



Public Participation Plan

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May 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

In accordance with state and federal compliance requirements described in Chapter 2, and to ensure inclusive and accessible public engagement processes for transportation related activities and decision-making, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT or the Department) has developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP or Plan). This Plan has been prepared to assist the Department in complying with the laws and regulations that address public involvement and outreach requirements. Chapter 2 contains where to find more detail on the laws and regulations with which this Plan is intended to comply. This Plan serves to guide MassDOT's public participation efforts to achieve inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility for members of the public to engage in the information sharing and decision-making activities of MassDOT. The PPP will also inform staff and partners about the policies, expectations, and strategies that may be used for proactive and responsive engagement with the public throughout the transportation project delivery process. An involved and well-informed public can provide invaluable input during all stages of the transportation decision-making process.

This Plan shapes all MassDOT public engagement, from instances of simply disseminating information to the regulated instances of public involvement in the transportation planning, project development, and decision-making processes for federal and state funded projects.

This Plan is also intended to provide members of the public with details regarding opportunities and methods for involvement and feedback on agency activities at different project stages. MassDOT is the state agency responsible for the administration and operation of an efficient, safe system of public roads, highways and other modes of transportation including public transit, rail, aviation, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. As such, MassDOT plans, designs, constructs, and maintains transportation systems statewide and is most effective when the public engages by providing feedback, comments, ideas, and reviews on agency plans and actions. The public involvement process is successful only if it provides an opportunity to carry out the agency's public service responsibilities. The benefit to MassDOT is a clear understanding of the cultural values, opinions, and needs of diverse populations; how those values and needs influence transportation planning; and how different communities experience the transportation system in daily life.

The remaining sections of Chapter 1 of this Plan provide an introduction to MassDOT and MassDOT's public participation goals and guiding principles. Chapter 2 summarizes relevant laws and regulations with which this Plan is intended to comply. Chapter 3 describes MassDOT's process and primary methods for public participation, and Chapter 4 describes opportunities for public participation during the project lifecycle, as described in the MassDOT [Project Development and Design Guide](#).

1.1.1 Self-Evaluation and Plan Modification

At least every three years, MassDOT will convene an internal working group with departments that conduct engagement under this Plan to review the effectiveness of the Plan to ensure it meets the needs of the public. This internal working group will provide input about potential modifications and improvements, and identify whether these modifications and improvements would require any adjustments to the Plan. One of the ways we monitor the effectiveness of this Plan is by monitoring the effectiveness of individual outreach events. The factors that we consider include:

- Number of registrations
- Number of attendees
- Level of attendee engagement and participation
- Number of comments received
- Impact of comments on project outcomes
- Success of partnerships
- Number of requests received for language and accessibility accommodations
- Utilization of language and accessibility accommodations
- Attendee survey responses
- Attendee requests for additional information or meetings
- Complaints
- Project website analytics

Based on the project and where data is available, MassDOT will disaggregate these factors based on geographic or demographic representation.

To develop this Plan, MassDOT solicited input from a range of internal and external stakeholders, and conducted a review of applicable regulations. MassDOT also issued a public survey as part of the development of this Plan. The survey solicited input on the effectiveness of MassDOT's existing public involvement procedures and opportunities for improvement. The Final PPP incorporates these responses, in conjunction with comments received during the Draft PPP Comment Period, to help MassDOT improve public involvement practices. Appendix B summarizes the findings from the public survey and public comment received.

For further questions, comments, requests, and information about this Plan, please contact:

MassDOTPPPUpdate@dot.state.ma.us

1.2 MassDOT's Structure

MassDOT includes four divisions: Highway, Rail & Transit, Aeronautics, and the Registry of Motor Vehicles, with administrators for each division appointed by the Secretary & Chief Executive Officer for MassDOT. The procedures detailed in this plan are meant to be universally applicable across the MassDOT structure where possible. There may be procedural differences for specific steps in the outreach process depending on the underlying regulations that each division is accountable for, but the civil rights protocols apply consistently to the entire agency. For more information on MassDOT's structure, refer to Appendix C.

The **Office of Transportation Planning (OTP)** serves all four of the modal divisions and is responsible for implementing state and federal transportation planning requirements. It oversees the federally mandated metropolitan planning process and the development of several key plans that shape both long-range and near-term transportation projects. This department also coordinates research projects that strive to identify challenges and opportunities for innovation, investment, and transportation improvements.

<https://www.mass.gov/topics/massdot-transportation-planning>

The **Highway Division** is responsible for the design, construction, and maintenance of the Commonwealth's state highways and bridges. The division is responsible for overseeing traffic safety and engineering activities to ensure safe road and travel conditions. The Highway Division includes a number of groups involved in public participation, including Highway Project Management and Design, Environmental, Right-of-Way, Construction, Maintenance, and Highway Safety.

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division>

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-project-management-and-design>

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-environmental>

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-right-of-way>

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-division-manuals-and-publications>

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massdot-asset-management>

<https://www.mass.gov/highway-safety>

The **Rail and Transit Division** is responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and planning all transit and rail matters throughout the Commonwealth. The division administers and manages the freight and rail programs of the Department, federal transit-related competitive grant programs, urban and rural transit training programs, and oversees the Commonwealth's regional transit authorities. The Rail and Transit Division works closely with Regional Transit Authorities and builds on the public outreach conducted directly by Regional Transit Authorities and their MPOs.

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/rail-and-transit-division>

The **Aeronautics Division** has jurisdiction over the Commonwealth's public-use airports, private-use landing areas, and seaplane bases. It is responsible for airport development and improvements, aviation safety, aircraft accident investigation, navigational aids, and statewide aviation planning. The Division certifies airports and heliports, licenses airport managers, conducts annual airport inspections, and enforces safety and security regulations.

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/aeronautics-division>

The **Registry of Motor Vehicles Division** is responsible for vehicle operator licensing and vehicle and aircraft registration, available online and at service centers across the Commonwealth. In addition, the Registry oversees commercial and non-commercial vehicle inspection stations, third-party driver and CDL education courses, and is responsible for issuing state identifications.

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-registry-of-motor-vehicles>

1.3 MassDOT's Public Participation Goals

MassDOT has nine public participation goals that each public engagement effort should strive to achieve. These goals are consistent with the laws and regulations that mandate public engagement. We regularly review our effectiveness in achieving these goals through the self-evaluation described in Section 1.1.1.

1. Obtain Quality Input and Participation

Comments received by MassDOT are to be encouraged and reviewed to the extent they can be useful, relevant, and constructive, and contribute to better plans, projects, programs, and decisions.

2. Establish Consistent Commitment

MassDOT strives to communicate regularly and develop trust with communities, while helping build community capacity to provide public input, as needed.

3. Achieve Diversity

Participants ideally represent, as appropriate to a project or those impacted, a range of experiences, abilities, and perspectives, including socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, and demographically diverse perspectives from all, including those who are traditionally underserved or underrepresented.

4. Ensure Accessibility

Every effort should be made to ensure that participation opportunities are physically, geographically, temporally, linguistically, and culturally accessible.

5. Communicate in Plain Language

Issues should be framed clearly and simply such that the significance and potential effect may be understood by the greatest number of participants.

6. Foster Participant Satisfaction

MassDOT should encourage the public to participate in discussions, recognizing that people who take the time to participate feel it is worth the effort to join the discussion and provide feedback.

7. Clearly Define Potential for Influence

The process should clearly identify and communicate where and how participants can have influence and direct impact on decision making.

8. Establish and Maintain Partnerships

MassDOT seeks to develop and maintain partnerships with communities and community-based organizations through the activities described in the PPP.

9. Provide Opportunities to Build Trust and Compromise

MassDOT should ensure that discussions, particularly where there are conflicting views, are structured to allow for discussions of compromise and consensus. MassDOT recognizes that processes which allow for consensus to be achieved are critical to enable public support for recommended actions.

1.4 Guiding Principles for Public Participation at MassDOT

MassDOT has seven guiding principles for public participation that help to inform the development of public outreach activities and events. These guiding principles inform MassDOT's measures of success with public participation.

1. Promote Respect

All feedback received should be given careful and respectful consideration. Members of the public should have opportunities to debate issues, frame alternative solutions, and affect final decisions.

2. Provide Proactive and Timely Opportunities for Involvement

Avenues for involvement should be open, meaningful, and organized to let people participate comfortably, taking into consideration accessibility, language, scheduling, location, and the format of informational materials. Meetings should be structured to allow informed, constructive dialogue, be promoted broadly and affirmatively; and be clearly defined in the early stages of plan or project development. Participation strategies should lower the barriers to entry in the public process (such as meeting people where they are), allow for early involvement, and be ongoing and proactive, so participants can have a fair opportunity to influence MassDOT decisions.

3. Offer Authentic and Meaningful Participation

MassDOT should support public participation as a dynamic and meaningful activity that requires teamwork and commitment at all levels. Public processes should provide participants with purposeful involvement, allowing useful feedback.

4. Provide a Clear, Focused, and Predictable Process

The participation process should be understandable and known well in advance. This clarity should be structured to allow members of the public and officials to plan their time and use their resources to provide input effectively. Activities should have a clear purpose, the intended use of input received made clear, and all explanations described in language that is easy to understand.

5. Foster Diversity and Inclusiveness

MassDOT should proactively reach out to and engage the diverse demographics across the state, particularly historically underserved or underrepresented populations, keeping in mind the protected characteristics of disability, income, race and ethnicity, limited English proficiency, and others.

6. Be Responsive to Participants

MassDOT meetings should facilitate discussion that addresses participants' interests and concerns. Scheduling should be designed to meet the greatest number of participants possible and be considerate of their schedules and availability. Informational materials provided should be clear, concise, and responsive to known community concerns, while avoiding misleading or biased suggestions or solutions.

7. Record, Share, and Respond to Public Comments

Public comments, written and verbal, should be given consideration in MassDOT decision making processes and reported in relevant documents. Specifically, public comments provide an opportunity for shared knowledge among MassDOT departments and transportation partners, but also require clear responses that are documented to demonstrate that community input was in fact addressed. MassDOT should communicate the impact of the public input on decisions at a broad summary level, describing the major themes, the decisions reached, and the rationales for the decisions.

2. Laws, Regulations, and Guidance

To ensure compliance with existing laws and regulations, a list of laws, statutes, regulations, and guidance that address public involvement and outreach were reviewed in the preparation of this Plan. Each document was examined for specific public involvement and outreach requirements that need to be explicitly included in the Plan, as well as key points for public involvement that, while not mandatory, serve as recommendations for public engagement. These key points suggest early and consistent outreach, engagement with historically underserved and prioritized communities, and the use of accessible and anti-discriminatory engagement practices for public events.

A number of laws and statutes, regulations, and guidance were reviewed in the preparation of this plan (and are referred to herein as “regulations”). MassDOT approaches public engagement activities consistent with the requirements identified in these regulations. Tables 1 and 2 identify which sections in the PPP address specific content associated with the regulations. MassDOT complies with these regulations and in many cases provides public engagement opportunities beyond what is required as part of these regulations.

Table 1 Description of Relevant Content Included in the Plan Related to Applicable Laws and Statutes

Resource	Relevant PPP Section(s)
The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1 January 1970	› Section 4.3.2 describes public participation considerations related to NEPA, which requires public involvement for projects using federal funds or projects with a federal nexus.
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended, 16 USC 470	› Section 4.3.2 describes public participation related to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires that federal agencies consider historic properties that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for any project that receives federal funding or requires a federal permit or license.
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, 19 October 2016	› Sections 3, 4, and Appendix D describe how MassDOT engages in nondiscriminatory practices, including creating meaningful participation opportunities for minority and limited English proficient (LEP) populations.
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990	› Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and Appendix D describe how MassDOT considers ADA in project development and in providing accessible public participation, including through public hearings and public comment periods.
Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sections 504 and 508	› Section 3 and Appendix D describe how MassDOT engages in nondiscriminatory practices, including creating public participation opportunities that are accessible to persons with disabilities consistent with Sections 504 and 508.
State of Massachusetts, The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), 201 CMR 11.00	› Section 4.3.1 describes public participation considerations related to MEPA, which requires public involvement for projects that require a state action and meet or exceed certain thresholds related to environmental impacts.

Table 2 Description of Relevant Content Included in the Plan Related to Applicable Regulations and Guidance

Resource	Relevant PPP Section(s)
Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning; Metropolitan Transportation Planning; Final Rule 27 May 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 1.1 describes MassDOT's periodic review of the public involvement process. › Section 3 describes MassDOT's approach to public participation and primary methods of engagement to foster diversity and inclusiveness. › Section 4.1 summarizes opportunities for public participation during the planning process, and relevant public comment periods. Section 4.2 provides more detail on these processes, including details for the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) in Section 4.2.3. › Section 4.2 describes specific opportunities for public participation during the planning process.
Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, 42 USC § 4601	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 4.3 describes MassDOT's approach to public participation related to right-of-way processes. › Appendix C describes public processes associated with the MassDOT Right-of-Way Bureau
Federal Highway Administration, Public Hearings, 23 USC § 128	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sections 3.2.2 and 4.3 provide additional detail related to public hearings.
Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Impact and Related Procedures; Section 4(f); 23 CFR 771, 29 October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 4.3 describes public participation related to the evaluation of environmental impacts through MEPA and NEPA. Section 4.3.2 describes public notice associated with Section 4(f).
Federal Highway Administration, Title VI Program and Related Statutes – Implementation and Review Procedures, 23 CFR 200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Appendix D identifies Title VI considerations related to public participation. › Appendix H contains MassDOT's Title VI Public Notice.
Federal Highway Administration, Parks, Recreation Areas, Wildlife and Waterfowl Refuges, and Historic Sites (Section 4(f)), 12 March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 4.3.2 describes Section 4(f) considerations.
Federal Transit Administration, Metropolitan and Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Planning, 49 CFR 613 Subparts A and B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 3 describes MassDOT's approach to public participation and primary methods of engagement to foster diversity and inclusiveness. › Section 4.1 summarizes opportunities for public participation during the planning process, and relevant public comment periods. Section 4.2 provides more detail on these processes, including for the STIP in Section 4.2.3 › Section 4.2 describes specific opportunities for public participation during the planning process.
Federal Highway Administration, Planning Assistance and Standards, 23 CFR 450 Subparts C and B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 3 describes MassDOT's approach to public participation and primary methods of engagement to foster diversity and inclusiveness. › Section 4.1 summarizes opportunities for public participation during the planning process, and relevant public comment periods. Section 4.2 provides more detail on these processes, including for the STIP in Section 4.2.3. › Section 4.2 describes specific opportunities for public participation during the planning process.

Resource	Relevant PPP Section(s)
Federal Transit Administration, Title VI Circular 4702.1B, 1 October 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sections 3, 4, and Appendix D describe how MassDOT engages in nondiscriminatory practices, including creating meaningful participation opportunities for minority, low-income, and LEP populations. › Section 3 describes MassDOT's approach to public participation and primary methods of engagement to foster diversity and inclusiveness. › Section 4.1.2.5 describes specific considerations applicable to transit planning.
Prohibition against exclusion from participation in, denial of benefits of, and discrimination under federally assisted programs on ground of race, color, or national origin, 42 USC §2000d	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sections 3, 4, and Appendix D describe how MassDOT engages in nondiscriminatory practices. › Appendix H contains MassDOT's Title VI Public Notice.
Office of the Secretary of Transportation, Nondiscrimination in Federally-Assisted Programs of the Department of Transportation – Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 49 CFR 21, 18 June 1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sections 3, 4, and Appendix D describe how MassDOT engages in nondiscriminatory practices. › Appendix H contains MassDOT's Title VI Public Notice.
U.S. Department of Transportation, The U.S. Department of Transportation Title VI Program, DOT 1000.12C, 11 June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Appendix D identifies Title VI considerations related to public participation. › Section 3 describes MassDOT's approach to public participation and primary methods of engagement to foster diversity and inclusiveness. › Sections 3, 4, and Appendix D describe how MassDOT engages in nondiscriminatory practices, including creating meaningful participation opportunities for minority, low-income, and LEP populations. › Appendix H contains MassDOT's Title VI Public Notice.
Requirements for Preparation, Adoption, and Submittal of Implementation Plans, 40 CFR 51, 1 July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 4.2 provides more detail on public participation in the planning process, including for the STIP in Section 4.2.3.
Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, 40 CFR 1500-1508	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 4.3.2 describes public participation considerations related to NEPA, including public comment periods.
Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office, MEPA Public Involvement Protocol for Environmental Justice Populations, 1 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Section 4.3.1 describes public participation considerations related to MEPA, including for Environmental Justice populations.

