Executive Director’s Report  
Mid-December 2020 through Mid-February 2021  
Submitted to the Executive Committee  
February 23, 2021

Arts & Culture

Creative Public Health Communications

Arts & Culture has partnered with Public Health to release a mini-grant call for artists, designers, and creatives to pitch concepts and deliverables to inspire COVID-safe behaviors and vaccination. This first phase will make $30,000 available for grants ranging from $1,000 to $8,000. The first of two information sessions occurred on February 12 and 39 prospective applicants attended. Awards are expected by March 5. The final deliverables will be shared with regional partners throughout MAPC, with a particular focus on cities and towns in the MetroNorth area. Learn more at www.mapc.org/covid19-art.

Regional Immigrant Entrepreneur Storytelling Project

In January, Arts & Culture and Economic Development released three short films directed by artist and filmmaker Daphne Xu. A public screening of “Quincy, from a Distance” is scheduled for March 3. A second event is scheduled for March 17 where MAPC will present findings and policy recommendations followed by a discussion with project partners. Participants at the events will have the option of Mandarin interpretation. Learn more by visiting www.mapc.org/resource-library/regional-immigrant-entrepreneur-storytelling-project.
To help municipalities chart a path to recovery for local arts and cultural organizations, MAPC is working with Arlington, Boston, Beverly, and Franklin to document the impact of COVID-19 on artists, creative enterprises, and events. We have released an artists’ survey (350 responses so far!) to track the impact of COVID-19 on artists in the four municipalities. In addition, the project team launched a project website that features preliminary findings updated on a weekly basis. On January 29, the project partners convened to discuss emerging needs and ensure the project continued to align with those needs. This conversation resulted in a shift away from focus groups toward data collection to support increased arts and culture programming within public health guidelines.

**Clean Energy**

**Net Zero in Action with Arlington, Melrose, and Natick**

MAPC completed its technical assistance to Arlington, Melrose, and Natick on their local net zero action plans at the end of December. Natick released its draft Net Zero Action Plan in January for public review, and Arlington and Melrose will be vetting their draft plans through a stakeholder process later this spring. MAPC is excited to see the three communities putting best practices from the MAPC’s Net Zero Playbook into action in their local plans.

**State Draft Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030**

On December 30, the Baker-Polito Administration released the MA 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap alongside in-depth technical reports on buildings, economics and health, energy pathways, land, non-energy, and transportation sector. The Administration also released its Interim Clean Energy and Climate Plan (CECP) for 2030, which provides descriptions of the actions the Commonwealth plans to undertake through the 2020s to ensure the 2030 emissions limit is met. MAPC issued a statement regarding the release of the draft CECP, which can be found here.

In general, MAPC was quite pleased to see the CECP commit to decarbonize our buildings, connect communities to clean energy, and increase accessibility to carbon-free modes of transportation for all. We particularly appreciated the references to establishing aggressive caps on fossil fuel emissions from heating buildings and updating the Massachusetts Rideshare Regulation to accelerate the reduction in single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) commutes, among others.

However, while zero-emission vehicles, the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI), and telework receive attention in the transportation section, far too little attention is currently given to optimizing smart growth land use strategies to decrease vehicle miles traveled (VMT) (see Data Services’ research brief on this topic here) or to improving and expanding public
transit. Additionally, decarbonization strategies for existing buildings beyond the heating fuel caps are primarily assigned to a new commission and task force to figure out.

MAPC is formulating comments on these sections and others for the Administration to consider in finalizing the CECP and aligning the state’s plan to our strategic priorities for the Greater Boston region. The public comment period has been extended to March 22, 2021.

**Green Municipal Aggregation: Collaboration on the North Shore and Launch in Boston**

On January 7, MAPC wrapped up its first year facilitating the North Shore Green Municipal Aggregation (GMA) Working Group. The meeting reviewed findings to-date on collaborative options, considered preferences for more local renewables, and discussed next steps for communities and the group as a whole. The group of 11 North Shore municipalities will continue to meet to share best practices and pursue collaboration in smaller cohorts of communities, with the most promising model involving a small additional fee collected that would be used to build renewable energy projects locally or to hire shared sustainability staff across communities.

Boston also launched its Community Choice Electricity program this month, including 10% more renewable electricity, purchased via MA Class I Renewable Energy Credits (RECs), than the 18% currently required under the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS). Arlington, Brookline, Newton, Natick, Somerville, Watertown, and Winchester also have GMA programs with 10% or more extra renewable energy beyond the 18% standard. MAPC supported Boston’s program creation by presenting at City Council in April 2017 and participating in the city’s aggregation working group that advised and supported the program’s launch.

**Multi-Town Gas Leaks Initiative (MTGLI) Previews Live Leak Map and Resource Page**

At the February 18 meeting of MTGLI, attended by more than 40 municipal leaders and local advocates, National Grid presented its new live gas leak map and a related resource page, which will answer a set of frequently asked questions and a non-emergency email address to contact with gas leaks questions. National Grid developed these resources in response to more than a year of advocacy by MAPC and MTGLI, and members will have opportunities to provide input to improve them in the future.

**Communications**

**Blog Series: Spotlight on DLTA**

MAPC launched a monthly series of blogs on the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grants distributed among the state’s 13 Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs), including MAPC, to provide cities and towns with technical staff to work on projects within the expertise of RPAs. The series will help highlight the importance and flexibility of this important funding program. The first two blogs in the series were published in January and February.
On the entire Planning 101 blog, we have published 23 blog posts since December, with 4,415 total views, a major growth.

