Task Force Meeting Summary
Allston Multimodal Transportation Project

DATE: December 11, 2025
HSH PROJECT NO.: 2021055.08
PANELISTS: Beth Larkin (TY Lin)
Susan Harrington (MassDOT)
Luisa Paiewonsky (MassDOT)
Laura Gilmore (MBTA)
Mike Rooks (MBTA)
Mark Shamon (VHB)

Overview

On Thursday, December 11, 2025, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) convened a hybrid (in-person and virtual) meeting of the Allston Multimodal Transportation Project Task Force. There were 93 attendees (19 in-person and 74 virtual). The meeting covered the following agenda items:

- Welcome/ Introductions
- Lincoln Street Noise Barriers
- Rail Operations Analysis
- Independent Consultant RFR
- Next Steps

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

- **Beth Larkin (Larkin), TY Lin and Task Force Facilitator,** welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a brief safety minute. Larkin reviewed the meeting agenda and introduced Laura Gilmore, MBTA Sr. Director of Strategic Transit Planning and Mike Rooks, MBTA Chief Railroad Officer who would be presenting the Rail Operations Analysis.
- **Luisa Paiewonsky (Paiewonsky), MassDOT** noted that the meeting focused on:
  - The progress of the Lincoln Street Noise Barrier implementation and the momentum in moving that project forward in conjunction with the City of Boston advancing in sequence the adjacent shared use path project.
  - Rail Operations Analysis, including a discussion of the modelling and ongoing work performed by the MBTA and the need for infrastructure to support those operations and future service.
  - The status of the Independent Consultant procurement process and the Request for Responses (RFR) that went out on Monday, December 9th reflecting a tri-agency effort.

- **Paiewonsky** addressed a request made after the last Task Force meeting regarding whether MassDOT could make available specific components of the Draft EIS and SDEIR documents that were not filed when the Reconnecting Communities Grant was rescinded. Paiewonsky reiterated that MassDOT would not be releasing the draft document itself, or any specific draft chapters or draft components of the documents because they were never fully vetted through the agency, never approved within MassDOT or by the FHWA for publication, and the document is still in draft form and therefore not a public document. MassDOT will release components of the environmental documents as requested when they become public. Paiewonsky added that MassDOT is moving forward with the cost study and engineering analysis because it will provide the information needed to finalize the environmental documents and get them out to the Task Force and public to review when completed.

Lincoln Street Noise Barriers

- **Mark Shamon (Shamon), VHB,** gave a presentation on the status of the Lincoln Street Noise Barriers in which he:
  - Provided an overview of the progress towards implementation, including that the noise barriers are feasible and reasonable, the neighborhood has voted in favor of the barriers and that the barriers are being evaluated by MassDOT as a potential early action project.
  - Summarized the outreach and community involvement to date, which included several neighborhood meetings, mailed notices about the project and meetings, and mailed ballots. The ballots asked affected residents to vote on the implementation of the barriers and key aesthetic decisions about the barrier's design. Two common concerns among the returned ballots that voted against the barriers were the height of the wall and the potential for graffiti.
  - Reviewed the MassDOT Noise Abatement Policy, noise fundamentals, FHWA model inputs, a basic highway noise model without a noise barrier, a basic highway noise model with a noise barrier, computed traffic noise levels and the acoustic benefits to the receptors adjacent to the two proposed noise barriers.
  - Provided a generalized cross section view of the proposed noise barriers in relation to I-90 westbound and the future path being planned by the City of Boston, renderings along Lincoln Street both with and without the noise barriers, and different wall materials.
- **Shamon** noted that the distance the barriers are set back from Lincoln Street mitigates the impact of the height of the barriers, and that even when the sun reaches the lowest point in the southern sky during the winter, the models show that the shadows cast by the barriers do not cross Lincoln Street to reach the properties along the north side of the roadway. Regarding the concern for graffiti, Shamon noted options of growing ivy on the wall and adding a mix of vegetation along the barriers or the potential to commission a community-based mural to deter graffiti.

