



## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

A critical part of the Beyond Boston effort involved transitioning from the discussion of the individual initiatives to consensus over how to proceed towards implementation. The process began by developing a transition document that, on an initiative-by-initiative basis, summarized each individual initiative, the major concerns expressed by the Advisory Committee and preliminary next steps. This document was distributed to the Advisory Committee prior to, and discussed in detail at, the May 24<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee meeting. Through these discussions as well as additional deliberations at a subsequent Advisory Committee meeting held on June 14<sup>th</sup>, a framework for advancing the Beyond Boston findings and opportunities was developed.

### DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following text summarizes the materials presented to the Advisory Committee on May 24<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix A for complete version). It is organized by initiative and contains the most salient Advisory Committee comments as recorded during the discussion of the initiatives and presents preliminary implementation plans.

### Develop Service Standards and Guidelines

#### Advisory Committee Input

- Most Advisory Committee members agree that the broader use of performance statistics would be a good and reasonable practice. Many also felt that the majority of RTAs already have and use service standards and guidelines, even if informal.
- While there was support for the use of service standards and guidelines overall, many individuals expressed concern over the use of minimum service standards:
  - If a route was found to be below the standard, it should not necessarily mean that it would be eliminated, but perhaps could be identified as a route that requires special analysis, marketing or modification.
  - Several suggested that performance standards should be used to encourage RTAs to benchmark progress and performance against themselves rather than against other agencies as comparisons could create competition and ill-will between agencies.
- Performance measurements, standards and guidelines should be simple, straightforward and easy to understand, but also flexible enough to account for local circumstances.
  - They should reflect industry standards, such as passengers per mile, passengers per hour and cost per passenger trip.
  - They should include measurements of customer satisfaction as well as service productivity, farebox productivity and performance.
- Service standards and guidelines should be oriented towards different types of service rather than RTAs as a whole.
  - One potential categorization could be by service areas and types (such as): urban (demand based); suburban (coverage based); and rural (lifeline based). Many RTAs have each of these service categories in their service areas.



- Another approach would be for all services to use the same measures, but the expected performance could vary based on service type.
- Service guidelines should be established for both fixed-route and paratransit services.

## Draft Implementation Plan

Service standards and guidelines can serve as a valuable management tool for the RTAs, and many RTAs already use formal or informal service standards. The tracking of service performance is also necessary to ensure that MassDOT understands the network's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in order to allocate funds effectively. To provide this ability:

1. Over the next three months, the RTAs should work together to develop a consistent set of service standards and guidelines that they would find most useful and that could be used consistently among all RTAs and by MassDOT. At a minimum, these standards and guidelines should address:
  - Modes
    - Fixed-route by type of service (regional, local, express, etc.)
    - Paratransit
    - Human Service Transportation
  - Topics
    - Ridership
    - Productivity
    - Cost-effectiveness and efficiency
    - Service levels
    - Coverage and span of service
  - Frequency of tracking/reporting

The RTAs should review service standards in use in other jurisdictions in order to identify best practices and models that could be useful in Massachusetts.

2. MassDOT should work with the RTAs to refine the RTA proposal to ensure that the the final measures work effectively for the RTAs and MassDOT.
3. MassDOT should work with the RTAs to develop a reporting format that is consistent among RTAs and that is easy to compile.

## Improve Service Planning

### Advisory Committee Input

- There is agreement that service planning is important and useful; this sentiment reflects agreement that there is always room for improvement and planning is essential.
- RTAs should conduct Comprehensive Service Analyses periodically. An appropriate time period between CSAs (or similar detailed planning studies) would be roughly every 5 to 10 years.
- Some RTAs felt there is already an inventory of good planning and while a lot of the existing planning work is focused on a specific market, it could be combined into a single document, which would effectively be a CSA. The Commonwealth could define a minimum set of planning objectives that would be important to achieve, and individual RTAs could conduct more detailed study, if desired.
- CSAs should document previous and planned changes in the community and how this has impacted or may impact demand. RTAs should make use of MPO/RPA planning data, analysis, and other resources for this purpose.



- CSAs should focus on local conditions and objectives, but broader statewide objectives should also be considered (e.g. integration of existing transit services).
- Data sources and tools to support service planning include: an analysis of transit propensity (market, census and other MPO/RPA resources), information from other transportation service providers and input from the public.
- Future plans should be locally driven. RTA representatives believe that if service planning efforts are mandated by the state, they should still be managed locally, and not by the state.
- RTA representatives also believe that if the state wants to encourage CSA type planning efforts, they should fund them.

## Draft Implementation Plan

To document and understand market needs and ensure services are periodically adjusted to meet changing needs:

1. RTAs should conduct CSAs every five years. At a minimum, the CSAs should include:
  - A market analysis that assesses the demand for transit service to, from, and within the service area.
  - A detailed evaluation of the performance of existing routes and services.
  - The development and evaluation of alternative service scenarios.
  - The development of recommended changes to better align services with market demand.
2. These studies should primarily be funded using FTA Section 5303 Metropolitan Planning funds, with state resources used to fund studies in RTAs without access to 5303.
3. The studies should be managed jointly by the RTAs and MPOs.
4. MassDOT, in consultation with the RTAs, should develop a “CSA Guidebook,” similar to Virginia DOT’s, to provide guidance to the RTAs on how to conduct a CSA. The MBTA’s experience and knowledge from its service planning reviews should be tapped for this product.
5. MassDOT, in consultation with the RTAs, should use the results of the CSAs to help identify unmet needs across the state, to allocate resources in a more efficient manner (while recognizing transit dependency along lower-efficiency routes), to advocate for additional funding, and to award future incentive based funding for new projects.

