

# Executive Director's Report Mid-March 2020 through Mid-April 2020

Submitted to the Executive Committee  
by Executive Director Marc Draisen

## *Arts and Culture*

### **"No Longer Normal: Reimagining Public Life in a Pandemic"**

In the wake of COVID-19, the physical distancing measures that are needed to keep people safe have upended the cultural sector and public life. In this moment of crisis and loss, we have a unique opportunity both to reflect and imagine new futures. What lessons can we learn from this moment as we consider the future of our public spaces and civic infrastructure? How might we foster values and practices that can sustain more inclusive and vibrant public life, both physical and virtual, after society reopens? Working with our partner at New England Foundation for the Arts and guest speakers and facilitators, we are exploring ways to launch a series of virtual convenings for government staff, artists, culture bearers, and community leaders. We are also developing a plan to launch blog posts, mini virtual discussions, podcasts, and more.

Through these discussions, we hope to foster new knowledge and ideas that can inform cultural policy and planning, and create the conditions for a stronger, more collaborative arts and cultural sector grounded in principles of cultural equity. This effort will supplant – we hope temporarily! -- a prior effort to catalyze critical dialogue around public memory, representation, and belonging in our region's public spaces – with a focus on monuments and memorials. We hope to get back to that project later in the year.

To receive notices about the upcoming series, join the [Arts & Culture mailing list](#).

### **Revamped Arts and Planning Toolkit**

The Arts and Planning Toolkit has been given a reboot to become better aligned with the needs of municipal planners who are doing arts and culture-related work. Each page now follows a consistent outline of tools, resources, and examples to show how ideas may be put into action. We've added case studies on the projects of the Arts & Culture team, and new pages, such as Creative Engagement, highlight cross-departmental work with the Community Engagement staff. With this relaunch, the Toolkit has a structure in place for continued updates. Visit the revamped Toolkit at [www.artsandplanningtoolkit.org](http://www.artsandplanningtoolkit.org).

### **Lynn Creative Placemaking: Lynnstallation**

On March 2, the City of Lynn and affiliated entities released a "Call for Art" seeking a signature work of art at Lynn's Mt. Vernon and Exchange Street Plaza. Developed with technical assistance

from MAPC’s Arts & Culture and Municipal Collaboration departments, the Call for Art is an exciting model for municipal public art commissions. The Call process was put on hold on March 23 as the City of Lynn focused its resources on addressing the worsening COVID-19 public health crisis. In the interim, the Call has attracted multiple submissions and statements of interest and the City of Lynn is preparing to reopen the Call with a shifted timeline.

### Massachusetts Arts Data Working Group

Responding to the current emergency, MAPC has joined MassCreative, the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and ArtsBoston to reconvene the Massachusetts Arts Data Working Group for weekly virtual meetings since March 18. MAPC staff from the Arts & Culture and Data Services departments are supporting the Working Group’s efforts to coordinate data collection, to identify data sharing opportunities, and to evaluate and respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the arts and culture sector. New initiatives emerging from this work will include an evaluation of unemployment impacts on the creative economy in Massachusetts, plus other products.

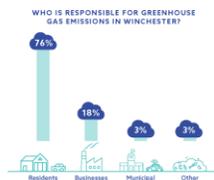
## Clean Energy

### What can Winchester do about climate change? A lot.

#### Clean Energy

Electricity can be generated with 100% renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and water. When we switch together to clean energy, we have demand for these renewables. In Winchester we have the option of choosing Winchener 100, which is a community choice aggregation program that negotiates for the best utility rates for renewable energy by leveraging the buying power of thousands of Winchester households.

Choose Winchener 100 to match your home and office energy needs with 100% renewable energy.



### Winchester Greenhouse Gas Inventory

In summer of 2019, MAPC contracted with Winchester to develop a greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory to inform the upcoming update to the town's Climate Action Plan. MAPC helped to collect necessary data, which we entered it into MAPC's new Community Greenhouse Gas Inventory Tool (launching for public use later this spring). The GHG inventory, completed this month, accounts for emissions from Winchester's homes and businesses, natural

gas leaks, electricity line losses, construction and manufacturing, on-road passenger and commercial vehicles, MBTA buses and commuter rail, municipal solid waste disposal, and wastewater.