Digital Report: Exploring Youth Mental Health on the North Shore

MAPC's communications teams designed a fully-digital report on our youth mental health project in North Shore/Cape Ann communities. Read it here.

CEDS: Report Design & Economic Development Web Page Redesign

Communications staff worked with the Economic Development team to design the 2020-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and update the Economic Development webpage with information about new areas of work. We are launching a comprehensive press strategy focused on equity, resilience, and COVID recovery around the CEDS this month.

Community Engagement Webpage Redesign

Communications staff worked with the Community Engagement team to rewrite and redesign the department's webpage, publish blog posts about best practices, and launch a brand new community engagement newsletter. See the new website here: www.mapc.org/our-work/services-for-cities-towns/community-engagement.

Legislative Advocacy

Communications staff worked with the Government Affairs team to advocate for legislative priorities, including Climate Roadmap legislation and key priorities in the economic development and transportation bond bills. This including creating Salsa “take action” campaigns to encourage stakeholders to e-mail their legislators and Governor Baker, planning and executing a social media strategy, and publishing blogs and statements, as well as issuing press statements that were picked up widely in the media.

Data Services

Impacts of Land Use on VMT and GHG

In December, MAPC released a research brief, “The Impacts of Land Use and Pricing in Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled and Transport Emissions in Massachusetts.” The study was motivated by a desire to evaluate in a quantitative way the influence of land use and housing policy on future household travel behavior across the region. The analysis is particularly relevant in the context of the recently released draft of the state’s Clean Energy and Climate Plan (see pp. 2-3 of this report), which focuses heavily on vehicle electrification to achieve emissions reductions, but does not place sufficient emphasis on the importance of complementary land use polices to reduce VMT.

Our analysis looked at different scenarios ranging from a “Smart Growth” scenario wherein future housing growth is concentrated in the inner core and gateway cities to a “Sprawl” scenario where household growth occurs mostly in lower density suburbs. The main findings
substantiate the importance of land use in influencing household vehicle travel: the Smart Growth scenario shows a reduction in vehicle travel of over 5% compared to the Sprawl scenario by the year 2030. The report underscores that smart land use policies must be considered as a key strategy for achieving the state’s 2030 and 2050 targets for transportation GHG reductions. Along with other research and discussions with transit and sustainable transportation advocacy groups, this study directly informs the MAPC comment submission currently being drafted in response to the CECP.

In addition to studying the impact of land use, the report also evaluated a series of transportation pricing strategies, which can have significantly different impacts on travel demand and GHG.

Congratulations to Senior Land Use & Transportation Analyst Conor Gately for his pathbreaking research on this important topic!

**Consortium for Scenario Planning Conference**

Last month, Data Services Director Tim Reardon and Senior Research Analyst Sarah Philbrick presented at the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy’s Consortium for Scenario Planning (virtual) Conference. Tim participated on the panel “Leading with Equity in Scenario Planning,” where he discussed the current work Data Services is doing to understand more fully the implications of race and ethnicity forecasting in transportation planning. Sarah presented on a panel called “After COVID: Future Scenarios for Transportation, Housing, and the Economy,” where she shared different COVID-19 economic recovery scenarios the agency created this past summer. A write up of the conference and a nod to Sarah’s presentation can be found [here](#).

**Data Requests**

Last fall, Data Services resumed efforts to record and catalogue the many data requests we receive from MAPC staff and external stakeholders. Our time responding to these requests is funded through our assessment resources from member municipalities.

Over the last five months, we’ve used an updated system to track 54 data requests. The majority of these requests were initiated by MAPC staff, the rest were initiated from stakeholders representing:

- Governments (Municipal (5), Regional (2), and State (2))
- Academic Institutions (5)
- Organizations (4) and private companies (2)

The most-requested information type was demographic data, followed by data on projections. We look forward to being able to share more information about this line of support in upcoming reports.
Environment

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP)

MAPC held a public meeting with the Carlisle Select Board on February 9 to brief the board and the public on the combined MVP/Hazard Mitigation Plan. The local Core Team met previously, on January 6, to review and update the status of the town’s mitigation measures.

Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs)

Needham received final approval for their updated HMP on January 22 and will now be eligible for FEMA grants for the next 5 years. Weymouth kicked off planning for their new HMP on March 4. The team drafting the plan includes town staff, the Director of the Weymouth Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Conservation Commission.

Wayland's HMP received a notice of Approval Pending Adoption from FEMA on January 28. The Board of Selectmen will vote to adopt the plan this month. Bellingham and Franklin both received final letters of approval from FEMA for their HMPs. MAPC prepared these two plans under a joint two-town MVP grant which also included an MVP workshop last year and preparation of a final MVP report.

Woburn and Milton have contracted with MAPC to update their HMPs.

Climate Convenings

Thirty members of MAPC’s South Shore Climate Network gathered on December 10 to hear reports on the progress of two state climate initiatives. Sara Grady, MassBays South Shore Regional Coordinator and North and South River Watershed Association Ecologist, served on the Commission on Ocean Acidification. Sara reported out on the findings and recommendations of the Commission. Ian Cooke, Executive Director of the Neponset River Watershed Association, served on MA DEP’s Stormwater Advisory Committee. Ian reported on DEP’s proposals to update stormwater regulations to reflect increasing precipitation.