## Develop Consistent Data and Reporting

### Advisory Committee Input

- The benefits of better reporting include making more appropriate comparisons and developing goals; understanding service needs, gaps and changes; and being better able to understand and interpret data over time.
- If state reporting is to be required, directions and forms should be clearly defined and should mirror some of the existing reporting requirements (or parallel the requirements set out by other entities the RTAs report to).
- A web-based reporting system that could have multiple applications, allowing data to be sorted, etc., could be a solution. RTAs should be consulted as such a system and its forms are developed.
- Guidance or a handbook should be provided on what and how to report.
- Reporting deadlines should consider end of year audits and other constraints (e.g., seasonal constraints at VTA, NRTA).



- Don't standardize where information must come from; each RTA must use the most accurate system available to them.
- Reporting places an administrative burden on systems; any system needs to be designed so that data only needs to be collected once.

## Draft Implementation Plan

Consistent and accurate data will help ensure that limited funds are used as effectively as possible: To achieve this:

1. MassDOT should develop a standardized reporting methodology that provides consistent data by RTA, mode, and geographical area. Key features to the new reporting system should be:
  - Data consistency: Data must be consistent across all RTAs and properly classified by service type (e.g. Fixed Route, DR, HST, intercity/partially subsidized services, etc.).
  - Clear definition of services and terms: Services should be considered a different mode if they meet a specific criteria; criteria should be developed, for example, to separate Human Service Transportation, Council on Aging trips and ADA paratransit services. These criteria and definitions should be refined over time as services evolve within the state to ensure that service type categories are comparable.
  - Fulfillment of reporting obligations: The data needs to be sufficient to fulfill M.G.L. Chapter 6C reporting requirements related to performance criteria and asset condition.
  - Consistency with NTD: Most RTAs already collect data in disaggregated formats, and re-aggregate it in order to report to NTD. The new system should allow data to be “rolled-up” into NTD categories, and the same timelines should be used as for NTD reporting.
2. MassDOT should produce a Data Reporting Guidebook that defines and describes the new process, and provides technical assistance to the RTAs to implement the new process.
3. MassDOT should develop an electronic submittal process that simplifies reporting, compiles the data, and produces summary reports.

## Improve Public Information

### Advisory Committee Input

- All agree that a base level of public information should be provided by all systems, and that RTAs should use a variety of methods to provide information.
- Many or most RTAs find it difficult to provide public information when they are struggling to maintain service.
- Designing a high quality website is expensive.
- RTA customers already understand the service being provided.
- MassDOT could provide professional expertise, personnel or a standard approach that could be adapted locally.
- It is important to:
  - Stay on top of trends.
  - Be mindful of federal outreach requirements.
  - Consider the consumers who will be served, such as seasonal visitors (summer, tourists);
  - Use different messages for current riders versus potential new riders.
  - Consider demographics: language, vary your type of outreach, include drivers in training.
- Mass DOT needs to stick with the effort and someone needs to be in charge of it.



- Provide information on other transportation resources (i.e., GATRA data on mobility management) on websites.
- Websites should be translatable (i.e., Google Translations).

## Draft Implementation Plan

1. Form MassDOT/RTA working group to:
  - Identify public information priorities.
  - Establish minimum set of public information to be provided by all RTAs. For example:
    - System map
    - Route schedules
    - Service alerts
    - Rider guides
  - Identify other desirable public information efforts.
  - Develop formatting and presentation standards/guidelines.
  - Take advantage of external tools that are available to disseminate information to the public (e.g. the ongoing MassDOT initiative to provide and maintain RTA route and schedule information on Google Transit).
2. Determine best process for implementing new approaches (for example, MassDOT initiative, on-call marketing consultant, by individual RTAs, etc.)
3. MassDOT should produce Public Information Guidebook to present and describe standards and methods.
4. Create MassDOT-administered discretionary grant program to provide funding for RTAs that desire to provide public information that goes beyond the minimum standards.

## Improve Contracting

### Advisory Committee Input

- Advisory Committee members said that contracts are based on historical precedent and current practices are constrained by Federal 13C agreements and Chapter 161B of M.G.L.
- It was recognized that contracting takes up a lot of the RTAs time and effort.
- There was a difference of opinion about the potential of fixed-price contracting. Some felt the model is less favorable than the management fee plus actual cost model because it may create an unfriendly environment for the customer and would result in less effective maintenance practices. Others, however, felt that fixed price contracting may produce a better work environment.
- RTAs were very interested in using performance measures in their contracting.
  - There was a lot of interest in how they might incorporate penalties and incentives into their contracts.
  - One area of concern was the time and costs associated with monitoring performance.
- Advisory Committee members felt there is enough competition in the contacting process. They said the decision to bid on contracts in MA reflects corporate policy.
  - Others added that the lack of turnover in contracts is a good thing. Long standing institutional knowledge makes for better, more efficient transit service.
- There was considerable disagreement over how different contracting arrangements are structured and used nationally. This was especially true for the discussion on fixed-price contracting.



Ultimately, several individuals suggested more research was required before a good decision could be reached.

- Advisory Committee members also suggested a demonstration project as another way to test the fixed-price model.