MAPC also developed a series of infographics to support the Town in communicating the important findings of the GHG inventory and key messages to inspire climate action among its residents. The infographics focus on the impactful role every member of the community can play in reducing emissions, such as participating in the town's Green Municipal Aggregation program; installing clean heating and cooling systems in homes and businesses; walking, biking, or driving an electric vehicle; and reducing contributions to the waste stream.

### International Energy Conservation Code Vote Validated

On April 8, the International Code Council (ICC) validated the 2019 vote on the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). The ICC is the body that administers the national model energy code, which is adopted as the building energy code in the majority of state and local jurisdictions across the country, including the Commonwealth. Throughout 2019, MAPC

provided technical support and education to numerous cities and towns throughout the state, to enable them to register to vote, prepare to respond to the provisions on the ballot, and then participate in the vote itself.

The vote results were largely positive, demonstrating that the votes of Massachusetts municipalities had an impact. The new code would account for at least a 10% increase in energy efficiency for buildings over the 2018 code. ICC's validation of the vote initiates a 30-day formal appeals process. We are currently encouraging municipalities that participated in the IECC vote to submit comment letters to the ICC in support of the voting process to ensure that the results are confirmed and that municipalities can continue to have a voice in future code cycles. More on MAPC's Codes for Climate efforts [here](#).

### **North Shore Green Municipal Aggregation Project Launch**

Clean Energy staff presented on Green Municipal Aggregation (GMA) at the North Shore Task Force Subregional meeting on March 19, with 16 municipal staff and volunteers from North Shore communities participating. The webinar provided an overview of municipal aggregation, benefits and risks, models for making aggregation programs green, MAPC's long-standing work in this space, and guidance on implementation. This meeting introduced MAPC's launch of its work with Salem, Gloucester, Manchester by the Sea, Rockport, Beverly, and potentially others to explore jointly pursuing GMA. MAPC will be providing content expertise, research capacity, and facilitation to help these communities explore and potentially pursue a collaborative GMA program that leverages greater market share, considers direct investment in renewable energy projects in New England, and researches other structures that increase the program's renewable energy and additionality impacts. More on MAPC's Green Municipal Aggregation work [here](#).

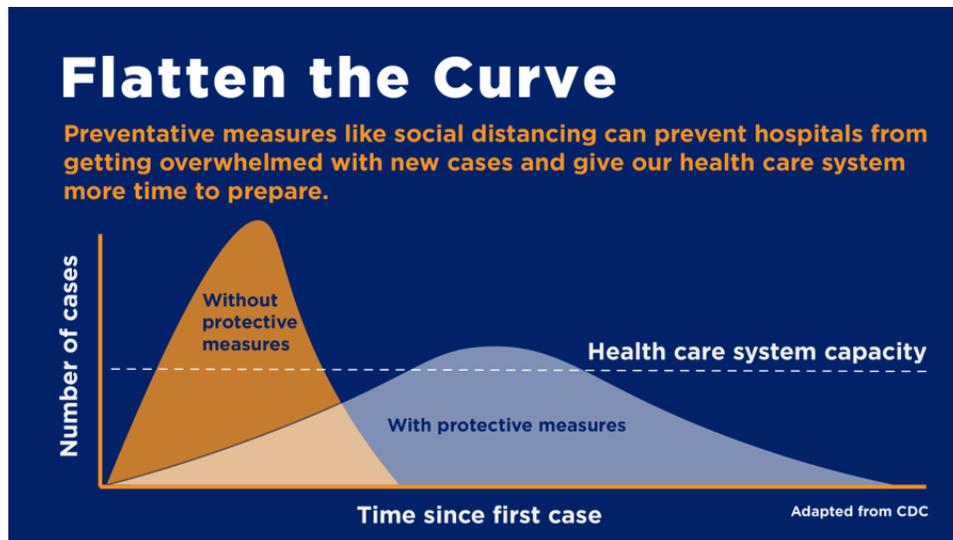
### **Metro Mayors Climate Task Force and Climate/Clean Energy During COVID-19**

The Climate Preparedness Task Force met virtually with close to 30 participants on March 31 with representatives from nine municipalities, EOEAA, MWRA, and the Mystic River Watershed Association, among others. In addition to agency and municipal updates, the agenda included Carolyn Meklenburg from EEA, speaking about upcoming changes to the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program and the spring grant Request for Responses (RFR).