- **Shamon** said that the next steps for the noise wall project includes continuing to engage with the community on aesthetic design elements, utility coordination, and finalizing the design package.
- **Paiewonsky** added that, at the request of Rep. Moran and consistent with several comments from the Task Force, MassDOT and City of Boston engineers have met to coordinate the advancement of MassDOT's Noise Barriers projects and the City of Boston's bike path and that that coordination will continue.

DISCUSSION

- **Anthony D'Isidoro (D'Isidoro), Allston Civic Association,** asked why the brick wall along Lincoln Street near Everett Street was remaining and who owns it. Shamon replied that the brick wall is privately owned, was constructed when the office building across the street was developed and that MassDOT does not plan to remove the brick wall as part of the noise barriers project. D'Isidoro noted that Harvard may own the property where the brick wall is and that it should be looked into as to why it needs to stay.
- **D'Isidoro** directed a question to the City of Boston on whether there is an incentive for the City to continue improvements on Lincoln Street per the Mobility Plan considering the upcoming Eversource project. Would the Eversource project be done first and then advance the complete streets improvements at the same time as the noise barriers? **Chris Osgood (Osgood), City of Boston** noted the goal would be to coordinate construction to minimize any rebuilding and that some of the recommendations in the Mobility Plan could move forward irrespective of the Eversource project. **Ben Zunkeler (Zunkeler), City of Boston Planning Department**, added that the goal would be to coordinate with MassDOT and Eversource to make sure the complete streets projects can move forward when funding is available. The main goal now with Eversource is coordination of the duct banks for fiber.
- **Galen Mook (Mook), MassBike,** asked the City of Boston whether traffic calming measures can be added on Lincoln Street. He also noted that while 10 feet for a bike path is certainly better than zero feet, it is still less than ideal for a bike path, while also acknowledging the space limitations. Mook added that he agreed with D'Isidoro's previous comment about the brick wall, and the need to understand who the landowner is since it is a major element of continuity. Osgood stated that the City is more than willing to work with MassDOT to figure out who owns the brick wall and what's feasible within the right-of-way to maximize the width of the shared use path.
- **Harry Mattison (Mattison), Community Representative,** asked what the schedule is for next steps on the project. Paiewonsky answered MassDOT is completing final design of the noise barriers and making sure there is a funding source for the project. Paiewonsky noted that construction of the noise barriers would likely start in the first half of 2026.
- **Mattison** highlighted the need to address the brick wall and to close as many of the gaps as possible, extending the path to Birmingham Parkway to the west and as close as possible to Mansfield Street to the east.

- **Mattison** asked what public participation will be taking place between now and the finalization of the design. **Susan Harrington (Harrington), MassDOT**, responded that the tie-in points for the shared use path would be part of the City's Mobility Plan and that MassDOT currently doesn't have any additional meetings involving the public planned for the noise barriers project.
- **Paiewonsky** said that continued changes could add cost and delay construction and that the goal is to move the project forward as soon as possible. Mattison said that the project will only be built once and that there should be discussions regarding a safe cycling path from Birmingham Parkway to Lincoln Street, the width of the path, what is going to happen with utility poles, what the surface will be between the curb and the wall, and whether the area for the path is going to be graded, before MassDOT moves forward on their own with the noise barriers project.
- **Mattison** asked for reconsideration of the public process before the design of the noise barriers is finalized and urged that one public meeting would be worth having due to the importance of the path beyond just the community affected by the noise barriers. Osgood responded by noting that many of Mattison's concerns regarding the path are elements that are part of the City's Mobility Plan and offered to share with the Task Force either separately or as part of a future Task Force meeting the public engagement strategy for the design of the path, and how that connects with the noise barriers.
- **D'Isidoro** emphasized wanting to move the noise barriers project forward.
- **Councilor Liz Breadon (Breadon), Boston City Council,** submitted an online comment which was read during the meeting stating that if drivers do not see cars on I-90, she is hoping speeds on Lincoln Street will decrease.