## Draft Implementation Plan

Improving contracting practices in Massachusetts offers the potential to help RTAs better manage and control costs as well as help reduce agency costs overall. Contracting also represents an opportunity for MassDOT to provide technical advice to RTAs, support RTAs in adopting best practices, and provide fiscal oversight to ensure that contracts are consistently and effectively executed. To achieve these goals, MassDOT and the RTAs should:

1. MassDOT and RTAs should collaboratively continue to evaluate contracting practices in Massachusetts and compare/contrast Massachusetts's practices with industry standards and national best practices.
2. MassDOT should play a role in information-sharing on contracting issues by:
  - Maintaining an inventory of all current RTA contracts.
  - Creating a database of RTA contracts to identify major terms and elements.
    - Execution date and contract length
    - Services included in contract (fixed-route, ADA, etc.)
    - Escalation rates and measures to limit cost escalation
    - Management amount (absolute and as percentage of costs) and staff included
    - Special terms (if any)
3. MassDOT to produce MA RTA Contracting Guidebook and/or Procurement Manual.
  - Establish format, recommended clauses and structure for RTA contracts (by type)
  - Identify and provide common contracting terms (federal clauses, etc.)

## Improve Capital Planning

### Advisory Committee Input

- There was general consensus that all RTAs should have a capital plan that covers their fleets, facilities and passenger amenities. These plans should be updated every 3-5 years and cover a longer-term horizon (e.g. 10 years).
- There was strong sentiment that capital planning is local/RTA responsibility.
- The RTAs indicated they already regularly inventory and assess their capital equipment, conduct capital planning and have a good handle on their needs.
  - Several RTAs utilize an asset management type approach today, but it is not coordinated at the state level. RTAs used to provide longer-term capital programs to the state, but overall needs were never presented on a statewide basis.
  - One commenter felt that a statewide RTA asset inventory could be put together in 90 days.
- Despite this consensus, there were several concerns expressed:
  - Some of the concern reflects the lack of staff at MassDOT. If the RTAs are asked to collect and provide detailed capital planning information, they want to be sure that MassDOT will use the information.
  - Others expressed concern the Commonwealth does not create processes that are clear, simple and transparent.



- Many were also concerned that a state plan would create competition between RTAs.
- Finally, it was generally agreed that the capital planning process needs to be tailored to suit the regional transit system. There are many differences between capital needs for highway assets and capital needs for transit assets, and the MPO process as it currently stands is not necessarily a good model for capital programming.

## Draft Implementation Plan

1. Develop Preliminary Asset Condition Inventory within 6 months.
  - MassDOT to obtain copies of asset data as currently collected by RTAs to assess the level of detail currently available and to get preliminary assessment of overall need.
  - MassDOT asset management efforts would include the identification of a list of capital assets to be inventoried and establish the format for submission. MBTA State of Good Repair database could be used as guide.
2. Develop a framework for a long-term Statewide RTA Asset Condition Inventory within 1 year.
  - Define specific roles and responsibilities for MassDOT technical staff and RTAs.
  - Identify level of detail to be collected, a rating system for asset condition, and electronic/web-based templates for asset inventory.
3. Require RTAs to submit annual 5 year Capital Plans, beginning in 2013.
4. MassDOT to prepare an annual Statewide RTA Capital Plan based on individual submissions.
  - Define statewide priorities for capital investment.
  - Identify desired statewide initiatives/joint procurement opportunities, etc.
  - Work with RTAs and MPOs to develop strategies for connecting Capital Plan priorities to regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project programming.

## Identify Additional Revenue

### Advisory Committee Input

- Periodic, scheduled fare increases could be a good policy, and a consistent statewide approach would be helpful. MassDOT might do this by setting a fare floor and/or requiring a time-based re-evaluation (i.e. every 3 – 5 years).
- There were several ideas about what transit fares should be indexed against, including the Consumer Price Index (CPI), certain cost drivers (labor, fuel, insurance), median income, and farebox recovery. In general, most preferred non-transit indicators.
- Local factors such as the population served need to be considered when statewide policies are set.
- Some Advisory Committee members felt from a political perspective, fare increases are easier to implement when you are not expanding service. Riders are willing to pay more to keep what they have but are not always willing to pay more to attract other or new riders.
- Advisory Committee members felt MassDOT and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should help RTAs establish UPass agreements with state-funded colleges and universities. But it was recognized that not all colleges and universities are easily served by transit and these institutions have their own cost and financial constraints.
- The cost structure of local school system “Day Tripper” programs varies across RTAs.
- Interoperability between RTAs and with the MBTA was identified as a key issue in the success of any partnership, but especially for UPass programs.
- Advisory Committee members agreed that local tax options to support transit were a non-starter.



- There are several other state level partners that RTAs may wish to work with, such as the Department of Transitional Assistance, Housing and Economic Development, etc.
- Employer pass programs should also be considered and pursued as a potential revenue source.

