

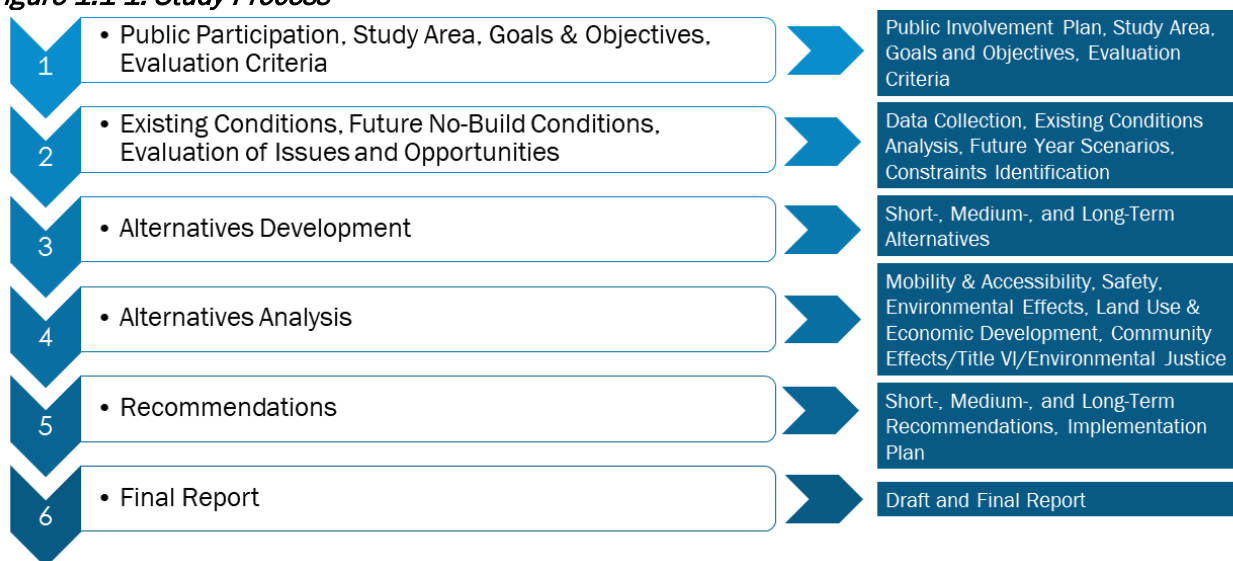
Chapter 1: Introduction

The Wellington Circle Study is a conceptual planning study to evaluate the existing and future multimodal transportation conditions at Wellington Circle (the Circle) in the City of Medford. Situated at the intersection of Massachusetts Routes 16 and 28, Wellington Circle is a crucial transportation link through Medford and the wider region. The intersection connects adjacent communities – including Malden, Everett, and Somerville – to each other, to the Wellington MBTA Station, and to regional routes such as Interstate 93 and Route 1. The study focuses on the redesign of the Circle to improve connectivity and multimodal mobility by examining and evaluating alternatives to improve transportation conditions in the context of vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, land use, and cost, as well as resulting economic, social, and cultural benefits and impacts. Chapter 1 sets the context for the Wellington Circle Study, providing an overview of the study process and background, study area, goals and objectives, evaluation criteria, public involvement, and working group.

1.1 Study Process and Background

This study was initiated as part of the Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30, Section 61 Finding for the Encore Boston Harbor casino. Section 61 determines the impacts of projects on the natural environment and details measures to avoid or minimize them, which involves a Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) review process. The Section 61 Finding for the Encore casino¹ provided funding for a transportation study to examine alternatives for long-term improvements to Wellington Circle. To do this, the study followed the process depicted in Figure 1.1-1 to develop logical and comprehensive alternatives relevant to the existing conditions at the Circle.

Figure 1.1-1: Study Process



¹ Massachusetts Gaming Commission Second Amended Section 61 Findings Issued Pursuant to M.G.L. c.23K and M.G.L. c. 30, Section 61 for the Encore Boston Harbor (f/k/a Wynn Everett and Wynn Boston Harbor) located at 1 Broadway in Everett, MA. EOEEA Number 15060. May 29, 2019.

