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# Task Force Meeting Summary

## I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

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DATE: October 16, 2025

HSH PROJECT NO.: 2021055.08

PANELISTS: Beth Larkin (TY Lin)  
Luisa Paiewonsky (MassDOT)  
Susan Harrington (MassDOT)  
Sandy Hoover (Tetra Tech)

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## Overview

On Thursday, October 16, 2025, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) convened a hybrid (in-person and virtual) meeting of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Transportation Project Task Force. There were 86 attendees (19 in-person and 67 virtual). The meeting covered the following agenda items:

- Welcome/ Introductions
- Project Update
- NEPA/MEPA Process
- Draft EIS/Supplemental Draft EIR Overview
- Next Steps

## Meeting Summary

### Welcome and Introductions

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- **Beth Larkin (Larkin), TY Lin** and Task Force Facilitator, welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a brief safety minute. She highlighted that the agenda focused on the DEIS/SDEIR Process and DEIS/SDEIR Overview in response to a request during last month's Task Force meeting. Larkin also introduced Dan Murphy, Town of Brookline Engineering and Transportation Manager as the newest member of the Task Force and noted that Dan was replacing Amy Ingles who had taken a position with the MBTA.

### Project Update

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- **Luisa Paiewonsky (Paiewonsky), MassDOT Executive Director, Megaprojects Delivery Office**, shared the following updates:
  - Leadership Changes. Phillip Eng had been named interim Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation while maintaining his position as General Manager of the MBTA. Monica Tibbits-Nutt, the prior Secretary would stay on through the end of the year as an advisor. Jonathan Gulliver was promoted to Massachusetts Undersecretary of



- Transportation while maintaining his position as MassDOT's Highway Division Administrator.
- Independent Strategic Review. MassDOT is close to completing the scope of services for the Strategic Review and asked that since the project is in the pre-procurement phase that there be no further contact with MassDOT regarding the scope at this time. The scope will include both the in-depth cost estimate and independent engineering review. There will be one procurement and one consultant selected to perform the work. MassDOT will brief the consultant and contractor community about the opportunity and issue an RFP for the work likely in November 2025.
  - Early Action Projects. There will be more to come on early action projects and MassDOT will report out in future Task Force meetings.
- **Susan Harrington (Harrington), MassDOT Project Manager**, shared the following updates:
- Layover: MassDOT and the MBTA continue to work with the City of Boston to identify alternate locations to offset layover currently proposed at Beacon Park Yard.
  - Grand Junction Rail: The consultant team is evaluating accelerated construction methods to reduce the duration of the Grand Junction Rail outage during construction, in collaboration with A Better City (ABC) and Harvard University and is continuing to evaluate strategies to address southside rail operational needs during a Grand Junction Rail outage.

## NEPA/MEPA Process

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- **Sandy Hoover (Hoover), Tetra Tech**, summarized the NEPA and MEPA processes:
- NEPA, or the National Environmental Policy Act, is a federal law that applies to major federal actions. MEPA, or the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, applies to actions of state agencies. NEPA and MEPA require agencies to analyze the environmental effects of those actions before they take them.
  - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the lead federal agency for this project's NEPA review, as such, procedures for implementing NEPA are outlined in FHWA regulations at 23 CFR 771. NEPA is considered an umbrella law which integrates review of many environmental regulations in the same process.
  - The first step is to identify a need for the project. The next step is to develop a reasonable range of alternatives that address the need. The third step would be to analyze the environmental impacts of each of those alternatives. Only after all those steps, and the environmental impacts have been disclosed to the public, and the public is given an opportunity to review those effects, can a decision be made for the project. Public stakeholder engagement is an important part of this process.
  - The sequence of these steps is intentional. If after environmental impacts of alternatives have been identified and there is a change in the project scope or purpose, the steps described above would need to be followed again starting from step one.



- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) milestones were reviewed. Notice of Intent – Scoping – Draft EIS – Public Comment on Draft EIS – Final EIS and Record of Decision. These documents are meant to help guide agencies to make decisions that balance transportation and engineering needs with social, economic, and environmental needs.
- The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) takes another look at the project, it updates the range of alternatives, the design of the alternatives, and the analysis of impacts from what was previously disclosed in the Draft EIR.
- The joint Draft EIS/Supplemental Draft EIR is also meant to tell a story about how this project came to be and explains the logic used to make project decisions. Connectivity is an important story for this project.
- For the Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIR, more than 20 disciplines were analyzed and more than 40 subject matter experts were involved in analyzing project impacts. Initial drafts of the Draft EIS and Supplemental Draft EIR are reviewed by MassDOT, FHWA and Cooperating Agencies before the joint document is filed and the public review begins.