3. MassDOT's Approach to Public Participation

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the process and methods for public engagement related to transportation activities such as planning and project development. This includes summarizing the processes the agency follows and MassDOT's primary methods of public engagement.

3.1 MassDOT's Process for Public Engagement

MassDOT's process for public engagement is driven by the goals and guiding principles described in Chapter 1. We endeavor to create opportunities for meaningful public participation in a careful and respectful environment in which members of the public can provide feedback, taking into consideration accessibility, language, scheduling, location, and format, while lowering the barriers to entry so that participants can influence MassDOT decisions.

The following processes support our federal nondiscrimination obligations, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and additional laws that require nondiscrimination and equal access across the categories of race, color, national origin (including LEP), age, sex, and disability, to ensure that sufficient consideration of outreach to and inclusion of these groups is incorporated into MassDOT's public engagement procedures.

MassDOT broadly applies the process identified in Figure 1 to primary methods of public engagement. While the process described below is generally applicable to MassDOT's public engagements, each instance of public outreach is unique and specific engagement strategies used for each project can vary in order to be most effective while still consistent with applicable compliance requirements.

Figure 1 Key Steps in MassDOT's Public Engagement Process

Backgrounding - Know Your Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Identify and determine the demographics of those who may be impacted by a project, plan, or program › Build an outreach strategy to reach diverse populations identified, including language groups and stakeholders across demographics
Providing Meaningful Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Consult with community leaders and community-based organizations to identify approach times and locations to promote meaningful access › Identify an accessible venue and/or an accessible virtual platform › Disseminate notice to reach diverse populations
Communicating and Meeting with Public Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Maintain an ongoing dialogue with the community › Create summary documents to present complex information in a simple and clear manner › Ensure that documents are accessible › Identify and arrange reasonable accommodations and produce meeting materials in alternate languages and formats › Provide attendees with opportunities to voice comments, questions, and concerns, and provide an adequate response at or after the event › Compile and provide responses to public comments
Planning for Inclusion, Representation, and Diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Establish a clear objective and role for public participation, including the nature of community involvement needed for meaningful outcomes › Understand the history of relationships between stakeholder representatives and groups › Identify factors that would encourage participation and involvement and potential barriers to participation. Common barriers could include limited English proficiency and/or limited literacy, lack of trust due to past experiences, lack of experience, economic barriers, and cultural barriers › Provide information and explain the decision-making process so that expectations are clear › Site meetings in the community, time meetings to avoid conflicts where possible, and fund translation and interpretation supports to reduce these barriers › Document the effort to achieve diversity by recording efforts to identify individuals and groups and following through to demonstrate that input was considered and/or had an impact on project parameters, study outcomes, and planned activities. This can demonstrate the value of continued public involvement in these activities

3.2 MassDOT's Primary Methods of Public Engagement

MassDOT staff responsible for planning these activities are also responsible for ensuring that any of the following methods that are utilized comply with the process detailed in Section 3.1 and Appendix D, including any applicable civil rights protocols.

To maximize the effectiveness of our outreach, MassDOT relies on a combination of in person, virtual, or hybrid formats. Specific strategies are shaped by project type, local demographics, local needs, past outreach experience, and direct requests from community members.

Appendix G provides specific instructions to the public on accessing our virtual engagement activities. The following subsections provide additional detail related to

some of the common methods that MassDOT uses for public engagement – this list is representative but is not exhaustive, as MassDOT may at times use additional methods of public engagement not identified here.

3.2.1 Online Calendar of Events

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-transportation/events?page=1>

MassDOT maintains a calendar of upcoming events on the agency website. Each calendar entry describes the details of upcoming public engagement opportunities and provides key information on how to attend, materials available for download, and how to provide feedback to project teams. Notices of public events are generally posted 30 days prior to the event. The public is encouraged to frequently check for updates and new materials as they become available. These events listings not only include details on the timing and location of upcoming events, but also include contact information to request information, accommodations including language services, or any other public inquiries. The event posting on the calendar includes a link to a specific study or the appropriate MassDOT division webpage, which includes more detailed information.

3.2.2 Public Involvement Plan

MassDOT projects may develop a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to identify project goals for public participation and anticipated public participation strategies. A PIP can guide the public involvement process in compliance with state and federal guidance and policies. It may be a living document that is updated during a project.

3.2.3 Public Meetings/Hearings

Public meetings are an opportunity for members of the public to learn about MassDOT activities, collaborate, and provide feedback. Meetings provide a time and place for real-time communication. They are generally tailored to specific issues or projects. Public meetings are used to disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion, and receive feedback from the community. They are held in geographically-appropriate locations to solicit input from members of the public.

The dates, times, and locations (virtual and/or in-person) of public meetings are published in newspapers with appropriate geographic coverage, including those with distribution to minority and non-English-speaking populations, as needed. These notices also include contact information for submitting comments, and a telephone number and email address for requesting accessibility accommodations or language assistance. The same information contained in the notices is included in [press releases](#) and media [advisories](#) that are issued to newspapers, radio stations, and television stations and in brochures that are mailed and/or emailed to various interested parties.

At public meetings, participation by members of the public is facilitated by a series of questions they are invited to answer about their day-to-day experiences with the transportation network, their observations of the workings of the system, and the issues they see as most important for transportation agencies to address.

A public hearing is more formal than a public meeting. The public hearing is an opportunity for members of the public to make recorded statements of their views before key decisions – such as 25% Design Public Hearings related to the development of a specific project.

The official definition of the purpose for a MassDOT Design Public Hearing is as follows: To provide an assured method whereby the Commonwealth of Massachusetts can furnish to the public information concerning the State's highway construction proposals, and to afford every interested resident of the area an opportunity to be heard on any proposed project. At the same time, the hearings afford the Commonwealth an additional opportunity to receive information from local sources which would be of value to the State in making its final decisions to what design should be advanced for development. MassDOT's Design Public Hearing process complies with regulations under 23 U.S.C. 128 and 23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(iii).

3.2.4 Open Houses

MassDOT staff and project partners regularly interact with members of the public through open house sessions prior to meetings/hearings. These sessions afford members of the public an opportunity to view design plans for projects that will be discussed at the formal public outreach event. They do not have formal agendas, and formal discussions or presentations may not take place. At open houses, people receive information informally from exhibits and staff, and they are encouraged to give opinions, make comments, and state preferences to staff, orally or in writing. MassDOT staff and consultants are on hand to discuss particular details of interest with members of the public. While the interactions during these sessions are informal, critical issues are often raised. MassDOT staff and consultants strive to address these issues accurately and effectively during these sessions.

3.2.5 Stakeholder Meetings and Workshops

MassDOT frequently establishes smaller [stakeholder advisory groups](#) to inform the project development process. These groups meet regularly during the planning process to discuss the framework and procedures that will be used to guide transportation decisions, in consideration of the priorities and themes identified in the outreach, specific policy objectives, and other considerations. Such stakeholder advisory groups generally follow the plan or study more closely than the general public, provide more frequent feedback, and serve as active public representation to the planning process on a detailed level. MassDOT makes affirmative efforts to ensure that a wide range of interests and perspectives are represented in its stakeholder advisory groups, including minority and low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and those with limited English proficiency.

Workshops are organized around a particular topic or activity and typically involve a relatively small group of people who want to participate intensively. These events are usually one to three hours in duration, and small groups work on a specific agenda. MassDOT staff members provide information, answer questions, and participate as individuals in workshops. Workshops are inherently participatory and encourage a "working together" atmosphere. Similarly, MassDOT may at times convene selected individuals and organizations within advisory committees, research efforts, focus groups, and the like.

3.2.6 Focus Groups

MassDOT uses focus groups to gain insights from a specific stakeholder group. Focus groups may include traditionally hard-to-reach stakeholders. Focus groups enable MassDOT to have discussions with a smaller group with specific content applicable to that group's needs, preferences, and concerns. MassDOT may identify focus group participants through a variety of approaches, including through existing relationships or partner community-based organizations. MassDOT may also screen potential participants through a questionnaire to confirm eligibility.

3.2.7 One-on-One Interactions

MassDOT staff members interact directly with the public by virtue of the public facing programs, services, and activities the organization provides. These interactions can include planned meetings and spontaneous interactions with members of the public.

3.2.8 Mapping Exercises

Mapping exercises allow participants to comment on existing conditions, identify challenges or opportunities, and propose improvements at specific locations. MassDOT may engage participants either through in-person exercises or through online platforms.

3.2.9 Surveys

Surveys provide an opportunity for project teams to ask specific questions and collect general feedback from the public. Because surveys can be administered in a variety of ways (in person, electronically, via targeted emails, or posted on the project webpage) they offer a straightforward and accessible option for public input that can be completed at the convenience of the survey-taker.

3.2.10 Public Comment

Public comment periods occur after MassDOT releases a document for public review and input. Section 4.2 identifies typical public comment period durations. MassDOT often notifies the public of the document availability and public comment period through multiple media channels, and similarly receives public comment through multiple methods (e.g., via online forms, email, postal mail, or other means), as identified by the public comment announcement or project website. MassDOT carefully reviews public comments. In some cases, MassDOT may summarize public comments, provide and publish comment responses, and identify how comments influence plans or decisions.

3.2.11 Website

The MassDOT website provides resources for public engagement, including specific project webpages, upcoming events, and opportunities for public involvement. MassDOT also uses study, plan, and project websites to communicate with the public. These websites often include resources, such as project background, project documents, and contact information.

3.2.12 Social Media

MassDOT uses a variety of social media platforms to share information and communicate directly with the public. MassDOT recommends that the public monitor these feeds to stay current on agency activities. In addition, MassDOT can at times respond directly to members of the public through these platforms when issues or concerns are expressed.



x.com/massdot



facebook.com/massdotinfo



instagram.com/massdot



youtube.com/user/youmovemass

3.2.13 Email Distribution List

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MADOT/subscriber/new>

MassDOT maintains an email distribution list as one key method for communicating with the public. Members of the public are encouraged to add their email addresses to the distribution list in order to receive regular communications from MassDOT and are provided the option of selecting specific projects and/or news categories for which they are interested in receiving updates. Members of the public are made aware of this email distribution list in project-specific communications and directly from the MassDOT home page by clicking “Sign up for news and project updates”.

3.2.14 Press Releases

MassDOT may issue press releases to announce major updates, public meetings, the release of key documents, or other items. Press releases may be distributed through various media channels to reach a wide audience. Press releases help keep the public informed and encourage public participation in the planning process and through project development.

3.2.15 Advisories and Alerts

MassDOT may issue advisories and alerts to communicate information that requires immediate attention (such as updates on construction projects or changes in a scheduled event). Advisories and alerts may be posted on the MassDOT website and/or sent via text message, email, and social media.

3.2.16 Postal Mail

MassDOT periodically uses postal mail to reach stakeholders who have reduced access to digital platforms. MassDOT also receives public comment and input through postal mail as an alternative to digital methods.

3.2.17 Virtual and Hybrid Engagement

MassDOT uses virtual meetings to offer the public additional options for participation. Virtual meetings can transcend geography and time barriers to reach more members of the public and provide a convenient engagement mechanism. These virtual meetings do not replace in-person meetings and serve as another mechanism for engaging with the public. Members of the public can join MassDOT meetings virtually using Zoom and accessibility and language related services are available at request (additional information on this process included in Appendix G). Virtual engagement platforms and associated tools allow for myriad feedback opportunities – commenting during a live event, real-time polling, sharing electronic surveys and comments forms, requesting attendee details during the event registration process, etc.

4. Opportunities for Public Participation during MassDOT Project Lifecycle

4.1 Overview of MassDOT Project Development and Design Process

The project development process covers a range of activities extending from the identification of a project need to a finished set of contract plans, through construction and project completion. The sequence of decisions made through the project development process progressively narrows the project focus and, ultimately, leads to a project that addresses the identified needs. MassDOT is committed to providing ample opportunities for public participation throughout the entire project development process, which includes the following steps applicable across the MassDOT structure:

1. Problem/Need/Opportunity Identification
2. Planning
3. Project Initiation
4. Environmental/Design/ROW Process
5. Programming
6. Procurement
7. Construction
8. Project Assessment

Project development often requires MassDOT to work with municipalities and a variety of stakeholders. The procedures that guide the interactions between municipalities and MassDOT during the project development process are captured in the [Project Development and Design Guide](#) (Guide). This guide was developed by MassDOT in conjunction with stakeholders and industry experts over the course of several years. The purpose of the Guide is to provide designers and decision makers with a framework for incorporating context-sensitive design and multimodal elements into transportation improvement projects. The emphasis of the Guide is to ensure that investments in transportation infrastructure encourage projects that are sensitive to the local context while meeting the important needs of the people they serve.

Transportation decision making is complex and can be influenced by legislative mandates, environmental regulations, financial limitations, agency programmatic commitments, and partnering opportunities. Decision makers and reviewing agencies, when consulted early and often during the project development process, can ensure that all participants understand the potential impact these factors can have on project implementation.

The following sections provide more detail about public participation during different stages of the MassDOT project lifecycle. Table 3 summarizes the key processes described in the following sections. Common methods of public engagement during each of these activities are summarized in Chapter 3 and described in more detail in the remainder of this chapter.

Table 3 Summary of Key Processes

Activity	Key Process(es)	What it Is
Vision & Policy Development PDDG Steps 1 & 2	Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	Federally recognized transportation plan for Massachusetts to present the long-term, multimodal vision of the transportation system For more information: https://www.mass.gov/beyond-mobility
Project Ideation PDDG Steps 1, 2, & 3	Planning Studies	Plans focusing on particular modes of transportation or specific areas or corridors that examine existing conditions, identify major opportunities for transportation improvements and growth, and develop potential solutions to improve transit. For more information: https://www.mass.gov/statewide-plans https://www.mass.gov/massdot-projects-and-studies
Project Programming PDDG Step 5	State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Capital Investment Plan (CIP)	The STIP is a federally mandated programming document listing all transportation projects expected to be funded in a five-year period using federal funds. The CIP is the Commonwealth's transportation investment strategy that programs state, federal, and other funds to pay for MassDOT's capital investments. For more information (CIP): https://www.mass.gov/info-details/state-transportation-improvement-program-stip For more information (STIP): https://www.mass.gov/info-details/current-capital-investment-plan-cip
Project Development PDDG Step 4	ROW Environmental Design	Review of the Right-Of-Way, Environmental, and Design impacts of a project after it has gone through the initial planning processes For more information: https://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division/events?_page=1 https://hwy.massdot.state.ma.us/projectinfo/projectinfo.asp?num=608862
Construction PDDG Steps 7 & 8	Construction Management Plan	Anticipated detours, traffic operations, and construction areas and activities

4.2 Public Participation during Planning and Programming Activities

It is important to engage the public from the beginning of project development during planning and programming activities.