Accelerating Climate Resiliency Grant

MAPC has released a Request for a third round of grants under the Accelerating Climate Resiliency (ACR) grant program funded by the Barr Foundation. A webinar for grant applicants was held on February 18, and responses are due on February 26. MAPC’s review team will evaluate proposals and recommend projects for funding beginning in April.

MAPC also launched the Resilience Community of Practice, which is a new feature of the ACR program. The first webinar was held on February 2, bringing together the grantees working on projects funded by the second round of ACR grants that began last year.
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEPA #</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>MEPA Status</th>
<th>MAPC Ranking</th>
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<tr>
<td>16319</td>
<td>North Allston Storm Drain Extension Project</td>
<td>BOSTON</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>16320</td>
<td>Enterprise Research Project</td>
<td>BOSTON</td>
<td>ENF</td>
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<td>COHASSET</td>
<td>ENF</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>ENF</td>
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<td>88 Black Falcon Avenue</td>
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<td>ENF</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
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<td>MBTA Service Level Reduction</td>
<td>GREATER BOSTON AREA</td>
<td>ENF</td>
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<tr>
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<td>The Range Bar &amp; Grille</td>
<td>HINGHAM</td>
<td>ENF</td>
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<tr>
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<td>ENF</td>
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<td>MassDOT Snow and Ice Control Program</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>Draft Envt. Status Report</td>
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<td>FEIR</td>
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<td>LYNN</td>
<td>SEIR</td>
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<td>WILMINGTON</td>
<td>DEIR</td>
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<tr>
<td>16268</td>
<td>Duxbury Beach Protection Project</td>
<td>DUXBURY</td>
<td>SEIR</td>
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EOEEA Secretary Theoharides issued Certificates for the Boynton Yards Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and the Dorchester Bay City Environmental Notification Form (ENF), projects for which MAPC previously submitted comment letters.
Boynton Yards
This project, located approximately a quarter mile walking distance of the planned MBTA Union Station in Somerville, is a mixed-use development that includes four buildings containing approximately 1,365,000 square feet. A total of 1,050 parking spaces are proposed and approximately 6,700 daily vehicle trips are forecasted.

MAPC’s comment letter focused on the proposed parking program and asked that the Secretary require the Proponent to aim for a higher future transit mode share and a reduced number of parking spaces. MAPC specifically asked for the Secretary to require the Proponent to prepare a revised parking program after reevaluating the number of parking spaces based on a shared parking analysis and identifying the number of parking spaces that can be reduced through implementation of additional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures. Accordingly, the Secretary’s Certificate requires the Proponent to complete a “comprehensive analysis of shared parking and other opportunities to reduce the number of proposed parking spaces.” The Certificate even states, “A key strategy for reducing auto trips to the site is minimizing the parking supply.”

The Certificate also calls for the Proponent to evaluate additional TDM measures that will be implemented to increase the use of public transit. For next steps, the Proponent will be required to prepare a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).

Dorchester Bay City
Dorchester Bay City is a proposed mixed-use redevelopment totaling approximately 5.9 million square feet of building program across two parcels. Full build-out of the site is anticipated to occur over a period of 10-15 years. At full build-out, the project is projected to generate an estimated 16,700 daily vehicle trips and include approximately 2,650 parking spaces. MAPC’s key comments included coordination with proximate roadway projects, access to JFK/UMass Station, advancing a parking program, implementing a robust TDM program, and developing a mode share and monitoring program. These comments were all reflected in the Certificate. The Certificate has also recommended the convening of a Transportation Working Group and a Resiliency Working Group. For next steps, the Proponent will be required to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR).

The comment letters for both projects are available on MAPC’s MEPA comment letter website here: https://www.mapc.org/ourwork/expertise/environment/mepa-review/

Government Affairs
Legislative Priorities
The legislative session drew to a close in the early hours of January 6. In the final days of the legislative session, we saw the passage of the Climate Bill, the Transportation Bond Bill, and the Economic Development bill. MAPC issued statements on the three bills, which can be found at the following links, and more info on each follows:
Climate Bill. Legislation reshaping the roadmap to 2050 on climate mitigation has now reached the Governor’s desk twice in as many months. The Governor has indicated, both in his pocket veto letter from January 14 (S.7) and in the language he returned to the legislature for consideration on February 8 (S.13), an interest in working with the Legislature to come to consensus on a final bill. MAPC has been glad to weigh in with legislators as they consider the Governor’s recommendations. We were glad to see the Governor put forward language to strengthen the environmental justice protections in the MEPA process and clarifying the intent of the bill to shift Mass Save incentives away from fossil fuel infrastructure. We are concerned, however, that some sections returned to the Legislature weaken the content of the local opt-in stretch energy code. This includes removing a definition of a “net zero” building and reducing the number of energy efficiency experts added to the Board of Building Regulations and Standards, which oversees the base building code. The Speaker and Senate President’s joint statements of support for the legislation, including the unprecedented push for swift re-passage of the bill at the beginning of this legislative session, indicate their strong support for returning a bill to the Governor’s desk soon.

Transportation Bond Bill. This $16.5 billion transportation finance bill included many important programs to meet our capital needs. It includes $30 million for Complete Streets and a specific carve out for low-income communities, a provision championed by MAPC.

