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June 5, 2017

Mr. David Mohler
Chair, Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Boston Region Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) FFY2018

Dear Mr. Mohler:

On behalf of the 495/MetroWest Partnership, please accept the following as our official comments regarding the draft *Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)* for FFY 2018 for the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The 495/MetroWest Partnership is a non-profit advocacy organization serving thirty-five communities, over half a million residents, and an employment base of over \$23 billion per year. The Partnership seeks to address regional needs through public-private collaboration by working to enhance economic vitality, improve quality of life and sustain natural resources. The Partnership focuses on helping to alleviate regional constraints and limitations, and conducts numerous initiatives on transportation, workforce housing, brownfields, and water resources.

The Partnership appreciates the importance of proper planning and understands that the long-term benefits achieved by transportation and transit projects always start with a planning project. With our latest economic analysis, we know that the 495/MetroWest region has continued to grow thanks to a diverse economic base and a high quality of life. While this growth has resulted in opportunities and benefits, challenges remain. If ignored, these challenges threaten the quality of life and economic wellbeing of a region that has become an economic engine for the Commonwealth. Our regional transportation challenges affect the state's ability to remain economically competitive. These challenges include: increasing traffic congestion, an increase in vehicle miles traveled, highway capacity issues, gaps in public transit coverage, and aging transportation infrastructure.

The Boston Region MPO includes twenty-six of the Partnership's thirty-five communities, we greatly appreciate the number of planning projects that have been completed in our region in recent years, and found Table D-1 a helpful resource in determining the distribution of UPWP planning tasks since 2010.

In the current Draft UPWP, the Partnership is extremely pleased by the inclusion of two projects in particular, namely the Foxborough Station Commuter Rail Pilot Program and I-90/I-495 Interchange Traffic Analysis Technical Support. The Partnership has an extensive track record of support for both projects. Partnership has been engaged on the topic of commuter service

to Foxborough since the 2010 feasibility study by the MBTA and staff have testified before the Foxborough Board of Selectmen as well as before the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board in support of the Pilot Program for Commuter Rail service to Foxborough. We welcome CTPS assistance to MassDOT and the Town of Foxborough in developing projected ridership estimates in addition to land use modeling, travel demand forecasting and other tasks for the pilot. Extending weekday service on an existing Line to Foxborough Station, on MassDOT owned infrastructure, holds the potential for a real return on investment for the Commonwealth. The Foxborough Pilot would support the Fairmount Line, while more effectively utilizing existing infrastructure such as the Framingham Secondary Line and relieving capacity and parking constraints at the stations surrounding Foxborough. Additionally, this proposed service would be a public private partnership benefiting the MBTA and the riders, as well as residents, employers, commuters, and taxpayers of Foxborough and the 495/MetroWest region. Such weekday commuter service would provide a tremendous benefit to Foxborough residents commuting to other parts of the Commonwealth, as well as opening up new employment opportunities for riders on the Fairmount Line, given the strong Foxborough employment base.

Additionally, the Partnership has advocated for various improvements to the I-90/I-495 Interchange since our formation in 2003. We are extremely pleased to see a long-term, comprehensive solution advancing with the Interchange Improvement Project slated for construction between 2021 and 2025, and we welcome the technical support from CTPS, specifically for traffic analysis in the FY 2018 UPWP. Recent analysis conducted by the Public Policy Center at UMass Dartmouth for the 495/MetroWest Suburban Edge Community Commission, confirms that the 495/MetroWest region is a net importer of labor in addition to showing large volumes of workers commuting into, out of and through our region.¹ Considering the data on commuting patterns and numbers and the transition to All Electronic Tolling, we feel confident that the timing of, and investment in improving the I-90/I-495 Interchange will provide significant returns for commuters, employers and residents of the Commonwealth.

Beyond these two projects the Partnership strongly supports the following projects included in Appendix A:

- South Station Expansion Project;
- Transportation Master Plan in Framingham;
- Edgell Road Corridor Study in Framingham;
- MetroWest Landline: Phase 1 by MWRC (MAPC);
- Foxborough Local Bus Service;
- Climate Change Adaptation Plan by MassDOT; and
- Intelligent Transportation Systems by MassDOT;

We understand that these planning studies do not include MPO funding but in the likelihood that they will result in project proposals before the Boston MPO, we feel it is important to state our support.

In addition to these specific planning projects, the Partnership also supports ongoing tasks and products such as LRTP and TIP development, congestion management, safety and operations analysis, freight planning support, and air quality conformity and support. The Partnership

¹ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/initiatives/suburbanedgecommission-ppc091616-commuting-patterns.pdf>

recognizes the addition of several new studies and hopes that our region, which includes portions of MAGIC, MetroWest, SWAP and TRIC, will benefit from such projects as:

- Bicycle LOS Metric;
- Safety & Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections;
- Potential Impacts of Connected and Autonomous Vehicles;
- Travel Alternatives to Regional Traffic Bottlenecks;
- Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways; and
- Addressing Priority Corridors from the LRTP Needs Assessment.

It is worth noting that out of the four subregions in 495/MetroWest, SWAP has the lowest number of tasks and is second lowest to only one other subregion in the entire Boston MPO region, with 37 tasks since 2010 and only 2 tasks performed in the last three years (SSC had 36, with 5 projects since 2014, according to table D-1). We understand that resources are limited but regional equity is essential to ensure the entire Boston region is benefitting from the planning process. We hope that you will give regional equity some consideration when advancing some of the new studies mentioned above.

The Partnership hopes that the Low-Cost Improvements to MBTA service will indeed include commuter rail locations including those in the 495/MetroWest region which includes the Franklin, Framingham/Worcester, and Fitchburg Lines. Wayfinding solutions could be particularly helpful in our region.

The Partnership advocated for the legislation which allowed the expansion of Regional Transit Authorities in Massachusetts, recognizing the growing need of such services in the suburbs. As such, we hope that the MetroWest RTA will benefit from the Regional Transit Service Planning Technical Support included in this UPWP. The MetroWest RTA has been innovative and proactive in expanding transit opportunities in our region, however, needs remain and we feel any investment in planning by the Boston MPO into the MWRTA will provide excellent returns for both riders and employers in our region.

Finally, the Partnership is encouraged by the inclusion of First- and Last-Mile Shuttle Partnership Models in the FY 2018 UPWP. We feel our region offers a unique TMA model that could benefit from such a project. CrossTown Connect is a transportation management association which began at the community level in the MAGIC subregion. CrossTown Connect six public partners in addition to private sector participation. Recently, they have developed new shuttles routes in several communities (Littleton/Westford, Boxborough, and Maynard), which would serve Fitchburg Line Commuter Rail stations. However, funding has only allowed the implementation of the Maynard shuttle. The Maynard shuttle has proven a huge success, with growing ridership and minimal cost to determine its feasibility. Sustainability for the Maynard shuttle remains a challenge despite the demand and limited overhead costs. We feel this could serve as an excellent case study for potential partnership models for first-and last-mile transit shuttles with potential funding recommendations by the Boston MPO to help determine sustainability that could also allow for expansion of services into other CrossTown Connect communities. We hope you will give serious consideration to studying the CrossTown Connect Model as part of this program.

We thank you for your consideration of our comments. If there are any questions regarding our commentary on the UPWP, please contact Jessica Strunkin at 774.760.0495 x.101, or by email at Jessica@495partnership.org. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul F. Matthews
Executive Director



Jessica Strunkin
Deputy Director