MassDOT sets the following goals when visioning the development of a new/updated plan, applicable across some or all of the following subsections describing different planning and programming activities:

- To engage the public – through a website, statewide workshops, virtual and/or in-person meetings, email, telephone, and U.S. mail – in a dialogue about our current and future transportation needs
- To use the products of that discussion to form the foundation of a plan or study
- To create a plan or study that describes the challenges facing our transportation network and begins to prioritize and advocate for new projects, programs, and approaches
- To continually evaluate the effectiveness of public participation activities through analyzing factors such as meeting registrations, number of comments received, comments that led to changes in plan contents, and others, and ensure that process improvements are made accordingly (see Section 1.1.1. - Self-Evaluation and Plan Modification - for additional detail).

During the plan development process, MassDOT typically uses a number of the methods of public engagement described in Section 3.2. In addition to these methods, MassDOT staff also notify interested parties by making flyers and brochures available at various meetings and events they attend, and by making announcements about the workshops at such events. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs), and other appropriate organizations are asked to assist in notifying people of the opportunities to provide input into MassDOT's planning activities using their existing outreach methods including email and mail distribution lists, posting information on their websites, and providing links to MassDOT's planning webpage. Planning work often supports MPOs and RPAs and thus builds on the public outreach conducted directly by MPOs and RPAs.

The following sections describe public engagement through vision and policy development, project ideation, and project programming. These sections also include specific public participation opportunities for the Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), draft plans or studies, MassDOT's Capital Investment Plan (CIP), and Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Table 4 identifies guidelines for each of these planning documents, including minimum comment periods and update frequency. The development of these documents typically includes some of the public participation methods described in Section 3.2, as detailed further in the following sections.

Table 4 Planning Document Guidelines

Plan Type	Minimum Comment Period	Update Frequency
Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	60 Days	Updated as needed
LRTP Amendments	21 Days	Updated as needed
Planning Studies	Varies by plan, but typically between 21-30 days	Updated as needed
Capital Investment Plan (CIP)	21 Days	Annual Update; usually released for public comment in May of each year
Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP)	21 Days	Annual Update; usually released for public comment in May of each year
STIP Amendments	21 Days	Updated as needed

4.2.1 Vision & Policy Development

One of the main vision and policy development documents that develops a long-term vision for transportation for MassDOT is the statewide long-range transportation plan.

The Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan

The statewide long-range transportation plan (LRTP), which is required by Title 23 USC, Section 135(f), is the federally recognized transportation plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is a policy document intended to present a long-term, multimodal vision of the state's transportation system. The LRTP development process provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points.

An LRTP-specific public engagement plan is developed early on in the process, allowing the public to provide input from the outset on the approach to and process for public involvement. Additionally, through other outreach methods that could include surveys, mapping exercises, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and others, the public is given the opportunity to shape the LRTP's policy framework by providing input on visions and values for the transportation system with the goal of reaching a wide array of stakeholders. Since the LRTP involves setting a strategic framework to inform capital planning at MassDOT, the public may be included in the LRTP development process by providing input on budgetary tradeoffs, thereby directly informing the recommendations and draft proposed, and final LRTP.

All public engagement activities are designed to garner the greatest amount of feedback by being accessible and user-friendly. In conjunction with robust public engagement, a process to involve local officials is conducted. The LRTP is presented to local officials through organizations such as the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boards. Other stakeholder groups listed in federal regulations (23 CFR 450.210) will also be engaged as part of the LRTP's public engagement plan at various points of the LRTP development process to ensure their input is accounted for. These stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- Individual members of the public
- Affected public agencies
- Representatives of public transportation employees
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Public ports
- Freight shippers
- Providers of freight transportation services
- Private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators)
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- Representatives of the disability community

When an LRTP is considered in its final draft form, the public is invited to provide input on the final draft plan during a minimum 60-day public comment period. Input may be gathered through comment forms, stakeholder meetings, a plan-specific email address, and other means as necessary. Throughout the process, express consideration is given to public feedback and its incorporation into the final LRTP.

If the need for an amendment on the current Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan arises, MassDOT will advertise a 21-day public comment period for this amendment using the same process performed for amendments to statewide projects on the STIP. This process involves publicly posting materials to the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan webpage, posting notices in key news publications statewide, and notifying key stakeholders of the public comment period.

4.2.2 Project Ideation

Project ideation is initiated in response to identified need(s) in the transportation system. Problem, need, or opportunity identification can occur through the regional planning initiatives of a planning organization; arise from community, legislative, or citizen input; or can result from suggestions or concerns about a regularly maintained asset or by the operation of a performance-management system, such as MassDOT's bridge management system or a recent corridor or area planning process.

Transportation improvements tend to be categorized as either transit- or roadway-related. Transit projects are usually generated from the project selection and development processes conducted by the transit authorities in the region. Most roadway projects begin at the local level with the identification of a particular need or deficiency by a municipality. Upon the identification of such a need, the municipality engages with MassDOT to advance project development.

The development of solutions to address identified needs often involves input from transportation planners, community leaders and advocates, residents, environmental specialists, landscape architects, natural resource agencies, local public works officials, permitting agencies, design engineers, financial managers, and agency executives. Solutions might target a single mode of transportation or address the range of road users including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit operators, automobile drivers, and truckers moving freight and goods.

Initial Public Outreach Process

Upon identification of a transportation improvement need, the project ideation and planning process commences. In the project ideation and planning phase, the proponent identifies issues, impacts, and potential required approvals in order to determine which design and permitting processes are called for. This phase also helps to define project responsibilities and benefits.

During the scoping of projects, MassDOT coordinates with the affected metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional planning agencies (RPAs), regional transit authorities (RTAs), and municipalities to determine the amount and type of public outreach that will be required for the project. These entities maintain Public Participation Plans of their own and should be contacted directly for a copy of their region's plans.

As part of the project ideation and planning process, the project proponent (which can include MassDOT, municipalities, MPOs, and other partners) must conduct public outreach to provide information regarding the project, and decide, based on the totality of information gathered during the project planning process as well as public input, whether and how to continue the project development process.

Public participation on projects begins early in project planning and before there is a recommended course of action. Project development staff coordinates with public outreach staff (project managers, meeting producers, and staff that have supported past outreach efforts) and civil rights staff (Title VI staff for issues related to language access and equitable and inclusive outreach, and ADA staff for matters pertaining to accessible events, accessible communications, and reasonable accommodations) to embark on a broad-based public involvement effort. The initial public outreach process starts with an early informational meeting and continues at strategic milestones during the planning process. Substantial effort is made to reach a broad spectrum of interested parties at this early project planning stage as well as throughout the life of the project.

Public meetings are conducted throughout the planning phase in order to relay information to the general public and to solicit input on the project. The public meetings serve as forums at which MassDOT can learn about and respond to community concerns. A public meeting typically begins in an open house format to allow individuals to speak one-on-one with MassDOT staff regarding their concerns and questions with respect to the project, and then formal presentations are made to share information and elicit public comments and suggestions.

Public Outreach on a Draft Plan or Study

Following review by all constituents and by environmental agencies of the alternatives and proposed project, the draft plan or study report will be developed and made ready for review. The reports document the need for the project, existing and future conditions, alternatives considered, public participation outcome, and solution recommended.

Once a draft plan or study is completed, the next round of public outreach is conducted. MassDOT provides comprehensive information about both the draft report and the public participation process on its webpage for that plan or study. The webpage includes information about public meetings and other opportunities for discussion of the draft document, and both

an email address and an online form for submitting comments and questions about the draft document and/or the ongoing public participation process. If possible, a streaming media presentation that provides an overview of the contents of the document and the process used to develop it is created and posted on the website.

The public is notified of the availability of the document and informed of the time frame and ways in which they can provide input on the document. This information is conveyed via email, the MassDOT website, statements at meetings of various organizations, and media advisories or press releases.

The meeting flyers are printed in a format suitable for posting on community boards; are posted at rail and bus stations; are distributed to municipalities, public and academic libraries, and various regional, state, and federal personnel, as well as other interested parties (including, but not limited to, transit operators, federally recognized Indian tribes, airport managers, bicycle enthusiasts, and motor transport representatives); and are forwarded to advocates and service providers representing diverse populations across the state or study area.

Legal notices announcing the availability of the draft plan or study for public review and comment, opportunities to review and provide input on the draft document, and contact information for submitting comments are placed in media publications with regional and state coverage, including publications with distributions to minority and LEP populations.

MassDOT's Communications section will issue press releases to newspaper, television, and radio organizations, including organizations serving minority, low-income, and LEP populations. This outreach occurs before, during, and just before the end of the public review and comment period on the draft document, which is typically 30 days but can vary longer or shorter depending on the study or plan. The press releases or media advisories announce the availability of the draft plan or study for public review and comment; provide information on opportunities to learn about, review, and comment on the draft document; give contact information for requesting reasonable accommodations, including language assistance, at public information meetings; promote attendance; and provide reminders of the deadline for submitting comments on the draft document.

In addition, MassDOT may utilize the following approaches to solicit input on draft plans and are typically developed in more detail in a study-specific public involvement plan as part of the scope of work for the effort:

- **Meetings with Elected and Appointed Officials:** Immediately following the release of the draft long-range statewide transportation plan, MassDOT holds meetings for members and representatives from MPOs, regional competitiveness councils, and elected and appointed officials to solicit comments on all aspects of the plan.
- **Meetings with Stakeholder Organizations:** As it is often difficult to get broad-based attendance at public meetings, it is often useful to attend meetings of local and regional organizations. Thus, MassDOT reaches out to numerous organizations across the Commonwealth, representing a diversity of interests and viewpoints, to offer individual, tailored briefings and discussions on the draft long-range statewide transportation plan, and staff members are made available to any organization that desires the opportunity to speak directly with MassDOT representatives about the draft plan.

- **Roundtables/Workshops/Focus Groups:** MassDOT identifies particular issues that are of fundamental importance to draft plans and brings individuals and groups together for a facilitated in-depth discussion to solicit detailed input and well-formulated ideas for the long-range statewide transportation plan.
- **Public meetings – Virtual and In-Person:** MassDOT holds meetings in locations across the Commonwealth, both in-person and virtually. MassDOT works to schedule these meetings at times and locations that are convenient to members of the public. The public meetings are advertised through the MassDOT website calendar, MassDOT's planning or study webpage, distribution of a flyer, local media outlets, and at all events at which the draft plan is discussed. Meeting notices include information about how to get to the meeting using public transportation when meetings are offered in a transit-accessible location; offer translation services, when appropriate; and instruct on how to request foreign language services, sign-language interpreters, and other accommodations. The notices for these meetings and the informational materials provided at the meetings are translated into languages other than English as determined by the four-factor analysis or to fulfill requests. MassDOT staff members attend all of the public meetings, which start with an open house format, followed by a formal presentation, which provides an overview of the contents of draft plans and the process used to develop it, and a question-and-answer session. Written comments on draft plans may be submitted at the public meetings.

On the basis of the public review and comments, MassDOT reviews and revises the plan or study. MassDOT works closely with the stakeholder advisory group to ensure that a variety of viewpoints are considered in finalizing the plan. After the final document is published, it is posted on the MassDOT website, stakeholders are notified via email or mail of its availability, and a press release that includes the MassDOT webpage address is issued to inform the general public of its availability.

The following sub-sections describe the types of plans that MassDOT develops.

Statewide Modal Plans

MassDOT's modal plans reflect the mission and vision of MassDOT, MassDOT's policies and their connections to programs and projects, the condition of MassDOT-owned and managed infrastructure, and the sources and uses of transportation funding. These plans focus on particular modes of transportation (separate plans for pedestrians, freight, bicycle, and rail are developed and can be found online on the Statewide Plans webpage linked in the Frequently Asked Questions), and will often identify major proposals for transportation projects, as well as important corridors for future growth and development.

Corridor and Area Plans

Corridor and area planning studies are used to help MassDOT identify transportation issues and develop potential solutions along a specific corridor or within a general area of the Commonwealth. The studies identify the transportation issues by closely examining the existing and expected future conditions within each study area. Elements evaluated include the design of the existing transportation facilities, transit services available, accommodation of non-motorized modes of transportation, traffic volumes, levels of congestion, and potentially unsafe conditions.

Highway Safety Planning

The MassDOT Highway Traffic and Safety Engineering Section develops the federally mandated Statewide Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/strategic-highway-safety-plan>) in coordination with Federal, State, local, private, and public sector safety stakeholders. MassDOT updates its SHSP every five years.

The SHSP is used to help MassDOT identify key safety needs and direct funding towards improvements that will reduce fatalities and serious injuries on public roads. The development process includes working with stakeholder groups to develop the framework and emphasis area topics for the plan.

4.2.3 Project Programming

MassDOT's Capital Investment Plan

One of MassDOT's key roles is to develop and implement the Commonwealth's transportation investment strategy – the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) – in coordination with the federal government, the state legislature, the Administration, municipalities, regional planning agencies (RPAs), regional transit authorities (RTAs), other state agencies, and the public. The CIP is a rolling five-year, fiscally constrained plan that programs state, federal, and other funds to pay for MassDOT's capital investments, which include the planning, construction, and capital maintenance of and improvements to the transportation system. It covers capital spending for MassDOT's Highway, Rail and Transit, and Aeronautics Divisions, the Registry of Motor Vehicles, and MassDOT's Planning and Enterprise Services, as well as state-funded investments for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). MassDOT updates its CIP annually.

The CIP development process provides the public the opportunity to provide feedback about the plan. MassDOT releases a draft CIP for public to review, typically in May, and announces a 21-day public comment period through various communication channels, including press releases, social media, and the MassDOT website.

The public has multiple opportunities to comment on the CIP within the 21-day period, including:

- By submitting email messages to massCIP@state.ma.us
- Submitting a comment using an online public comment tool available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/developing-the-capital-investment-plan>
- Mailing physical letters to MassDOT at:
 - Office of Transportation Planning
 - Attn: Manager of Capital Planning
 - 10 Park Plaza Rm. 4150
 - Boston, MA 02116
- Sharing a comment during public meetings held during the 21-day comment period

In recent years, MassDOT has organized public meetings for the CIP with its MPO partners, with individual meetings focusing on investment highlights for specific regions of Massachusetts. MassDOT also provides annual updates about the CIP development process at MPO board meetings.

Comments that received during the CIP public comment period are shared with relevant MassDOT Divisions, and MassDOT staff summarize public feedback for the MassDOT Board of Directors before the Board adopts a final CIP (typically in June). MassDOT staff provide a summary of the public comments that were received, along with MassDOT's responses, on MassDOT's CIP web page (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/current-capital-investment-plan-cip>).

The State Transportation Improvement Program

The State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which is required by Title 23 USC, Section 134 (h), is a federally-mandated programming document that lists all transportation projects expected to be funded in a five-year period utilizing federal funds for highway and transit investments. Although the STIP is federally-required to include four years worth of investments, MassDOT's STIP covers a five-year period for long-term planning purposes. This document must be updated annually and submitted for approval to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

Since the STIP is a compilation of regional TIPs – containing both state and regional projects – MassDOT utilizes the public outreach programs of each of the Commonwealth's MPOs to gain feedback and invite regional perspectives. Once the STIP is assembled, a draft version is published on MassDOT's website: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-transportation-improvement-program-stip> and MPOs are requested to inform their stakeholders of the opportunity to comment.

A 21-day public comment period is held for the STIP each year after a final draft version is available. Each year when the STIP is released for public comment, members of the public are invited to either provide comments to MassDOT via email or mail. Notices announcing the public comment period are also posted in select media outlets.