During the meeting, Task Force members discussed COVID-19 disruptions and impacts on efforts to advance climate mitigation and adaptation. Participants expressed willingness to advance work in general and to apply lessons from the current crisis to climate in communications, framing, legislation, and engagement. This was tempered by very real concerns related to staff capacity, budget uncertainties, and shifting priorities. The Clean Energy Department has been facilitating similar smaller discussions with municipal and agency staff, and can support cities, towns, and other stakeholders to think through next steps and regional coordination.

## Communications

Communications has worked swiftly to craft an internal and external communications strategy in response to COVID-19. Collaborating with Government Affairs, we have created both a central landing page for all the “need to know” information at [mapc.org/resource-library/covid-19-resources](https://mapc.org/resource-library/covid-19-resources) and a package of social media graphics for municipalities to share, offering critical and timely coronavirus information in visually engaging ways. We’ve supplemented this with email newsletters to our subregions, municipal leaders, and planning colleagues across the region.



Communications, Community Engagement, and Data Services are helping train staff in some of the digital tools for collecting virtual feedback from the public, so that many of our projects can continue despite the crisis. This has included trainings for staff and community “town hall” meetings online, which have been very successful so far. We hope to roll out a series of webinars for our municipal audience next week, covering topics such as food insecurity, homelessness, unemployment and housing assistance, and more, along with tactics to address them. We are in the midst of surveying our stakeholders on ways MAPC can assist during the crisis, and the data we collect will inform our project priorities in the coming months.

Working from home also presents a great opportunity to do some much-needed refurbishment of our website, toolkits, marketing materials, and other projects.

## Data Services

### THE COVID-19 Layoff Housing Gap

In response to requests from member municipalities, MAPC has conducted a rapid-response analysis of unemployment claims for the first three weeks of the COVID-19 crisis to understand the impacts on workers in various occupations and their households. Using industry-level unemployment claims released weekly by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce

Development, Data Services staff estimated the number of layoffs by occupation and used Census data to estimate the average impacts on household income for each occupation. We then estimated the gap between remaining income and housing costs (after accounting for non-housing expenses) and factored in the one-time direct payments and expanded unemployment benefits provided by the federal CARES Act.

We estimate that without public assistance or dipping into their savings, 165,400 households affected by the first two weeks of unemployment claims won't be able to cover housing costs as well as other basic needs. Fortunately, the combination of expanded unemployment and direct payments authorized by the federal CARES Act will cover housing expenses for almost all of households who receive the federal assistance. However, after the direct payments are exhausted, the expanded unemployment won't cover everyone's costs. Once the one-time payments run out, 6,700 first-wave households will need an estimated \$6 million monthly to make ends meet.

The positive impact of federal assistance underscores the needs of households who are ineligible for such assistance, including undocumented workers.

Data Services is continuing to expand and update the analysis as new economic data is released. We will be releasing an updated report on April 21 and will be presenting the results in a webinar on April 22.

### **Housing Researcher Convening**

In late March, MAPC hosted a virtual convening of over a dozen housing-focused researchers and policy analysts to solicit their feedback on three MAPC research activities. We presented a proposed housing submarket typology for the region, which classifies each Census Tract into one of seven submarkets based on characteristics such as price, housing stock, and market conditions. We also shared work underway to examine speculative investment and commodification of the region's housing stock; for that effort, we use property transaction data going back to 2000 to identify "investor" purchases and real estate "flips." Finally, we presented a draft regional zoning map, which compiles and standardizes base zoning and overlay districts from all 101 MAPC municipalities. The presentations sparked a lively discussion about our findings so far and their relevance for COVID responses. All these research products are due to be released later in this fiscal year.

### **Digital Maintenance and Upgrades**

Members of the Digital, Research, and IT teams have conducted some much-needed maintenance and upgrades on our digital infrastructure. Over the past month, we have migrated more than a dozen project and agency websites to a hosted service, where they will be much more stable and secure. We also updated our geodatabase software on our on-premises and cloud-hosted servers; this will enable us to move to the most up-to-date version of GIS software and also affords better security and stability for our own web applications that use those databases. While not glamorous work (or even apparent to the public or our own staff!) this type

of IT/digital maintenance is essential for efficient development and error-free operation of our many digital applications and IT resources.

