

Inner Core Committee

A subregion of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council including 20 cities and towns:

Arlington • Belmont • Boston • Brookline • Cambridge • Chelsea • Everett • Lynn • Malden • Medford • Melrose • Milton • Newton • Quincy • Revere • Saugus • Somerville • Waltham • Watertown • Winthrop

June 13, 2012

David Mohler, Chairman
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee, Boston MPO
c/o Central Transportation Planning Staff
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Mr. Mohler,

The Inner Core Committee (ICC) of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is MAPC's most populous subregion, consisting of the following twenty cities and towns: Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Lynn, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Saugus, Somerville, Waltham, Watertown, and Winthrop. At our February 1, 2012 Inner Core Committee meeting, ICC members reviewed the draft list of projects considered for inclusion in the FFYs 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program. This discussion was facilitated by representatives from the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), MAPC, and ICC leadership. We sent a review letter dated March 20, 2012.

At our June meeting the ICC discussed subregional priorities for transportation before moving on to a discussion of the TIP and UPWP. This letter supplements our review letter of March 20. We note that the review period for the TIP ended on May 31 but due to scheduling difficulties, the ICC was unable to review and discuss the draft at our May meeting. We note that the TIP will not be voted on until June 28 and respectfully request that you take our comments into consideration.

The following are the Inner Core Committee's overall transportation priorities along with an indication of supporting projects:

Support for the MBTA – The ICC supports the concept of promoting mode shift away from vehicles, and as such, recognizes the extremely important role that the MBTA plays in making the Inner Core a desirable place to live and work. The maintenance of existing service and the eventual expansion of service have far-reaching implications for the economy of the region. As evidence of this, we note that ridership has been increasing. The ICC recognizes the need to deal with the short-term budget issues but encourages the MBTA and legislators to find a long term solution to the debt issue. Based on the importance of the MBTA we support the following initiatives:

- The Green Line Extension to Route 16.
- Improved bus operations.
- The continued planning and advancement of the Urban Ring.

Support for all forms of transit – While the MBTA is the foremost provider of transit services in the region, the ICC recognizes that there are financial constraints to its expansion and gaps in the current system that can be filled by other forms of transit services such as those often provided by Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) and private businesses. Water transportation is another important area. Some examples identified by ICC members include:

- All shuttle services provided by Transportation Management Associations.
- Opportunities for a TMA at the Assembly Square development.

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Complete Streets – The ICC supports the Complete Streets concept that advocates for streets that support a balance of modes and are attractive and safe for all users. Among the ICC members there is interest in measures that promote increased bicycle and pedestrian transportation. Inner Core communities would like to see a greater commitment from Mass DOT to implementation of complete streets.

The Inner Core Committee supports ongoing Clean Air and Mobility Program (CLAMP, formerly CMAQ) funding for bicycle sharing programs in the subregion. ICC supports CLAMP funding for Boston, Cambridge, and Brookline in order to help fund Hubway. In addition, ICC supports efforts by other communities to join the Hubway system and would support CLAMP funding for such communities if needed to expand or sustain Hubway.

Redesign of existing roads–The ICC understands the fiscal constraints that are involved in decisions on project funding for the TIP. Due to the aging infrastructure in many Inner Core communities, upgrading of existing roadways to implement Complete Street standards is critically important. Some of the projects previously noted in our review of the TIP that support this include:

- Massachusetts Avenue Phase I (Arlington)
- Route 129 Broadway (Lynn)
- Beacon Street (Somerville)
- Commonwealth Avenue from Armory Street to Alcorn Street (Boston)*
- Hancock Street at East and West Squantum Streets (Quincy)*
- Gateway East (Brookline)*
- The Needham Street/Highland Avenue Corridor (Newton and Needham)*

We note that not all of these projects are currently programmed in the TIP but the ICC is committed to working to advance all of these projects. Projects noted with an asterisk * also involve significant bicycle/pedestrian improvements and therefore fall within our support for Complete Streets.

Support for Low Cost Roadway Improvements – ICC members recognized that while there are many major roadway projects that are important to maintain the existing roadway network, there are also numerous opportunities for lower cost improvements such as updated signal timing and improvements to intersection geometry. These lower cost improvements can significantly improve traffic flow and reduce congestion. While these projects do not usually rise to the level of TIP projects, we note that there are several projects within the UPWP that support this approach.

Should you have any questions about this letter, please contact Joan Blaustein, Land Resources Planner and Interim Inner Core Committee Coordinator at jblaustein@mapc.org or 617-451-2770 ext. 2023. Thank you for considering our priorities for the FFYs 2013-2016 TIP.

Sincerely,



Laura Wiener, Chair
Inner Core Committee