Rail Operation Analysis

- **Laura Gilmore (Gilmore), MBTA,** provided an overview of the MBTA's future service and capacity needs, noting that the focus of the presentation would be on the infrastructure along the Framingham-Worcester Commuter Rail Line. Gilmore added that the design of West Station and the Grand Junction rail connection are other important rail infrastructure components that would be addressed in future meetings.
- **Gilmore** explained that the Framingham-Worcester line, historically, had mostly four tracks between Boston and Framingham. The construction of I-90 led to the number of tracks through Allston and Brighton being reduced to two. Gilmore noted that the Framingham-Worcester Line is the MBTA's second most-used line, serving 18 stations across 10 municipalities.
- **Gilmore** said that the MBTA plans to dramatically increase frequency on the Framingham-Worcester Line in the next few years. This will include a mix of local services and zonal express services. West Station will be included in one of those service patterns when it comes into operation. Gilmore also discussed the anticipated Compass Rail service which MassDOT hopes to inaugurate in 2030, and which will run 4 trains per day (2 round trips) between Boston and Springfield by 2035. With all these planned additions, the number of trains on the line is expected to almost triple in the next 10 years.

- **Gilmore** summarized rail planning policy requirements, including:
  - Finding a balance between local access and working towards the service from Worcester and Metro West to Boston being "car competitive."
  - Promoting system resiliency and prioritizing eliminating constraints
  - Maintaining the ability to provide higher levels of service in the future
  - Maintaining freight operations per CSX rights
  - Not precluding potential future feasible transit options along the Grand Junction
- **Mike Rooks (Rooks), MBTA,** stated the purpose of the Rail Operation Analysis is to determine if the proposed track layout for the West Station area is adequate for future service across the Worcester-Framingham Line, and if it provides the desired resiliency. The analysis tests system resilience across multiple disruption scenarios (i.e. perturbed scenarios) and identifies bottlenecks and assesses the potential impacts of services disruptions. The analysis does not directly consider time savings in routine operations and does not precisely mirror real work conditions (RTC is more optimistic than actual operations). Rooks noted that the key inputs for this model focused on the future schedule, infrastructure, and operations, and that only funded and in-progress projects were included in the infrastructure assumptions.
- **Rooks** stated that:
  - From an operational perspective, future Worcester 30-30 service consists of an average of one train every 10 to 15 minutes operating in the same direction with stopping patterns requiring trains to be scheduled as close as 5 minutes apart.
  - Capacity constraints on the Worcester Line include proximity of Boston Landing to West Station, single sided stations in Newton, long distances between crossovers, and system resiliency which is limited by only two Worcester Main Line tracks, and a large number of stations (8 within 11 miles).
  - The RTC modeling was examined under three infrastructure scenarios: zero main line tracks, one main line track, or two main line tracks for the Baseline Alternative/Option 4A which consists of two Worcester-Framingham Main Line tracks with their current alignment maintained, four Beacon Park Layover Yard tracks, two station tracks for the Worcester-Framingham Line, and two station tracks for potential Grand Junction service.
  - The RTC model stress tested several perturbed scenarios drawn from real-world serious disruptions, and that each scenario was tested under the different infrastructure assumptions for the different number of Worcester Main Line tracks.
  - The RTC modelling results indicated that across all scenarios, Worcester Line service performed best with two Worcester Main Line tracks and two separate West Station tracks, and that two Worcester Main Line tracks and two separate West Station tracks minimized average train delay during service disruptions and led to a higher average on-time performance.
  - The MBTA then compared the outcome of the RTC analysis with other peer agencies operating similar frequencies as those proposed for MBTA's Worcester 30-30 service and found that peer agencies with similar service generally utilize between 2-4 operating tracks.