## DISCUSSION

- **Anthony D'Isidoro, (D'Isidoro) Allston Civic Association**, asked if the efforts in recent years to reform and streamline the NEPA process are still in motion and if they have much of an impact on the Allston project for any regulatory reasons. Hoover responded that the streamlining efforts are continuing but those regulatory changes related to timeline do not apply to the Allston project because the effective dates of those streamlining efforts are post-NOI of the Allston project.
- **Stacy Thompson (Thompson), LivableStreets Alliance**, asked whether the Task Force will get a copy of the draft environmental documents for review. Paiewonsky responded that an overview would be provided, however, since the draft documents were not complete, not filed and not published, they cannot be shared with the public.
- **Albert Ng (Ng), Harvard University**, asked whether it is possible that the process might need to start over again after the studies are completed. Paiewonsky clarified that we won't know until the studies are complete. The project is \$327 million short from when it started, so it's unclear what the filing will look like until completing this process.

## Draft EIS/Supplemental Draft EIR Overview

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- **Paiewonsky** stated that the joint Draft EIS/Supplemental Draft EIR (DEIS/SDEIR) developed to the point at which \$327M of the \$335M Neighborhood and Equity Grant was rescinded was unpublished and not complete and that the DEIS/SDEIR that ends up being submitted will not be exactly the same as what has been prepared at the time the environmental documents were paused.



- Hoover presented the list of chapters and appendices included in the draft document, and focused on Chapter 2: Purpose and Need, Chapter 3: Alternatives, Chapter 4: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences, Chapter 6: Draft Section 4(f), and Appendices. The following overview of what had been prepared to the point at which the grant was rescinded was provided.
  - Chapter 2: Purpose and Need. The purpose of the project included addressing roadway conditions, adding a new rail connection and upgrading layover facilities, and improving mobility and access.
  - Chapter 3: Alternatives. The project included two alternatives, the No Build and Build Alternatives. The Build Alternative included four major project components: Interchange, Layover, West Station, and the Throat Area.
    - Interchange. Two design options were presented: 3L Modified and 3-Bridge.
    - Layover. Layover was included in the document along with the commitment to reduce or eliminate layover if an alternate location for layover was found.
    - West Station. West Station included a four track, two platform station with a multimodal bus concourse above the train station.
    - Throat Area. Two design options were presented: Modified At-Grade and Modified Highway Viaduct.
  - Chapter 4. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences. Each discipline described in the document included a discussion of the regulatory framework; impacts during construction and operation; and measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse impacts.
  - Chapter 6. Draft Section 4(f). The draft document identified those properties for which 4(f) applies. It reviewed possible avoidance alternatives and made a determination if those avoidance alternatives were prudent and feasible. It also outlined efforts made to minimize harm to those 4(f) properties where no prudent and feasible avoidance alternatives were available. The 4(f) review is not considered final until the Final EIS and Record of Decision are published.
  - Appendices. The document included over 25 appendices. These were technical studies and reports that largely supported the environmental analyses described in Chapter 4.
- **Paiewonsky** noted that the Task Force could expect changes from what had previously been prepared to reflect the funding shortfall. However, MassDOT would continue to address some FHWA comments so as not to lose time when refiling the documents.

## DISCUSSION

- Ng asked whether layover was shown in the No Build Alternative or just the easement rights. Harrington responded that in the No Build alternative the MBTA would maintain the easement rights in Beacon Park Yard. Hoover clarified the document did include assumptions that layover would be utilized at Beacon Park Yard.
- **David Loutzenheiser (Loutzenheiser), MAPC**, asked whether the Modified Highway Viaduct alternative is still being considered as an alternative. Hoover said that it was being



analyzed in the NEPA and MEPA filing with the same weight as the at-grade alternative. Loutzenheiser said that it had been years since the Task Force had discussed that alternative.

