

Massachusetts Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Notes
Wednesday, March 27, 2021, 1:00 – 3:00 PM
Teleconference

*****NOTE***:** This meeting was originally scheduled to take place in person. Due to circumstances related to COVID-19, all large out-of-office MassDOT meetings are now being held remotely via the ZOOM app until further notice.

Welcome & Introductions: Pete Sutton, ex-officio, called the meeting to order, called roll and motioned to accept minutes from the previous meeting.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Implementation:

Update on snow & ice removal on MassDOT bike/pedestrian infrastructure

John Gendall, Director of Roadway Operations, gave an overview of MassDOT's infrastructure, beginning with 1,080 miles of sidewalk under MassDOT jurisdiction with only 8.7% (roughly 1/10th) of those total miles being cleared of snow and ice during an average winter. It is estimated it would cost an additional \$30 million to cover the remaining 90% of sidewalks. MassDOT relies heavily on hired snow/ice removal via outside vendor agreements, establishing an hourly rate based on levels of service provided. In 2019, a request for additional services related specifically to clearing sidewalks was distributed yet yielded no applicants. This past fall, the same solicitation yielded three interested parties, though at the present time none have fulfilled their initial requirements. Other challenges included:

- Separated bike lanes and sidewalks require additional effort than plowing roadways curb to curb
- Sidewalks are also inconsistently sized and contain obstructions in the way (utility poles, trees)
- Restrictions on where snow can be dumped, particularly on bridges: snow can't be dumped onto a roadway below or into a body of water; snow must be removed completely from pedestrian bridge structures that span roadways
- Storage of snow: roadway snow gets "plowed up" and onto some edge-of-road sidewalks if there is no landscaping or buffered strip between roadway; conversely removal of snow from sidewalks on private property could negatively impact operations if put back onto roadways
- Hourly rates for snow removal disincentivizes some vendors from working more efficiently; lack of direct MassDOT supervision also an issue
 - One idea being considered is borrowed from DCR: Pay vendors by inches of snow that has fallen; decision to formally adopt still pending due to lack of willing participants
- Money is not the overriding issue: Even if additional \$30 million were made available, lack of willing and available vendors remains a bigger challenge

Scott Wilson, Deputy Chief of Operations & Maintenance also added best practices can typically be found with municipalities that have an established snow/ice removal policy already in place. MassDOT has also studied practices in Canada, where all sidewalk maintenance occurs at the local level. On federally-owned infrastructure such as highways, sidewalk maintenance is contracted out to a sole vendor. Scott also emphasized that much of the sidewalks in Massachusetts are under local jurisdiction, with MassDOT having a relatively small percentage.

Some questions asked included the following:

- What is the annual snow and ice removal budget for MassDOT?
 - \$97 million this season based on a five-year average and is not broken down into roadways vs. sidewalks/separated bike lanes
- Why are the numbers for vendors interested in snow/ice removal so low?
 - The work, particularly on sidewalks is very labor-intensive compared to the relative comfort of being in a heated truck plowing roadways. The labor shortage is not unique to MassDOT – DCR has also experienced similar demand issues and must supplement their efforts with additional outside labor

Joe Foti, Chief of Operations & Maintenance stated this year MassDOT has begun bringing in seasonal employees who use MassDOT equipment due to internal staffing shortages. Joe emphasized the biggest challenge for MassDOT continues to be a shortage of qualified vendors willing to undertake snow and ice removal.

Additional comments by MAPBAB members included:

- WalkBoston emphasized the importance of solving the labor shortage issue as it related to sidewalk snow and ice removal. MassDOT has done an admirable job on its roadways and needs to extend that to its sidewalks. This issue is even more important now during COVID where so many citizens are essential employees walking to their jobs and people working remotely who are walking more for exercise around their own neighborhoods
- Prioritization is key to progress, setting incremental goals year by year. Fostering better relationships with local municipalities is highly desired as an initiative MassDOT could lead
- An effective local engagement strategy needs to be established in addition to existing ordinances, especially as it relates to senior citizens and their limited mobility
- Political will remains a barrier: one town recently voted down a bylaw that would require citizens to remove snow from their adjacent sidewalks. MassDOT should incorporate best practices for local jurisdictions to adopt to prevent this scenario in the future
- Municipal Resource Guides to [Bikeability](#) and [Walkability](#) offer several examples of best practices
- MABPAB will continue to assist MassDOT in sharing resources and advancing better practices
- MassDOT's continuing challenge is building out new infrastructure statewide such as sidewalks and separated bike lanes while the maintenance budget remains static

