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June 8, 2018

Mr. David Mohler
Chair, Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Boston Region Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) FFY2019

Dear Mr. Mohler:

On behalf of the 495/MetroWest Partnership, please accept the following as our official comments regarding the draft *Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)* for FFY 2019 for the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

The 495/MetroWest Partnership is a non-profit advocacy organization serving thirty-five communities, over half a million residents, and an employment base of over \$24 billion per year. The Partnership seeks to address regional needs through public-private collaboration by working to enhance economic vitality, improve quality of life and sustain natural resources. The Partnership focuses on helping to alleviate regional constraints and limitations, and conducts numerous initiatives on transportation, workforce housing, brownfields, and water resources.

The Partnership appreciates the importance of proper planning and understands that the long-term benefits achieved by transportation and transit projects always start with a planning project. With our latest economic analysis, we know that the 495/MetroWest region has continued to grow thanks to a diverse economic base and a high quality of life. While this growth has resulted in opportunities and benefits, challenges remain. If ignored, these challenges threaten the quality of life and economic wellbeing of a region that has become an economic engine for the Commonwealth. Our regional transportation challenges affect the state's ability to remain economically competitive. These challenges include: increasing traffic congestion, an increase in vehicle miles traveled, highway capacity issues, gaps in public transit coverage, and aging transportation infrastructure.

The Boston Region MPO includes twenty-six of the Partnership's thirty-five communities, we greatly appreciate the number of planning projects that have been completed in our region in recent years, and found Appendix D a helpful resource in determining the distribution of UPWP planning tasks since 2010. It is worth noting that out of the four subregions in 495/MetroWest, SWAP has the lowest number of tasks in the entire Boston MPO region, with 39 tasks since 2010 and only 4 tasks performed since 2014 (SSC had 41, with 10 projects since 2014, according to table D-1). Similarly we would note that in the TRIC Subregion, the 495/MetroWest Communities of Medfield and Foxborough have not had any projects since 2015 and further, Medfield has only had 1 project since 2010. We understand that resources are limited but

regional equity is essential to ensure the entire Boston region is benefiting from the planning process. We hope that you will give regional equity some consideration when advancing some of the studies we are supporting in FFY 2019.

In the current Draft UPWP, the Partnership is extremely pleased by continued funding for I-90/I-495 Interchange Traffic Analysis Technical Support. The Partnership has an extensive track record of support for this project, advocating for various improvements to the I-90/I-495 Interchange since our formation in 2003. We are extremely pleased to see a long-term, comprehensive solution advancing and we welcome the technical support from CTPS, specifically for continued traffic analysis in the FY 2019 UPWP. Analysis conducted by the Public Policy Center at UMass Dartmouth for the 495/MetroWest Suburban Edge Community Commission, confirms that the 495/MetroWest region is a net importer of labor in addition to showing large volumes of workers commuting into, out of and through our region.¹ Considering the data on commuting patterns and numbers and the transition to All Electronic Tolling, we feel confident that the timing of, and investment in improving the I-90/I-495 Interchange will provide significant returns for commuters, employers and residents of the Commonwealth.

Additionally, the Partnership welcomes the level of support for MassDOT's Commuter Rail Vision Study, which is of great interest given that the 495/MetroWest Region is home to 3 Lines, namely, Framingham/Worcester, Franklin, and Fitchburg, the last of which is currently experiencing the worst on time performance in the system.

Beyond these two projects the Partnership strongly supports the following new and continuing studies in FFY 2019:

- Reverse Commute Areas Analysis - the 495/MetroWest region is a net importer of labor and therefore, this analysis is of great interest to the Partnership and to our stakeholders;
- Addressing Priority Corridors from the LRTP Needs Assessment - as in previous years, the Partnership urges inclusion of our communities in these studies and its recommended conceptual improvements;
- Low-Cost Improvements to Express Highway Bottleneck Locations - as in previous years, the Partnership urges inclusion of our communities in this report and its proposed solutions;
- Addressing Safety, Mobility and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways - as in previous years, the Partnership urges inclusion of our communities in this report and its recommendations;
- Transportation Access Studies of Commercial Business Districts - we encourage inclusion of at least one community in each of MAPC's subregions to appropriately reflect the CBD needs in a range of community sizes as well as ensuring regional representation;
- New and Emerging Metrics for Roadway Usage - we feel it is important to revisit methodologies to ensure an accurate picture of roadway functionality;
- Updates to Express Highway Volumes Charts - continued updates on data are essential to determine future demand and thereby project need; and
- Regional Transit Service Planning Technical Support - given the Partnership's collaboration in creating in the MetroWest RTA, our longstanding work with the Worcester, Montachusett, Greater Attleboro, and Lowell RTA's and regional TMAs like CrossTown Connect, MetroWest/495, and Neponset Valley, and our regular attendance at MetroWest Regional Collaborative, MAGIC, and SWAP subregional meetings, we greatly appreciate this level on ongoing technical support and remain hopeful to see benefits of this support in our region.

We would like to re-emphasize our support for the proposed Reverse Commute Areas Analysis and again encourage inclusion of our region in this analysis. Specifically, we feel case studies on last-mile transit options should look to CrossTown Connect in the MAGIC subregion. Under Cross-Town Connect, we have seen success with Acton shuttles, a Maynard shuttle and now a Littleton/Westford shuttle. The Maynard shuttle has proven a huge success, with growing ridership and minimal cost to determine its feasibility. Sustainability for all of these services remains a challenge despite the demand and limited overhead costs. We feel this could serve as an excellent case study for potential partnership models for first-and last-mile transit shuttles with potential funding recommendations by the Boston MPO to help determine sustainability that could also allow for expansion of services into other CrossTown Connect communities. We hope you will give serious consideration to studying the CrossTown Connect Model as part of this program.

In addition to the specific planning projects mentioned above, the Partnership also supports ongoing tasks and products such as LRTP and TIP development, congestion management, safety and operations analysis, freight planning support, and air quality conformity and support. The Partnership recognizes the addition of several new studies and hopes that our region, which includes portions of MAGIC, MetroWest, SWAP and TRIC, will benefit from such projects as:

- Safety & Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections, with particular thanks for the conceptual design and evaluation for Improving Route 126 truck access to/from Maple Street in Bellingham;
- Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program;
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Support Activities - the Partnership is supportive of a variety of modes of transportation and we feel this work complements the growing number of communities participating in the Complete Streets Program;
- Transit & Traffic Data Support - the work by CTPS is critical to understanding the region's future needs;
- MAPC Planning Studies and Technical Analysis;
- MetroFuture Update and Implementation;
- Alternative-Mode Planning and Coordination; and
- MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts.

The Partnership greatly appreciates the work of CTPS and values the planning projects proposed in this year's Unified Planning Work Program. We hope you will strongly consider our comments on regional and subregional equity in deciding areas to study within individual projects and analyses.

We thank you for your consideration of our comments. If there are any questions regarding our commentary on the UPWP, please contact Jessica Strunkin at 774.760.0495 x.101, or by email at Jessica@495partnership.org. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Paul F. Matthews
Executive Director



Jessica Strunkin
Deputy Director

¹ <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/02/12/495MW%20Profile%20by%20UMass%20D%20PPC.pdf>