Throughout the study process, the public was involved to identify multimodal issues and opportunities, guide the development of alternatives, and provide critical insight. This involvement was achieved on multiple fronts. One was the participation of a Working Group made up of local and regional stakeholders representing different organizations, from federal, state, and local officials to local resident associations. Six Working Group meetings throughout the process of the study allowed members to share their local knowledge and perspective.

Additionally, engagement directly with the public was achieved through three virtual public meetings. The public meetings were opportunities for anyone interested to receive project updates and provide feedback or ask questions. Public engagement was also possible through the MassDOT webpage for the project and the Project Involvement Management Application (PIMA), which allowed for users to submit comments and sign up for project updates.

1.2 Study Area

As modes of transportation through the Circle have differing scales of impact on the surrounding area, distinct study areas were defined for different modes.

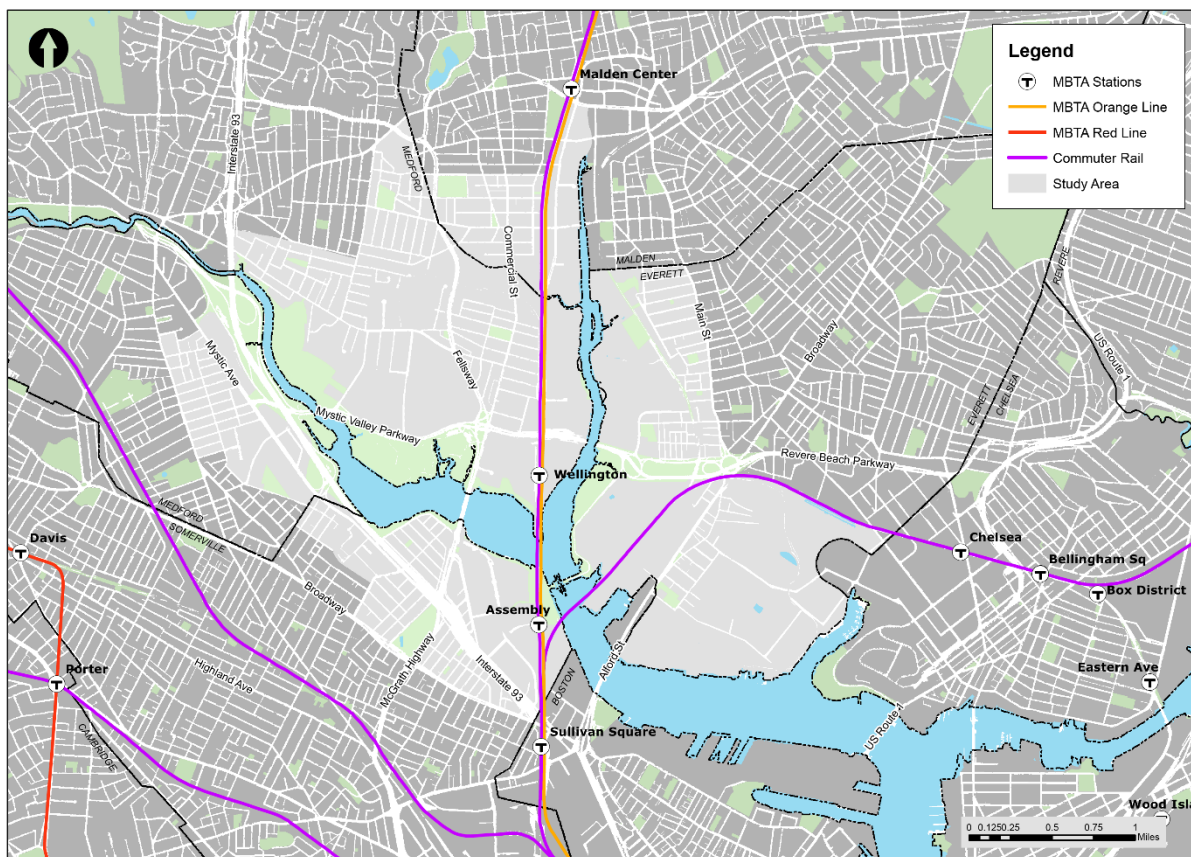
Operations for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians were analyzed within a local study area, running from the Route 16 and I-93 interchange in the west to the Revere Beach Parkway and Rivers Edge Drive interchange in the east, and from the Route 28 and I-93 interchange in the south to Riverside Avenue in the north. Transit was analyzed within a local study area based on bus routes, bounded by Central Avenue and Medford Street to the north, the Malden River and the rotary with Route 99 in Everett to the east, the Mystic River to the south, and Park Street to the west. This study area also includes the Wellington MBTA Station. The local study area is depicted in Figure 1.2-1, which includes specific intersections for the analysis of vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian operations.

