

Executive Director's Report
Submitted to the Executive Committee
July 17, 2024

Arts & Culture

On June 28, MAPC and the Town of Holliston released a call for mural artists to design murals at three sites to connect the Holliston Rail Trail to downtown Holliston. This art installation will serve as the MetroWest demonstration project for the Regional Trails Creative Placemaking Strategy. An information session for the temporary art opportunity was held on Tuesday, July 9. The call will be open through July 19, 2024.

On July 8, MAPC led a tour of the City of Malden's parks and open spaces to inform the Malden Open Space and Recreation Plan + Public Art. Steering Committee members were joined by two ward councilors and the Tree Warden for a half day tour of Malden's parks and open spaces. The tour included ten locations over more than four hours, starting at Amerige Park in the West End, and concluding at Waitts Mount in the downtown area, one of the highest points in the city. The Community Engagement team has led efforts to strengthen partnerships with seven community-based organizations and is working to find opportunities for the public to have more input into the plan.

Community Engagement

The MetroWest, TRIC, SSC, SWAP, MAGIC and ICC subregions hosted Legislative Breakfasts throughout the spring and early summer, and they discussed the Municipal Empowerment Act, the Affordable Homes Act, and key budget and policy priorities for municipalities and legislators in their communities. Each breakfast welcomed between 20 and 40 attendees and included robust discussion.

The **Milford Comprehensive Plan** held a successful Immersion Day, bringing together over ten community-based organizations and service providers in town. The event aimed to share an overview of the Milford Comprehensive Plan, connect with other partners, and share successes, challenges, and resources. Partners expressed gratitude for the convening and indicated that they wished they had an opportunity to more regularly hold them, and create a space for centralized community resources.

The Community Engagement team completed an Executive Discretionary Fund project on the evaluation of community engagement in technical assistance projects, developing six tools and holding a focus group for feedback from nine staff across the agency.

We facilitated a workshop for residents to understand the benefits of Asset Mapping in partnership with the Office of Equity and Social Justice in the Town of Reading. Over 13 residents participated in the workshop. Asset Mapping lets us start with what is working in the community rather than what is wrong with the community.

Data Services

Peak Demand Support/Improvements

Software Developer Jon McKenzie has been supporting the Clean Energy team's Peak Demand tool, improving the service and ability to administer it during the crucial summer months when it is most needed.

Interactive Landline Maps

Coding it Forward fellow Andrew Liu wrapped up his fellowship at MAPC, creating new interactive web maps to support MAPC's Landline Vision plan.

Solar Suitability Mapping

Senior Land Use and Transportation Analyst Conor Gately completed an analysis to identify the most suitable parcels for large ground-mount solar within every municipality in Massachusetts.

Environment

MA Flood Vulnerability & Impacts on Environmental Justice Communities

The Project Team has successfully completed the FY24 scope of work, which entailed: 1) Initial outreach and one-one-one conversations about MA communities' flood experiences and impacts; and 2) Initial mapping to identify potential "hot spots" of flood vulnerability and gaps in existing flood data particularly in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. The Project Team successfully hosted a virtual event on June 20 to provide an overview of the project, facilitate discussions around information gaps in MA flooding data, and highlight equitable engagement approaches for the project. Approximately 40 municipal, state, regional, community, and environmental leaders attended the event.

The Project Team is reconvening and kicking off the next phase of the project in July. In the next 12 months, we will begin expanding our outreach and engagement plan to 187 communities across the Commonwealth to ground truth and fill in identified gaps of data/models on flood exposure and vulnerabilities in EJ communities. The team will also begin identifying select EJ communities for pilot projects where we can develop participatory community engagement processes and identify flood mitigation actions and solutions.

Climate Resilience Playbook

MAPC, in partnership with EEA's Municipal Vulnerability Project (MVP) team and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), is developing a resource to support MA municipalities with climate resilience planning and implementation. We will soon begin hosting focus groups with municipal staff, representatives of community/environmental organizations, and subject-matter experts to gather their input on priority strategies and actions that they would like to see included in the resource, spanning across the following topics: housing and neighborhoods, economy, ecosystems and natural environments, infrastructure, and people and communities.

Government Affairs

The Legislature is working towards the July 31 end of formal sessions in both branches with a number of major legislative vehicles on the move in both branches.