## Draft Implementation Plan

RTAs will benefit from both diversify their revenue sources and develop revenue opportunities that they can directly control and influence. Diversifying and expanding funding sources would also help RTAs establish more financial independence. Opportunities to work toward this goal include:

1. Establish an RTA-led working group to review current fare policies and fare structures in support of developing a statewide fare policy. Topics for consideration include:
  - Establish minimum fare levels
  - Identify benchmark for increasing fares (CPI, transit agency peer group)
  - Identify reasonable “triggers” for fare increases
2. Review existing partnerships with state/private colleges and universities, and develop a framework for University Pass programs:
  - Set clear goals for partnerships
  - Evaluate strengths/weaknesses and lessons learned of the existing arrangements
  - Collect and document useful materials, such as contracts
  - Determine what RTAs need to expand UPass programs
3. Use framework to implement UPass programs at state colleges and universities. As part of this strategy, RTAs may begin to also work with private colleges and universities.
4. MassDOT should review the potential for employee transit pass programs by surveying existing employee pass programs in other jurisdictions, evaluating legal and institutional hurdles to implementation, identifying potential participating employees, and developing a pilot project proposal.
5. RTAs should review current operational agreements with local school districts for the provision of school trips.
  - This review could be conducted as part of the MassDOT-RTA council or other peer-to-peer forum.
  - RTAs with established partnerships with local school districts could help other RTAs establish similar types of arrangements.

## Develop More Effective Funding Processes

### Advisory Committee Input

- The Advisory Committee agreed that the current system for allocating RTA funding is fundamentally broken. There was a tremendous amount of discussion regarding issues that need to be addressed. These included:
  - Lack of predictability
  - Equity issues (although committee members define equity differently)
  - A funding process that is not based on clear policy, and is always changing
  - Delayed grants and funding “in arrears” (or the lack of forward funding)
  - The fact that any changes to allocation methods will result in “winners” and “losers”





- Many felt the first step should be to develop a policy framework (e.g. state goals) to guide funding decisions, because any formula would communicate such goals.
- Some Advisory Committee members expressed that any changes should be agreed to collaboratively, while others felt a final decision should be made by MassDOT.
- State Contract Assistance (SCA): It was agreed that a formula-based approach for distributing SCA is appropriate.
  - A range of possible factors were discussed, although there was no consensus on which factors to be included:
    - Performance measures (ridership, cost effectiveness of service, etc.)
    - Income/Socio-economic characteristics (although there was varied opinion on how important population and other socio-economic factors are)
    - Could use 5307 formula as a starting point (with different weights).
    - Some felt that basic state planning or other requirements should be met before RTAs qualify for funding.
  - There was recognition that funding should be allocated within different groups of RTAs and that different factors or weights would be applied within these groups. RTAs should be grouped by urban/rural geography and/or by system size.
  - Any new SCA formula must work at current funding levels, as well as with any future increases in funding. We need a mechanism/funding source to pilot new services.
  - All agreed that MassDOT would need to give RTAs advance notice to transition to any new formula, or would need to “hold harmless” for a certain period of time. The timeframe would depend on the impact of the new formula.
- Capital Funding: It was agreed that a needs-based process is more appropriate than a strict formula when distributing capital funds.
  - Most agreed that the priority should be to establish a baseline level of funding to achieve "state of good repair" goals. RTAs could submit “wish lists” for non-SGR projects, to be considered if additional funding were available.
  - Some felt capital funds should be categorized and allocated according to the size of the system, but most felt funding should be awarded based on actual needs which may fluctuate from year to year.
  - All agreed that rural RTAs must be assured some level of dedicated capital assistance, since they do not receive direct federal capital assistance.
  - MassDOT must be appropriately staffed to support a statewide asset inventory and a needs-based capital process. RTA staffing will also be a challenge.
  - Other revenue streams can be tapped, but MassDOT must provide clear policy on whether it supports these actions:
    - Use of toll credits
    - Discretionary federal grant programs: Some RTAs felt they are penalized for obtaining federal earmarks for large projects; they work diligently to secure federal investments, but then the state cannot provide local matching resources.
  - RTAs would like more time to spend capital money, more flexibility about how funds are spent, and flexibility to potentially move funds between projects. This reflects a common concern about leaving capital funds on the table.
  - The existing capital process does not account for large, non-recurring expenditures such as major facilities and new construction.



## Draft Implementation Plan

1. MassDOT and the RTAs should work together to support and advance transportation reform including forward funding and new revenues for regional transit.
  - Work with Legislature to advocate for Forward Funding and to make local assessments available to RTAs sooner.
  - Consider legislation to expand one-year constraints on spending of state capital funds. Discuss with Legislature prior to the 2014 Transportation Bond Bill.
  - Make preliminary estimates of overall state need, and advocate for greater funding levels.
  - Identify the level of toll credits that may be available to support RTA projects.
2. MassDOT to develop new capital funding allocation process.
  - Identify state priorities (e.g. asset repair and replacement; system enhancement, statewide initiatives; incentives for local funding).
  - Identify share of capital funding to be granted for each priority (90% SGR? 10% Expansion?).
  - Provide rural RTAs with some level of dedicated capital assistance, since they do not receive direct federal capital assistance.
  - Develop evaluation criteria and evaluation process to prioritize capital projects across RTAs.
  - Provide opportunity for large, non-recurring expenditures (e.g. new maintenance facilities).
  - Identify funding source/process to match federal earmarks for large discretionary projects.
3. Create a more transparent, flexible process.
  - Work collaboratively to identify statewide goals for regional transit.
  - Use a broader group of stakeholders to support MassDOT decision-making on priority of capital projects.
  - Create a chapter in proposed Transit Handbook to describe funding allocation process.
  - Evaluate the potential to move funds between capital projects if a project is not “ready to go” or faces other issues (so money is not left on table).
    - Identify Risk Assessment/Project Readiness Criteria to ensure projects are ready to go.
    - Develop project oversight and reporting mechanisms.
4. MassDOT to develop new SCA formula.
  - Classify RTAs (Urban/Rural, Large/Small).
  - Propose shares of total SCA to be awarded by:
    - Formula
    - Incentives based on performance data
    - Discretionary funds for new pilot programs and other state initiatives
  - Develop formula that reflects state goals (e.g. lifeline service, efficiency, reduced auto use).
    - Identify and carefully define need-based factors.
      - Include seasonal or student populations? Put greater weight on vehicle miles for rural systems?
    - Identify performance measures to award incentive funds (see Initiative #1).
    - Identify priorities and evaluation criteria for awarding discretionary funds.
    - Respond to comments on proposed formula, with MassDOT making final decision.
  - Propose timeline for transition/phased implementation.
    - Consider transition period to hold RTAs “harmless” for 3 years.



