



Task Force Meeting Summary

I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

DATE: September 18, 2025

HSH PROJECT NO.: 2021055.08

PANELISTS: Beth Larkin (TY Lin)
Luisa Paiewonsky (MassDOT)
Susan Harrington (MassDOT)

Overview

On Thursday, September 18, 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 76 attendees (22 in-person and 54 virtual). The meeting covered the following agenda items:

- Welcome/ Introductions
- Project Update
- Independent Engineering Review - Summary of Task Force Input
- 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. She ran through the agenda with Task Force members and meeting attendees, noting that there were several topics to be covered under each of the major agenda items. Larkin also reported changes to the Task Force membership welcoming Peter Dunn, City of Worcester Chief Development Officer, representing the City of Worcester, and James Curley and Jake Sullivan, representing Boston University to the Task Force. **Luisa Paiewonsky (Paiewonsky), MassDOT Executive Director, Megaprojects Delivery Office**, noted that Elizabeth Leary had moved on from Boston University and acknowledged her contributions to the Task Force.

Project Update

- **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. The consultant team is evaluating accelerated construction methods to reduce the Grand Junction outage duration during the construction period, in collaboration with ABC and Harvard, and is continuing to evaluate strategies to address southside rail operational needs during a Grand Junction outage.
 - Cambridge Street Bridge Preservation. MassDOT will implement preservation work on the existing Cambridge Street Bridge to improve road conditions and restore pedestrian access. All work will be performed within and accessed by existing State or City roadway layouts.
- Paiewonsky provided an update on the upcoming strategic review of the project. Paiewonsky stated that MassDOT is seeking an independent review of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Transportation Project to ensure the project's cost, scope and delivery strategy are aligned with available resources and policy objectives. She described MassDOT's reasoning in pausing the environmental documentation during the cost and independent engineering review. She noted that if the funding assessment shows that the project needs to be phased, or if federal regulatory changes require modifications to the design, or if Grand Junction or the layover analysis required significant changes after publication of the DEIS, the project could be required to submit a Supplemental DEIS, creating a separate and unnecessary step to the NEPA process. She noted that there would be continued engagement with the Task Force and project partners and anticipated that there would be a single procurement to encompass an in-depth cost analysis and independent engineering review.

DISCUSSION

- **Matthew Petersen (Petersen), City of Boston, noted that** the City of Boston welcomes the collaboration with the state on the layover study and is seeing progress on Grand Junction Rail. Petersen also emphasized that the Grand Junction mitigation efforts are a priority for the City. Maintaining service along the Worcester Mainline during construction is crucial to consider with construction phasing. Petersen added that the City supports the ongoing process and filing the right project.
- **Seth Gadbois (Gadbois), CLF, asked for clarification** regarding the risk of an additional supplemental environmental document to a previously filed supplement. Paiewonsky clarified that there will likely be several changes to the project as part of the strategic review which would require notifying Federal Highway and MEPA and would trigger an additional supplemental document should there be an environmental filing in advance of completing the strategic review. Therefore, MassDOT does not want to file environmental documents until after the strategic review is complete since doing so would be a large and costly effort and it would not help advance the project.



- **Jessica Robertson (Robertson), Community Representative**, agreed that it is better to get the project right and said she was happy to hear that there are changes planned as part of the strategic review. Robertson also asked that the current work-in-progress SDEIR and DEIS be provided. Paiewonsky agreed to brief the task force on the draft environmental documents and that it would be beneficial to give the Task Force a better understanding of the level of detail required for such a draft.

Independent Engineering Review – Task Force Input

- Larkin began by noting that a request went out to all Task Force members for input on priorities and focus areas for the Independent Engineering Review and that responses representing over a dozen Task Force members were received. Task Force member input was summarized in four general categories: priorities, focus areas/scope input, transportation goals/benefits, and suggestions/recommendations.
 1. **Priorities.** Input included ensuring that the people of Allston can move around safely; improving the frequency, speed, and reliability of the Commuter Rail; expediting the independent review; continuing to embrace transformative goals and scope and advancing early action projects.
 2. **Focus Areas/Scope Input.** Input included articulating overall project goals and metrics at the start of the process and clearly delineating roles and tasks among the different consultants; defining transportation benefits; defining evaluation metrics; prioritizing review of key project elements such as rail in Beacon Park Yard; suggestions regarding what the consultant should consider and present; identifying early action projects; what the consultant should evaluate; evaluation of measures that will mitigate construction impacts to the community; and that the review outcome should inform the development of a feasible pathway for investments in infrastructure improvements.
 3. **Transportation Goals/Benefits.** Input included suggestions and recommendations defining transportation benefits and transformational goal, with an emphasis on being broad and holistic; considering transportation benefits in terms of the overall timeline of the project; and analyzing in the context of fulfilling the Commonwealth's global warming solutions and climate targets and applicable environmental protection laws.
 4. **Suggestions/Recommendations.** Input included reconsidering advancing projects previously put on pause, which weren't necessarily part of this project but might have been impacted by it; consultant selection criteria; level of engagement with the Task Force during the process; avoid revisiting settled design decisions such as the at-grade option through the Throat Area; and the determination of available resources should produce multiple financing plans