DISCUSSION

- **David Loutzenheiser (Loutzenheiser), MAPC,** asked for clarification as to whether the proposed Compass Rail trains of 4 trains per day equated to two round trips. **Meredith Slesinger, MassDOT Rail and Transit Administrator**, confirmed the two round trips.
- **Councilor Breadon** asked if there were any plans to electrify the Worcester-Framingham Line. **Lynsey Heffernan (Heffernan), MBTA Chief of Policy and Strategic Planning** stated that there is interest in electrifying the line, but there are no plans to do so. Heffernan noted that there is a pilot project to electrify the Fairmount Line with new trains expected in 2027 and service beginning in 2028 and that the next line to be electrified would be the Providence Line as it has the highest ridership in the commuter rail system and carries Amtrak's fully electrified service, although electrification of the Providence Line is not funded.
- **Loutzenheiser** asked which stations express trains would stop at. Rooks answered that the term "express" usually means skipping three to four stops at a time, and that there are several stations between Back Bay and Framingham that could be part of the express service network while noting that available infrastructure for trains to pass one another is also critical for determining express stops. Loutzenheiser followed up by asking if Boston Landing, West Station, and Lansdowne would be local or express stations. Gilmore responded that that is a dynamic question as schedules are changed every year and that which stations get local vs express services is likely to continue to evolve based on demand.
- **Loutzenheiser** asked why there is no center platform for West Station along the Worcester Main Line tracks. Gilmore said that different layouts for the rail infrastructure and for West Station will be looked at as part of the independent engineering review.
- **Tom Nally (Nally), A Better City**, asked when the MBTA anticipates funding for a third track in the Wellesley area and where in the list of priorities this project is. Heffernan responded that the MBTA is funding constrained and that the Worcester Triple Track is not a "next up" item compared to other unfunded projects that are more critical to the MBTA's operations.
- **Nally** asked if there could be another RTC analysis that assumes the Worcester Triple Track is in operation, noting that it would be nice to know what the implications are, what the benefits would be, and what the trade-offs are between more tracks. Heffernan responded that the RTC analysis reflects the MBTA's funding constraints, and Worcester Triple Track is an unfunded and complicated project that may not be built in the near future, and is therefore not included in the RTC analysis.
- **D'Isidoro** asked what role do mode shift policy objectives factor into the modeling. Gilmore answered that mode shift does not factor into the RTC model. She said the model looks at operational factors, resilience of the system and where bottlenecks in the system or disruptions in the system lead to. Gilmore referred to other analyses like the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) modeling that factor in mode shifts, noting that the RTC analysis is more about operations.
- **Peter Dunn (Dunn), Worcester,** asked whether the service volume and frequency projections for 2030 and 2035 are dependent on the triple track. He also asked if increasing the number of locomotives and coach cars is built into the Five-Year Capital Plan. Rooks confirmed that the

frequency projections for 2030 and 2035 did not assume a third track. Rooks also clarified that along with locomotives there are other elements supporting the future service that are built into the Five-Year Capital Plan, including the interlocking projects at CP16 and CP44 that are already funded and underway.

- **Mook** took issue with the Worcester Main Line tracks not being referred to as bypass tracks. Mook then received confirmation from Gilmore that the RTC model does not include GJR service. Mook stressed the need to think about West Station in terms of it being a junction for BDU's that will eventually go to Kendall Square. Mook asked if the team could be instructed to model the maximum connectivity to Kendall Square and can the team also model no layover at BPY. Mook expressed concern that designing not to preclude a future Grand Junction service without actually thinking about what that service might be is limiting. Mook added that he thought mode shift could be achieved by connecting to the Worcester Line and getting off at West Station to go to Kendall Square. Gilmore responded that mode shift and not precluding Grand Junction service are two major MBTA policy goals and that the MBTA is working to make sure there is capacity to continue to increase service on the line. Gilmore noted that the MBTA is focused on modeling the infrastructure capacity of the Worcester Main Line to determine whether the MBTA could still operate service if that capacity was reduced. Regarding Grand Junction service, Gilmore said the MBTA is leaving that option open, as there are several factors that would need to be figured out in order to even enable that modeling component, including the engineering of the line, the types of vehicles, and the frequency of service. Gilmore emphasized that the goal has been to make sure the design of this project does not preclude future decisions to be made about the Grand Junction service.
- **Paiewonsky** noted the strong sentiment among the Task Force that this project is only going to be built once, so it is important that it is built right. Paiewonsky stated the focus should be on what is realistic, what there is funding for and moving as much of the project into construction as possible, while still being visionary. She said that this process has been long, it is critical to keep moving forward, and that the project team does not intend to get wrapped up in lots of extra modeling. Paiewonsky said if it is possible to move layover out of BPY, then it will be modeled.
- **Mook** stated the design of the project should meet the needs of what all envisioned, which is increased service and connectivity. Paiewonsky noted that there is no disagreement there.
- **Albert Ng (Ng), Harvard,** asked several questions regarding track assumptions, what operating speed was used in the model, and how the MBTA designates a key station for express service. Rooks confirmed that the analysis looks at perturbances and the flexibility to move trains around each other when disruptions happen, and that the Baseline Alternative/Option 4A shows four operating tracks, two station tracks and two Worcester Main Line tracks. Rooks clarified that the MAS of 79 mph is specific to the segment south of the station. He added that stopping patterns and schedules of intercity trains or express trains may impact the speeds that a train is able to reach in this segment. Regarding key station designation and express service, Heffernan stated that the MBTA doesn't have a set classification for key station designation. When the station is built, the MBTA will collect ridership data and other information to develop

