



## **Inner Core Committee Meeting Highlights**

Wednesday, January 4, 2012 from 9:30-11:00am at MAPC in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room

---

### **Agenda**

- Welcome and Community Exchange
- Municipal Governments and Accessibility Issues
- Upcoming Inner Core Committee Events and Activities

### **Welcome and Community Exchange**

Four communities, Arlington, Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville were represented at the ICC meeting and each gave a brief update on proposed transportation projects, zoning amendments, and other local projects, as well as updates on planning-related job openings in their communities.

### **Municipal Governments and Accessibility Issues**

MAPC Land Resources Planner Joan Blaustein gave a presentation on municipalities and accessibility. The presentation included a brief history of Federal legislation related to handicap accessibility. It provided detail on requirements of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), with particular attention to requirements for state and local governments. ADA is considered civil rights legislation and holds state and local governments to a higher standard than private entities. Ms. Blaustein's presentation also included an overview of Massachusetts building code regulations for accessibility in public areas of a building under the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB). Massachusetts regulations have been generally more advance than Federal regulations. The presentation included what municipalities need to do in order to be in compliance with ADA, and information on enforcement through the Department of Justice Project Civic Access.

Beyond the basics of ADA and Massachusetts AAB compliance, the presentation also covered small steps that state and local governments could take to improve accessibility in their facilities, at their events, in public rights-of-way, and in their communications. Ms. Blaustein shared a YouTube video created by MAPC that features her navigating around MAPC offices and outside MAPC on Temple Place in a wheelchair, to show areas where small, low-cost changes could be made to improve accessibility. Many of the changes that could be made would not involve any construction – changes such as ensuring chairs and tables set up in a conference room allow enough room for a wheelchair to pass through, or moving trash cans or other items out of the way to allow for a wheelchair to easily turn around.

Following Ms. Blaustein's presentation, participants discussed some of the challenges and tradeoffs they have faced in their work as it relates to accessibility:

- A participant mentioned that the MBTA would like to make bus stops longer to accommodate wheelchairs in their municipality, but doing so would take out 2-4 parking spaces per bus stop. The tradeoffs would be lost parking revenue as well as the community's perception that those are critical parking spaces in an active commercial area. On the other hand, longer bus stops would allow the bus to pull fully into the curb, which would help to prevent it from blocking travel lanes for cars and bicycles. Also, providing universal access does not only benefit wheelchair users – it can benefit the aging population, people carrying strollers, people carrying grocery bags, and many others.
- Communities can follow up by finding out more about municipal plans and policies for ADA compliance, and by finding out who their municipality's ADA Coordinator is. In many communities, the ADA Coordinator has other duties and the position is housed in different departments in different cities and towns – for some, it's in the Department

of Public Works, for some it's a staff person who runs the housing rehabilitation program, and some communities have a Disabilities Commission with its own staff. Planning and community development staff can work with ADA Coordinators to ensure that local regulations are written appropriately and can be implemented feasibly.

- Participants discussed challenges with snow removal. MAPC has a Snow Removal Policy Toolkit, available at <http://mapc.org/resources/snow-removal-policy>, that may be useful to address these concerns.
- A participant mentioned the challenges associated with abuse of handicap parking permits and raised the question of whether the policy of offering free parking for wheelchair-accessible parking spaces makes sense given abuse in the system.

### **Upcoming Inner Core Committee Events and Activities**

Inner Core Committee Coordinator Manisha Bewtra provided an update on upcoming meetings and activities for the remainder of FY 2012.

### **ICC Representatives Present**

Manisha Bewtra, MAPC, ICC Coordinator

Bill Deignan, Cambridge

Tom Kadzis, Boston

Lori Massa, Somerville

Laura Wiener, Arlington, ICC Chair

### **Other Participants**

Joan Blaustein, MAPC

### **Meeting Materials** (available on ICC website, <http://mapc.org/icc>)

- Agenda
- PowerPoint Presentation
- YouTube Video