## Foster Cross-Border Collaboration

### Advisory Committee Input

- Several Advisory Committee members said there is a large amount of inter-RTA collaboration occurring today, above and beyond the examples pointed out and highlighted as part of the Beyond Boston study.
- Most Advisory Committee members also felt it was not necessary for MassDOT to become involved in these efforts, but that benefits might be realized by formalizing and/or expanding the process.
- Other Advisory Committee members said there is a critical need for an information clearinghouse on several topics to share between agencies. MassDOT or MARTA could provide this resource.
- Areas mentioned by the Advisory Committee where more collaboration may be warranted include:
  - New transit trends / information on current and upcoming issues (e.g. Title VI).
  - Driver training (e.g. remedial training, customer service training).
  - Latent demand for inter-regional fixed route services.
  - Sample inter-RTA agreements to operate such services.
  - Resource sharing for certain vehicle repair/maintenance/inspection services.
- Some Advisory Committee members expressed interest in the concept of establishing “Centers of Excellence” to pool resources used for certain RTA activities (e.g. provide information and lead statewide development of new technology applications, group procurements or driver training).
- Several suggested that other stakeholders be included as well, such as RPAs and other providers of transportation (Steamship Authority, private bus, TMA’s, etc.).

### Draft Implementation Plan

RTAs, together with MassDOT, should expand and formalize efforts to share expertise and best practices with peers.

1. The RTAs should identify what issues they find most challenging to deal with and where, if at all, they would appreciate having outside technical expertise – either from each other, MassDOT, the MBTA or other entities.
2. MassDOT could work with the RTAs to establish an information clearinghouse (e.g. a web-based list-serve or electronic bulletin board) to share information and resources between agencies. Files to share could include (for example) sample contracts, UPass agreements, service standards, and planning studies.
3. Other strategies may be helpful to share in more of a workshop or informal “lunch and learn” setting. Topics to explore could be successful planning strategies used by local RPAs, strategies for linking land use and transportation planning, implementation of UPass programs, etc.
4. The concept of identifying “Centers of Excellence” within the state needs to be discussed in more detail. Areas to explore include: information technology, mobile app development, procurement, training, maintenance services, etc.

## Improve MASSDOT/RTA Collaboration

### Advisory Committee Input

- Advisory Committee members agreed that other initiatives recommended as part of the Beyond Boston study will NOT succeed unless the MassDOT/RTA relationship is improved.



- MassDOT and the RTAs need a common vision of a statewide Transit Policy. Such a policy should be developed collaboratively.
- There is a need – on both sides – for a more customer-oriented focus when dealing with each other. Both parties should frame problems as: “What can we do as a team to help implement programs that will help the customer?”
- MassDOT staffing is a critical element to the success of improving the relationship:
  - MassDOT needs more capacity and staff to provide support and respond to requests.
  - MassDOT Rail and Transit Division has three primary roles – administration, oversight, and planning. Currently and historically, administration has been the primary function; oversight and planning functions should receive greater attention and resources.
- The RTA Council could be a good format for improving this relationship if it is practical and productive; quarterly meetings would be good.
- A handbook or procedural guide for Regional Transit in MA should be developed to clarify roles and responsibilities, and to limit programmatic change over time.
- MassDOT should think of the RTAs as individual entities, not as an association of RTAs.

### **Draft Implementation Plan**

A strong MassDOT – RTA relationship would greatly improve transit in Massachusetts. Benefits from an improved relationship would include a better ability to solve issues and ultimately, more effective and efficient transit service.

1. MassDOT should reconvene the RTA Council as a forum to share ideas and discuss potential program changes. The RTA Council may or may not be conducted in conjunction with other working groups suggested as part of the Beyond Boston implementation plans. For the council to be successful, it should:
  - Hold regularly scheduled meeting, potentially quarterly, and meet at a rotating location
  - Establish clear rules of meetings to ensure discussions stay on topic.
  - Participants should be limited to MassDOT and RTA Administrators.
  - Identify near term and longer term agenda items to ensure RTA Council will be productive and applicable to RTA needs. Potential topics include asset management, funding formulas, UPass arrangements, etc.
2. In the near term, MassDOT and the RTAs should work collaboratively to articulate a common vision for regional transit across the state. Policy goals and objectives should be developed collaboratively with RTAs, RPAs and MPOs.
3. MassDOT should begin the process of expanding the staff assigned to the Rail and Transit Division. They should identify and define the specific roles and positions needed to carry out its regional transit obligations and oversight duties (Administration, Oversight and Planning). Potential management structures may include:
  - Assigning staff to specific actions (contracts, Title VI)
  - Assigning staff to specific RTAs or groups of RTAs
4. MassDOT should transition to a more customer-focused “how can we help you” role that is clearly articulated. As part of defining its role and responsibilities with regard to regional transit, MassDOT should:
  - Outline a complete list of annual deadlines/milestones, including RTA submissions to MassDOT and MassDOT publications/notices related to regional transit.