## ***Environment***

### **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP)**

*Climate-Ready Healthy Plymouth and COVID:* MAPC and partners created the first ever, for the agency and the Commonwealth, virtual Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness workshop for the Town of Plymouth. A mandatory component of the MVP Planning Grant, Plymouth's workshop was cancelled due to COVID-19. MAPC worked with the state, town, and Old Colony Planning Council to create a virtual workshop to be completed individually at the participants own time and pace. The virtual MVP workshop is part of MAPC's Climate-Ready Plymouth project - a climate change and public health vulnerability assessment and action plan. You can view the workshop on our website at <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/plymouthmvp/>

*MVP Virtual Listening Sessions:* MAPC is preparing virtual meetings for Dover, Needham, and Norwell, and final Hazard Mitigation Plan public meetings for Bellingham and Franklin. Conducting these required meetings remotely will allow these projects to be completed on or near to their original schedules.

### **Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP)**

The Arlington and Salem HMPs have been completed and submitted to MEMA and FEMA for review and approval. The Gloucester HMP 2020 Update has received a notice of Approval Pending Adoption from FEMA. Bellingham, Franklin, and Saugus all held the third meetings of their HMP/MVP Core Teams. The towns focused on reviewing and updating their hazard mitigation measures.

### **Accelerating Climate Resiliency Grants and Resilience Community of Practice**

MAPC is pleased to report a grant award of \$1.2 million from the Barr Foundation to grow our Accelerating Climate Resiliency Grant program and institute a Resilience Community of Practice. In 2019, MAPC awarded 11 municipalities over \$360,000 to implement resilience strategies identified as priorities in climate planning efforts. In 2020 and 2021, MAPC will increase the number and amount of grant awards to broaden the effort and create greater resilience impact across the region. We will also form a Resilience Community of Practice among local officials and staff, to eliminate barriers to progress in implementing climate resilience while learning from leaders locally, statewide, nationally, and globally

### **Covid-19 Impacts on FEMA Flood Map Adoption**

The Environment and Government Affairs departments are working with several South Shore communities to navigate the FEMA flood map adoption process. When flood maps are updated FEMA requires communities to adopt the new maps within six months after FEMA issues a Letter of Final Determination. Failure to adopt the maps results in suspension from the National Flood Insurance Program, which means no one in the community can purchase or renew flood

insurance. Three Norfolk County MAPC communities have a deadline of June 19, while seven MAPC communities in Plymouth County face a deadline of July 22. Towns need to adopt the maps at their Town Meeting. As it is unclear whether all communities will be able to safely hold Town Meetings before the deadlines, we are working with the Government Affairs Department to advocate for an extension of the deadlines.

**MEPA Project Review**

The projects listed below for the region were filed with the MEPA office and were ranked by MAPC for the level of review. The MAPC review categories are defined as follows:

- A Major regional project to be reviewed by the Officers and/or Executive Committee
- B Regional project to be reviewed by staff and approved by Executive Director
- C Local or regional project to be tracked by MAPC; no MEPA review needed

Summary of MEPA Projects recently reviewed and ranked by MAPC:

MEPA #	Project	Community	MEPA Status	MAPC Ranking
15995	Allston Yards	BOSTON	DEIR	B
16024	Riverside Station Redevelopment	NEWTON	DEIR	B
16183	Mill Pond Dam Removal Project	NORWOOD	ENF	C
16185	Sudbury Plaza	SUDBURY	ENF	C
16186	Curley Community Center Renovation	BOSTON	ENF	C
16157	Green's Creek Sediment Removal Project	REVERE	ENF	C
16170	Acton Water Solar Partners, LLC	ACTON	ENF	C
16172	Crane River Bank Restoration	DANVERS	ENF	C
16179	Revere-Winthrop Cable Replacement	REVERE, WINTHROP	ENF	C
16046	Northeastern University Coastal Institute	NAHANT	FEIR	C
15820	Dunham Ridge	BEVERLY	NPC	C

MAPC submitted one MEPA comment letters during this reporting period:

Riverside Station Redevelopment in Newton

This project, located at the end of the Green Line D Branch, proposes to redevelop 13.5 acres with a mixed-use, Transit-Oriented Development comprising approximately 1.03 million square feet. The site is projected to generate an estimated 11,368 new weekday vehicle trips and 2,041 parking spaces are proposed. MAPCs comment letter addressing the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) outlined concerns pertaining to advancing a robust Transportation Demand Management program, developing mode share goals, project monitoring and reporting,

mitigation, parking, and bicycle/pedestrian connections. The comment letter for this project is on MAPC's MEPA comment letter website here: <https://www.mapc.org/our-work/expertise/environment/mepa-review/>