Housing Bond bill: The Affordable Homes Act

Both the House and Senate have now voted on the Affordable Homes Act and a conference committee will be charged with reconciling the differences between the branches. While MAPC and the Local Option for Housing Affordability coalition's efforts to include a transfer fee were not successful, the bills include a number of MAPC priorities including ADUs by right, inclusionary zoning by simple majority, the creation of an Office of Fair Housing, Eviction Sealing, tenant opportunity to purchase, and the inclusion of funding and prioritization for decarbonization and resiliency. Working with Senator DiDomenico, an amendment was included to ensure that data provided to a dashboard will be available in a machine-readable format for others to analyze in addition to the State.

Economic Development Bond Bill

The Senate is expected to take up the proposal this week and build on the House's proposal. Buried among the many provisions, we want to call out the inclusion of language creating a single procurement process for broadband design, installation and service in alignment with recommendations from MAPC's data services team.

Land Use

Norfolk Master Plan

The Norfolk Master Plan has been completed in draft form and is currently in a public comment period. Staff from MAPC attended the Norfolk Farmer's Market on June 5th to share the draft master plan, hand out copies of the executive summary, and to invite conversation and feedback.

\$3M HUD PRO Housing Grant Awarded to MAPC Region

MAPC, along with partnering cities Boston, Cambridge, Everett, and Newton, received a \$3M federal discretionary grant to explore innovative building methods to build new homes. This new HUD grant program supports communities in actively removing barriers to affordable housing. You can find more information about the federal grant program here: [Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing \(PRO Housing\)](#).

Our winning proposal will create a regional strategy to research and incentivize the use of innovative offsite construction methods to meet housing, climate, and economic development goals. The regional strategy will include various working groups to research topics such as addressing regulatory barriers to offsite construction, generating a housing project pipeline for a facility, generating Good Jobs for the region that include fair labor standards, and identifying suitable sites for a new manufacturing facility. We welcome all communities that might be interested in joining the grant project or want to learn more.

PRO Housing HUD Grant Links

- [PRO Housing Award Announcement Press Release](#)
- [Overview of 21 Awards](#)
- [MAPC Award Profile Fact Sheet](#) (prepared by HUD, based on our grant application)

To celebrate and announce our award, the Communications Team spearheaded a well-attended public announcement in Cambridge City Hall on July 2nd. The event was emceed by Lizzi Weyant, and speakers included HUD General Counsel, Damon Smith; Congressman Jake Auchincloss; Cambridge City Manager Yi-An Huang; Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria; John Sisson, Director of Community Development in Newton; and Marc Draisen. An informative roundtable discussion was held after the public announcement, and was attended by Representative Marjorie Decker, several Cambridge City Councilors, representatives from all of the partner municipalities, and local CDCs, along with our HUD Regional Administrator, Juana Matias.

Read more in the Boston Globe: [bostonglobe.com/2024/07/08/opinion/modular-housing-mass-shortage](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2024/07/08/opinion/modular-housing-mass-shortage)

Successful Implementation-focused Workshops held for Everett Housing Production Plan

In June 2024, the Everett HPP Team designed and facilitated two Implementation Workshops to identify actions and build buy-in for implementing recommendations in the plan. The first workshop, held on June 20, 2024, convened over 20 leaders and members of Everett's community-based organizations who had engaged throughout the process. The discussion focused on how the CBOs can continue engaging with the City on housing issues and how they might support the plan's implementation. The second workshop, held on June 27, 2024, included approximately 10 municipal staff and housing experts, who will ultimately have a role in implementing the HPP. This group discussed how to prioritize actions and steps that would be needed for implementation. These two 90-minute dinner discussions enabled the HPP team to gain the local buy-in and context needed to develop a robust and effective housing plan. Photo below is from the June 20 event.



Economic Development

Walpole Economic Development Study

MAPC is beginning an economic development study with the town of Walpole. The goal of this project is to take a comprehensive look at the areas in Walpole where commercial and industrial zoning is not practical or is currently underutilized and develop recommendations that the town can incorporate into amendments to its bylaws and zoning map.

The locations in Walpole most impacted by outdated commercial and industrial zoning are within environmental justice neighborhoods, making it a priority to employ an equity-oriented lens throughout the different phases of the project. The different components will encompass mapping, geographical analysis, understanding non-conforming uses, and a survey to reach a wide range of residents. With this analysis, the town also aims to address how new zoning can best accommodate environmental protection and economic development without exacerbating housing pressures. The town and MAPC will work together to identify and address challenges and potential opportunities through this economic development study.