Additional questions and comments from the chat box:

- Why does MassDOT not have a 311 or citizen reporting capacity for snow/ice removal (along these lines for potholes, street lighting, etc)?
 - MassDOT does receive notifications through a "3-1-1 type" non-emergency phone number system (see below). The issues documented through the use of that number that involve our infrastructure and services are routed along to use so that reported problems can be prioritized and addressed. There's also a number established just for MassDOT. It is worth noting that the types of issues are not limited to sign issues, potholes, and street lighting – a caller could easily include sidewalk and/or bike path issues as well.
 - The "Contact MassDOT" online site is located at: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/contact-massdot>
 - The toll-free phone number to bring roadway issues to our attention is (877) 623-6846, and it's listed on the MassDOT website
- Many of MassDOT's sidewalks abut up to local sidewalks. Have local communities been approached about "extending" the sidewalk that these local communities are clearing with a financial incentive (extra chapter 90 allocation or reimbursement)?
 - On a smaller level, local communities and MassDOT have entered into multiple "side agreements" or "understandings" for issues like you describe. For example, in some locations where there is a stretch of MassDOT-owned bridge sidewalk that represents a small segment of a city or town's run of sidewalk. The segment would be difficult for the Department to tend to (for reasons discussed), but municipalities have agreed to take care of these segments (sometimes) for other considerations.
 - But – a full-blown policy of creating a reimbursement for undertaking such sidewalk work may be the perfect solution for multiple reasons. Communities may actually have the sidewalk equipment, labor, or vendor-contacts that the DOT lacks; plus they are more familiar with the highest priority areas. The key, it would seem, would be to enact this arrangement through legislative action. The reimbursement could be (as you pointed out) an extra Chapter 90 allocation, but it would be necessary to determine what *monetary value* the work has – as it varies wildly depending upon vendor availability, site logistics, and accumulation type – plus the work would necessitate supervisory support to guarantee a level of financial accountability. It is a great solution, in my opinion, if we could define a consistent approach to workmanship and establish a fair/consistent value for the work.
- Maybe set a standard rate, that's going to be paid. or methodology given the amount of snow given volume and pay that rate to [whoever] gets the contract based on the average amount of time it's going to take to remove it.
 - These are ideas are good. As stated in the presentation, we have secured most of our sidewalk clearing success with the use of hired equipment/labor. The compensation for the work has been at an "hourly" rate and that's the fairest way (if you find yourself doing the work) to deal with so many variables. Remember, the snow accumulations can vary in density and the locations can vary in logistical problems – and therefore the [vendor's] *productivity rate* can vary greatly from place-to-place and from event-to-event.
 - Also, if the pay is by the hour, the Department would need to supervise the work in some way to ensure that we get our money's worth each time.