- Develop MA Regional Transit policy/procedures manual that sets MassDOT's policies and articulates expectations. This would reduce the burden on both MassDOT and RTAs and ensures policies are consistent over time.
- Include RTAs in MassDOT's overall training programs, such as its "How Can I Help You Today" module and other Management/Leadership Training programs.
- Host workshops and/or facilitate peer-to-peer training on relevant topics, such as training, homeland security, fleet sizing, maintenance, Title VI, and service planning.
- Increase the involvement of MassDOT's Research Program in conducting research that addresses topics relevant to the provision of public transportation service by the RTAs.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

After the May 24<sup>th</sup> Advisory Committee, recommendations were finalized and subsequently translated into implementation plans. The implementation plans provide additional detail on the next steps associated with each initiative and include a series of subtasks that specify both the lead agency/entity and a general timeline for action. One initiative, Foster Cross-Border Collaboration was not developed into an implementation plan because it is an effort that would be undertaken entirely by the RTAs without MassDOT involvement.

Responsibility for individual actions within the implementation plans were assigned to either MassDOT, the RTAs, some combination of these organizations, or the RTA Council, which is assumed to be a joint RTA and MassDOT effort. A general definition of the individual categories of responsibility includes:

- **MassDOT** – led by MassDOT
- **RTAs** – led by RTAs
- **MassDOT and RTAs** – requires separate action from both entities
- **MassDOT with input from RTAs (or other entity)** – MassDOT lead with input from RTAs (or other entity)
- **RTA Council** – membership as defined in 161b; joint RTA and MassDOT effort

The implementation plans also include indicative timelines in both the text and graphically as a timeline. The timelines are general, but several include deadlines for completion of specific action items.



## A. Improve MassDOT/RTA Collaboration

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. Reconvene the RTA Council with a Constructive Purpose</b>		
a. Schedule quarterly meetings with participation by MassDOT staff and RTA Administrators.	MassDOT and RTAs	Start August 2012; quarterly meetings through FY 15
b. Re-engage purpose of RTA Council: – Initially to develop Beyond Boston initiatives. – Subsequently to address issues of MassDOT and RTA concerns.	RTA Council	
c. Establish subcommittees/working groups to address Beyond Boston initiatives and other issues (and which could be broadened beyond MassDOT and RTA Administrators for some topics).	RTA Council	
d. Identify next steps, set priorities, and identify responsible parties by topic.	RTA Council	
e. Devote portions of RTA Council meetings to educating MassDOT on RTA operations, missions and goals. May highlight one or more RTA at each meeting.	RTA Council	
f. Devote at least one RTA Council meeting to educating RTAs on MassDOT divisions, roles and responsibilities, plus key MassDOT procedures, such as contracting.	RTA Council	
<b>2. Implement Changes within MassDOT to Improve Collaboration with RTAs</b>		
a. Determine additional internal needs to implement Beyond Boston initiatives and other needs.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	Start immediately; ongoing through FY15
b. Identify existing problem areas and potential solutions.	RTA Council	
c. Identify responsibilities and tasks to be performed by MassDOT Rail and Transit Division: – To fulfill statutory requirements – To provide better service to RTAs	MassDOT	
d. Evaluate and determine appropriate management structure.	MassDOT	
e. Increase MassDOT staffing for RTA-related functions.	MassDOT	



## B. Develop More Effective Funding Processes

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. Develop New Process for State Contract Assistance</b>		
a. Develop RTA Working Group to determine RTA priorities and preferences.	MassDOT and RTAs	Start July 2012  SCA Funding Process complete by January, 2013  Implementation of revised process in FY 13
b. Set framework for development of priorities and preferences by RTA Working Group.		
c. Determine RTA priorities and preferences, such as: – How to classify RTAs by type (for example, Large/Medium Urban, Small Urban, Non-Urban, Rural, Large/Small, etc.) – The most desirable formula factors (for example, ridership, socioeconomic factors) – Shares of total SCA to be allocated by performance, need, and other factors – Methods to address federal funding – Preferences on SCA set-asides for discretionary initiatives, new services, special needs, etc.	RTA Working Group	
d. Review RTA Working Group proposals.	RTA Council	
e. Develop proposed SCA funding process based on Working Group recommendations: – Develop proposed SCA formula – Propose distribution process for set-aside amounts – Propose timeline for transition/phased implementation to new SCA distribution method – Address hold-harmless issues	MassDOT and RTAs	
f. Review proposed SCA funding distribution process/SCA formula with RTAs.	RTA Council	
g. Respond to comments on proposed formula, and issue final SCA distribution method, and implement new SCA formula for distribution of FY 2014 funds.	MassDOT and RTAs	
<b>2. Develop New Capital Funding Allocation Process</b>		
a. Revise application process to provide better information and justification for requested funds.	MassDOT with input from RTA Council	Start July 2013  Revised Capital Funding Process by February 2013
b. Draft evaluation criteria to compare projects across RTAs		
c. Incorporate RTA five year capital plans in capital planning process	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
d. Identify shares of capital funding to be allocated to different statewide priorities (as determined in the Improve Capital Planning initiative).	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
e. Establish process for planning/ evaluating large, non-recurring expenditures.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
f. Develop policies on use of Toll Credits for RTA projects.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
g. Establish dedicated baseline level of capital assistance for RTAs not receiving direct federal capital assistance.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
h. Provide funding based on priorities set in Statewide Capital Plan (see Capital Planning initiative).	MassDOT	
i. Incorporate priorities in Statewide RTA Capital Plan.	MassDOT	
<b>3. Address Forward Funding</b>		
a. Develop RTA position on Forward Funding, cost estimates, and strategy.	MassDOT and RTAs	TBD
b. Work with Legislature to advance Forward Funding.	MassDOT and RTAs	
<b>4. Increase State Funding for Transportation</b>		



