



Charles D. Baker, Governor  
Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor  
Jamey Tesler, MassDOT Secretary & CEO  
Meredith Slesinger, MassDOT Rail & Transit Administrator



To: MassDOT Board  
From: Meredith Slesinger, Rail and Transit Administrator  
Re: Current Activities  
Date: October 15, 2021

## **TRANSIT**

### **RTA Council Meeting Held October 13th**

An RTA Council took place on October 13th and agenda topics included the workforce shortage impacting the transit industry. The MBTA and RTAs shared their experiences with the challenges of attracting and retaining qualified employees, recruitment strategies, as well as discussing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transit service. Upcoming meetings in calendar year 2022 will be held on January 26<sup>th</sup>, April 27<sup>th</sup>, and July 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **FTA Review of Covid Relief Funding ECHO Draws**

The MassDOT Transit Unit successfully closed out a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Covid Relief Program funding drawdown review. This FTA review is part of a nationwide effort by the FTA to ensure proper spending and compliance with Covid Relief Program funding rules. The FTA notified MassDOT that there were no findings related to the FTA ECHO Drawdown Review of Covid Relief Program Funds. The MassDOT response required a significant team effort on data collection and follow-up explanations to the FTA auditors. The conclusion of no findings validates the MassDOT FTA ECHO drawdown process.

### **FTA State Programs Biennial Meeting**

MassDOT Transit staff virtually attended the 19th Biennial FTA State Programs Biennial Meeting and State Public Transportation Partnerships Conference on 9/28-9/30. This event brings together state departments of transportation and the FTA to discuss funding and initiatives for rural and tribal areas.

### **RTA Battery Electric Bus Studies**

The MassDOT Transit Unit is undertaking two Battery Electric Bus (BEB) studies on behalf of the 15 Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs). The Phase I Study – Efficiency Analysis Task Order with consultant team WSP is already underway. This work is important to inform the RTAs on next steps for BEB procurements to ultimately meet the Commonwealth's climate goals as possible funding sources, including additional Volkswagen settlement funds and federal funding, become available. We expect the Phase I study to take nine months to complete. While the

Phase I work is underway, MassDOT Transit will draft the Scope of Work for Phase II that will focus on implementation of BEBs within the RTA service areas.

### **FY22 Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP)**

The MassDOT Transit Unit expects to make recommendations on the FY22 CTGP applications in the coming weeks. There were 56 applications by 39 unique organizations for a total of \$10,913,787 requested. Twenty-four were operating and mobility management applications totaling \$1,592,258 and 32 were for 137 vehicles totaling \$9,321,529. The MassDOT Transit team is coordinating with its vehicle manufacturers and working to address the impact that manufacturing delays are having on the production of the vehicles being awarded.

## **RAIL**

### **Federal Funding**

There is considerable funding for rail contemplated in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that is pending in Congress. As there are no formula programs for rail, the \$66 billion for rail over five years includes \$22 billion directly to Amtrak and \$44 billion in competitive grants. The largest program is the \$36 billion Federal-State Partnership program of which \$24 billion is for eligible Northeast Corridor projects. While specific information on each program will be provided by the FRA when and if the Act is enacted, MassDOT intends to compete where eligible and appropriate to meet the rail needs of the Commonwealth.

### **Industrial Rail Access Program**

Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP) award announcements for nearly \$3 million were made September 17<sup>th</sup>. Fourteen applications were submitted and seven awards were made. The Rail Unit is also evaluating changes to the application and award calendar for next year to optimize procurement and construction timing.

### **Construction Activities**

- A bridge replacement has started in Norton on the Middleboro Subdivision Line.
- 2 bridge decks have been replaced and one bridge has been repaired on the Berkshire Line.
- Approximately 80% of continuous welded rail has completed on the Berkshire Line. The remaining 20% will be completed next spring.
- 3 bridges are being repaired on the Knowledge Corridor.