Concurrent with when the STIP is available for public comment, MassDOT also releases its five-year Capital Investment Plan (CIP) for public review. Given that the CIP includes investments programmed in the STIP and a number of other targeted outreach methods are used for the CIP, as described above, MassDOT treats comments received during that process as additional comments for the STIP. After the close of a 21-day comment period, MassDOT summarizes and considers all comments received, and includes the comments and responses in the Appendix of the STIP.

The Commonwealth requests that all MPOs and Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) place the notice of the STIP's availability onto their respective websites, in newsletters, and in other public communications. In most instances the draft STIP's 21-day comment period will coincide with or overlap an individual region's 21-day Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) public comment period. These agencies make the draft project listings in the STIP available for public comment and review during their regular business hours. They also use this time to ensure that the listings encompass all the projects found in their own regional transportation improvement programs, which have undergone their own public review as required by federal statute. If discrepancies exist between a regional TIP and the STIP, the MPO, the state, and other affected parties work together to achieve consistency. MassDOT staff members attend all MPO informational meetings on the transportation improvement program/STIP and are available to receive comments and answer questions.

The amendment and adjustment procedures contained within MassDOT's STIP (available here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-transportation-improvement-program-stip>) govern when an amendment is required. Any changes to the existing amendment and adjustment procedures would require a 45-day public review period per federal regulation.

4.3 Public Participation during MassDOT Project Development (Environmental, Design, and Right-Of-Way) Process

Continued public outreach during MassDOT project development (which includes environmental, design, and right-of-way [ROW] processes) is essential. The goal is to provide meaningful, cooperative, and ongoing engagement with the public to share information, seek input, and clearly and effectively communicate decision points within the project delivery process. Public engagement is often in the form of required public hearings, but should also include less formal dialogues with those interested in and affected by a proposed project. Appendix D describes MassDOT's process for public engagement, and Chapter 3 describes the approach to public engagement. Public engagement is proactive and provides important input for transportation decision making and project delivery. There are five steps to meaningful public engagement:

1. Set goals and objectives;
2. Identify those to be reached;
3. Develop a strategy and general approach to meet the goals and objectives and target audience;
4. Identify specific techniques; and
5. Execute strategy and follow through with decision making.

The environmental requirements for public involvement/public hearing procedures are defined in 23 CFR 771.111 which states that for the Federal-aid highway program, each State must have procedures approved by FHWA and these procedures must provide for:

- Coordination of public involvement activities and public hearings with the entire environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(i))
- Early and continuing opportunities during project development for the public to be involved in the identification of social, economic, and environmental impacts, as well as impacts associated with relocation of individuals, groups, or institutions. (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(ii))
- One or more public hearing or the opportunity for hearing(s) to be held by MassDOT at a convenient time and place for any federal-aid project that requires significant amounts of ROW; substantially changes the layout or functions of connecting roadways or of the facility being improved; has a substantial adverse impact on abutting property; otherwise has a significant social, economic, environmental, or other effect; or for which the FHWA determines that a public hearing is in the public interest. (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(iii))

- Reasonable notice to the public (typically 4-6 weeks in advance) of either a public hearing or the opportunity for a public hearing. Such notice will indicate the availability of explanatory information. The notice shall also provide information required to comply with public involvement requirements of other laws, executive orders, and regulations. (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(iv)). Notice is given via the MassDOT events page and through MassDOT social media accounts. Typically, municipalities will also place events on the municipal website and post the event at the City/Town Hall. MassDOT also provides notice with two newspaper advertisements, the first of which is run two weeks prior to the hearing, and the second is run one week prior to the hearing.
- Explanation at the public hearing of the following information, as appropriate:
 - » The project's purpose, need, and consistency with the goals and objectives of any local community planning
 - » The project's alternatives and major design features
 - » The social, economic, environmental, and other impacts of the project
 - » The relocation assistance program and ROW acquisition process
 - » MassDOT's procedures for receiving both oral and written comments from the public (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(v))
- Submission to the FHWA of a transcript of each public hearing and a certification that a required hearing or hearing opportunity was offered. The transcript will be accompanied by copies of all written statements from the public, both submitted at the public hearing or during an announced period after the public hearing. (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(vi))
- Display written comments received between 14 and 5 days prior to the hearing at the public hearing and provide these comments to the stenographer for inclusion in the official transcript
- Provide written comments to the stenographer for inclusion in the official transcript if they are postmarked within 10 days following the hearing
- Project Managers should respond to comments received within three weeks of the receipt
- Store all written comments and signed responses to comments in the ProjectInfo Repository
- An opportunity for public involvement in defining the purpose and need and the range of alternatives, for any action subject to the project development procedures in 23 USC 139. (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(vii))
- Public notice and an opportunity for public review and comment on a Section 4(f) de minimis impact finding, in accordance with 23 CFR 774.5(b)(2)(i). (23 CFR 771.111(h)(2)(viii))
- Coordination of public involvement activities with the entire environmental review process under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). This includes a public meeting and public notice for projects subject to MEPA. Project filings within a determined designated geographic area of an environmental justice (EJ) population to undergo additional outreach. MEPA also provides email addresses of community-based organizations and tribes that must be included in the project's outreach efforts

4.3.1 Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act

Compliance with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), as detailed in the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), is required when there is a state action and the project meets or exceeds review thresholds related to environmental impacts. A state action is defined as a project that is undertaken by, requires a permit from, or involves financial assistance or a land transfer from a state agency.

The MEPA review process provides meaningful opportunities for public review of potential environmental impacts of projects for which certain actions by state agencies are required. MassDOT conducts public engagement efforts throughout the MEPA review process, including maintaining distribution lists and holding additional meetings as needed. Depending on the review threshold and proximity to Environmental Justice (EJ) populations, there are two typical MEPA filings with specific requirements and comment periods:

Environmental Notification Form (ENF) serves as an initial screening tool to determine whether a proposed project warrants further environmental review under MEPA. All projects subject to MEPA review require an ENF, or Expanded ENF (EENF), as their first filing. It provides basic information about the project and its potential environmental impacts, and is published in the *Environmental Monitor*, a biweekly publication by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). MEPA mandates that public notices be issued for ENFs, and that these notices must be made accessible to the public via a local newspaper. There is a 20-day public comment period during which stakeholders can review the ENF and provide feedback. The Secretary of EEA reviews the ENF and public comments, then issues a Certificate determining whether an EIR is required, or if no further review is warranted.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR), if required, is a more detailed analysis of the proposed project's environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures. An EIR is filed after the ENF and may consist of one (Single EIR) or multiple (Draft EIR and Final EIR) filings. It serves as a comprehensive document to assist decision-makers in understanding the full range of potential environmental effects and the effectiveness of proposed mitigation strategies. Similar to the ENF, an EIR is published in the *Environmental Monitor*. There is a 30-day public comment period during which stakeholders can review an EIR and provide feedback. The Secretary of EEA reviews the EIR and public comments, then issues a Certificate determining whether additional review is required, or if no further review is warranted.

4.3.2 National Environmental Policy Act

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is required for all federally funded projects and projects with a federal nexus. Public engagement and agency coordination activities differ by NEPA class of action. The three NEPA classes of action and their required public involvement processes are detailed below.

Categorical Exclusion (CE): As defined in 23 CFR 771.117(a), CEs are actions that do not involve significant environmental impacts. Typically, public engagement for CEs is satisfied under MassDOT's Design Public Hearing (DPH) requirement. Although not required by the NEPA regulations, MassDOT will hold a DPH for every project that requires additional Right of Way. A DPH is a formal public hearing with appropriate public notification and professional transcription service, with translators provided as necessary. These meetings are a combination of virtual, hybrid, and in-person meetings. Appendix D describes MassDOT's

process for public engagement to encourage public participation. The public is encouraged to provide commentary, including written comments, during each DPH. Some projects classified as CEs may not have any public engagement at all, depending on their scope and impacts. Projects that do not require the acquisition of Right of Way do not require design public hearings. Examples of these types of projects are resurfacing, ADA sidewalk improvements, bridge preservation, etc. However, engagement with the public for these project types may occur through the associated requirements of the Section 106 process, as described below.

Environmental Assessment (EA): As defined in 23 CFR 771.119, an EA is required if MassDOT is not able to determine if a proposed action would result in significant effects to the environment. For projects that require an EA, MassDOT, in consultation with FHWA, must, at the earliest appropriate time, begin consultation with interested agencies and the public to advise them of the scope of the project and to achieve the following objectives: Determine which aspects of the proposed action have potential for social, economic, or environmental impact; identify alternatives and measures that might mitigate adverse environmental impacts; and identify other environmental review and consultation requirements that should be performed concurrently with the EA. MassDOT will engage the public through a formal Design Public Hearing for each project requiring an EA, providing transcription and translation services, although not required by NEPA regulations. MassDOT will respond to all public comments, either written or verbal. MassDOT must summarize the public engagement process in the EA. The EA should also document compliance, to the extent possible, with all applicable environmental laws and executive orders, or provide reasonable assurance that their requirements can be met.

When FHWA expects to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), copies of the EA must be made available for public and agency review for a minimum of 30 days before FHWA makes its final decision. The public availability of the EA must be announced by a notice similar to a public hearing notice. MassDOT will announce the availability of the EA on the project website.

If, at any point in the EA process, FHWA determines that the action is likely to have a significant impact on the environment, MassDOT will be required to prepare an EIS. MassDOT then must follow the public outreach process as prescribed in 23 CFR 771.123.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): As defined in 23 CFR 771.123, MassDOT must prepare an EIS for any federal aid highway project that FHWA determines is likely to cause significant impacts on the environment. Providing timely information to the public and seeking public comments is a crucial part of the EIS process. MassDOT, therefore, will prepare a Public Involvement Plan (PIP), which will identify the various methods that MassDOT will use to engage the public, some of which are addressed below. The PIP will be available to the public on the project's website.

The public involvement process for an EIS begins when FHWA publishes a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. MassDOT also will post the NOI onto the project website. Following publication of the NOI, MassDOT will begin a scoping process to identify the purpose and need of the project, the range of alternatives, expected environmental impacts, and the significant issues to be addressed in the EIS. MassDOT will hold early scoping sessions for both the public and participating and cooperating federal and state agencies. FHWA will announce the early scoping sessions in the NOI and MassDOT will post information about the scoping sessions on the project website.

MassDOT will prepare a draft EIS (DEIS) in cooperation with FHWA. The DEIS must evaluate all reasonable alternatives to the action and document the reasons why other alternatives, which may have been considered, were eliminated from detailed study. FHWA, when satisfied that the DEIS complies with NEPA requirements, will approve the DEIS for circulation by signing and dating the cover sheet. MassDOT must circulate the DEIS for comment. The DEIS will be available on the project website for review by the public and agencies. Hard copies of the DEIS will be made available to local libraries and, upon request, to the public. Hard copies are free of charge, but MassDOT encourages the use of the project website to minimize printing costs and paper usage.

MassDOT, in cooperation with FHWA, will hold a public hearing to discuss the DEIS. A notice of the public hearing will be placed on the project website and in local newspapers. The DEIS must be available at the public hearing and for a minimum of 15 days in advance of the public hearing. The availability of the DEIS must be mentioned, and public comments requested, in any public hearing notice and at any public hearing presentation. FHWA will place a public availability notice for the DEIS in the Federal Register. The public availability notice must establish a period of not fewer than 45 days nor more than 60 days for the return of public comments on the DEIS to FHWA. The notice and the DEIS transmittal letter must identify where comments are to be sent. A transcript of the public hearing will be available on the project website.

All public and agency comments regarding the DEIS will be addressed in the Final EIS (FEIS) before FHWA issues a Record of Decision (ROD). FHWA will publish the ROD in the Federal Register and MassDOT will make the ROD available on the project website.

MassDOT also might provide additional public outreach that is not required by federal regulations for a project that requires an EIS. Such additional outreach might include the establishment of a public advisory group to advise MassDOT on project alternatives and to help shape the DEIS. A public advisory group might be comprised of elected officials, representatives of state and local agencies, local organizations, and interested members of the public. MassDOT also might hold “open houses” at convenient local venues at which the public will have access to MassDOT personnel and the project design team to view plans, discuss alternatives, ask questions, and have casual conversations about the project. MassDOT will maintain an email distribution list to provide updates to the public on key project milestones. MassDOT also will regularly update the project website to provide information to the public.

In addition to NEPA, there are additional public engagement requirements housed under specific federal laws and regulations. A detailed overview of the process MassDOT follows to meet these requirements is provided below:

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and its implementing regulations under 36 CFR 800 require federal agencies to consider historic properties that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for any project that receives federal funding or requires a federal permit or license. The federal agency must consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs), local officials, and the public to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to historic properties.

Federal regulations implementing Section 106 (36 CFR 800.2(d)) consider the views of the public to be “essential” to the federal decision-making process. The regulations encourage the lead federal agency to “seek and consider” the views of the public according to the “nature and complexity” of an undertaking and its potential effects on historic properties.

The MassDOT Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) staff initiates consultation with the public on behalf of FHWA early in the design process (25% plan review) through the local historical commission (LHC) of the municipality in which a MassDOT project is located. MassDOT CRU staff, or a design consultant on behalf of MassDOT, submits a notification letter to the appropriate LHC for every federal aid project. A copy of this letter is also submitted to the SHPO at the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

The LHC will reach out to the public through the LHC's regularly scheduled public meetings depending on the complexity of a project and its potential to affect historic properties. MassDOT CRU staff address any comments received from the public, the LHC, or the MHC regarding any project. CRU staff will also attend LHC meetings for more complex projects for which the LHC or the public might have expressed concerns or objections regarding effects to historic properties. FHWA, SHPO, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) have concurred in a Programmatic Agreement that MassDOT's consultation with the LHCs is sufficient to meet the requirements of public outreach in the Section 106 regulations.

FHWA, in coordination with MassDOT, will hold a Section 106 consulting parties meeting or a series of meetings, usually virtual, for any project that requires an EIS or EA and might affect historic properties, or for any other project that has unresolved adverse effects to historic properties. All consulting parties, as determined by FHWA, will be invited to the meeting, including SHPO, THPOs, ACHP, LHCs, other interested federal, state, and local agencies, and any private organizations or members of the public that have expressed an interest in a project. At the meeting, FHWA and MassDOT will explain the federal regulations, identify historic properties, assess effects, discuss alternatives, suggest reasonable mitigation for adverse effects, and solicit comments. FHWA and MassDOT will seriously consider those comments regarding effects to historic properties as part of its decision-making process for proceeding with a federal undertaking.

MassDOT also submits project design information to the THPOs in accordance with Section 106 consultation requirements. FHWA also has negotiated Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and the Stockbridge Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians that establishes an area of interest for each tribe for project notification and specifies certain project types that are exempt from THPO review. MassDOT submits project information to the THPOs, the SHPO, and the Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources (BUAR) to meet the Section 106 consultation requirements of the US Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permit application process for work in waters of the United States. MassDOT CRU addresses any comments received from the THPOs, the SHPO, or the BUAR. Any comments received from the federally recognized tribes in Massachusetts are shared with the lead federal agency given their formal nation-to-nation relationship with the U.S. government.

For MassDOT projects requiring an archaeological survey, MassDOT submits right of entry letters to the property owners thirty (30) days in advance of the fieldwork. The THPOs are notified by MassDOT's archaeological consultants of the proposed archaeological survey so the tribes may provide comments or feedback in advance of the fieldwork. This is a courtesy that MassDOT extends to the THPOs as standard practice and is not required under NEPA or the Section 106 regulations. The THPOs are then notified by MassDOT CRU staff ten (10) days in advance of the survey schedule so tribal monitors may be present during the archeological fieldwork.

Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 stipulates that FHWA and other DOT agencies cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historic sites unless the following conditions apply: 1) there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the use of land, and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use, or 2) FHWA determines that the use of the property will have a *de minimis* (i.e., minor) impact.

MassDOT notifies the public regarding the *de minimis* use of parkland that is protected by Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act through a legal notice in a local newspaper of general circulation. The public comment period extends for 15 days following publication of the legal notice. If MassDOT receives no substantive comments, the Official with Jurisdiction (OWJ) may concur with MassDOT's *de minimis* finding after the 15-day comment period. The OWJ is the authorized representative of the municipality or state or federal agency that owns or manages the resource protected under Section 4(f). MassDOT must resolve any substantive public comments prior to OWJ concurrence. FHWA has final approval authority of the *de minimis* finding following OWJ concurrence.

Section 4(f) does not require engagement with the public beyond that required under the regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

4.4 Public Participation to Support Construction

After a construction contract is awarded, the proponent and the contractor develop a construction management plan. The permitting agencies, local authorities, businesses, utility companies, and affected members of the general public are informed of the plan. These entities are also notified as changes in detours, traffic operations, and construction areas and activities occur throughout the project.

Before construction activities begin, the proponent and construction manager must determine the appropriate type of public notification and participation needed. Different projects result in different types of disruption to transportation and other nearby activities. For simple projects, including resurfacing, a minimal degree of public participation may be needed. For these projects, the proponent should, at a minimum, notify abutters of the impending construction activity.

For complex projects, the proponent may need to schedule a construction management plan meeting with abutters and other project participants (local boards, interest groups, business associations, etc.). At this meeting, the proponent can describe the types of construction activity needed, construction phasing, and durations. Issues and concerns associated with the construction period can be identified and adjustments made to the construction management program to minimize community impacts.

It is critical to remain in contact with stakeholders, neighbors, abutters, legislators, and municipal officials throughout the duration of a project, including the construction phase. Monthly or quarterly stakeholder and abutter meetings should be held when the size or

location of a project calls for them. In addition, MassDOT utilizes the following communication tools to share project information and receive feedback:

- **MassDOT website:** By the time construction is underway, many projects already have their own project page on the MassDOT website. The project page should be a clearinghouse for accurate, up-to-date information. It is important that the Project Manager or a Public Affairs staff person assigned to the project page update the content regularly throughout the duration of the project. In addition, any public meetings scheduled for a project should always be posted in the MassDOT website calendar.
- **Media:** MassDOT utilizes press releases, advisories, alerts, and other traditional forms of media outreach.
- **Social media tools:** MassDOT uses numerous social media platforms for project updates, traffic advisories, and notices of upcoming project meetings.
- **Community Relations email account:** MassDOT has an email account that is used to send meeting notices and traffic advisories to the project contact lists and to receive public input.

5. Additional Considerations for the Rail & Transit Division

The procedures detailed in this plan are meant to be universally applicable across the MassDOT structure where possible. The opportunities for public participation during the MassDOT project lifecycle described in Chapter 4 apply to the Rail & Transit Division, but additional considerations are unique to the Rail & Transit Division, as described in the remainder of this chapter.

In addition to public engagement conducted by the Rail & Transit Division, the Transit Unit also directly supports Regional Transit Authorities and thus builds on the public outreach conducted directly by Regional Transit Authorities and their MPOs.

On a quarterly basis, the Transit Unit convenes the RTA Council, which brings together all 15 Regional Transit Authorities and the MBTA and is chaired by the Secretary of Transportation. The agenda of each meeting includes time for public comment; instructions on how to submit public comment are included on all agendas and meeting notices. Meeting notices are posted online at www.mass.gov/regional-transit-authority-rta-council.

The Transit Unit also receives and responds to periodic queries from members of the public at the massmobility@dot.state.ma.us email address, which is listed on informational pages on the mass.gov platform that share information about how to find local transportation options as well as strategies agencies can use to expand mobility for their consumers.

The MassDOT Transit Unit administers the state's 5311f program, which subsidizes intercity bus routes for underserved areas. Approximately every three to four years, the Transit Unit conducts a survey of transit authorities, private bus carriers, Regional Planning Agencies, and MPOs to determine whether intercity needs are met and identify unmet needs.

The Transit Unit runs the annual [Community Transit Grant Program](#), which solicits applications from Regional Transit Authorities, municipalities, nonprofits, and in some cases private operators of public transportation, for projects to expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities. Applicants can apply for funding to operate a service, for funding for a mobility management project, or for a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.

Public engagement strategies in support of the Community Transit Grant Program include:

- Compiling an email list of organizations serving older adults and people with disabilities and community-based organizations to share information about when the grant application is opening and how to apply. The Transit Unit does proactive outreach to compile this list, but also welcomes any interested organization to sign up directly at https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MADOT/subscriber/new?topic_id=MADOT_219
- Conducting training for new organizations interested in applying for the grant
- Providing technical assistance to organizations during the grant application stage on all aspects including development of the idea, incorporating promising practices, compliance with regulations, and use of the application system

- Requiring all grant applicants to relate their proposed project or service back to their region's Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan, which is developed by their Regional Planning Agency and includes input from older adults and people with disabilities, disability and aging services organizations, and other stakeholders. Proposed projects must be referenced in the plan or fulfill an unmet need identified by the plan
- Collecting information from applicants about the area served, including the proportion of low-income and minority residents, and conducting analyses to ensure that award decisions are not biased against low-income or minority areas
- Providing written resources and individualized technical assistance, which may include site visits, to grantees
- Encouraging grantees to conduct outreach and serve low-income and minority communities within their service area
- Supporting grantees in meeting Title VI and ADA requirements, and enforcing those requirements through compliance reviews

Transit agencies also have additional unique opportunities, such as seat drop surveys, to conduct public engagement.

Appendix A: Glossary

Construction Management Plan: A plan that identifies approaches to managing construction activities, including planned communications.

Environmental Justice (EJ): The equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): An agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that supports state and local governments in the design, construction, and maintenance of the Nation's highway system.

Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT): The agency responsible for supporting transportation within the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA): A Massachusetts regulation that provides for public review of potential environmental impacts of projects for which certain actions by state agencies are required.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): A federal law that mandates the review of environmental impacts for major projects and the involvement of the public and other stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Open House: A method of public engagement where the public can receive information informally from exhibits and staff, give opinions, make comments, and state preferences.

Project Development and Design Guide: A MassDOT guide that defines the MassDOT Highway Division's project development process and guides the planning and design of transportation projects.

Public Comment Period: A period during which the public can provide comments on plans or projects.

Public Hearing: A formal meeting where the public can make recorded statements of their views before key decisions.

Public Meeting: A meeting where the public can learn about MassDOT activities, collaborate, and provide feedback.

Public Participation Plan (PPP): This document, developed by MassDOT to shape MassDOT public engagement processes.

Section 106 (National Historic Preservation Act of 1966): Requires federal agencies to consider historic properties and to consult with SHPOs, THPOs, local officials, and the public to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to historic properties.

Section 4(f) (Department of Transportation Act of 1966): Prohibits the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or public and private historic sites unless there is no feasible and prudent avoidance alternative to the use of land, and FHWA determines that the use of the property will have a de minimis impact.

Social Media: Platforms used by MassDOT to share information and communicate directly with the public.

Virtual Public Meeting: A public meeting conducted using a web-based platform, allowing members of the public to attend and participate remotely.

Workshop: A meeting organized around a particular topic or activity, typically involving a small group of people who want to participate intensively.

Appendix B: Summary of Public Input Received

This appendix includes a summary of public input received through the public survey and through public comment on this Draft Public Participation Plan. Comments were sorted by theme and responses were put together accordingly. Some comments only necessitated one response while others may have required a more direct response.

Theme 1: Geographic Equity

MassDOT Response

MassDOT received a handful of comments regarding Geographic Equity concerns. MassDOT recognizes the unique needs and concerns of rural residents in Massachusetts. MassDOT is administering the Rural Roadway Funding Program, which provides \$25 million in funding to support the construction and reconstruction of municipal ways. These funds are to be distributed to all municipalities in the Commonwealth using a formula based on local road mileage, municipal population, and rurality – applying a rural definition of a population of less than 10,000, and a population density under 500 people per square mile. Apportionments have been added to each municipality’s existing Chapter 90 contract and are readily available for use.

Additionally, Beyond Mobility, MassDOT’s 2050 long-range transportation plan, identifies several action items with a focus on geographic equity, and recommends a set of performance measures to evaluate the impact of its action items on overall performance. You can access the “Beyond Mobility” plan, through the MassDOT website: www.mass.gov/beyond-mobility.

Comments

I commented in your review of programs document that all of the reports do little to address or meet the needs of small towns that contain miles of dirt roads. Tip programs in the state do little to meet the needs of small towns and the chances of getting a road or bridge project funded is very remote. Many Western Mass communities contain miles of dirt roads that need continued maintenance and funding that currently is not available. Report and handbooks do not address dirt road issues.

MassDOT needs a rural community strategy that does not seek to impose urban design requirements in a rural region.

Theme 2: Outreach Methods and Information Availability

MassDOT received many comments on the Outreach Methods used for soliciting public participation and the availability of information to the public.

MassDOT Response

MassDOT makes every effort to hold meetings in buildings that are accessible, both in its design and near public transit. When these locations aren't available, MassDOT still makes efforts to meet people where they are by hosting pop-up events, attending community meetings, participating as guest presenters, etc. MassDOT also offers virtual options for most of its meetings. By incorporating virtual participation MassDOT can reach an even broader audience, including those who face barriers to attending in person. Virtual meetings are conducted using reliable platforms that allow for interactive participation. By continuing to offer these virtual options, MassDOT remains dedicated to expanding public access and facilitating meaningful community involvement.

MassDOT acknowledges the challenge the public may face with determining what feedback is most helpful and may have the greatest impact. The feedback being solicited varies by type of project, and its phase or cycle. MassDOT makes efforts to overcome this challenge by identifying opportunities to engage the public in its presentations by incorporating interactive elements that encourage meaningful participation. One example is with the use of scenario planning exercises. These exercises allow community members to explore potential transportation solutions, provide informed feedback based on different projected outcomes, and help stakeholders better understand the complexities of transportation planning while ensuring that their perspectives and priorities are considered in decision-making processes. MassDOT will commit to identifying more opportunities for these types of exercises and encourages the public to provide feedback on their effectiveness.

Please refer to "Appendix D: Process for Public Engagement" in the PPP to learn more about the steps and practices MassDOT employs to ensure civil rights considerations and obligations are addressed in public outreach and engagement activities.

Comment

Meetings occurring at the same location consistently makes them more accessible. Guided questions after meetings would help me give more useful feedback. It's not always clear what the public can give input on specifically.

MassDOT Response

MassDOT acknowledges the critical role of diverse media channels in promoting public engagement and informing communities about upcoming public meetings, hearings, and events. To enhance outreach and localize communication efforts MassDOT has developed a media contact list, which will be shared with MassDOT staff, and partner organizations. This list will be routinely monitored for its effectiveness and updated to ensure accuracy and inclusiveness. Additionally, MassDOT's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs serves as a liaison, ensuring that local and state officials are well-informed about transportation projects and initiatives that impact their jurisdictions.

Comment

I have never seen any articles about MassDOT public engagement in the Boston Globe or in local newspapers or shared by town governments or shared by state legislators. You aren't reaching the public with your public engagement.

MassDOT Response

MassDOT values all input and feedback from the public. We are committed to upholding the highest standards in honoring our commitments, adhering to relevant policies and regulations, and fostering an inclusive and accessible environment for public participation. We continuously strive to improve our services and processes to better serve our communities. If you believe that we have not met these standards or have fallen short in any way, we encourage you to share your concerns. You may file a formal complaint or submit feedback using the contact information provided below. Additionally, if your concern or feedback is project specific, project presentations, and webpages typically include contact information for project managers and engineers and comments can be submitted to them directly. Your input is invaluable in helping us enhance our operations and better meet the needs of the public.

Additionally, any member of the public can submit a public records request to acquire access to specific project information or other relevant information on work MassDOT is conducting. You can submit a Public Records Request at: <https://www.mass.gov/public-records-requests-for-the-department-of-transportation>

MassDOT Contact Information is listed below for your reference:

Contact MassDOT: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/contact-massdot>

For all departments Call Massachusetts Department of Transportation, (857) 368-4636

This line is open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., M-F

Toll Free Call Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Toll Free at(877) 623-6846

This line is open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., M-F

TTY Call Massachusetts Department of Transportation, TTY at(857) 368-0655

For those who need accessible services

Comment

1. Contradictory and non-sensical statements and policies of MassDOT staff and contractors make public participation difficult, confusing and in some cases impossible.

Example: Announcing that meetings of an Advisory Group are open to the public but refusing to provide essential information such as time and place of the meetings.

2. Failure of MassDOT to comply with its own directives

3. Failure to honor promises and commitments

4. Failure to comply with Mass public records law

Theme 3: Communicating Technical Information

MassDOT Response

MassDOT received a comment regarding its processes for communicating technical information to members of the public. MassDOT recognizes the importance of incorporating visuals and minimizing the use of technical jargon to enhance the clarity and accessibility of its presentations. As part of our commitment to effective public engagement, we have formally integrated this approach into our public participation plan (see page 51, step 3 under Preparation for the Meeting). Moving forward, we will continue to emphasize these principles to ensure our presentations are more engaging, inclusive, and easily understood by a broad audience.

Comment

When attending 25% design public meetings, I have always appreciated MassDOT's efforts to include visuals such as non-technical sketches and renderings. Not everyone can read construction plans, and these "other visuals" contribute greatly to creating a more inclusive level of participation. The same appreciation applies to MassDOT's effort to refrain from using an excessive number of acronyms. Any effort to communicate what is often a very complicated and complex message in clear simple terms.

Theme 4: Service Gaps

MassDOT Response

MassDOT received a handful of comments regarding gaps in service, particularly related to RMV services. Appointments are required for license and identification card services. Appointments can be scheduled online, over the phone and if a customer were to walk in without an appointment one can be made at the Service Center for a later time. Registration services are walk-in. Suspension hearings are in demand and there is both a dedicated suspension telephone line and an ability to make a hearing appointment and upload critical documents to support the hearing and reinstatement application.

The RMV allows customers to perform transactions ahead of renewal periods, up to a year for a license or ID card and 6 months for a registration, for example, to help customers avoid a last-minute rush for services. There are services that require a timely turnaround and the RMV adjusts its business based on volume of such transactions. For suspension hearings, there are generally statutorily set timelines that drive one's ability to seek to reinstate their operating privileges; customers can schedule a hearing in advance to align with those dates.

Comments

The RMV. Sad that open access to do all business in person any time is limited, and the requirement that you have to use the internet for appts, etc. is somewhat required. And being able to reach the suspension officers re: issues can be improved.

Hire more RMV workers so the public can do business with the agency more swiftly.

Theme 5: Process Improvements and Suggestions

MassDOT received a handful of comments related to some of the processes used when soliciting public input and suggestions for improvements.

MassDOT Response

MassDOT endeavors to create opportunities for meaningful public participation in a careful and respectful environment in which members of the public can provide feedback. Focus Groups are one of a variety of strategies MassDOT used to gain insights from a particular stakeholder group and are established intermittently to provide insight on specific topics, projects, and study areas. MassDOT may identify focus group participants through a variety of approaches, including existing relationships or partner community-based organizations. Please find more information in Chapter 3 – MassDOT's Approach to Public Participation.