## C. Improve Capital Planning

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. Develop Preliminary Asset Inventory</b>		
a. Obtain available asset data from each RTA (all RTA assets not just vehicles).	MassDOT and RTAs	Start July 2012; complete with Capital Funding Process in February 2013
b. Assess existing RTA asset data.	MassDOT	
c. Use a state of good repair database and RTA estimates to provide standard useful life data and estimated asset replacement costs.	MassDOT	
d. Develop a preliminary assessment of RTA needs.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
<b>2. Develop Framework for Long-Term Statewide RTA Asset Inventory</b>		
a. Develop proposed framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Roles and responsibilities for MassDOT and RTAs</li> <li>– Identify asset types and level of detail</li> <li>– Develop rating system for asset condition where useful life is not appropriate</li> </ul>	MassDOT with input from RTAs	Follows on previous action; ongoing implementation
b. Discuss level of detail, rating system and submission requirements for statewide asset inventory.	RTA Council	
c. Begin compiling data in new format.	RTAs	
d. Submit asset inventory in new format to MassDOT.	RTAs	
e. Develop longer-term plan to phase-in collection of more detailed asset data, including condition data.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
<b>3. RTA Preparation of Annual Capital Plan Updates</b>		
a. Develop consistent format and guidelines for RTA 5-Year Capital Plans.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	Builds on previous action; annual submission in January
b. Outline required components (prioritization, project justification, implementation plans, cost estimates, etc.).	MassDOT	
c. Obtain information on capital needs from RTAs.	RTAs	
d. Review content, level of detail, submission dates and other requirements.	RTA Council	
e. RTAs submit first annual Capital Plan in new format	RTAs	
<b>4. MassDOT Preparation of Annual Statewide RTA Capital Plan</b>		
a. Define statewide priorities for capital investment.	RTA Council with input from MPOs	Builds on previous action; annual submission in April
b. Identify desired statewide initiatives and enhancements.		
c. Work with RTAs and MPOs to develop strategies incorporate RTA Capital Plan priorities with regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) programming.		
d. Develop Statewide Capital Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For FY 2014 based on information developed in Steps 1 and 3.</li> <li>– For FY 2015 and beyond based on information developed in Step 3.</li> </ul>	MassDOT	





## D. Enhance Public Information

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. Identify Public Information Priorities and Standards</b>		
a. Form MassDOT/RTA Council Working Group to identify public information needs and priorities. Include MBTA on Working Group.	RTA Council	Start October 2012; end October 2013
b. Review Beyond Boston research, RTA best practices, and MBTA practices to identify: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Necessary public information elements</li> <li>– Desirable public information elements</li> <li>– Practices/methods that would work best for RTAs</li> </ul>	RTA Council	
c. Identify methods to ensure statewide consistency.		
d. Identify technical assistance needs.		
e. Review Working Group recommendations with MassDOT/RTA Council.	RTA Council	
f. Estimate costs of recommended actions, approaches for implementing recommendations, and potential funding sources.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
g. Establish formal policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Types of public information that should be provided by RTAs</li> <li>– Other desirable information</li> <li>– Presentation/formatting guidelines</li> </ul>	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
h. Develop optional website design/draft template for use by RTAs	RTA Council	
<b>2. Establish "Challenge" Grant Program to Fund Information Innovations</b>		
a. Develop program parameters, including funding source and funding levels.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	Follows previous action; start date TBD
b. Identify public information priorities (i.e., types of information) and greatest needs.	MassDOT	
c. Begin accepting applications from RTAs.	MassDOT	
d. Select projects to be funded.	MassDOT	