Figure 1.2-1: Traffic Study Area



The regional study area takes into account the surrounding communities whose residents and employees may benefit from or be impacted by changes to the Circle. This regional study area is made up of Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs) from the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) transportation model. It is approximately bound by the Mystic Avenue corridor on the west, the intersection of Fellsway and Pleasant Street (Malden) on the north, the Northern Strand Community Trail and the Broadway corridor on the east, and Route 99/I-93 (Sullivan Square) on the south, as shown in Figure 1.2-2. For several demographic and environmental indicators that are reported at the community level, such as mode share and public health data, the regional study area includes the municipalities of Medford, Malden, Everett, Revere, and Somerville as a whole.

Figure 1.2-2: Regional Study Area



1.3 Study Goals and Objectives

The study goals reflect the project's purpose and the needs of the community. The final study goals and objectives, depicted in Table 1.3-1, were refined with the input from the Working Group to address their concerns and priorities.

Each goal reflects a broad theme of the anticipated outcome of the study that can be attained through the final recommendations. The objectives associated with each goal provide specific methods for how the goal may be achieved.

Table 1.3-1: Wellington Circle Study Goals and Objectives

<p style="text-align: center;">SAFETY</p> <p>Improve safety conditions for all transportation modes and users in the Wellington Circle area</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce vehicular speeds • Reduce number of conflict points between modes • Provide dedicated space for pedestrians, bicyclists through and across Wellington Circle 	<p style="text-align: center;">CONNECTIVITY</p> <p>Improve local and regional connectivity to support businesses and future development</p> <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce travel delays (vehicle hours traveled and queuing) • Improve access and circulation within and between parcels for all modes • Promote active transportation through improved connections between modes
<p style="text-align: center;">MOBILITY/ACCESS</p> <p>Improve mobility and access for all transportation modes and users in the Wellington Circle area</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigate traffic congestion within Wellington Circle • Provide facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users • Improve connectivity to Wellington Station for pedestrians and bicyclists 	<p style="text-align: center;">QUALITY OF LIFE</p> <p>Improve quality of life for residents in the Wellington Circle area</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize public health and environmental impacts • Provide fair and equitable treatment for Environmental Justice (EJ) populations • Provide opportunities for enhancing attractiveness of Wellington Circle

1.4 Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria enable the alternatives analysis process to standardize outcomes by providing measures of effectiveness to assess the benefits and impacts of alternatives developed during the study. The evaluation criteria, listed in Table 1.4-1, were developed to support the goals of the study, and help define and measure the objectives related to each goal, as listed in Section 1.4. The evaluation criteria were also vetted with the working group to ensure the alternatives analysis would provide information to compare how well each selected alternative met study goals.

Table 1.4-1: Wellington Circle Study Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criterion	How to Measure How Well Goals are Met
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to best practice design elements for pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities • Number of crashes • Number of conflict points • Intersection clarity • Degree of corner and turn radii
Mode Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on mode split
Vehicle Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadway geometry • Level of Service • Queue length
Pedestrian Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity along desire lines • Number of pedestrian crossings from northwest to southeast • Travel time savings from northwest to southeast crossing • Number of pedestrian crossings greater than 3 lanes without refuge island • Opportunity to provide visual and landscaped surroundings
Bicycle Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity to existing bicycle facilities • Ability to provide high-comfort bicycle facility
Transit Operations & Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel time savings • Quality of service
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts to wetlands, waterbodies, Chapter 91/Tidelands, Floodplains, open space/recreational areas, hazardous materials and sites, climate change/resiliency, historic and archeological resources • Impacts to Air Quality • Impacts to Noise
Land Use & Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency with Medford Master Plan • Driveway access • Enhanced development potential • Community Cohesion
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality effects • Safety effects • Active transportation and connectivity effects
Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts to minority and low-income populations
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction cost

1.5 Public Involvement Plan

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was developed to guide a comprehensive and inclusive outreach process throughout this study. It aligned with MassDOT's policies and procedures regarding accessibility and can be found in Appendix A. The PIP focused on the following:

➤ Public Engagement

The study provided various outreach methods for the public to learn about the study and participate in its development. These included meetings, specifically a series of Working Group and public information meetings. Both the Working Group and public received advance notice of the virtual meetings and were notified of the time and location of each event. Meeting notices were also posted to the study website and included in email correspondence and local newspapers.