At public meetings, participation by members of the public is facilitated by a series of questions they are invited to answer about their day-to-day experiences with the transportation network, their observations of the workings of the system, and the issues they see as important for transportation agencies to address through specific projects. Please find more information on these subjects in Chapter 3 – MassDOT's Approach to Public Participation.

Comments

It would be nice to have information sessions available remotely. Notification on seminars, etc. should be sent to not only municipal highway staff but also to select board or town. city administrators. Announcements should contain a brief explanation of what will be discussed. There should be a greater interest in providing district/local/workshops that handle issues that small towns have with limited budgets and differing road and bridge conditions.

The document says that MassDOT has used focus groups to understand how to better reach people. I think there needs to be updated focus groups especially following COVID19 to understand how communities have changed. There might be new barriers.

Update focus groups. Clearer ask of the public at meetings.

MassDOT Response

MassDOT recognizes the importance of utilizing a variety of outreach methods and processes when soliciting public input or notifying the public about project update meetings and construction timelines and affected driving, walking, cycling, and transit routes. MassDOT collaborates with local, regional, other state, and federal partners as appropriate, particularly during construction coordination, to ensure that those traveling in and around a project area are aware of any detours or affected facilities. Maintaining an accessible public right of way is a requirement of all MassDOT projects and should the public come across an inadequately maintained or inaccessible public right-of-way around a project area, they should contact the MassDOT Project Manager (if posted at the construction site), the general MassDOT phone number, in addition to local officials of the municipality or municipalities where the project is located.

Comment

Delivery and effectiveness is inconsistent.

Web or email notices of meetings, comment periods, etc., can be clear and complete, but are sometimes incomplete or non-existent.

Road closure messages rarely (almost never) include mention of affected pedestrian or bicycle facilities, although I believe MassDOT policy requires that it should. Response to complaints on this is, "We'll do that next time." The next time, there is again no mention of pedestrian or bicycle facilities.

MassDOT Response

MassDOT received several comments that emphasized the criticality of sharing information about public meeting opportunities in a timely manner and with sufficient detail regarding meeting topics. The procedures detailed in this draft PPP, as well as the standard operating procedures staff follow, reflect this and are designed to achieve this outcome. Members of the public interested in participating in MassDOT events should be aware that information regarding events is typically disseminated in multiple stages. For example, the process often begins with posting a notice on the event calendar and project webpage with just general details about date, time, location, and topic. As materials are developed for the meeting, such as a detailed agenda, summary sheets, presentations, surveys, designs, etc. the event calendar and project webpage are updated with those materials. Lastly, for meetings with a virtual component, the event calendar and project website are updated approximately 24-48 hours before the event with the link for the virtual session. The public is encouraged to monitor the pages for those events they are interested in attending to ensure they have access to these updated materials as they are released. Members of the public are also encouraged to sign up for [MassDOT's listserv](#) to receive email notifications related to projects and/or general agency announcements when they are published.

Comment

1. Provide relevant information ahead of meetings as was the practice in the past.
2. Make good on promises and commitments.
3. Admit and apologize for failures, including failures to comply with federal or state requirements and failures to provide promised public participation elements. (Your lawyers will advise you against admitting failures. Please admonish your lawyers for providing such advice.)
4. Take appropriate action to correct failures.

Appendix C: MassDOT's Structure

More detail on each of the MassDOT divisions is included below.

Office of Transportation Planning

<https://www.mass.gov/topics/massdot-transportation-planning>

The Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) is responsible for implementing state and federal transportation planning requirements. It oversees the federally mandated metropolitan planning process and the development of several key plans that shape both long-range and near-term transportation projects. This includes the Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan, the agency's Capital Investment Plan, the State Transportation Improvement Program, and modal plans. This department also coordinates research projects that strive to identify challenges and opportunities for innovation, investment, and transportation improvements.

Highway Division

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/highway-division>

The Highway Division is responsible for the design, construction, and maintenance of the Commonwealth's state highways and bridges. The division is responsible for overseeing traffic safety and engineering activities to ensure safe road and travel conditions.

Highway Project Management and Design

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-project-management-and-design>

Highway Division projects have many origins, including metropolitan planning organizations' priorities, bridge or highway maintenance requirements, federal funding programs, and MassDOT Highway District requests.

Project designs are generated by engineering consultants or in-house staff and generally follow the process outlined in the Project Development and Design Guide. The 25%, 75%, and 100% design completion points are milestones at which project plans are reviewed for compliance with environmental regulations, adherence to design criteria, utility and right-of-way considerations, and budget constraints.

During the preliminary design process, information regarding the social, economic, and environmental project impacts is reviewed to determine impacts and what mitigation, if any, is needed. Design engineers also ensure that all design criteria are met for walkways, street crossings, and pedestrian facilities in accordance with the most current Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), including the modifications prescribed by 49 CFR Part 37, Appendix A. With regard to transportation system facilities within the public right-of-way, design engineers ensure that the standards set forth in 49 CFR Part 37.9 are applied.

Environmental

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-environmental>

The Environmental section (Environmental) is responsible for Highway Division-wide environmental policy and permitting activities in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations to ensure timely environmental approvals that facilitate the construction of transportation projects. Environmental is the primary liaison to the federal, state, and local environmental regulatory and resource agencies during all phases of the project. Environmental provides strategic environmental policy guidance and conducts environmental reviews and permitting for transportation projects.

Additionally, Environmental develops training and guidance documents for staff and consultants for identifying project-level environmental and community issues, conducting early coordination with appropriate stakeholders, and preparing environmental documentation and permits.

The work of Environmental is done through the following units and programs. Additional information on each of these units can be found on the Environmental webpage linked above.

- Cultural Resources
- Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)/National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Stormwater
- Wetlands and Water Resources
- Wildlife

Right-of-Way

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-right-of-way>

The MassDOT Right of Way Bureau (ROW) is responsible for securing and managing all property and rights in land required for the road and bridge program.

- The Project Section reviews preliminary ROW plans, gathers parcel and owner data relative to the project, and provides data to the Conveyance and Appraisal Sections. This Section also contacts property owners and explains the project and its impact to them.
- The Conveyance Section prepares and reviews titles, prepares leases, deeds, memoranda of understanding, and other legal documents, and records plans, orders of taking, and other related documents at the various Registries of Deeds.
- The Appraisal Section prepares and reviews appraisals to establish the value of fee acquisitions, permanent and temporary easements, and other rights in property.
- The Negotiation Section meets with property owners to explain the situation and answer questions about the impact of road and bridge projects on their property and inform them of the amount of compensation being offered. The negotiators also answer questions, address concerns, and explain the owner's rights in the eminent-domain process.
- The Relocation Section ensures that all personal property is moved from the acquired land and the owners or tenants are reimbursed for the eligible cost of the move. Relocation agents meet with the property owners or tenants living or conducting business at the acquired property, explain what benefits they are entitled to, and offer relocation

assistance to them. When moves are completed, the relocation agents present the claims for payment approval and processing; they then tender the payments to the claimants.

- The Community Compliance Section ensures that municipalities follow all applicable state and federal regulations prior to the issuance of a right-of-way certificate, which allows the city or town to proceed with roadway and bridge projects.
- The Property Management Section performs typical property management duties when structures are included in the acquisition. Fair-market rent is determined and charged to the occupant of the structure acquired. Property Management is also responsible for maintenance until the structure is vacated.
- The Finance Section develops the annual administrative and capital budgets and is responsible for timely payments for goods, services, and property acquisitions.
- The Clerical Section provides administrative support to the other Sections of the ROW Bureau through document preparation and distribution, filing, and file maintenance.
- The Outdoor Advertising Section regulates and controls the erection and maintenance of off-premise billboards, signs, and other advertising devices. Licenses are issued to firms and individuals wishing to engage in the business of outdoor advertising, and permits are issued on an annual basis for the erection and maintenance of signs, in accordance with 711 CMR 3.00, et seq.

Construction

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-division-manuals-and-publications>

The Construction Department manages all aspects of MassDOT construction projects, including contract administration, to ensure that all construction complies with MassDOT Highway plans and specifications and to ensure that construction proceeds safely and in accordance with established schedules and budgets. The Construction Department includes a Boston Construction Office, construction departments in each of the six District offices, and the Research and Materials Section.

The Construction Office includes Construction Management and Construction Finance. Construction Management handles all technical issues related to MassDOT Highway construction, including evaluating bids, recommending contract awards, processing contract changes, and coordinating responses to technical questions that arise during construction. Construction Finance handles all financial paperwork for construction contracts, including funding appropriations, fiscal tracking for spending, extra work order funding, and processing of contractor pay estimates.

The Construction Office in each of the six Districts is headed by a District Construction Engineer, supported by assistant construction engineers, area engineers, resident engineers, and field engineers. These individuals have direct responsibility for monitoring construction onsite, day-to-day to ensure that construction proceeds safely and in accordance with established schedules and budgets.

Maintenance

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massdot-asset-management>

MassDOT Highway operations and maintenance is conducted in the six Districts according to the Maintenance Program. The Maintenance Program is developed on the basis of a comprehensive process of inspection, evaluation, and prioritization of maintenance efforts. Through careful preservation, rehabilitation, and maintenance, MassDOT maximizes the useful life of each asset to progress towards a long-term state-of-good repair (SOGR) in its pavement and bridge assets, as documented in the Transportation Asset Management Plan.

The Highway Division's Boston office makes the policy decisions that lead to the road and bridge improvement projects that are planned or are ongoing across the commonwealth. The Highway Division identifies roads and bridges that are in need of repair, reconstruction, or replacement and works to make the appropriate upgrades. MassDOT's priority is safety with as little inconvenience as possible to Massachusetts motorists.

Each district is under the direction of the District Highway Director (DHD), who reports to the Chief Engineer. The District Office supervises all construction within its jurisdiction, performs on-site engineering, implements maintenance and preventive maintenance programs, generates proposals for maintenance and construction work, and provides engineering support to cities and towns.

Highway Safety

<https://www.mass.gov/highway-safety>

The MassDOT Highway Traffic and Safety Engineering Section is responsible for overseeing traffic engineering activities to ensure that the roadway and bridge construction and maintenance programs comply with the Federal Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) (https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno_11th_Edition.htm) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 90: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter90> and Chapter 85: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter85>). This includes preparing and reviewing various traffic engineering documents such as:

- Traffic Signal Permits
- Speed Limit Regulations
- Heavy Commercial Vehicle Permits
- Traffic Control Agreements
- Highway Logo Sign Policy
- Details and Drawings for Temporary Traffic Control Plans
- Traffic Impact Studies and Functional Design Reports
- Construction Sequencing Program Plan
- Traffic Data Analytics
- Highway Safety Improvement Program
- Road Safety Audits
- Strategic Highway Safety Plan

The Traffic Engineering Unit provides technical review services for all construction and maintenance projects prepared for MassDOT, including private development mitigation and municipal construction projects. The staff provides regulatory guidance and technical expertise to support compliance with current state and federal standards. In addition, Traffic Engineering staff is engaged in numerous field activities to support Department policy, including traffic signal inspection, road safety audits, work zone inspections, right-of-way investigations, speed zoning, sign and pavement marking inspection, and fatal-crash reviews.

The Safety Management Unit of Traffic and Safety Engineering maintains a database of crash data (<https://apps.impact.dot.state.ma.us/cdp/home>) in support of the records collected by the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Staff uses the crash data to identify locations for safety improvement projects and develops network screening tools, both crash and risk based, to produce top priority locations. These can be used to develop a priority listing of safety project needs under the Highway Safety Improvement Program. In addition, the Safety Management staff participates in numerous statewide safety initiatives aimed at reducing fatal and severe-injury crashes including conducting Road Safety Audits and developing several federally mandated plans such as the Statewide Strategic Highway Safety Plan (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-shsp-2023/download>) and the Vulnerable Road User Assessment (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/2023-massachusetts-vulnerable-road-user-assessment/download>).

Rail and Transit Division

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/rail-and-transit-division>

The Rail and Transit Division is responsible for overseeing, coordinating, and planning all transit and rail matters throughout the Commonwealth. The division administers and manages the freight and rail programs of the department, federal transit-related competitive grant programs, urban and rural transit training programs, and oversees the Commonwealth's regional transit authorities.

The MassDOT Rail and Transit Division (RTD) supports transit and rail across Massachusetts outside of the MBTA system and works closely with the MBTA¹.

The MassDOT Transit Unit seeks to increase transportation options and improve mobility across the Commonwealth and New England by assisting, funding, and/or overseeing public transit services provided by the Regional Transit Authorities, local governments, non-profits, and private carriers. Much of the work of the Transit Unit is directly in support of Regional Transit Authorities and thus builds on the public outreach conducted directly by Regional Transit Authorities and their MPOs. The Transit Unit provides service to the people travelling through the Commonwealth by collaborating with sub-recipients, stakeholders, communities, and business partners and using innovative business processes to maximize investment and provide the highest levels of accountability and impact possible. Transit employs policies and procedures in line with the latest federal and state promising practices, while also focusing on

1 MBTA public engagement activities are detailed in the MBTA Public Engagement Plan, including the outreach process for proposed major service and fare changes, project development, and all other outreach activities. A copy of the PEP can be found here: <https://cdn.mbta.com/sites/default/files/2023-06/2023-06-Public-Engagement-Plan-English.pdf>

customer feedback, safety, equity, and sustainability; empowering our employees and business partners; and utilizing a rigorous measurement process.

The Division's Rail Unit manages the state's 300 miles of state-owned railroad properties with their operating railroads and manages the administrative program required by M.G.L. 40/54A and M.G.L. 161(d) that protects railroad corridors. The Unit also provides policy and technical assistance for major rail and freight initiatives, including high-speed and intercity rail, major corridor acquisition, and freight access programs.

Aeronautics Division

The Aeronautics Division has jurisdiction over the Commonwealth's public-use airports, private-use landing areas, and seaplane bases. It is responsible for airport development and improvements, aviation safety, aircraft accident investigation, navigational aids, and statewide aviation planning. The Division certifies airports and heliports, licenses airport managers, conducts annual airport inspections, and enforces safety and security regulations.

Registry of Motor Vehicles Division

The Registry of Motor Vehicles Division is responsible for vehicle operator licensing and vehicle and aircraft registration, available online and at service centers across the Commonwealth. In addition, the Registry oversees commercial and non-commercial vehicle inspection stations, third-party driver and CDL education courses, and is responsible for issuing state identifications.

Appendix D: Process for Public Engagement

This chapter is intended primarily for staff to understand the steps to follow to meet Title VI and ADA requirements in public engagement. By incorporating these practices into existing public engagement procedures, staff can ensure that civil rights considerations and obligations are addressed in public outreach and engagement activities.

While the following protocols endeavor to highlight specific steps to follow and available resources to achieve civil rights obligations in public engagement, past experience with the public can and should be considered an important element of understanding individual and community needs, including civil rights related considerations such as language assistance needs, accessibility accommodations and inclusive public participation. Please use these protocols as a guide and use good professional judgment in the decisions you make as you implement them.

Per processes established by the Governor's office, MassDOT staff are directed to submit **Outreach Plans** for approval with respect to any public engagement activities associated with projects or initiatives, inclusive of engagement with individuals or organizations, and including but not limited to the activities listed in Section 3.2, as well as posting materials reflecting public engagement activities to the internet (i.e. the MassDOT website). These Outreach Plans should outline and describe engagement activities that are consistent with the policies and procedures included in this Public Participation Plan. Outreach Plans follow a common template and are submitted for approval to the Governor's Office via MassDOT Legislative Affairs. The MassDOT Communications team should be consulted as part of the development of Outreach Plans. No public engagement activities should be conducted until Outreach Plans are approved by the Governor's office. Please contact MassDOT Legislative Affairs for more information about Outreach Plans.