DISCUSSION

- Paiewonsky responded to a number of the bullet points included in the slide presentation as follows.
 - Priorities
 - Emphasized that local and regional connectivity is one of the most important goals of the project.
 - Noted that three months is too short for the independent review process, but it would be good to have the consultant on board to lay out the schedule and review the draft environmental documents. MassDOT will work to develop a schedule for the consultant's work that is realistic and will regularly update the Task Force before finalizing the schedule.
 - In regard to transformative goals, Paiewonsky said MassDOT recognizes that transportation investments made by this project will enable future economic benefits for the area. Robertson commented that MassDOT should take credit for the broader benefits that the transportation project creates.
 - Focus Areas/Scope Input
 - Paiewonsky said that MassDOT does plan to discuss transportation benefits and evaluation metrics.
 - Paiewonsky reiterated that all the major components will be examined by the consultants, including alternatives.
 - Paiewonsky asked for clarification regarding the request to evaluate continuous decking across the I-90 interchange and track area. **David Loutzenheiser (Loutzenheiser), MAPC**, clarified that the benefit of the decking would be to create a more inviting pedestrian space while crossing 6-12 or more lanes of either train tracks or highway lanes. Paiewonsky responded that once the cost analysis is complete it will give them insight into the project phasing and what resources are available.
 - Suggestions/Recommendations
 - Paiewonsky said that considering other projects previously put on pause is not within her jurisdiction, but she would relay comments to her colleagues.
 - Paiewonsky said that MassDOT does not plan to proceed with a smaller, steering committee. The desire is to keep discussions broad and with the entire Task Force to avoid excluding people from the process. She added that oversight of the selected consultant would not be a responsibility that would be shared outside of state government, but that MassDOT would share updates with the task force.
- Robertson asked if the track analysis to be given to the consultant to justify the Worcester Main Line includes estimated travel time savings using these tracks. She also asked about the magnitude of the benefits served by the dedicated Worcester Main Line tracks. **John Weston (Weston), MassDOT Rail and Transit**, said that the model has information on



travel times, but not necessarily travel time savings per individual train associated with the WML tracks. It's more about the capacity of the whole system. Paiewonsky confirmed that MassDOT will continue modelling and share that data with the consultant for assessment.

- **Peter Dunn (Dunn), City of Worcester**, commented he has no issue with quantifying the benefits while noting that the Worcester Regional Research Bureau wrote a report analyzing the MBTA's data that found that the Worcester-Framingham commuter rail line is the second highest ridership across the system, and although there is need for the high capacity at West Station the Worcester Main Line needs to support all service. Dunn added that the Worcester Report could be posted to the project website.
- **Anthony D'Isidoro (D'Isidoro), ACA**, asked whether consideration had been given to including representatives from the City of Worcester and City of Boston Chambers of Commerce. D'Isidoro reiterated that everyone needs to do their part to create momentum for this project; to work smarter and not dig up past points of contention; to stay focused and start taking issues off the table; let the community know there is momentum; and work together to compromise to keep the project moving forward.
- **Tom Nally (Nally), A Better City**, agreed with D'Isidoro and added that it will be important to move forward with a concise consultant scope, tightly focused to make it easier to get to the next step. Nally also asked that the consultant scope be shared with the Task Force after the project is advertised.
- **Albert Ng (Ng), Harvard**, pointed out that Peter Dunn and Jessica Robertson's opinions on the capacity of West Station with the Worcester Main Line tracks are not mutually exclusive. Harvard plans to develop 10 million square feet of potential development at West Station. West Station will become a key node for distributing people from Metrowest to the several major institutions in and around Allston. He added that Harvard's vision has been shared with a number of Task Force members.
- Petersen suggested the project team and City of Boston coordinate on early action items before the next Task Force meeting. Petersen emphasized the need to look at the big picture, and that the City hopes to ensure a pathway for delivering the full transformative scope of the project while recognizing affordability issues.
- D'Isidoro asked about the progress and status of the I-90 viaduct preservation work as well as the Cambridge Street Bridge preservation work, specifically more detail regarding when different construction activities will take place. Petersen noted that next summer, with the FIFA World Cup and Sail Boston the City will continue to make sure traffic management plans stay lined up.
- **Beth Maloney (Maloney), Kendall Square Association**, indicated her support of comments made by Tom Nally and Albert Ng.
- **Jim Curley (Curley), Boston University**, commended MassDOT and shared his optimism of the project moving forward.



Next Steps

- Larkin noted the next several meeting dates and location.
 - Dates: October 16, November 13, and December 11
 - Location: Josephine A. Fiorentino Community Center, Brighton, MA
- Follow-up actions include posting the Worcester Regional Research Bureau report on the Framingham/Worcester Commuter Rail Line, providing the Task Force with the Cambridge Street Bridge Preservation timeline, and providing the Task Force with the consultant scope after the project is advertised.

DISCUSSION

- Robertson mentioned that there is a longer list of topics to follow up on than what was presented. She added that discussion of modeling and activities around parking pricing should be added. Larkin said she can share the expanded list of suggested topics with the task force.
- Gadbois noted that he understands not filing the environmental documents now, however, agreed with an earlier suggestion regarding getting a better understanding of what was included in the environmental documents that were put on pause. He supported discussing transportation benefits with the Task Force. He added that he was not shocked by MassDOT not embracing the idea of a steering committee and asked for reconsideration of working groups to address the number of follow up topics or for more frequent than monthly Task Force meetings.