Dates of Working Group and public information meetings are listed in Table 1.5-2.

Table 1.5-2: Wellington Circle Study Meeting Schedule

Working Group Meetings	Public Information Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 16, 2020 • May 27, 2021 • August 31, 2021 • January 5, 2022 • December 8, 2022 • March 2, 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 24, 2021 • December 15, 2022 • April 26, 2023

Meeting summaries were posted to the project website following each meeting and are included as Appendix A.

➤ Public Participation

There were continuous opportunities for the public to participate in the development of the study. The study team solicited feedback from the public at working group and public meetings and through the study online comment form. All comments and questions received were recorded, whether they were submitted at virtual meetings, by email, through the study comment form, or by letter. The study team provided responses to those requested. Further, the study team aimed to regularly coordinate with various agencies and stakeholders to disseminate current and accurate information about the study to the public.

➤ Virtual Resources

A study website was created and maintained by MassDOT, and can be found at mass.gov/wellington-circle-study. The website contained information about the study, including a Study overview, meeting information and materials, relevant study documents, and contact information. An online interactive map to collect feedback on issues and opportunities was also available during the existing conditions phase of the study. The study website also contained a section where visitors could sign up to receive study updates via email and submit their comments and questions to the study team. This comment form was hosted through PIMA. Comments received via PIMA are included as Appendix A. PIMA was also used to develop and maintain the study's stakeholder database and to send all individual and group emails, including meeting invitations.

➤ Study Information

The study website was regularly updated to ensure the public had access to the latest available information about the study. This information included Working Group and public meeting details, meeting presentations, and minutes. Study information was also included in the form of presentations, maps, mailings, and local newspapers.

➤ Accessible Documents

Study documents were posted in electronic format were made accessible to people with disabilities in compliance with Section 508 of the U.S. Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Massachusetts General Law Chapter 272 Section 98/98A, and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. All information provided to the public, including technical terms and regulatory procedures, was presented in a clear and concise manner.

➤ Outreach Efforts to EJ Populations

Outreach to EJ populations was an essential component of the study's equitable public process. Strategies included providing ample notice and information for upcoming public information meetings, leveraging Working Group members' existing community connections and communications, and securing ASL services, CART services, translators for Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish, and providing newspaper translations in Chinese, Portuguese, and Spanish.

1.6 Working Group

The stakeholder Working Group was a core component of the study process. The purpose of the Working Group meetings was to provide an open platform for discussion with the study team on the goals and priorities for the project, as well as alternatives development. The Working Group was assembled by MassDOT to include federal, state, regional and local representatives as outlined in Table 1.7-1. Working Group members provided professional input based on their local knowledge and experience, represented the interests of their affiliation, and shared information back with their communities.

Table 1.7-1 Working Group Representatives

Federal	Local
U.S. House of Representatives	City of Medford
U.S. Senate	City of Malden
State	City of Everett
State House of Representatives	City of Revere
State Senate	City of Somerville
Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)	Medford City Council
MassDOT	Medford Police Department
Regional	Bike to the Sea
Asian Community Development Corporation	Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition
MBTA	Medford Chamber of Commerce
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Medford Council on Aging
Mystic River Watershed Association	Medford Health Matters
	NAACP, Mystic Valley Branch
	Resident Associations
	WalkMedford

The framework detailed in this chapter guides the documentation of existing and future conditions in Chapter 2. The foundation provided by both the process and documentation of existing and future conditions are integral to the analysis of alternatives, detailed in Chapters 3 and 4 and ultimately selection of a recommendation and implementation plan, discussed in Chapter 5, to improve Wellington Circle and meet the goals of the study.