Backgrounding – Know Your Audience

1. Identify who may be impacted by or interested in the project, plan, or program you are working on. Important factors to consider include:
 - » The nature of the program, service, or activity:
 - » Is it connected to the project development process?
 - » Is it statewide, regional or local?
 - » What are the impacts to the public?
 - » Project parameters such as:
 - » Location
 - » Areas that will be impacted by construction phases
 - » Areas that may benefit from the completed project
 - » Areas that may be burdened by the completed project.
 - » Populations who reside in, travel to, and utilize community services in the geographic area of interest.

2. Determine the demographics of those impacted by or interested in your project, plan, or program. Reference:

- » MassDOT's Online Public Engagement Tool "Engage – Demographics Map"
<https://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/engage/>
- » MassDOT's Regional Environmental Justice Plus (REJ+) Database
<https://gis.data.mass.gov/datasets/MassDOT::rej-simple-june-2024/explore>
- » CTPS Combined Municipal Demographic Data Tool
https://ctps.shinyapps.io/Combine_Municipal_Demographic_Data/
- » EPA's Environmental Justice screening and mapping tool – "EJ Screen"
<https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>
- » Housing and Transportation Affordability Index <http://htaindex.cnt.org/map/>
- » National Equity Atlas <http://nationalequityatlas.org/>
- » Social Vulnerability Index <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>
- » [USDOT](#) Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer
- » Institutional knowledge

3. Build an outreach strategy. Meeting planners should strive to develop an outreach strategy that reaches the diverse populations identified, including language groups and stakeholders across demographics.

To identify points of contact that should be included in the outreach strategy, the following resources are available:

- » MassDOT's online public engagement platform – "Engage – Community Contacts List"
<https://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/engage/>
- » MassDOT Media Publications List: This Excel sheet includes a list of media publications throughout MA: [Publications.xlsx](#)
- » Consult MassDOT's Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR)
MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us
- » Contact the local MPO to identify organizations and key stakeholders. MPO Liaisons in the Office of Transportation Planning can assist in identifying regional contacts.
- » For outreach in the Boston area, contact the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services.
<https://www.boston.gov/departments/neighborhood-services>

When sharing information with the public, the following activities should be considered part of an effective outreach strategy:

- » Summarize key details that are most critical (consider providing a one-page handout/flyer)
- » Provide vital information in multiple languages, if the demographics of the impacted area include LEP populations
- » Consider sharing information through multiple means (online, print, in-person, through partners, etc.)

When soliciting feedback from the public, the following activities should be considered part of an effective outreach strategy:

- » Provide multiple mechanisms for feedback including multilingual options (paper survey, in-person meeting/discussion, online comment form, email address, mailing address, phone number, etc.)
- » Specify what information you are seeking from the public and how it will be used

Meeting Location and Time

1. Title VI Considerations

- » Consult with community leaders and community-based organizations to identify factors that may help determine appropriate times and locations for public engagement activities.
- » Multiple meetings can be held at various locations and times if doing so promotes meaningful access to the public engagement opportunity.
- » Virtual engagements allow for increased flexibility with meeting timing. Consider holding multiple virtual sessions to afford the public with maximum opportunities to participate.
- » Where possible, select a meeting location near (within ½ miles walking distance) public transportation options.

2. ADA Considerations

- » Identify a venue for the public meeting that is accessible. The following resources can be used to assist with this step.
 - i. MassDOT's online public engagement platform – "Engage"
<https://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/engage/>
 - ii. The Massachusetts Office on Disability
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-office-on-disability>
 - iii. The Municipal Disability Commissions
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/commissions-on-disability#contact-your-local-commission-on-disability->
 - iv. The Regional Independent Living Centers
<https://masilc.org/findacenter/>
- » For in-person and hybrid meetings, when communicating with a meeting venue, determine if assistive technologies are available, such as assistive listening devices. While these details should be captured in the Engage database, it is appropriate to use these communications to confirm their availability and operability.
- » For virtual engagements, the accessibility of the virtual meeting location is primarily related to the platforms and tools being used. Each meeting planner should confirm that they are using the recommended platforms and tools, and the appropriate recommended settings, as identified by the MassDOT Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) Committee.

Coordinating Public Notice

1. Ensure you are using the current template for the public meeting notice. Copies of the templates can be requested by emailing the Highway Public Involvement Office (HPIO) at william.a.woolford@dot.state.ma.us.
2. The Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR) and HPIO are available to provide meeting planners with recommendations regarding notice dissemination strategies to effectively reach diverse populations. You can reach ODCR and HPIO here:
ODCR – MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us
HPIO - william.a.woolford@dot.state.ma.us

Preparation for the Meeting

1. Convene the project team to coordinate early preparation activities. This can include drafting and reviewing presentation materials, rehearsing the presentation, refining the outreach strategy, securing accommodations and language access requests, and troubleshooting the technology that will be used to host the event.
2. Meeting planners should maintain an ongoing dialogue with the individuals and organizations identified as part of the outreach strategy in order to remain well informed on the level of community interest and likely involvement in the event.
3. The subject matter of transportation-related public engagement can often be highly technical. Project managers and meeting planners should create summary documents to present complex information in as simple and clear a manner as possible to members of the public who have widely varying backgrounds, including varied education levels. Key strategies include avoiding industry jargon, replacing complex words with simple words, and using acronyms carefully.
4. The period between notice dissemination and the meeting date should be used to identify and arrange reasonable accommodations and produce meeting materials in alternate languages and formats (such as Braille and large print), if necessary/requested. Electronic documents, whether produced by MassDOT staff or consultants that will be used during the meeting need to be accessible.
 - » Employees can access contact information for procuring language services, as well as MassDOT and MBTA accessibility service providers, by referring to the MassDOT/MBTA Language Access Plan Reference Guide (see Appendix E). Additionally, alternate formats can be obtained by contacting:
 - i. MBTA System Wide Accessibility
<https://mbta.com/accessibility>
 - » Massachusetts Office on Disability
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-office-on-disability>. If you're unsure how to provide a particular accommodation or for guidance on recommended accommodations, consult:

- i. The following MassDOT/MBTA departments:

Office of Diversity and Civil Rights

MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us

Systemwide Accessibility

<https://www.mbtta.com/accessibility>

- » Funding Considerations

- i. All accommodations must be provided to the public free of charge.
- ii. For public outreach events necessitated by the project development process, each project contains an administration budget that should be utilized, if available.
- iii. For all other requests, contact the MassDOT Budget Office at (857) 368-9150.

During the Meeting

1. At the start of the meeting, announce the Title VI and ADA related services that are available. This can include foreign language interpreters, translated documents, ASL interpreters, CART reporter, alternate format documents (such as Braille and large print), and others. Instruct attendees how to access these services.
2. For virtual and hybrid events, announce the process attendees should use to address technical difficulties accessing the event/presentation.
3. Identify all of the available mechanisms for attendees to provide comment. This includes making a statement during the live event but should also include leaving voicemails, sending emails, mailing correspondence, participating in electronic or hardcopy surveys, utilizing a web form, etc.
4. MassDOT is required to “demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input” (23 CFR 450.210). During a public outreach event, this requires affording attendees with opportunities to voice comments, questions, and concerns and provide an adequate response at the event or by following up in writing or at subsequent public outreach opportunities. A critical element of meeting this regulatory requirement is accurately documenting comments that are received and detailing how they have been responded to and/or addressed.
 - » For virtual events, it is important to make sure that attendees that are listening on separate foreign language audio channels have an opportunity to provide comment through the interpreters. During comment periods, each interpreter should be asked whether any of their attendees would like to comment.

Post Meeting

1. All public comments (written and oral) expressed during the public outreach event should be compiled by the Project Manager (or designee).
2. The Project Manager is responsible for coordinating responses to public comments.
 - » Methods of responses can include:
 - i. Individualized written responses
 - ii. General distribution of written statements (web, email, newsletter, newspaper, etc.)
 - iii. Postings to project specific website, if available
 - iv. In-person or virtual follow-ups with individuals/organizations regarding the topics of discussion at the public outreach event.
 - » The Project Manager (or designee) reviews the public comments to determine which MassDOT program areas (such as Civil Rights, Right of Way, Design, Environmental, Planning, etc.) should be consulted with or assigned the responsibility of drafting a response.
 - » Responses should also contain:
 - i. Contact information for additional follow-up
 - ii. Notice of upcoming related public engagement opportunities, if available.

Planning for Inclusion, Representation, and Diversity

Planning for the involvement of diverse community members is essential to an inclusive and successful effort. In addition to following the protocols outlined in earlier steps from backgrounding to post-meeting, project managers and meeting planners should consider the following:

3. Have you established a clear objective and role for the participants, including the nature of community involvement needed for meaningful outcomes?
4. Who needs to be at the table for the work to be accomplished?
5. What is the history of relationships between stakeholder representatives and groups? Is there any past tension that may be a deterrent to participation? If so, are there other community leaders who could help mediate to encourage participation despite differences?
6. If known from past experience, are there stakeholders critical to the process who may be reluctant to participate? How can this reluctance be alleviated? What would be the impact of their refusal to participate in the process? Is there an alternative to their participation?
7. Other than known stakeholders, what other individuals or groups could have an interest in the project that are not in the immediate project area, and/or are not otherwise represented in the outreach strategy?

Reaching out to Invitees – Anticipating Potential Obstacles to Participation

There are a range of factors leading to reluctance to participate for individuals and groups that

could be helpful in a transportation-related discussion. Think through and identify the factors which would encourage participation and involvement before reaching out, to be in the best position to explain how it is important for this individual or group to participate.

The following are some common barriers to participation, and possible resolutions:

1. **Limited English proficiency and/or limited literacy:** MassDOT has the ability and obligation to fund translation and interpretation supports. Presentations and meeting materials should use simple language to reach audiences from varying educational backgrounds. Simplified text also makes translations more accurate and minimizes the risk of translations that are out of context or offensive.
2. **Lack of trust due to past experiences:** Respond with as much information as will demonstrate that both participation and the project are being honestly and openly addressed.
3. **Lack of experience with transportation decision making processes:** it is important to explain and contextualize the decision-making process so that expectations are clear.
4. **Economic barriers:** Meetings can be sited in the community to avoid cost factors, and they should be timed to meet the schedule of the majority of participants, after due consideration of all schedules, alternatives, and needs. Virtual meetings offer an option that may help further reduce some of these economic barriers.
5. **Cultural barriers:** There may be intergroup dynamics that make bringing people together problematic. Early research will help build understanding of this possibility and suggest whether a mediated way of bringing the groups together is an option, or identify the need to have separate meetings.

Responding to a Refusal to Participate from an Invitee

1. If a person or group declines to participate in a particular effort, it is important not to get frustrated but instead to handle the refusal diplomatically because that same group might be the subject of an outreach effort in the future and may wish to participate on another occasion.
2. In responding to a decision not to participate, thank the person or group for considering the invitation and suggest that they might accept an invitation for a different opportunity in the future. In this way, no feelings are hurt, doors are left open, and the person or group remains feeling that they are valued in the future.
3. Consider sending the individual or organizations updates on the effort that are sent to others. This effort could be informative and demonstrate a good faith effort to be inclusive.

Documenting the Effort to Achieve Diversity

Documentation of our efforts is good evidence of the opportunity that was given to the public. Our civil rights obligations require us to provide an equal opportunity to participate in public engagements and, ultimately, it is an exercise in demonstrating that MassDOT has been thoughtful and reached out effectively to increase diversity. For purposes of proving that an outreach effort was genuine and reached out to diverse communities, there are steps that the meeting convener or planner should take:

1. The meeting planner should keep a record of efforts to identify individuals and groups, the nature of the outreach effort, the people invited, and the results of a recruitment effort. Consider capturing these details:
 - » Lists of potential invitees who were considered and/or accepted

- » Copies of invitation e-mails or other correspondence
 - » Group membership lists, with indications of the Title VI communities represented
 - » Meeting sign-in sheets
 - » Correspondence from invited individuals
 - » Copies of translated outreach materials
2. Effective management of the group that is ultimately formed is key to the productivity and longevity of relationships with diverse community members. Following-through with stakeholders to demonstrate that input was considered and/or had an impact on project parameters, study outcomes, and planned activities can demonstrate to participants the value added to their interests and communities through continued involvement in these activities.

Appendix F: Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1 – How does the planning process work?

<https://www.mass.gov/planning-process>

Visit the link above for details regarding the transportation planning process, including opportunities for public input and involvement during these activities.

Question 2 – What statewide transportation planning projects has MassDOT conducted?

www.mass.gov/statewide-plans

MassDOT Planning conducts a wide variety of statewide transportation planning projects. Plans include elements from overall vision concepts to specific recommendations on individual transportation improvements. Each plan is different in scale and complexity, but all focus on safety and customer service. Visit the link above to view these plans including the statewide bicycle, pedestrian, and rail plans. This page also provides announcements about public engagement opportunities related to these plans.

Question 3 – How can I leave feedback on planning activities?

The following links provide useful information on public input opportunities related to various planning activities:

1. Long Range Transportation Plan
<https://www.mass.gov/beyond-mobility>
2. Statewide Plans
<https://www.mass.gov/statewide-plans>
3. Planning Studies
<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-projects-and-studies>
4. Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/state-transportation-improvement-program-stip>
5. Capital Investment Plan
<https://www.mass.gov/capital-investment-plan-cip>

Question 4 – What are MPOs?

www.mass.gov/info-details/regional-planning

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are federally required regional transportation policy-making organizations. MPOs create a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision making. Through inclusionary approaches, MPOs are able to effectively engage communities and stakeholders. To find your local MPO and more information on how to engage in their activities, visit the link above.

Question 5 – How are projects developed and designed?

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/2006-project-development-and-design-guide/download>

This guidance document provides comprehensive details regarding the project development process, including opportunities for public involvement throughout the lifecycle of project.

Question 6 – How are projects initiated?

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdot-highway-initiating-a-project>

Projects are identified and initiated through the Massachusetts Project Intake Tool (MaPIT). Projects may be initiated by MassDOT Highway Division staff, another state agency staff, and official staff of a city or town in Massachusetts or their designated representative. The MaPIT application uses information provided to establish an overall score based on criteria related to system preservation, mobility, safety, economic impacts, environmental effects, social equity, policy support, and cost effectiveness. Projects are submitted to the Project Review Committee for approval.

Question 7 – What is MEPA? How can I get involved?

<https://eeaonline.eea.state.ma.us/EEA/MEPA-eMonitor/home>

Certain Highway Division projects require review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act if they meet or exceed a threshold under its regulations. These projects are subject to a public comment period and public meeting, at minimum, during their MEPA review process. MEPA's Environmental Monitor, linked above, provides information on projects that are currently, or were historically, under MEPA review, their public review period, and meeting details.

Question 8 – How will I know if my property will be impacted by a project? How does the right-of-way acquisition process work?

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/right-of-way-acquisition-and-your-property>

This guide provides details regarding the property acquisition process. To improve Massachusetts' extensive transportation system, it is sometimes necessary to acquire land from private property owners. We offer this information about the process of acquiring land and rights therein for public transportation projects.

Question 9 – Where is my Local Highway District Office?

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/find-your-highway-district-office>

Visit the link above to find which district to contact for questions on local projects, to inform MassDOT of a local transportation need, and provide feedback on ongoing construction activities.

Visit the following links for maps:

1. District Offices
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/massdot-highway-districts-map/download>
2. Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs)
<https://www.mass.gov/files/images/massgis/datalayers/rpas.png>
3. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
<https://www.ctps.org/dv/mpoFinder/index.html>
4. Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/public-transportation-in-massachusetts#map-of-transit-authorities-in-massachusetts->

Question 10 – What projects are currently being constructed?