We were disappointed to see the Governor veto several important provisions, including the creation of a Congestion Commission, a low-income fare program, new TNC fees, and new data requirements for TNCs. We are already working with legislative sponsors to re-file those provisions this session.

Economic Development Bill. This five-year bond bill will help the Commonwealth jumpstart its economic recovery. It includes important funding for the Mass Growth Capital Corporation and a new $10 million fund to support regional planning efforts. Importantly, this bill also includes the long-sought Housing Choices provisions, and a new requirement for by-right multifamily zoning in “transit zones.” We were disappointed to see the Governor veto important tenant protections, including language that would have given tenants a limited right to purchase their property, and language that would have sealed evictions after five years. We are working to help DHCD to issue guidance on these important new programs, and we will be holding a webinar on these topics with CHAPA and MHP in early March.

Budget Priorities

Despite the fact that we only recently passed the FY21 budget, the start of the new legislative session also kicked off the FY22 budget conversation. The Governor filed his budget in early January and included $3 million for DLTA and $11.3 million for Shannon, both representing level-funding from the FY21 budget. The Governor’s budget relies on an assumed 3.5% rate of growth and increases funding to Local Aid accordingly. The Governor’s
proposal also fully funds the first year of the Student Opportunity Act, which was supposed to be funded in FY21, but was not due to the impact of the COVID pandemic on state revenues. The Governor's budget proposal reflects a slight decrease in spending from FY21 (.7%) and relies on $1.6 billion from the Stabilization Fund.

COVID 19 Coordination

The Government Affairs team continues to coordinate calls and resources for mayors and Managers in the MAPC region and beyond. We have held calls with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and we are continuing to meet and talk with members of our federal delegation.

Communities have been increasingly frustrated with the Administration’s vaccine rollout and have been urging the Governor to allow for a bigger role for local boards of health. In many communities across the Commonwealth, municipalities are eager to provide vaccine support and have sufficient capacity to do so. But the Administration has so far been reticent to give cities and towns more control over their vaccine distribution.

Land Use

Master Plans

Winthrop

Led by Principal Planner Carlos Montanez, MAPC successfully completed the Win2030 Vision Plan for Winthrop. Carlos presented the final Vision Plan at the January 19 Town Council meeting. MAPC is coordinating with the town’s recently hired planning director to leverage the completed Vision into Winthrop’s forthcoming master planning effort. The process included committee meetings, two online bilingual surveys (Spanish and English), and two public online workshops. The two online Zoom public presentations and discussions were carefully paired with informational content and online community surveys to extend opportunity for community input. About 50 people participated in the workshops and 765 responded to the surveys.

The Win2030 Vision plan includes one vision statement, 29 overlapping, high-community consensus goals, and 16 multi-pronged recommendations. The statement begins with a brief overview of town character and assets before the bulk of it ties together the priority, high-level consensus goals. Among them are: aspirations for future redevelopment opportunities and housing options; flood resiliency for this seaside town; increasing customer foot traffic; traffic calming; park protection; and expanded educational opportunities.

The recommended strategies, actions, and resources highlighted in the Win2030 Vision Plan report are geared toward accomplishing these goals through mixed-use, multi-purpose vertical in-fill redevelopment paired with multimodal transportation solutions, and an eye toward ensuring redevelopments enhance the streetscape with amenities for walkability and leisure.
Also spearheaded by Carlos, MAPC successfully completed the Rockland Master Plan 2030. The town adopted the master plan at a joint Planning Board/Select Board meeting on December 15. The planning process included committee meetings, two online surveys, and three public workshops (including an online two-part workshop). Bilingual community outreach in Portuguese and English with physical flyers and social media advertisements resulted in approximately 60 workshop participants and 522 survey respondents.

Some highlights of the goals and recommendations of the master plan include:

1) strengthening Rail Trail connections to other assets;
2) improving pedestrian infrastructure and amenities along Union Street downtown, and linking these with transit improvements;
3) proactively helping restaurants with permanent outdoor dining to enliven the streetscape;
4) leveraging Town Hall and the Community Center for high-impact multi-purpose indoor/outdoor functions;
5) expanding mobility options by partnering with employers and neighboring communities to connect workers at major employment centers via a shared hybrid shuttle service; and
6) expanding the scope of the 2018 Joint Waterworks Myers Avenue facility engineering study to go beyond solving existing water shortages, and allow the potential for future economic and community growth.

Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRP)

Norwell
The Norwell OSRP was submitted to the MA Department of Conservation Services (DCS) and received Conditional Approval. In the next few weeks, the MAPC staff and the OSRP Steering Committee will work to address comments from DCS and the public, as well as to present the
plan and collect support letters from the many Boards and Committees that have been involved in the planning process and will be critical to implementation.

**Walpole**
The Walpole OSRP was submitted to DCS and received Conditional Approval. In the next few weeks, the MAPC staff and the Walpole OSRP Core Team will work to address comments from DCS and finalize the plan. Among the recommendations, the town is interested in building on recent rail trail success by supporting concept of the Metacomet Greenway trail with a potential connection from Walpole, through Norfolk, Wrentham, North Attleboro, and eventually meeting up with the Blackstone Bikeway in Central Falls, RI.