## ***Government Affairs***

### **Coordinating Municipal COVID-19 Response**

For the past month, the Government Affairs team has worked with cities and towns in our region and throughout the Commonwealth to create a regional and coordinated response to the COVID-19 crisis. Working with Mayors Joseph Curtatone (Somerville) and Kim Driscoll (Salem), the team has held weekly calls with over 130 municipalities, connecting municipal leaders with epidemiologists and scientific experts to help arm them with critical data to make decisions on the local level. We have also been joined by Attorney General Maura Healey and Congresswoman Katharine Clark, who have given an overview of the work their offices are doing to help cities and towns, and we heard from Leo Flor, the Director of the Department of Community and Human Services in King County, Washington (Seattle), who helped shape our thinking on the local shelter, quarantine, and isolation needs in our region.

We are also coordinating a smaller weekly call among Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, 20 mayors and municipal managers, and Administration staff working directly on the crisis. These conversations have given us the opportunity to raise specific questions about local needs directly with the Administration.

Through these frequent communication channels, municipal leaders have influenced the Administration's decisions around quarantine and isolation facilities, municipal finance, strict social distancing measures, additional state closures, and efforts to protect the homeless and other vulnerable populations. We expect to continue these calls and meetings through the ongoing emergency, and to help municipalities pivot to recovery.

### **COVID-19 Legislation**

Despite transitioning to informal sessions, the Legislature has been extremely active since the State of Emergency was declared in early March. By last count, well over 50 bills have been filed to address local concerns with COVID-19. MAPC has elevated concerns around municipal finance issues, town meeting quorum requirements, and virtual town meetings. We have also taken a position in support of the eviction and foreclosure moratorium bill that is currently before a conference committee to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate bills. We expect that subsequent bills will be filed that relate to additional financial relief measures, and we have already been asked to weigh in as legislators craft those bills.

We continue to communicate with legislators about the FY21 budget. Municipalities are understandably worried about the local aid numbers that will be included in the FY21 budget, but legislators are only beginning to get a sense of the revenue loss estimates for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Metro Mayors Coalition held its first spring leadership meeting, virtually, with Senate President Karen Spilka on April 14, discussing many of the issues listed above.

## ***Land Use***

### **Master Plans**

The “Designing Dedham 2030” town-wide master plan held its public kick-off on April 4. Originally, intended to be an in-person visioning workshop, the town and MAPC adapted to running a virtual workshop instead. The workshop was broadcast live via Webex and Facebook Live and included a presentation introducing the master planning process and the content areas for the plan, with facts about existing conditions in Dedham today. The presentation integrated six interactive polling questions, where participants were able to weigh in about their priorities for the plan remotely. The one-hour session closed with live questions and answers from participants raised by typing comments throughout the presentation. The virtual session attracted 108 participants in Webex and an additional 300 views of the Facebook Live feed during the live broadcast. The session promoted an initial community survey which is active and available for residents to give additional feedback. To date, the survey has received 500 responses and will remain open for the next few weeks as the master plan effort advances.

Additional master plan efforts proceeding: MAPC is also planning for remote/on-line open houses as part of the ongoing Rockland Master Plan and the initial phase of the Winthrop Actionable Visioning project. In addition, MAPC is currently scoping a visioning process with Wrentham as phase 1 of a master plan. We hope this project will begin later this spring, and it may also include remote/on-line sessions.

### **Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRP)**

The North Reading OSRP is also proceeding towards completion with the opening of a virtual open house to collect feedback on the plan. The OSRP draft has been forwarded to the state Division of Conservation Services for review and will be formally reviewed by the Planning Board and Selectmen in May. The Hamilton OSRP was also the subject of a recent on-line open house and is moving towards project completion.

### **Housing Plans**

The Stoneham Housing Production Plan (HPP) was recently approved by DHCD. This culminates a planning process that began in 2017. The HPP was locally adopted in late 2019, pending minor modifications.

The full “Housing Lynn” steering committee held its first online working meeting where members shared their COVID-19 emergency response efforts and developed a digital engagement strategy for the remaining public process through the fall.