- That's why, in the later solicitations, we explored a payment using "Depth" of snow accumulation. If, let's say, you were a vendor and you (1) knew you had to clear an area and (2) had an established price to accomplish the feat, you'd be interested in the most efficient and effective ways to do the work. Spreading anti-icing material (for example) on the surfaces, pre-storm, and limiting your labor hours become your incentive to maximize profit. Our (the MassDOT) work is easier, but the profit risks are absorbed by the vendor(s) doing the work.
- Who is clearing the 8.7% of sidewalks now? Are there agreements between municipalities and MassDOT to clear sidewalks?
 - The percentage of sidewalk clearing currently being done by DOT crews (to a small extent), and mostly by contracted vendors. We have been using the yearly "Vendor Agreement" – which is the same volunteer-contractual agreement through which we sign up plows, front end loaders, and material spreaders.
 - Here's a link to this program: <https://www.mass.gov/snow-and-ice-vendor-information>
- Can you share a link to the contract bids that MassDOT has put out there? A big barrier to working with MassDOT is the process to become a vendor – perhaps you can look at making this as easy as possible for neighbors or small organizations (local non-profits / bike + ped groups) with shovels to be compensated to clearing MassDOT / MassHighway properties
 - Here's the link to the COMMBUYS solicitation and COMMBUYS in general: <https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/>
 - (this general link could be used to check for all snow & ice vendor solicitations statewide) <https://www.commbuys.com/bsol/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-21-1030-0H100-0H110-57307&external=true&parentUrl=close> (this link is for the 'current' solicitation that just closed on Jan. 29th, 2021)
 - Here's a link to the Vendor Agreement site specifically for new vendors (it's also on the MassDOT Highway webpage): <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-to-become-a-snow-and-ice-vendor>
- Does MassDOT map sidewalk clearing in the same way the DCR does?
 - Not at this time, however former DCR parkways now under MassDOT jurisdiction are included on this map: <https://eoea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/SimpleViewer/index.html?appid=4a64ec9cf8ac4bb5a5bc97e5e443e798>
 - Link offered in response to the comment of the MassDOT-Highway sidewalk infrastructure: <https://massgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=3c4b4d684b6a4d35894efe8d04a145a7>
- What is the contact email for presenter John Gendall, Director of Roadway Operations?
 - john.gendall@dot.state.ma.us
- Could MassBike fundraise to purchase a snow tractor and plow the bike lanes?
 - There's no reason not to – but the commitment would be to house, maintain, and operate the equipment as well. The sight specific requirements may necessitate the use of other methods/equipment – if, for example, the accumulations could not simply be pushed/thrown onto an adjacent area. Snow cannot be relocated off an overpass onto a roadway or waterway below.
- Has DOT considered giving extra funding towards better sidewalk snow removal with guidelines on how to remove snow/ice from their sidewalks to cities & towns?
 - As stated previously, a successful program could consist of reimbursement for activities taken to treat and/or clear sidewalks & bike paths. The roadway program has many techniques that involve air/roadway temps, plus material types that are used (or not used) depending upon the current temperature, the dew point, the temperature trend, and the roadway condition. These techniques and continual patrolling (to access roadway needs) help shape the timing and type of treatments. But there's much more total volume with roadway traffic than for pedestrian traffic – so the efforts & methods could be simplified for sidewalks. If they are slippery – salt them. If a pre-treatment (i.e. before snowfall) will make removal easier and keep the surface from becoming treacherous – then pre-treat.
- Is there an opportunity to open a procurement that would create a master service agreement of individuals rather than just organizations? We have lists like those for contracting on health and safety services...
 - I think that question is worth exploring. The closest we come to 'ease' of contracting is through the vendor agreement – since the vendors suffer little or no consequences for not showing up. Particularly if there are no vendors that we could replace them with...

- If there were dedicated funding from the clearance budget that could only go to sidewalk / bike lanes, I imagine that would force the work to happen.
 - There's an opportunity for this business market to expand. And we'd all appreciate it – if it did.
- Snow removal equipment is an eligible item in the Winter Streets and Spaces program: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/program-overview-shared-winter-streets-and-spaces-grant-program>
 - Thank you for suggesting/providing the link. The grant program moves communities in the right direction – by increasing mobility opportunities. If snow removal equipment is an eligible item – then that's a good thing.
- Lack of enforcement continues to be an issue at the local level regarding snow and ice clearing
 - There is a variety of requirements – dramatically different from municipality to municipality – that make homeowners responsible (or not) for sidewalk snow removal and/or adjacent businesses responsible for removal (or not). Into this patchwork approach we have the smaller percentage of MassDOT-owned sidewalks that are *not* plowed with a great degree of frequency (if at all). The effect is that too many areas are challenging to traverse after the snow falls. The lack of law enforcement may be contributing to the issue – but only if there is a clear responsibility that is neglected.
 - As with most complex issues, a combination of approaches may be the most appropriate way to proceed.

Overview on MassDOT's five-year Capital Investment Plan

Michelle Ho, Director of Capital Planning, gave a detailed overview (attached) of MassDOT's five-year Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Michelle emphasized three key goals of the CIP:

- Goal 1 - deliver a more strategic performance-based CIP driven by planning not cash flows
- Goal 2 –align our CIP programs with our multimodal strategy and connect our investments across modes (roads and bridges, bicycle and pedestrian, MBTA and RTA strategy, etc.)
- Goal 3 –reframe the messaging to better communicate not only what capital investments are but how those investments benefit all parts of the Commonwealth, all modes and different constituent groups

Bryan Pounds then provided background info on the role of the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the relationship between them, MassDOT and regional planning agencies. Bryan also gave insight on how planning timelines are now more closely aligned to take advantage of newer projects that have been approved within the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Finally, Patrick Nestor, Community Engagement Manager, provided details on upcoming CIP public outreach meetings. Members of the public will be able to show support for and/or comment on projects at these virtual meetings or through the CIP online comment tool. One observation was raised in the chat box regarding the classification of many bike/pedestrian projects:

- Unfortunately, there are not a lot of existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, so by nature much of what is to be built out would be considered “expansion”, so to intentionally focus on reliability and modernization perpetuates the inequity of infrastructure that exists today
 - Regarding investments, MassDOT is funding \$250 million in its five-year CIP for new expansion which is considerably more than most other states
 - Regarding reliability and modernization, many bike and pedestrian upgrades are contained within roadway resurfacing and reconstruction projects. As such, these “hidden investments” need to be brought to the forefront more to better tell the story on multimodal advancements

MABPAB Membership

- 2-year terms; terms continue unless notify us that you wish to step down
- Thank you to Angela Johnson-Rodriguez and Amanda Chilson
- Two vacancies looking to fill – let us know if there are recommendations for people

Other Announcements

- MassDOT [Shared Streets and Spaces](#) funding program
 - \$10.2M for winter months
 - Applications are being accepted through March 26
 - Projects must be mostly or completely implemented by May 31

- 2021 [MassTrails](#) Grant Round
 - Applications due February 1st, 2021
 - Provides matching grants to communities, public entities and non-profit organizations to design, create, and maintain diverse network of trails
 - Generally range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 with grants of up to \$300,000 awarded to high priority projects
- [Tracker 2020](#) - several new performance measures that MABPAB informed can be found within Highway
- RMV updates – changes to [Driver's Manual](#) (chapter 4) + new learners permit [portal](#)
- Tread Carefully: the Alarming Rise in Pedestrian Deaths. Virtual Town Hall sponsored by AAA. Recording of meeting webinar held Monday, Feb 1 is available [here](#)
- Next MABPAB meeting on Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 (Teleconference)

- List of board members in attendance (see below)
- Other attendees:
 - Anthony Vona (MassDOT D1)
 - Judi Riley (MassDOT)
 - John Gendall (MassDOT)
 - Astrid Glynn (MassDOT)
 - Joe Foti (MassDOT)
 - Jackie Jones (SRPEDD)
 - Josh Grzegorzewski (FHWA)
 - Scott Wilson (MassDOT)
 - Tim Paris (MassDOT D4)
 - Laura Hanson (MassDOT D2)
 - Kristen Pennucci (MassDOT)
 - Beth Giannini (FRCOG)
 - David Loutzenheiser (MAPC)
 - Casey Claude (CTPS)
 - Barbara LaChance (MassDOT D5)
 - Derek Krevat (MassDOT)
 - Lev Malakhoff (CCC)
 - Brian Levine (MassDOT D6)
 - Gregory Guertin (SRPEDD)
 - Chris Timmel (FHWA)
 - Elizabeth Torres (MassDOT)
 - Courtney Worhunsky (MassDOT)
 - Fay Rhault (CMRPC)

MA BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD

**Board Member Sign-In Sheet
September 16, 2020 – Teleconference**

Member Name	Attended	Notes
Tom DiPaolo MassDOT-Highway	yes	
Andy Smith MassDOT-MBTA	no	
Pete Sutton MassDOT-Planning	yes	
Kurt Gaertner EOEEA	yes	
Dan Driscoll	no	

DCR		
Jackie DeWolfe MassDOT	yes	
Ben Wood DPH	yes	
Phyllis Cahaly MOTT	yes	
Jeff Larason EOPSS	yes	
Jeff McCollough MARPA	yes	
Betsy Goodrich MARPA	yes	
Paul Chenard MARPA	yes	
Bryce Hoffman – public member (Lowell Bike Coalition)	yes	
Keith MacDonald – public member (South Coast Bikeway Alliance)	yes	
Galen Mook – MassBike	yes	
Karin Goins – public member (Walk/Bike Worcester)	no	
Seun Oluwole – public member	yes	
James Fuccione - public member (Mass. Healthy Aging Collaborative)	yes	
Cheryl Casper – public member	yes	
Sam Squalia – public member (Fitchburg City Council)	yes	
Stacey Beuttell - WalkBoston	yes	
Maureen White - public member	yes	
Meg Robertson – public member (Commission for the Blind)	yes	
Alice Brown – public member (Boston Harbor Now)	yes	