**Hull**
In February, DCS approved Hull’s OSRP through June 2027. MAPC facilitated the OSRP process and drafted the plan, which was last updated 20 years ago. The OSRP offers strategies and actions to preserve and protect Hull’s parks, open space, and beaches and improve existing playing fields and playgrounds.

**Economic Development**

**Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**
Following last month’s adoption by the Executive Committee, the Economic Development team incorporated the feedback and submitted the plan to the Economic Development Administration. The plan will be launched officially in late February/early March in coordination with the members of the Advisory Committee.

**Support for Business Districts and Commercial Corridors**
The Economic Development team is building the capacity of communities to respond to the needs of local businesses through a variety of targeted initiatives. Over the past two months, Economic Development Planner II Jenn Kaplan led a peer exchange for communities participating in the MassDOT Shared Streets program. (See full update in the Transportation section.) MAPC also has been selected to provide technical assistance to five municipalities through the Local Rapid Recovery Plan program funded by the Mass Downtown Initiative.

**Chelsea-Everett Small Business Needs Assessment**
Senior Planner Raul Gonzalez worked Jenn Kaplan, Bunker Hill Community College, and the cities of Chelsea and Everett to create a plan for a business support center at the college. Given that the study was conducted as the COVID-19 crisis evolved, such a center is more critical than ever to provide support to emerging and existing businesses in these communities. The study recommended that the BHCC Enterprise Center provide business consulting services, for-credit courses, continuing education workshops, and seminars on the topics of marketing, financial management, business model planning and more.

**Revere Workforce Development Plan**
Senior Planner Josh Eichen worked with a cross-departmental team from MAPC to complete the first-ever workforce development strategy for the City of Revere. The plan built on MAPC’s work on the Revere Master Plan, which revealed the importance of improving employment options for Revere residents. The plan was guided by an Advisory Committee made up of a
range of partners, including workforce providers, non-profit support organizations, and city staff. Iolando Spinola and Sasha Parodi, on the community engagement team, conducted a Photo Voice project, through which residents were asked to submit photos documenting their goals for workforce development based on their lived experiences. The final plan builds on those first-hand accounts, research regarding the various career options that meet the needs of key populations in the city, as well as the recommendations and guidance from the Advisory Committee. Mayor Brian Arrigo announced the upcoming launch of the plan at his State of the City address on February 11.

**Municipal Collaboration**

**Collective Purchasing**

The Collective Purchasing Division had a busy few months issuing procurements for a variety of goods and services. The division, led by procurement specialist Kelsi Champley, successfully issued and completed procurement processes for medium and heavy-duty trucks, ambulances, streetsweepers, and parking meters and mobile payment systems. Additionally, the division recently issued a number of bids for public works services on behalf of communities on the South Shore and in Metrowest.

Working with the Clean Energy Department, Kelsi also recently presented on the agency’s electric and hybrid vehicle contracts to a group of sustainability/energy coordinators.

**North Suffolk Public Health Collaborative COVID Vaccine Clinics**

Members of the Municipal Collaboration and Public Health Departments assisted Revere, Chelsea and Winthrop to host joint COVID-19 clinics for vaccinating first responders, health care workers, and persons over 75 years of age. More than 1,400 people received doses at these clinics between mid-January and mid-February. MAPC staff helped coordinate across the three communities to ensure sufficient staffing, logistics, connection with Medical Reserve Corps volunteers, and link to Cataldo Ambulance for the provision of emergency medical support. These clinics also vaccinated public safety officials from a number of federal and state agencies, such as the FBI and the Chelsea District Court. The clinics represent a great example of regional collaboration and are expected to continue into the future.

**Shannon Community Safety Initiative**

On December 28, EOPSS awarded $651,526 to MAPC for the FY2021 Shannon Community Safety Initiative run by the Metropolitan Mayors’ Coalition. The award includes funding for both law enforcement partners ($224,050) and community programs ($302,016) in Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Quincy, Revere, Somerville, and Winthrop. The programs funded by the FY21 grant continue to focus on improving youth mental health in the region, in addition to funding for youth employment, the arts, and recreational activities.

On December 16, the Metro Mayors Coalition Shannon program hosted a Regional Youth-Police Dialogue Session via Zoom, with over 150 youth and 50 police officers from all 8
communities in attendance. The event was made possible through a collaboration with the Center for Teen Empowerment, who organized and facilitated multiple planning sessions leading up to the event, during which youth were invited to create discussion prompts and set the agenda. Representatives from law enforcement were invited to join the final planning session as well. During the session, several youth made opening statements before each community entered breakout rooms for small-group discussions about issues facing their communities and the country as a whole, including mental health, representation and diversity, discrimination, the Black Lives Matter movement. MAPC staff from Municipal Collaboration and Community Engagement attended and served as note takers and facilitators when needed. The event was well-received by participants. The Metro Mayors’ Local Action Research Partner at UMass-Boston assessed the dialogue session through an analysis of pre- and post-event surveys by participants. The survey data showed there was strong interest from youth in attending additional dialogue sessions, and youth would like to see police officers more frequently in informal settings in their communities (without uniforms, outside of school, etc.). Based on the responses, the Shannon program will likely host at least one additional dialogue session this spring.