## E. Develop Consistent Data and Reporting

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. Develop Standardized Reporting Methodology</b>		
a. Define essential data to be reported. b. Define modes and service types in same manner as for Service Guidelines. c. Develop reporting methodology and timeline: – By RTA service area and provider – Consistent reporting of service provided by others (for example, HST, intercity bus, etc.) – Consistency with FTA National Transit Database (NTD) reporting – Rollup of data into FTA NTD reports – Timeline consistent with NTD timeline	MassDOT with input from RTAs	First data submission in October 2012; revised process by October 2013
d. Develop short-term spreadsheet-based reporting process.	MassDOT	
e. Implement process.	MassDOT and RTAs	
<b>2. Produce RTA Data Reporting Guidebook</b>		
a. Develop draft Data Reporting Guidebook that: – Describes the reporting process – Describes how data will be used – Defines terms – Presents an annual timeline for reporting activities – Provides detailed instructions	MassDOT with input from RTAs	Builds on previous task; guidebook available in 2013
b. Identify specific MassDOT and RTA personnel available to provide technical assistance.	MassDOT and RTAs	
c. Refine Guidebook as needed to ensure statewide consistency, reflect new services and programs, and maintain consistency with evolving NTD requirements.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
<b>3. Develop Electronic Reporting Process</b>		
a. Develop beta electronic/web-based templates to facilitate reporting of data by RTAs and to automate compilation of summary reports.	MassDOT with input from RTAs	Available in 2013
b. Review with RTAs; revise and finalized based on RTA input.	RTA Council	
c. Implement web-based reporting process.	MassDOT and RTAs	
<b>4. Produce Annual Scorecards</b>		
a. Develop format based on Step 1.	MassDOT and RTAs	Start January 2014; then annually
b. Produce scorecards: – Short-term: information currently being reported. – Long-term, based on information developed through this initiative.	MassDOT	



## F. Develop Service Standards/Guidelines

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. RTAs Identify Standards</b>		
a. Develop an RTA working group to propose service guidelines that can be used by all RTAs. At a minimum, the guidelines should measure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Service effectiveness/productivity (for example, passengers per vehicle service hour or mile, etc.)</li> <li>– Cost-effectiveness (for example, total or net cost per passenger, cost per vehicle service hour, etc.).</li> </ul>	RTAs	Second half of 2012
b. Determine service guideline preferences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Review service standards used by other states</li> <li>– Identify the service standards that could most effectively measure service and cost-effectiveness across all RTAs</li> <li>– Develop route classifications that would appropriately group similar types of routes</li> <li>– Develop minimum thresholds</li> </ul>	RTA Working Group	
<b>2. MassDOT Assists and Refines Proposal</b>		
a. Review proposed service guidelines.	MassDOT	First half of 2013
b. Develop final set of service guidelines, service types, and minimum thresholds that balance RTA and MassDOT needs.	RTA Council	
c. Determine how the service guidelines will be used by the RTAs and MassDOT (for example, to monitor performance and identify routes that need improvement).	RTA Council	
<b>3. Identify Simple Reporting Process</b>		
a. Develop reporting requirements (in terms of level of detail) and schedule	RTA Council	Second half of 2013
b. Develop spreadsheet-based reporting format.	MassDOT with RTA input	
c. For on-going use, develop web-based reporting system.	MassDOT with RTA input	
d. Develop guidebook that presents the service guidelines, reporting requirements, and methodology.	MassDOT with RTA input	



## G. Improve Service Planning

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. Conduct Comprehensive Service Analyses (CSAs) on an Ongoing Basis</b>		
a. Determine frequency that CSAs should be conducted (for example – initial plans within 5 years; after first plan every 7 years).	MassDOT with input from RTAs	Start second half 2013; ongoing
b. Determine required components: – Overview of existing system – Examine transit demand – Evaluation of existing services – Development and evaluation of alternative service scenarios – Recommended changes to better align services with market demand – Other	MassDOT with input from RTAs and MPOs/RPAs	
c. Identify rotating schedule (for example, three RTAs per year with five year cycle)	MassDOT with input from RTAs	
d. Begin conducting CSAs.	RTAs	
<b>2. Develop Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA) Guidebook</b>		
a. Develop draft guidebook that describes: – The overall process and schedule – Objectives – Required elements – Optional elements – Differences (if any) in requirements in CSA elements by system type	MassDOT with input from RTAs/RPAs	First half 2013
b. Review draft with RTAs and revise based on RTA comments and issue final guidebook.	RTA Council	



## H. Identify Additional Revenue

Action	Responsibility	Duration
<b>1. Review Current Fares and Fare Policies; Consider Potential for Statewide Fare Policy</b>		
a. Establish working group to review current RTA fares, fare policies and fare structures.	RTA Council	2014
b. Inventory/document RTA fare levels, revenues and fare structures.	RTA Council with input from RTA Advisory Boards	
c. Explore opportunities to generate additional revenues through fares; for example: – Minimum fare levels – Benchmarks and/or triggers for increasing fares – Statewide fare policy		
d. Develop preliminary recommendations.		
e. Draft fare policy and guidelines.		
f. Implement fare policy.	MassDOT, RTAs and Advisory Boards	
<b>2. Develop Framework for Pass Programs</b>		
a. Create working group to examine and pursue opportunities for UPass partnerships.	RTA Council	2014
b. Inventory existing UPass agreements.	RTA Council	
c. Review existing partnerships.		
d. Invite representatives from community colleges, state colleges and public universities to discuss UPass potential.		
e. Work with Massachusetts Department of Education to determine feasibility of consistent approach for all Mass. universities and colleges.	RTA Council	
f. Develop action plan for promoting UPass program.	RTA Council	
g. Expand UPass programs with state colleges and universities.	RTAs	
<b>3. Develop Framework for Other Partnerships</b>		
a. Create working group to review potential partnerships, with focus on pass and service agreements with school districts and major employers.	RTA Council	2014
b. Inventory existing partnership agreements and national best practices.	RTA Council	
c. Invite representatives from school districts and/or major employers to discuss potential partnerships, needs, expectations and challenges.		
d. Develop action plan for promoting partnerships. Plan should include RTAs and potential partner needs.		
e. Expand partnerships with local school districts and major employers.		



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Figure 5-1 Proposed Implementation Timeline