- **Chris Osgood (Osgood), City of Boston**, asked if the 3L Modified and the Modified At-Grade alternatives were identified as the preferred alternatives. Hoover stated that a preferred alternative was identified for the Throat Area, but a preferred design option was not identified for the interchange. Instead, a split-diamond concept was identified as preferred for the interchange.
- Thompson said while she understands the project team not wanting to hand out the draft environmental documents to the Task Force, she feels it is important for the Task Force to have the ability to get to actual data. She asked whether areas of the draft environmental documents that the Task Force would be interested in better understanding could be shared. Paiewonsky reiterated that the draft environmental documents were not published, are likely to change and that there would be an issue with having a separate public review process outside of the regulatory prescribed public review process.
- Thompson asked what other things are being considered due to the budget deficiency since the project was never fully funded. Paiewonsky emphasized the need to work within available funding. Thompson suggested that instead of starting with the cost constraints, start by determining what is needed and then appraising the costs. She commented that the current budget restrictions should not preclude future outcomes. Paiewonsky acknowledged a middle ground where goals are determined and their potential for achievement be evaluated by the available funding. MassDOT intends to meet project goals of improving access from Allston to the regional network and resources, provide improved rail access from Springfield, Worcester and Metrowest to and from Boston, and support the future redevelopment of Beacon Park Yard in decades to come.
- Osgood asked about the relationship between the cost analysis and the environmental filings. Paiewonsky explained it starts with the cost analysis as it is a critical element for moving the project forward. The public will be informed of the project's full cost, the resources available to support construction, the outcome of the engineering analysis, and a proposed path forward. MassDOT will update the Task Force regularly as the work continues. MassDOT intends to move early action projects forward as soon as possible to demonstrate good faith to the Allston neighborhood and maintain project momentum.
- **Fred Salvucci (Salvucci)** stated his belief that the biggest problem on big projects is delay. Salvucci asked about the effect of tariffs on this project with the rising cost of steel as well as overall inflation. He also asked why another consultant needs to be brought on while there are concerns about complexities, costs, and potential procurement conflict issues. Salvucci asked MassDOT to reconsider bringing on another consultant to perform the strategic review.



- **Jim Curley (Curley), Boston University**, asked whether there would be one RFP or two for the independent analysis. Paiewonsky responded that there will be one RFP that will include the scope for both the cost analysis and the engineering analysis. Paiewonsky added that MassDOT is advancing the independent cost and engineering analysis to save time and money and help avoid cost overruns and schedule exceedances as many projects around the country have.
- Ng asked for more details on Section 61, Chapter 5. Hoover said that while they can't go into too much detail as things are still very much up in the air, the purpose of the chapter is to outline the mitigation measures for each discipline where an adverse impact was identified. These will eventually become part of state permit conditions. The chapter identified agencies that have responsibility for implementing mitigation measures, the estimated schedule for when the measure would be implemented and would report the estimated cost of the mitigation measures, if known. **Mark Fobert (Fobert), Tetra Tech**, added that this section is subject to change as the agencies and their requirements are very design-specific.
- Ng said that as a property owner there are challenges with Harvard not being included in the environmental filings process. Ng requested that Harvard work with the project team to provide input on impacts that this project may have on their land as it relates to Section 61 as this is very important to the University.
- Salvucci suggested using the Interstate Cost Estimate as an initial construction cost analysis. It uses current prices and doesn't include costs other than construction (e.g. no ROW). Using a calculation like this might give a rough estimate of where to start. Salvucci suggested the current project team do this benchmark cost and reconsider bringing in another consultant.
- Osgood asked if the project team could share the cost estimate and funding plan included in the draft documents. Paiewonsky stated that it was over \$2 billion and was not fully funded. Recent inflation was not accounted for, layover was not included, and the bridge was not included.
- Loutzenheiser asked how much money is committed at this point. Paiewonsky reviewed the state funding components which totaled approximately \$1.1 billion. Ng noted that there were some additional funding sources. Curley confirmed Boston University's \$10M commitment to the project.
- **Matthew Petersen (Petersen), City of Boston**, said that some of the funds from Boston and Harvard are sequenced for later in the project schedule, but not early. Costs depend on construction staging, timing, and design factors such as whether the project is built on fill. Petersen added that there may be ways to reduce temporary work and that the City is very willing to think out of the box regarding construction staging. He added that as scenarios develop, how those scenarios tie to development needs to be considered with respect to project cash flow.
- Ng commented that after proposals are submitted and the selected consultant is brought on, it would be helpful to understand their approach and how it will tie in with the



environmental filings. Paiewonsky commented that there would be a briefing on the RFP when it comes out.

- Thompson asked whether MassDOT has drafted a timeline through the end of this year as it would help to prioritize tasks. Paiewonsky answered that MassDOT's goals for the rest of this year are to focus on the RFP and to continue discussion on Grand Junction Railroad.
- Thompson asked whether the Task Force should be prioritizing any documents for review and input at this time. Paiewonsky said there are none at this time.

## Next Steps

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- Larkin noted the next several proposed meeting dates – November 13, 2025, December 11, 2025 and January 15, 2026.
- Potential topics at upcoming Task Force meeting were reviewed. Larkin noted that the topics on the slide were intended to capture near term topics and that she would email the Task Force a running list of topics after the meeting.
- Larkin asked for other suggested topics for upcoming Task Force meetings. Petersen suggested the topic of construction phase mitigation, including TDM, possible construction timelines.