**NERAC**

In an attempt to improve interoperability in the region, the NERAC Council implemented a new policy (effective for the FFY2020 grant cycle) requiring that municipalities or regional organizations applying for NERAC-funded projects demonstrate that the Massachusetts Tactical Channel Plan has been properly implemented into their radio systems, to the extent possible based on the technical capabilities of their systems. The goal of this mandate is to enhance the ability of first responders to communicate in real time and establish effective command and control at the scenes of future regional emergencies. After the Merrimack Valley gas explosions of 2018, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) found that “field radio communications used across fire departments on September 13 [2018] lacked adequate interoperability and availability to ensure that emergency responders had efficient means of interdepartmental and intradepartmental communications.”

To resolve such issues, MAPC staff has assisted the NERAC Interoperability Committee in recruiting certified communications professionals within the region to provide technical assistance to municipalities as needed. Interested communities will have communications professionals working on behalf of NERAC to assist their staff in incorporating the Massachusetts Tactical Channel Plan into their mobile and portable radios. NERAC funds will be used to provide backfill and overtime reimbursement to participating personnel.

**Strategic Initiatives**

**MetroCommon2050 Update**

The MetroCommon team hosted two significant events over this reporting period: the launch of the Zoning Atlas and Municipal Leaders Policy Breakfast. The Zoning Atlas is an interactive
website that includes zoning and overlays for MAPC communities, the result of nearly a decade of work. Initially, we did not expect the release to be a huge draw, but we ended up with over 170 participants from across the state. The municipal leaders breakfast likewise was well attended, drawing more than 70 mayors, managers, and top elected officials from across MAPC. This event kicked off the policy vetting phase of the plan. Mark Fine, Emily Torres-Cullinane, and Brian Luther presented highlights from the four chapters on dynamic and representative government, including strategies for increasing the diversity of the municipal workforce, encouraging greater participation in governance, creating incentives for regional collaboration, and exploring new revenue options. We spent much of the meeting in breakout groups organized by subregion and received thoughtful feedback from participants.

The next research release will be on February 23, where we will showcase the research on housing submarkets. Our Data Services team analyzed the characteristics of housing submarkets and found they cluster into seven distinct typologies depending on housing costs, density, populations, and other key data. The research will help advocates, municipal and state planners, developers, and academics better understand local dynamics with the hope of encouraging more tailored interventions, development proposals, and other investments. Finally, the External Advisory Committee met for their third-to-final meeting. They provided feedback on the governance policy recommendations, on the digital design for the plan, and received an update on the plan for the final six months of the planning process.

Community Engagement

**Norwood Town Meeting**
The Community Engagement team has been hard at work helping Norwood with its Special Town Meeting - virtually! The CE Team scheduled and facilitated five Zoom trainings for Town Meeting Members and helped to run three days of Town Meeting in early February.

**Dellea Agricultural Property**
Community Engagement is working with Franklin to envision potential uses for several agricultural parcels along the Charles River, which the Town is interested in acquiring. The land would connect several town-owned properties and could potentially expand existing trail networks, provide access to the riverfront, and support the development of a community-based agriculture programming. MAPC staff recently completed a virtual site tour of the area using Google Earth. You can view that [here](#); it is really worth a visit, if only virtually!
MACDC Virtual Facilitation Training
MAPC provided consultation on virtual facilitation best practices, gave a two session training to staff from the Massachusetts Association of CDCs, and surveyed staff to improve MACDC meetings. Since December, recommendations have been implemented and are reported to show positive results.

APA National Webinar: Working with a Qualitative Methodology
On Friday, January 22, staff from Community Engagement, Data Services, and Public Health led a national webinar through the APA on “Working with a Qualitative Methodology.” The webinar shared MAPC’s Qualitative Methodology Practice Guide and provided participants with examples from MAPC’s practice of working with qualitative data. Over 160 people attended from all across the country. The Community Engagement Division will continue to lead webinars in 2021 to share our best practice approaches and tools.

Power Dynamics in Virtual Meetings
The Community Engagement team in collaboration with the Equity Team and Human Resources hosted a lunchtime TalkShop addressing challenging power dynamics in virtual meetings. This was an opportunity for staff to reflect on some of the different challenges and some interventions they have used to improve virtual meetings both internally and externally.

Subregions
TRIC hosted a transportation focused meeting with CTPS to review the subregional needs assessment and brainstorm relevant and needed UPWP projects.

SSC continued to coordinate advocacy and response to the proposed MBTA budget cuts, with specific focus on saving the ferry service (which was included in the final transportation bill that passed in January). SSC also hosted a community leader recognition event, focusing on people who had been working on transportation and climate advocacy.

In January, SSC developed a workplan for the year focused on a range of key topics on the South Shore, with increased interest in regional initiatives. In February, the SSC focused on transportation goals in their February meeting with great attendance from municipal staff and partner organizations. At that meeting, the members also elected Lauren Lind, Cohasset Planning Director, as the new SSC Vice-Chair.

SWAP is moving forward with a UPWP submission for a regional traffic mitigation project to explore the future of e-commerce and implications for land use and transportation.

MWRC joined the MetroCommon2050 municipal breakfast on dynamic and representative government as part of the January meeting. They heard from MAPC transportation staff on research regarding e-commerce and implications for land use and mobility.

The TRIC Citizens’ Academy project team met with municipal and community stakeholders to discuss issues related to civic engagement and racial equity in the subregion. The team also began conversations with the Boston University Metro Bridge program to discuss a communications audit for TRIC municipalities.
TRIC Citizens’ Academy team also set dates and goals for a May convening of municipal and community-based organizations to discuss the intersection of land use planning, racial equity, and representation on local boards/committees/commissions.