<https://www.mass.gov/massdot-projects-and-studies>

Visit the link above to find details regarding current MassDOT construction projects. Project webpages contain important information regarding project details, upcoming public meetings, public input opportunities, and sign-up instructions to join project mailing lists.

Question 11 – How does the MassDOT Transportation Asset Management Plan reflect MassDOT maintenance practices?

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/massdot-asset-management>

MassDOT builds and maintains assets to provide a reliable transportation system. This process is Transportation Asset Management. MassDOT collects data about every asset's location, condition, and history. This guides management of the asset's performance and smart use of resources. MassDOT's Transportation Asset Management Plan documents MassDOT's progress toward a long-term state-of-good repair in MassDOT pavement and bridge assets. Visit the link above to learn more about MassDOT's Asset Management practices and review the TAMP.

Question 12 – What is IMPACT?

<https://apps.impact.dot.state.ma.us/cdp/home>

IMPACT is designed to encourage public safety initiatives and awareness specific to crash information. Within IMPACT, you can engage with crash related data through easy-to-understand pre-built reports/dashboards or conduct self-driven analysis and visualize or export results.

Question 13 – Where is my Local Transit Authority?

www.mass.gov/info-details/public-transportation-in-massachusetts

Visit the link above to find which transit authority serves your area. Then visit your transit authority's website or give them a call to learn about public participation opportunities.

Question 14 – What is the Massachusetts Freight Plan?

www.mass.gov/info-details/freight-plan

The Massachusetts Freight Plan is a planning document that defines the short and long-term visions for the freight system in the Commonwealth. Visit the link above to view the plan, which includes multimodal elements such as air, rail, truck, maritime transport, and intermodal transportation (transportation by more than one mode). This page also provides announcements about public engagement opportunities related to future updates of the plan.

Question 15 – How can I stay up to date with MassDOT news?

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-transportation/news>

Visit the link above to find the latest news and announcements from MassDOT. The details provided here often include instructions regarding public input and feedback opportunities related to new developments.

Question 16 – How can I get involved in transportation planning?

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-involved-in-transportation-planning-processes>

There are broader opportunities for public involvement related to public transportation options that MassDOT doesn't directly manage. This webpage linked above provides a description of and links to additional engagement, feedback, and input opportunities, that can be particularly useful for advocating for expanded transportation options in your area.


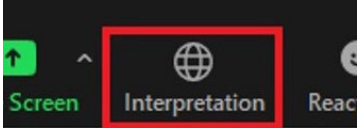
Appendix F: Instructions for the Public to Access MassDOT Virtual Events

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation has embraced virtual public engagement strategies. By incorporating virtual meetings into the existing array of public engagement strategies already in use by MassDOT, the agency is able to offer the public additional options for participation. In fact, virtual meetings can facilitate more and broader participation due to the ability of technology to transcend geography and time barriers. If used strategically, virtual meetings can effectively reach the public and provide a convenient engagement mechanism.

Key Virtual Public Engagement Details

The following information is intended to provide key details to the public regarding how to participate in MassDOT's virtual public engagements.

Question	Answer
Does MassDOT only conduct meetings virtually now?	No. Virtual meetings have been added as another mechanism for engaging with the public, but they have not replaced in-person meetings.
What platform does MassDOT use for virtual meetings?	Zoom (https://zoom.us/)
Why does MassDOT use a particular virtual platform?	After researching and testing numerous available platforms, Zoom was found to be the most accessible with features and tools that facilitate information sharing and receiving feedback from attendees.
How do I access Zoom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › If joining from a computer, visit https://zoom.us/ and follow the instructions for signing up, downloading, and installing Zoom. › If joining from an Apple iPhone or tablet, download the Zoom app from the Apple App Store and follow the installation and signup instructions › If joining from an Android smartphone or tablet, download the Zoom app from the Google Play Store and follow the installation and signup instructions.
Do I need my own computer or smartphone to participate in MassDOT virtual meetings?	<p>No.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Attendees can join MassDOT virtual meetings from public devices as well, such as those available at public libraries. Groups of individuals can participate through a single device. › Please note that you can also call-in to MassDOT's virtual meeting via a standard telephone. Call-in details are provided with the event details.
What if I'm having technical difficulties with Zoom?	MassDOT's public engagement staff is available to help troubleshoot. Feel free to send them an email at william.a.woolford@dot.state.ma.us . They are available before and during meetings.
How do I find MassDOT virtual meetings to attend?	MassDOT's event calendar includes all upcoming public meeting opportunities, both virtual and in-person.
Do I need to register for MassDOT virtual meetings?	<p>Yes. When you find an event on the MassDOT calendar that you would like to attend, the event details page will include a registration link. The registration button will look like this:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-top: 10px;"> Register via Zoom → </div>

Question	Answer
How do I request accessibility or language related services (like interpreters)?	<p>All MassDOT event announcements, both virtual and in-person, include instructions for making disability or language access related requests. To make such a request, please contact MassDOT's Office of Diversity & Civil Rights at MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us. Please send requests as early as possible, ideally 14 days prior to the event, so that there is adequate time to secure the requested services. MassDOT will still make every effort to fulfill untimely requests.</p>
How do I access disability or language access related services during the meeting?	<p>Each MassDOT virtual meeting starts with instructions on how to use the various features of Zoom, including these auxiliary services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Sign language interpreters have their video "pinned" so that all users can see the video. › Real-time captions can be turned on by clicking the captions button on the toolbar at the bottom of the Zoom window.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Foreign language interpretation can be accessed by clicking on the interpretation button on the toolbar at the bottom of the Zoom window and selecting your preferred language. 
Do you record virtual meetings?	<p>MassDOT virtual meetings may be recorded. If a session is going to be recorded, this is announced at the beginning of the meeting and any participant who does not wish to consent to the recording is provided with an opportunity to exit the meeting. If you are unable to attend because of the recording, there are numerous other ways to provide feedback, including sending comments via email, mail, or phone. Each meeting announcement, both virtual and in-person, includes instructions on all available options for providing comments.</p>
What if I'm unable to attend the virtual meeting due to a scheduling conflict?	<p>For those virtual public meetings that are recorded, these recordings can be watched at a later date. Past meeting session details, including links to recordings, can be found on the MassDOT calendar of past events. You are welcome to watch these recordings at your convenience and provide feedback to the project team via email, mail, or phone at the contact information provided with the event details.</p>
What can I expect during virtual public meetings?	<p>Virtual public meetings contain many of the same elements as in-person public meetings, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A presentation by staff to share key details and request public input. › An opportunity for public comments. › A description of next steps and additional upcoming opportunities to engage on this or related projects. <p>Virtual public meetings also contain some unique elements as compared to in-person meetings, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Live polling – attendees may be asked to provide real-time input on key questions via prompts on the screen.

Question	Answer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Breakout rooms – the meeting may include smaller group sessions where topics can be explored in more detail. › Feedback survey – attendees will be asked to fill out a survey at the end of the virtual meeting, reflecting on the effectiveness of the session and recommendations for improvement.

Public Feedback Mechanisms in the Virtual Context

Whether conducted virtually or in-person, a key purpose of MassDOT’s public engagement activities is to solicit feedback from the public. This feedback is critical to gauge public sentiment and to determine appropriate paths forward on key decisions. With the introduction of virtual public involvement, MassDOT focused on two goals regarding public feedback – first, to ensure that the virtual engagement process included opportunities for effective feedback and second, to ensure that traditional feedback mechanisms were still available.

Virtual engagement platforms and associated tools allow for myriad feedback opportunities – commenting during a live event, real-time polling, sharing electronic surveys and comments forms, requesting attendee details during the event registration process, etc. MassDOT has implemented all of these strategies to solicit feedback from the public. However, it may not be possible for all interested parties to participate in virtual meetings. Therefore, MassDOT requires that traditional low-tech and no-tech feedback mechanisms still be available for each public engagement opportunity. This includes providing a phone number where the public can leave messages, a mailing address where the public can mail written comments, providing hardcopy survey and comment forms at local public offices and partner organizations (libraries, municipal offices, advocacy groups, etc.), and other such approaches.

Appendix G: Language Access Plan Reference Guide

This reference guide summarizes resources for language and accessibility services.

Demographics Identification Map Tool

Before securing language or accessibility services, you can use this tool to identify demographics in your project area(s). With this, you can choose appropriate resources from the vendors below.

- [ODCR Demographics Map Tool](#)¹

MassDOT and MBTA Language Services Providers

Division	Primary Resource	Secondary Resource
MBTA	Standalone Contract with Language Line ²	Language Services Contract PRF75 ³
RMV	Standalone Contract with Baystate Interpreters ⁴	Language Services Contract PRF75 ³
Highway	Language Services Contract PRF75 ³	UMass Translation Center ⁵
Rail & Transit	Language Services Contract PRF75 ³	UMass Translation Center ⁵
Aeronautics	Language Services Contract PRF75 ³	UMass Translation Center ⁵

Alternative Option

If you are unable to secure the necessary language services through the primary or secondary resources listed here, please contact the Language Access Coordinator for assistance with alternatives.

Language Access Coordinator
 Office of Diversity & Civil Rights
 MassDOT / MBTA
 10 Park Plaza, Suite 3800
 Boston, MA 02116
 Phone: 857-368-8580
 Email: MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us

MassDOT/ MBTA Accessibility Services Providers

- Accessible Websites
 - MassDOT: [Digital Services Request](#)⁶

¹ https://ctps.shinyapps.io/Combine_Municipal_Demographic_Data/

² https://470255.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/470255/LL-2023/PDFs/US/LLS-Government_Brochure.pdf

³ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/prf75/download>

⁴ <https://www.baystateinterpreters.com/Default.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.umass.edu/translation/>

⁶ https://massdot.service-now.com/mymassdot?id=sc_cat_item&sys_id=e402636a0f11720051729bd692050e1b&sysparm_category=d67c446ec0a80165000335aa37eafbc1

Public Participation Plan

- MBTA: [Web Content Team Request](#)⁷
- Accessible Document Checks
 - MassDOT/MBTA Primary Resource: IT Accessibility Services Contract [ITS61](#)⁸
 - MassDOT Secondary Resource: [Digital Services Request](#)⁶
 - MBTA Secondary Resource: [Web Content Team Request](#)⁷
- American Sign Language (ASL)
 - MassDOT/MBTA Primary Resource: [MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(MCDHH\)](#)⁹
- Real-Time Captions (CART)
 - MassDOT/MBTA Primary Resource: [MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(MCDHH\)](#)⁹
- Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDI)
 - MassDOT/MBTA Primary Resource: [MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(MCDHH\)](#)⁹
- Braille Documents
 - MassDOT/MBTA Primary Resource: [MA Commission for the Blind \(MCB\)](#)¹⁰
- DeafBlind Communication
 - MassDOT/MBTA Primary Resource: [MA Commission for the Blind \(MCB\)](#)¹⁰
- Screen Readers/Magnification
 - MassDOT/MBTA Primary Resource: [MA Commission for the Blind \(MCB\)](#)¹⁰

Questions? Please contact the Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR) at MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us.

⁷ <https://form.asana.com/?hash=d045af16e90907762b08e142dc0809e2abf58ecfa5bad4e5ea02caa156496d75&id=1117064241406883>

⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/its61designateditd-it-accessibility-services/download>

⁹ <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider>

¹⁰ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-commission-for-the-blind>

Appendix H: Title VI Public Notice

Civil Rights Notice to the Public

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency). Related federal and state nondiscrimination laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, disability, and additional protected characteristics. MassDOT and the MBTA are committed to nondiscrimination in all activities.

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against may file a complaint with MassDOT/MBTA at:

MassDOT/MBTA Title VI Specialists

Office of Diversity and Civil Rights – Title VI Unit

10 Park Plaza, Suite 3800

Boston, MA 02116

Phone: (857) 368-8580 or 7-1-1 for Relay Service

Email: MassDOT.CivilRights@state.ma.us or MBTAcivilrights@mbta.com

Complaints may also be filed directly with the United States Department of Transportation at:

U.S. Department of Transportation

Office of Civil Rights

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20590

Website: civilrights.justice.gov/

For additional information, language service requests, or reasonable accommodations visit mass.gov/nondiscrimination-in-transportation-program or mbta.com/titlevi



massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

Translation

English: Discrimination is prohibited at MassDOT/MBTA. If you believe discrimination has occurred you have the right to file a complaint. For translations of this notice visit mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections or mbta.com/titlevi

Português: A discriminação é proibida no MassDOT/MBTA. Se você acredita que ocorreu discriminação, você tem o direito de apresentar uma queixa. Para traduções desta notificação, visite mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections or mbta.com/titlevi

Español: La discriminación se prohíbe en MassDOT/MBTA. Si cree que se ha producido una discriminación, tiene derecho a presentar una queja. Para ver las traducciones de este aviso, visite mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections or mbta.com/titlevi

英語: MassDOT/MBTA 禁止歧視。如果您認為遭遇了歧視，您有權提出投訴。有關本告知書的翻譯，請訪問 mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections 或 mbta.com/titlevi

英語: MassDOT/MBTA 禁止歧視。如果您認為遭遇了歧視，您有權投訴。有關本告知書的翻譯，請訪問 mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections 或 mbta.com/titlevi

Русский: Дискриминация запрещена в MassDOT/MBTA. Если вы считаете, что имела место дискриминация, вы имеете право на подачу жалобы. Для перевода этого уведомления посетите сайт mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections или mbta.com/titlevi

Kreyòl Ayisyen: Yo defann fè diskriminasyon nan MassDOT/MBTA. Si ou kwè gen diskriminasyon ki fèt, ou gen dwa pote plent. Pou wè tradiksyon anons sa a, ale nan adrès mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections oswa mbta.com/titlevi

Tiếng Việt: Phân biệt đối xử bị nghiêm cấm ở MassDOT/MBTA. Nếu quý vị tin rằng bản thân đã bị phân biệt đối xử, quý vị có quyền nộp đơn khiếu nại. Để xem các bản dịch của thông báo này, vui lòng truy cập mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections hoặc mbta.com/titlevi

Français : Tout acte discriminatoire est interdit chez MassDOT/MBTA. Si vous pensez avoir été victime d'une discrimination, vous avez le droit de déposer une plainte. Pour les traductions de cet avis, rendez-vous sur le site mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections ou mbta.com/titlevi

Italiano: la discriminazione è vietata nel MassDOT/MBTA. Se ritiene che si sia verificata una discriminazione, ha il diritto di presentare un reclamo. Per la traduzione di questo avviso visitare il sito mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections o mbta.com/titlevi

ខ្មែរ: ការបំបែកប្រក្រតីតាមលក្ខណៈពណ៌ស្បែកជួនដំណើរការនៅ MassDOT/MBTA។ ប្រសិនបើអ្នកជឿថា ខ្លួនអ្នក ត្រូវបានបំបែកប្រក្រតី អ្នកមានសិទ្ធិប្តឹងបណ្តឹង។ សូមចូលមើលទៅលើ mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections ឬ mbta.com/titlevi

اللغة العربية: يحظر كل من قسم النقل في ولاية ماساتشوستس/ سلطة النقل بخليج ماساتشوستس التمييز. وإذا كنت تعتقد أنك تعرضت للتمييز، فيحق لك تقديم شكوى. وللحصول على ترجمة لهذا الإشعار يُرجى زيارة الموقع الإلكتروني: mass.gov/service-details/title-vi-rights-and-protections، أو الموقع: mbta.com/titlevi.