the most sensible stopping patterns. Ng reiterated that he thinks the main line should run through West Station. Ng also pointed out that if service to Grand Junction is added, some commuters have to transfer multiple times, which is a less-than-ideal scenario. Heffernan clarified that the MBTA is not committing 100% to any particular service pattern and that service for West Station and Grand Junction will receive careful thought and adjustments to best fit the MBTA's operations.

- **Fred Salvucci (Salvucci)** said he is happy to hear the design will not preclude the Grand Junction connection, and although not all trains may stop at West Station, it should be designed not to preclude all trains stopping there in the future. Regarding rail history, he agreed that there were four tracks in Allston before the construction of I-90, noting there used to be four stations within walking distance of each other in Allston and Brighton. Salvucci also noted that when I-90 was constructed it was built right up against the neighborhood. Salvucci said that the turnpike tore up the neighborhood and that residents of Allston will push back to make sure that something similar doesn't happen again. He recalled from the first Task Force meeting that reconnecting South Allston with North Allston and South Allston to the Charles River was a big deal. Salvucci reiterated that he believed that layover should be removed from the project. Salvucci said that he had hoped to see the beginning of rectifying the damage that was done to the community in his lifetime.
- **Osgood** said the City of Boston's interests are for there to be no layover in BPY, to maximize service potential at West Station and maximize that connection for every Metro West rider to the Grand Junction. He stated Option 4A does not achieve that, and that the MBTA's modelling reflected the base case they were given. Osgood followed up with two questions, first, when will the technical report be shared and second, what does the path forward look like as different rail alignment alternative are pursued. Paiewonsky responded that the technical report would be available once MassDOT proposes a layout for the project and that the path forward for layover depends on an agreement with the City. Paiewonsky emphasized that there is a documented need for layover and that along with service to West Station, plus West-East rail and better rail service connections between Central Mass/Metro West to Eastern MA comes the infrastructure needed to support that service. Paiewonsky reiterated that MassDOT is working in good faith with the City to attempt to find an alternate location for layover so that it can be relocated outside of BPY.
- **Osgood** asked what the process would be for the Task Force to provide input for developing a preferred rail alignment for the West Station area and whether consideration would be given to including the Worcester Main Line tracks adjacent to West Station. Paiewonsky said that MassDOT is open to relaying input received from the Task Force to the independent engineer and that MassDOT is already coordinating with the MBTA on potential alternative rail configurations. Regarding the Worcester Main Line tracks, Paiewonsky said MassDOT is open to considering the tracks adjacent to West Station if the MBTA thinks that is viable and is operationally feasible.
- **Seth Gadbois (Gadbois), Conservation Law Foundation**, asked if there was any relationship between the CTPS modeling done earlier this year that looked at potential transit

ridership numbers for 2050 and the rail operation analysis. Heffernan clarified that they are not the same. The RTC analysis is an operations model, not a ridership model. The RTC analysis focuses on how trains move with other trains, not how many people are on the trains. Gadbois noted that it is hard to reconcile the CTPS modeling with the rail operations analysis.

- **Gadbois** suggested that the independent review consultant be a regular member of the Task Force meetings so that they can hear the questions and discussion.