Municipal Collaboration

The Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council (NERAC)

NERAC funding and planning efforts supported the Topsfield Fair Mass Casualty Incident Functional Exercise. Over 120 attendees included police and fire personnel from fourteen surrounding communities, Massachusetts State Police, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, Northshore Medical Center, Beth Israel Lahey Health (Beverly Hospital), Northeast Emergency Medical Services, Northshore Regional 911 Center, and fairgrounds staff. This exercise evaluated emergency response plans and capabilities in action and identified areas of improvement to increase public safety at the Topsfield Fair.

Procurement

A new Invitation for Bid (IFB) was issued for Northeast Schools concerning fresh produce for school food. The bid has been awarded to Produce Connection and is on track to begin providing service to the participating schools for their summer sessions and throughout the new school year. The goods provided will be for fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as pre-chopped or sliced goods, as part of previous initiatives to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the school systems of Massachusetts.

Additionally, a contract was awarded in collaboration with the MBTA to RoadSafe for red bus lane and green bike lane road painting and traffic markings. The work is anticipated to continue the efforts of previous years for more conscious roadway allocation to public transportation and green non-vehicle transportation.

Emergency Preparedness Practice

MAPC staff developed and facilitated a regional tabletop exercise that brought together communities in the Cape Ann region to work collaboratively to identify potential future areas for regional shelter plan development and growth. The scenario used at the exercise, which was attended by 86 municipal stakeholders, was a Category 3 hurricane expected to make landfall over Manchester-by-the-Sea, Essex, Gloucester, Rockport, and Ipswich. Each municipality's response to such an event, along with the regional response to the scenario, were evaluated, and the team developed a list of recommended areas that the municipalities can improve upon to ensure a coordinated regional response to a similar real-world event.

Public Health

Climate Resilience – Cambridge Community Corps

As of this June, MAPC has supported two years of climate readiness training with the [Cambridge Community Corps](#), who comprise diverse, grassroots network of paid ambassadors coordinated by the Cambridge Public Health Department.

Strategic Initiatives

Directors met for a half day retreat on June 6th to discuss the draft outcomes and strategies developed by the inter-departmental working groups.

Transportation

MAPC Hosts Virtual Forum on MBTA Fiscal Cliff 7/9 for 287 attendees (450+ registered!)

The Transportation, Government Affairs, and Communications teams hosted a webinar with a record-breaking registration and attendance (thanks to outreach by the Communications team!) about the MBTA's fiscal cliff. The panel featured two MBTA board members and the MBTA Advisory Board and included a discussion moderated by Lizzi Weyant. The event was an opportunity to learn about both the state of financial needs at the T and the history that created them, notably the structural deficit created by "forward funding" and an overreliance on an underperforming sales tax.

Follow-up will include media coverage, a blog post, sharing a recording of the event, and an in-person event in the Fall with the same theme.



**The MBTA's
Fiscal Cliff
and the
Future of
Public Transit**

**Tuesday, July 9 • 10:00 am
Virtual via Zoom**

Panel of Speakers:
Brian Kane, Executive Director, The MBTA Advisory Board
Thomas McGee, Member, MBTA Board of Directors
Mary Skelton Roberts, Member, MBTA Board of Directors

Register:
mapc.ma/mbta-webinar24

Electric Vehicle Charging Federal Grant

The Transportation team resubmitted its initial [Charging and Fueling Infrastructure \(CFI\)](#) Round 1 application, *Program for EV Charging in Greater Boston*, to the Federal Highway Administration for reconsideration in Round 2. MAPC applied for this discretionary grant on behalf of Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Framingham, Lynn, Malden, Revere, Quincy, Somerville, and Winthrop. The focus of the grant request is to plan for and deploy electric vehicle charging infrastructure located in publicly accessible parking lots and curbside, in close proximity to dense areas of multi-family housing with limited off-street parking. The grant program also includes a strategy to support electric vehicle car sharing in selected sub-areas of these municipalities.

Additionally, MAPC is engaging in preliminary discussions with MassDOT, MBTA, and the MA Department of Energy Resources regarding participation in a separate Round 2 application. If MAPC participates in this application, which will be led by MassDOT and the MBTA, the deadline is August 28.

Human Resources

New Staff

Felix Garcia joined MAPC in July as the Regional Field Trainer with the Public Health Department for the Eastern MA Local Public Health Training Hub. This is a position that MAPC hosts for the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. In this role, Felix will support the public health training system that works to increase the capabilities and professional growth among local public health staff. Felix joins us from the city of Lawrence where he was a Health, Safety, Equity Officer and Food Inspector. In addition to the ongoing public health work, during that role he served as part of the city's response and recovery efforts to the Merrimack Valley gas explosions.