In addition to adapting ongoing planning processes under social distancing protocol, the Housing team is starting up several new projects, funded through a combination of DLTA, local funds, and

Community Compact awards. We'll be working with Melrose and Maynard on HPPs, as well as Ashland on an HPP in tandem with development of inclusionary zoning; several municipalities in the SWAP and TRIC subregions on developing a blueprint for a new Regional Housing Services Office, and Manchester by the Sea is working on a new 40R Smart Growth Overlay District.

The Economic Development and Housing teams will be working with Data Services to study the impacts of COVID-19 on households and the housing market so that we can recommend local and state policy and program responses. This work will entail consideration of which sectors may experience high rates of unemployment, associated housing cost burdens, and changes in the housing market.

### **Economic Development**

The Economic Development team helped the Venture Café in Roxbury secure \$350,000 from the EDA to provide business development and entrepreneur programs at the Roxbury Innovation Center in Boston. With support from the City of Boston, this funding will provide much-needed services at a crucial time for small businesses in the area.

The team also launched four new COVID-19 response projects, in addition to adapting current projects and preparing to launch new projects later this Spring.

**Unemployment Rapid Response Plan:** Economic Development staff are developing a plan to respond to the current unemployment crisis in Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Revere and Somerville, in partnership with the Workforce Investment Boards/Mass Hire Career Centers and DHCD. The plan will focus on ways to meet current needs of unemployed workers, immediate job placement options in industries that are currently safely hiring, and future job placement options. Following the completion of this plan, the team will work with Revere on a long-term workforce development strategy.

**Small Business Support Plan:** Economic Development is working with Arlington, Medford, Salem, and the Newton/Needham Chamber of Commerce and other local chambers, to develop a plan to support small businesses in the immediate-, short- and long-term. The plan includes an analysis of surveys conducted in the region, regulatory recommendations for municipalities particularly to help businesses get up and running post social restrictions, and programs and policies to support businesses, such as CDBG grant programs and tax abatements.

**Small Business Storytelling Project:** The Small Business Support Plan will be complemented by a project that will capture first-hand stories of immigrant business owners. The project will be done in partnership with Arts & Culture, with the goal of informing policy and programming.

**Long-term Recovery Planning:** The Economic Development team is pivoting the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which is currently being designed, to focus on long-term economic recovery post COVID-19. The CEDS will be completed this summer, and the team is currently working with the EDA to secure additional funding to implement the plan.

Quincy Small Business Plan: Economic Development staff completed the Quincy Small Business Plan, a five-year plan to address the needs of small businesses in the city, in partnership the City of Quincy and the Quincy Chamber of Commerce. The plan is particularly timely given the current situation. The project was funded through a combination of DLTA and City funds.

## ***Municipal Collaboration***

### **HMCC Update**

Since the end of February, MAPC staff have been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through the team's work on behalf of the Region 3 Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC). Staff have been working with healthcare facilities, including hospitals, local public health departments, long term care facilities, doctors' offices, EMS service providers and other healthcare entities on all of their personal protective equipment (PPE) requests related to COVID-19. The team first tries to fulfill these requests at a regional level and if that is not successful, staff work directly with the COVID Command Center to obtain these items. Additionally, the team has been working with local public health coalitions and hospitals to revise their budgets to reallocate HMCC funding towards COVID-19 response efforts.

### **Public Safety Procurement**

Our current fiscal report comparing FY2019 and FY2020 shows a \$12,160,167 increase in total sales for the Greater Boston Police Council contracts versus the same time last year. Overall GBPC sales to date in this fiscal year have been \$47,163,318. We have seen an increase in both standard vehicle sales as well as in the larger scale items, such as trucks and sweepers. Sales for the Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts (FCAM) also show an increase of \$5,856,031 between FY19 and 20. FCAM sales have totaled \$20,438,594 to date this year. There have been more purchases of our more complex aerial options as compared to the previous fiscal year.

Of course, it is impossible to predict future sales, but we expect a significant decline due to the fiscal stress of the COVID-19 crisis.

### **NERAC**

MAPC staff recently assisted the Northeast Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council (NERAC) in drafting its Regional Plan for FFY2020. The plan was developed over the course of two Council meetings on March 12 and 24, and was submitted to EOPSS on April 3. The plan outlines with detailed project justifications how NERAC will spend the anticipated allocation of \$1.5 million from the FFY2020 State Homeland Security Program. Proposed projects include several trainings and exercises for first responders, equipment for the regional cache program, and improvements to communications infrastructure that were prioritized after the Merrimack

Valley Gas Explosions in 2018. After-Action Reports from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and MEMA were used to guide the funding decisions regarding the interoperability upgrades.

Also, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Council allocated \$300,605 on March 24 for the purchase of 27 portable ventilators for use in area hospitals. The ventilators will replace older models that were purchased during the H1N1 pandemic in 2009 and have reached the end of their useable lifespan, and will provide the region's hospitals with additional surge capacity during this outbreak and future mass casualty incidents. MAPC is now procuring the ventilators after officially receiving approval for the project from EOPSS and FEMA on April 2.

### **Shannon Community Safety Initiative**

On March 4, MAPC organized the 2020 Community Safety Day at the State House. The event was well attended and featured remarks from many of the legislators that support the program's continued funding, including Rep. Adrian Madaro, Sen. Joseph Boncore, and others. Staff from the Municipal Collaboration Department will continue to work with the Government Affairs team in the coming weeks to lobby for a return to the historic high of \$13 million for the FY2021 Shannon Grant.

In addition, on January 15, \$652,534 was awarded to the Metro Mayors Coalition Shannon Grant Site for FY2020, representing a roughly 50% increase from FY19. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak there was no formal announcement ceremony from Governor Baker regarding the award. Entering its 13th year, the MMC Shannon Grant CSI will continue to foster collaboration between law enforcement and prevention partners to provide at-risk youth with employment, recreation, and community engagement opportunities. New for the FY2020 grant is funding allocated for shared mental health services and more collaborative programs between partners. MAPC will work with partner organizations and police departments to ensure that Shannon-funded programs continue as normally as possible in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Several organizations (Teen Empowerment, Winthrop CASA, etc.) have already transitioned to remote activities for at-risk youth, including holding virtual meetings and engaging youth via social media.

## ***Public Health***

### **MAGIC Healthy Aging, Healthy Living Report**

The first Age Friendly Plan produced by MAPC, the "MAGIC Healthy Aging, Healthy Living Report" assesses the transportation and housing needs of older adults of the 13 member towns of MAGIC subregion, and presents a range of local and regional strategies for addressing those needs. Implementation of the Healthy Aging, Healthy Living strategies will happen through regional coordination as well as municipalities acting independently.

### **Local Public Health Shared Services**

The Public Health team in partnership with Municipal Collaboration have been awarded two local public health shared services grants. One grant is for a four MetroWest municipalities (Framingham, Ashland, Holliston, and Hudson) and the other includes municipalities on the North Shore, led by Peabody. Both grants will help establish public health nurse (PHN) positions that will be shared among the cities and towns. While PHNs play a critical role under typical conditions, the importance of their role has been amplified during the current COVID-19 crisis. We are already working with the involved municipalities to take lessons from the current response to better shape the positions and prepare those involved for future recovery and response efforts.

### **Support for Local Public Health Responses to COVID-19 Crisis**

The Public Health and Municipal Collaboration teams are taking an active role in assisting local health departments and their municipalities in responding to the coronavirus outbreak. The teams have assisted the state to identify local public health needs and in the distribution of approximately \$775,000 to cities and towns in HMCC Region 3, which covers 45 communities in Northeastern Massachusetts, including the North Shore, Cape Ann, and Merrimack Valley.

The teams have also worked with local public health staff to identify and share resources related to operating alternate shelter and quarantine and isolation facilities, providing clinical and behavioral health care, and addressing food insecurity. The teams provided support to Revere, Chelsea and Everett officials in establishing an isolation facility for COVID positive individuals without permanent living arrangements, connecting them to state officials and resources. In addition, the teams are building capacity for the recovery phase so that MAPC is well positioned to support local public departments and other municipal departments as cities and towns return to operations post-pandemic.

### **Blue Hills Regional Coordinating Council (BHRCC) Design Sprint**

The [Blue Hills Regional Coordinating Council \(BHRCC\)](#) engaged the Public Health team, in collaboration with representatives from DSI and Transportation, to lead a design sprint. The sprint focused on staff at health and human service organizations that assist individuals and families who face transportation barriers in accessing daily goods (e.g., food), physical and behavioral health care services, job training, and places to recreate and socialize. Over three sessions, MAPC and BHRCC facilitated discussions and work that resulted in a prototype digital application that could allow health and human service staff to share info among themselves, connect people with potential transport options, and collect information that could be used to make transportation system improvements.



## *Strategic Initiatives*

### **MetroCommon 2050**

The MetroCommon 2050 is continuing all internal and external work largely as planned, with the obvious change of no in-person meetings for the foreseeable future. Instead, our team hosted a virtual External Advisory Committee and two remote Community Engagement External Advisory Committee meetings this past month. In these meetings, we discussed how the plan should adapt to be more responsive to COVID-19; we received input on the three Action Area narratives we've completed and added to the Digital Hub (Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation, Housing for Everyone, and Inclusive Growth and Mobility); and we presented our plan to engage subject matter experts and grassroots leaders around the Action Areas to determine the steps we'll need to take to reach our MetroCommon goals. The Action Area engagement of subject matter experts will begin this week, with the goal of continuing to populate our list of systemic challenges and opportunities the plan needs to address for the next 30 years.

Staff that have been assigned to draft policy recommendations in nine topic areas have made great progress over the past several weeks, conducting research and outreach to external stakeholders. The first cohort of policy writers will have their draft recommendations complete by the end of this month, at which point there will be a period of feedback and discussion with the other policy writers to ensure coordination across content areas.

### **Community Engagement**

The Community Engagement Division hosted its first virtual TALKSHOP on March 19 covering the topic of Online Open Houses. Iolando Spinola hosted Digital Communications Specialist Elise Harmon and Economic Development Planner I Jennifer Kaplan. They highlighted how an Online Open House is more than just an online survey, it's a framing that can generate genuine understanding and reliable public input. This TALKSHOP experience served as a first time convening of many staff over a webinar event.

Additional TALKSHOPS were held covering such topics as best practices in collecting and analyzing digital engagement and focus group data; improving virtual facilitation skills; and best practices around survey creation and the platform Qualtrics.

### **Subregions**

Subregional Coordinators have been communicating with their chairs and members over the past month, checking in on their needs and responding by updating their meeting topics and allowing for more time to have municipalities connect. Most of the regularly scheduled meetings have continued over Webex or Zoom. The meetings have included useful updates from Government Affairs staff on legislation passed and additional useful information about COVID-19 response and resources. Additionally, outside speakers (CE Team, CTPS, etc.) presented on local projects of relevance such as Net Zero, Senior Transportation, and Virtual Engagement Best Practices. Coordinators have been making time in their meetings for community sharing as well. Through these meetings and their ongoing communication with subregional representatives, coordinators have been tracking needs and concerns and exploring ways to provide support, resources, and innovative strategies for work and projects.

### **Learning and Evaluation**

In response to the fact that MAPC staff are working remotely, DSI created an internal website to house all the information staff need to successfully work from home. Our internal “Working Remotely” site provides one space where MAPC staff can catalogue and locate the information they need and update it when necessary. We credit MAPC’s IT department with the template for the site and supporting the roll out. It’s worth mentioning that the Community Engagement team went a step further and used the opportunity to launch a digital handbook on remote engagement practices. We expect this to be model that other departments follow in the future.

## ***Transportation***

### **Taxi/Livery Emergency Transportation Fund**

Staff are working with MassDevelopment to seek a way to expedite funding to provide local transportation services for vulnerable populations during the current crisis, such as homeless transportation, food and medicine access, non-emergency medical trips, and trips for essential workers. The funds would come from fees charged on Uber and Lyft rides and rides would be provided by taxi and livery drivers.

### **Bike Share**

Staff have been working hard to expand the BlueBikes system into five new communities (Arlington, Revere, Chelsea, Watertown, and Newton) and we're close to having a contract that the new communities and Lyft all agree to adopt. We are hopeful that the new system expansion will be operational by mid-summer. The current system is still operating, although ridership is down by approximately 80 percent.

MAPC also released an RFP for bike share services in the North Shore in mid-March and have already received one response. We expect to have all responses and scoring completed by mid-May.

### **Boston MPO**

The MPO has developed the TIP for FFY 2021 - 2025. Each year, the Boston MPO decides how to spend approximately \$110 million in federal funding to complement state and local transportation infrastructure investments in the Boston region. In general, the MPO focused on addressing project cost increases, which pushed some projects out to later years. Details of the changes can be found at <https://www.ctps.org/tip>.