Independent Consultant RFR

- **Paiewonsky** gave a status update on the procurement of an Independent Consultant. She said that the project team issued a Request for Response (RFR) and that the RFR acknowledges that the project lost $327 million in federal grant funds. The RFP also states that the project scope was already larger than the available budget before the grant was rescinded and that it is important to understand the full price tag of that project scope when the grant was rescinded. Paiewonsky stated that:
  - Although the independent consultant may be brought in, at MassDOT's discretion, to meet with the Task Force upon completion of tasks, the Task Force is an advisory body to MassDOT and the MBTA and MassDOT will keep the Task Force informed on the work of the independent consultant.
  - The elements that the consultant will be asked to look at for the cost analysis include past budgets, third party contributors, and individual components of the project such as the train tracks, I-90, West Station, parkland improvements, local roads, and the Allston Community Path.
  - The findings of the cost analysis will help determine the direction of the engineering analysis. The analysis will look at the full scope, a hybrid scope, and altered scope options.
  - The consultant will be asked to look at construction packaging, delivery methods, constructability, minimizing impacts to existing services, and early action opportunities.
  - Although MassDOT ultimately decides what comes out of this process, MassDOT and the MBTA will make decisions in the public's interest while considering feedback from others, including the independent review consultant and the Task Force.
- **Paiewonsky** emphasized that, ultimately, the goal is to identify the most efficient and practical way for the project to move forward. The next steps in the consultant procurement process, now that the RFR is out, is to answer consultant questions about the nature of the work, receive consultant proposals at the end of January 2026 and for a multi-agency selection committee to select a consultant. The work of the selected independent consultant is expected to go well into 2026. Paiewonsky noted that at the end of the cost analysis the Task Force will be able to provide input before the engineering work moves forward.

DISCUSSION

- **Mook** asked if the City of Boston, Harvard, or other landowners will be part of the consultant selection process and recommended that they be included in the process since their input is

highly regarded. Paiewonsky responded that those groups will not be directly involved with the consultant selection, however, regular interactions with these stakeholders will continue.

- **Mattison** asked how the independent review process will impact the timelines for early action items. Paiewonsky answered that early action items such as the Lincoln Street Noise Barriers that are already in motion will not wait for the independent cost analysis to be completed. The consultant will be asked for their opinions on the feasibility of early action items, however, that is not central to their work, and the project team does not intend for early actions to be delayed for the length of the analysis. Mattison asked if elements of the full project, like improvements along the Charles River edge, elements involving rail, or other paths or footbridges could still move forward in 2026 as early action items. Paiewonsky noted that things that have been part of the scope as of July 2025 could be considered for early action but would also need to go through the MEPA process before being accelerated.
- **Ng** suggested that it would be helpful for the Task Force to understand the definition of the project and what the project elements are as provided to the independent consultant who is doing the cost estimating. Ng also asked how mitigation costs are being accounted for, such as for Grand Junction. Paiewonsky stated that much of the project itself would normally count as mitigation. Paiewonsky said that in general, the project includes I-90, West Station, tracks, local roads, the parklands along the river, and the Allston Community Path. Paiewonsky added that MassDOT would send the Task Force a list of what the consultant will be asked to look at.
- **Nally** asked if the Task Force would be able to provide the consultant with past proposals, so they understand what's behind the recommendations. Paiewonsky said that ABC as well as other organizations that are a part of the Task Force are welcome to draft up a summary of what they believe the consultant should understand about the project for MassDOT consideration. She also emphasized that MassDOT does not anticipate regular interaction between the Task Force and the consultant since the analysis is supposed to be independent. Paiewonsky added that those who wish to provide additional written input have until at least the end of January to do so and should send them to MassDOT.
- **Mook** cautioned not to be penny wise and pound foolish, referencing GLX as a cautionary tale. Mook also stressed the need for a different dynamic than MassDOT presenting to the Task Force and the Task Force pushing back. Mook noted project elements that have benefited the project that were advocated for by the Task Force, including the buffer path, connections to Malvern Street, West Station, and the Agganis Way overpass. Paiewonsky agreed that although community involvement is essential, MassDOT wants to give the consultant space to do an independent review. Mook reiterated the need for a shared project vision, to work together since everyone wants the best project possible, and that with more open conversations there will be less delays.

Next Steps

- Proposed Upcoming Task Force Meeting Dates
  - January 15 (date confirmed after the Task Force meeting), February 26, March 24

- Potential Topics at Upcoming Task Force Meetings
  - Early Action Projects
  - Independent Consultant Review
  - City of Boston BPY Regional Framework