SWAP’s February meeting featured a panel discussion with members of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committees across the region, sharing more about how their committees were created and offering lessons for towns interested in creating their own DEI Committees.

Julie Curti hosted her first meeting as the MAGIC subregional coordinator with Government Affairs providing an update on the latest bills passed in the last Legislative session.

TRIC heard a legislative update on the recently passed Economic Development Bond Bill from MAPC Government Affairs team. TRIC discussed how new legislation would impact proceedings of spring town meetings.

AT the ICC meeting, MAPC staff provided a legislative update, including features of the Economic Development Bond Bill and the MBTA multifamily requirement, which was considered via the new Zoning Atlas.

The Massachusetts Housing Partnership came to the NSPC December meeting to talk about emergency rental and mortgage assistance programs. Subregional Coordinator Alex Koppelman also created a streamlined housing needs assessment for the subregion to provide context for the discussion.

ICC met in January to discuss the intersection of public health and land use, including challenges created by the pandemic as well as actions focused on recovery. NSPC hosted meetings focused on public health in January.

The ICC January meeting focused on safe building design and development and on productive, safe use of open and public spaces. Representatives from 17 Inner Core municipalities were joined by speakers from the architecture and interior firm Dyer Brown, Bench Consulting, the Central Square Business Improvement District, Flagg Street Studio, and the City of Salem. Participants discussed the WELL Building Standard, winter placemaking strategies, Starlight Square in Cambridge’s Central Square, and reclaiming street space in Salem.

NSTF has an Interim Coordinator, Christian Brandt, Community Engagement Specialist I, and he has begun work planning with the group for the year. He is also preparing for elections for co-chairs at the upcoming NSTF meeting. Nominations were collected for co-chairs this month.

Public Health

Metro North COVID-19 Coordination

MAPC has continued to help facilitate weekly calls among Metro North public health, hospitals, and community organizations. Over the past few months, the group has focused on issues related to vaccine distribution and coordination among municipalities and hospitals. This work has entailed coordinating outreach with patients and residents, sharing information
among the participants, and creating shared forms of communication about vaccine safety and vaccine hesitancy. In addition, the calls have been used to coordinate with the state’s Continuum of Care efforts in order to assist people experiencing homelessness and connect them with housing opportunities.

**Region 3 COVID-19 Affiliate Funding and Technical Assistance**

The Municipal Collaboration and Public Health teams assisted the DPH with distribution of a new round pandemic-related emergency funds and continued to coordinate with local health departments in the Region 3 emergency preparedness region. The team convened peer calls among cities and towns to share experiences and practices on rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. Specific calls were held to discuss first responder rollouts for the vaccine, adapting to the state’s reduction of vaccine supply to local health departments, establishing regional vaccine efforts, and continuing needs such as testing and contact tracing.

More information is available here: [https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/covid-19-resources/](https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/covid-19-resources/) (see Emergency Funding for Local Public Health Departments).

**Randolph Community Wellness Project**

A collaboration with the town’s health and planning departments, this project aims to advance health and racial equity through coordinated implementation of the [Randolph Community Wellness Plan](https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/covid-19-resources/). In this first year of the project, the focus is on establishing the infrastructure for coordinated action. To that end, the facilitating partners established its steering committee, whose members include residents, community organizations, and town staff and board representatives. In January and February, the steering committee discussed and made decisions to establish three working groups to focus on implementing the Community Wellness Plan goals related to “Health Care and Public Health”, “Community”, and “Schools.”

**COVID Response in Chelsea**

The Public Health Department is collaborating with Chelsea and the Center of Complex Interventions to augment the city’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and provide support as COVID-19 vaccines roll out. The work has included three months of neighborhood-based wastewater surveillance to monitor potential infection spikes, development of communication materials, deployment of mobile testing and a set of promotores (health workers) based out of La Colaborativa. Work is expected to continue into the summer to expand wastewater monitoring to more neighborhoods, include additional household assistance and data analysis around positive cases.

**Keep Cool Somerville**

Public Health and Community Engagement teams continue their collaboration with Somerville on the Keep Cool Somerville initiative, which aims to improve community resilience to extreme heat. The initiative began in 2020 and culminated in a toolkit of evidence-based and community-supported cooling strategies (available at [mapc.org/keep-cool-somerville](http://mapc.org/keep-cool-somerville)). In 2021, the initiative will build upon the findings of earlier community engagement and research to focus on supporting community solutions to address heat. Community groups will be invited
to propose small-scale, pilot projects to improve resilience to heat and a handful of projects will be funded to be implemented over the summer.

**Transportation**

**Regional Trail and Greenway Project Advances**

MAPC co-hosted a forum with Senator Jason Lewis and several state representatives to create a vision for a greenway that would fill the gap between the Malden River and Wakefield. Communities that participated in the forum included Malden, Melrose, Wakefield, and Stoneham, all of which were highly supportive of the effort. The Wakefield Rail Trail will eventually extend to Portland ME, so filling this gap is critical for connectivity. Follow-up discussions will be held between MAPC and the communities to develop the network.

**Bluebikes**

After the large expansion of the Bluebike system last summer to five new communities, MAPC received a number of inquiries from municipalities about the possibility of further expanding Bluebikes to their municipality. We have been working with Salem, which formerly had a bike share system with Zagster, to bring a new bike share system to their city. In January, Salem applied for and received a Shared Streets grant to fund eight stations. We are helping to coordinate this expansion with Salem, Motivate, and the existing municipalities. Salem will join the system as an “island” bike share system that does not connect with the core system.

The communities awarded funds for Bluebikes through the most recent round of Shared Streets grants include the following:

- **Boston** received $197,856 to install four new Bluebike stations in the neighborhoods of Roslindale, Mattapan, and Dorchester.
- **Everett** received $107,238.60 to add three new Bluebike stations to Everett’s existing 11-station network. The new stations will connect the Wellington MBTA station to the rest of the Everett bikeshare system, provide additional coverage on the west side of Everett, and make connections to the Revere and Chelsea bikeshare systems and to the MBTA Silver Line and Commuter Rail station on Everett Avenue.
- **Salem** received $200,000 to install eight Bluebike stations with 50 total bicycles to connect key transit nodes and residential neighborhoods with Salem’s commercial, cultural, and educational destinations.
- **Watertown** received $280,318 to add a new Bluebike station at an access point to the Charles River Greenway just south of Watertown Square.

**Taxi, Livery, and Hackney Partnerships Grant Program**
The Urgent COVID Taxi Program awarded 25 grantees state-wide to partner with taxi, livery and hackney businesses. All of the programs are actively supporting vulnerable populations to access essential services, or have expended their funds. We are receiving bi-monthly reports about their programs, which have generated a lot of interest in this service. As of our most recent reports (November/December), $334,561 has been spent of the $1 million we distributed. This money has gone to 41 taxi companies and allowed nearly 13,000 essential trips to happen, with nearly 7,000 individuals served.

The pie chart below outlines the distribution of trips. The highest use of taxi rides through December was for non-COVID related, non-emergency medical trips. Since vaccination trips are included in this category, as vaccines begin to be more readily available, we anticipate this use will continue to increase.

In November, MAPC launched the second round of funding, no longer limited to “urgent COVID” needs. We received approximately 60 applications. We expanded the eligible entities to include non-profits and eliminated the restrictions on populations served and types of trips. After an extensive review period, we are recommending funding 47 applications, either fully or partially, including municipalities, RTAs, health and human service providers, and non-profits. The vast majority of these applications will continue to focus on serving vulnerable populations for essential travel, as this is still a high need. We expect to make an announcement about awards in February. We hope to offer this grant opportunity approximately twice per year, depending on funding.

MAPC will also post updates on the taxi partnerships webpage at https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/taxipartnerships.
VFW Parkway/Providence Highway Corridor Action Plan

In a partnership with Dedham, the Boston Planning and Development Agency, and CTPS, MAPC is assisting on an Action Plan for the VFW Parkway and Providence Highway corridor in Dedham and West Roxbury. The Action Plan was initiated by the Town of Dedham to transform the car-centric corridor into a route for everyone that meets the needs of local residents, businesses, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders, as well as motorists.

MAPC is leading the community engagement effort. To date, MAPC has developed a community engagement plan, a project webpage, and an online corridor user survey. The first community forum will be held on March 11 at 7 PM. The forum will allow stakeholder to identify what needs to be improved and future opportunities for the corridor.

Shared Streets and Spaces

On January 12, the MAPC team hosted a successful two-part peer exchange for Shared Streets and Spaces program participants with MassDOT and the Solomon Foundation. The first hour focused on peer-to-peer conversations and the second hour was a panel discussion open to the larger public. Sixty-five people attended the first hour peer exchange, with municipal staff, engineers, public utilities, elected officials, and non-profits representing 57 communities from across the state. View a draft document with highlights from the event here.
The second hour panel, with close to 130 attendees, featured a robust discussion moderated by MassDOT with panelists from Northampton, Middleton, Chelsea, and Berlin. A recording of the webinar is available on-line at www.mapc.org/resource-library/shared-streets.

Transportation Demand Management in a Post-COVID World

On February 18, the Boston Region MPO and MAPC hosted a forum on Travel Demand Management (TDM). Three panelists discussed the future of TDM, programs which are designed to reduce drive-alone trips and shift people to walking, biking, and taking transit. The panelists also addressed implementing TDM policies, how TDM can work in Massachusetts in both urban and suburban locations, and how the need for TDM changes in a world where more people are working from home. The first of a two-part series, this event attracted over 130 attendees.

New Staff

Jessica Boulanger

The Transportation Team welcomed a new Planner, Jessica Boulanger, on February 16. Jessica is a recent graduate of Tufts UEP, where her thesis focused on the effectiveness of 3D painted crosswalks in Greater Boston and around the world. Jessica was born and raised in the MAPC region and looks forward to advancing equity and access through her work. Jessica will help support many technical and research projects, including research on fare free transit programs, bus lane enforcement strategies, and she will assist with data collection and analysis. We are very excited to have Jessica on board!

Sukanya Sharma

The Land Use Department welcomed Sukanya Sharma as a new Regional Land Use Planner II on February 22. She will initially focus on economic recovery projects, but she will eventually work across the various teams of the Land Use Department. Sukanya joins us from the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission in Illinois. She has a Master's in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as well as a Bachelor's in Physical Planning from the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi.