

Executive Report
Submitted to the Executive Committee
November 20, 2024

Arts & Culture

MAPC recently partnered with the MASSCreative Action Network to host three events as part of the *Creative Conversations: Advocacy Voices for a Stronger Creative Sector* series. MAPC attended and supported an event drawing members of the Essex County creative community to the Lynn Museum, as well as events for members of the creative community from Boston and surrounding municipalities held at Artists for Humanity and the Boston Center for the Arts. During these events, MASSCreative staff shared updates on the Creative Sector Legislative Agenda, collected feedback on the bills advanced through that agenda, and facilitated a conversation about the pressing challenges facing the creative sector today to guide MASSCreative's policy work during the next legislative session.

Director of Arts & Culture Dr. Annis Sengupta also joined local artist Ngoc-Tran Vu, Cambridge Director of Arts & Culture Planning Claudia Zarazua, and Dr. Gonzalo Bacigalupe, Professor of Counseling Psychology at UMass-Boston for a panel discussion on art and climate justice moderated by Dr. Rosalyn Negrón, Associate Professor of Anthropology, at the inaugural *Thinking about Climate Change: Art, Science, and Imagination in the 21st Century* conference at UMass Boston. Dr. Sengupta also joined David Gamble and Abby Jamiel to share how MAPC is using art to enhance completed trails as community assets, reflecting the diverse communities that use the trails and strengthening connections to local business districts from trail access points.

Clean Energy

Greater Boston Climate Action Plan Sector Workshops

In October, the Clean Energy Department hosted two workshops for stakeholders across Greater Boston to inform the comprehensive [Greater Boston Climate Action Plan \(GBCAP\)](#). The first workshop was on "Reducing GHG Emissions from the Agricultural and Natural Lands Sector." The session reviewed ecosystem services, including how land conservation and preservation can be used as carbon sinks. Over 30 stakeholders attended the workshop and participated in small breakout groups to discuss policy priorities and solutions for inclusion in the GBCAP.

The second workshop, "Reducing GHG Emissions from the Waste and Materials Management Sector," was held in-person at the Lexington Community Center. Rep. Michelle Ciccolo and Sustainable Lexington Committee Chair, Cindy Arens, welcomed almost 40 people to the workshop. The agenda also included a presentation on DEP's municipal waste program from Branch Chief Kathi Mirza. Participants included municipal staff, volunteers, advocates, state agency staff, and private sector companies. In addition to the presentations, the half-day workshop included an interactive session to share lessons learned, challenges, and best practices for local, regional, and state-level waste management policies that can inform the GBCAP.

A preliminary draft of the GHG reduction measures will be shared in the new year, with region-wide opportunities to provide feedback and input to prioritize the measures that will be included in the final plan. For more information about the plan, see our [GBCAP website](#).



Reporting out on small group discussions.



A small group discussion on downstream waste solutions.

Climate Resilience Playbook

For the past 10 months, the Clean Energy and Environment teams have been working with EEA and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to conduct outreach for the Climate Resilience Playbook. The Playbook is modeled after MAPC's [Municipal Net Zero Playbook](#) and will include zoning, education, capacity building, construction, and other actions that municipalities can take to advance climate resilience locally or regionally.

The team started with several months of research and data collection about Massachusetts municipal projects funded through the MVP Program, MAPC's Accelerating Climate Resiliency Program, and other state and federal grants. The team identified trends (e.g., type of project) and used this information to launch a survey that received more than 260 responses from municipalities and community partners. The survey revealed insights about municipalities' priority projects, opportunities and challenges around partnering with CBOs, and difficulties shifting from planning to implementing projects. The team used this input to draft an initial list of actions, which were reviewed by 14 focus groups this summer and fall. Focus group participants represented municipalities of varying sizes and capacities, CBOs, RPAs, hospitals, universities, consultants and other groups. In the fall, the team held conversations across state agencies and with most MAPC departments. The team is conducting a final review of the resulting 200+ actions and determining which 30 actions will be turned into more detailed "implementation blueprints." The team is also collaborating with Data Services to develop an online platform that will allow municipalities to search these actions by factors such as "climate threat" or "type of action" or "capacity required." The playbook is expected to launch in the spring of 2025.

Good Jobs Metro Boston Clean Energy Employer Workshop

On October 17, MAPC collaborated with Good Jobs Metro Boston Coalition (GJMBC) clean energy partners to host a virtual Employer-Student Meet and Greet. MAPC and outreach partners recruited employers for the event through calls, emails, network connections, and social media. GJMBC training institution partners Franklin Cummings Tech (FCT) and AACA kicked off the session with an overview of their practical electricity, electric vehicle, HVAC, weatherization, building energy management, and other clean energy training programs and outlined key opportunities for employers to engage with students (e.g., lunch and learns). After the introduction, each of the six employers in attendance hosted a breakout room, and 20+ students moved between virtual rooms to share information about their backgrounds and training and ask employers about upcoming hiring needs. After an hour, a group of students chose to stay for an additional 30 minutes to learn more about industry challenges and opportunities from two employers. The event resulted in exciting job connections for students and employer relationship leads for the FCT Career Services office. Given the positive reception to this format, MAPC is in the process of coordinating and promoting an employer information session in December with FCT and an Employer-Student Meet and Greet with AACA in January.

Community Choice Aggregation National Conference

MAPC's Director of Clean Energy Julie Curti was invited to speak on a panel at the [2024 National Community Choice Aggregation Conference](#) in Washington, D.C. organized by LEAN Energy US from October 8-10. The panel focused on how to create strong relationships with state agencies to support community choice aggregation programs. The MAPC portion of the panel highlighted our agency's efforts to develop and support [green municipal aggregation](#) (GMA) as a strong program model in Massachusetts. In a GMA, a municipality buys more high quality renewable energy than is required under the Renewable Portfolio Standard, signaling greater demand and helping to drive the

production of more clean energy for the New England electricity grid. The panel also included speakers from the US. Department of Energy, the National Association of Utility Regulatory Commissioners, and New York and Ohio state agencies.



Panelists at the "Creating a Strong Relationship with State Agencies" session.

Community Engagement

MAPC hosted a Community Engagement Conversation on Stakeholder Analysis with over 60 participants. The session provided space for planners and community engagement practitioners across the region to consider the purpose of stakeholder analysis, the approach that MAPC takes to conducting stakeholder analyses, and created space for participants to consider how to apply learnings from the discussion to their work.

We also presented on MAPC's Language Access Program at the "Moving Together" conference hosted by MassDOT to 90 session participants. The presentation topics included the Language Access guide, key takeaways from the Language Access work MAPC has done thus far, and how Language Access is incorporated into MAPC projects,

The team also facilitated a workshop session on Language Access at the International Association for Public Participation North American Conference in Ottawa, Canada. The workshop session included 40-50 participants and consisted of a presentation on Language Access, followed by small group activities to work through language access challenges collaboratively, followed by small group activities to collaboratively work through language access challenges.

Engagement team members conducted Language Access training with CHAPA's Homebuyer Counselor cohort of 37 participants. The training was aimed at prompting participants to think comprehensively about how to make their classes more accessible and welcoming and to ensure that they meet all the needs of their participants and students. Topics covered included defining language access, understanding how language access is featured in Homebuyer Counseling, and the challenges counselors face.

MAPC hosted its Fall Council Meeting at the Lynn Museum & Arts Center on October 10. The meeting brought together 100 participants and included an inspiring tribute to Heidi Anderson, MAPC's former Operations Manager, followed by an insightful conversation with municipal leaders, moderated by Lynn Mayor Jared Nicholson and with participation from Chelsea City Manager Fidel Maltez, Braintree Mayor Erin Joyce, Melrose Mayor Jennifer Grigoraitis, Watertown City Manager George Proakis, and Hull Town Manager Jen Constable. This was also the first Council meeting for MAPC's Council Engagement specialist, Emma Koontz, who will be taking the lead on coordinating council meetings moving forward.

Data Services

Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) presentation

Lily Perkins-High, Analytical Services Manager, and Van Du, Assistant Director of Environmental Planning, presented at the MACC Fall Conference in October. During the session, Lily and Van shared key findings and recommendations from MAPC's "Water, Water Everywhere" report, which resulted from our analysis of 27,000 flood claims from three historic storms in March 2010. We also led a discussion on how those recommendations relate to the local work of Conservation Commissions. MAPC's collection of stormwater flooding resources, including the "Water, Water, Everywhere" report, are published here: mapc.org/resource-library/stormwater-flooding/

Presenting our Statewide Trails Database work at the MassTrails Conference

Stephen Larrick, Digital Services Manager, Guy Hydrick, GIS Administrator, and Jonathan McKenzie, Civic Web Developer presented at DCR's bi-annual MassTrails Conference alongside MAPC Senior Transportation Planner David Loutzenheiser, FRCOG GIS Specialist Ryan Clary, and MassGIS Director Cy Smith. The team presented MAPC's [work coordinating a statewide trails database](#) to municipal officials and as part of a workshop for a broad community of trails stakeholders, gathering feedback and interest ahead of our public data portal launch anticipated in May/June of 2025.

Massachusetts Broadband Institute Apartment Wifi Program

MAPC's Digital Equity program has announced our second cohort of public and affordable housing partners for our Apartment Wi-Fi Partnership program, funded by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute. Cohort 2 partners include: Boston Housing Authority, Greenfield Housing Authority, Watertown Housing Authority, and Bethany Community Services (Haverhill). Together, we will bring free Wi-Fi to 2,256 households, adding to the 1,938 households from Cohort 1 with projects already underway. Learn more about the housing providers participating in our Apartment Wifi program and the status of each installation project, in our [Apartment Wi-fi Project Profiles](#).

SNAP-Ed

In September, MAPC concluded our work on the Visualizing SNAP-Ed project, which focused on defining the locations and characteristics of SNAP-Ed's nutrition education programming in Massachusetts and applying this understanding to strategic planning. This year, which was the final in the project, focused on migrating SNAP-Ed program data from the database we constructed in previous years to the Program Evaluation and Reporting System (PEARS), a custom data collection and reporting platform built specifically for SNAP-Ed and used by SNAP-Ed programs nationwide.

Environment

Environmental Justice Flood Vulnerability Project

The Environment Department has been working with EEA and DCR on a state-wide flood vulnerability assessment of Environmental Justice communities. As part of this effort, the project team has brought together community-based organization (CBO) staff from across the state to be part of a Flood Impact Advisory Committee. In the first of a series of meetings, Committee members provided input and feedback on the project team's community engagement approach. This feedback helps the team work effectively in and with communities to develop flood mitigation strategies that are unique and effective. The project team also brought together directors and staff from 9 RPAs around the state to collaborate and synthesize similar efforts. In September, the participating RPAs helped to distribute a survey to planners statewide to provide details on how each of their communities experience flooding. This detailed information helps the project team to have a robust picture of what EJ communities are experiencing and what gaps there are in the support that is provided. These survey results and input from both meetings helps the project team move forward in choosing four pilot communities to begin co-creating flood mitigation solutions.

Topsfield Resilience Bylaws

Environment has also been assisting several communities to revise their existing floodplain zoning regulations to comply with the State's Model Floodplain Bylaw and FEMA's standards for compliance with the NFIP (National Flood Insurance Program). As part of a current TAP project with Topsfield, the floodplain overlay section of the zoning bylaw has been updated, reviewed and approved by the Planning Board and Town Counsel, and will be submitted to the state for review. The next phases of this project will include reviewing and revising the existing stormwater regulations and considering how the town could incorporate additional regulations or zoning updates to support and address climate resilience, while simultaneously supporting recent approval of the MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District bylaw and the recently-passed Accessory Dwelling Unit by-right statute.

Land Use

Economic Development

The Town of Milton will work with MAPC to develop an Economic Development Plan. The MAPC Economic Development Team met with the Milton Planning Board at its October 10 meeting to kick off the project. The town is seeking ways to enhance its mix of economic activities to better meet community needs, sustain economic activities, and expand the commercial and industrial tax base. This project is starting up on the heels of the recent East Milton Square project, with a focus on commercial activity townwide. The economic development team looks forward to working closely with the town to develop the plan over the next year.

Municipal Collaboration

Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council

With the support of NERAC funding, 11 communities in Essex County participated in a 3-part mutual aid training and exercise series focused on active shooter response and election security, which culminated in October. Part 1 began with Tabletop Exercises to provide instruction on Incident Command System protocols, incorporating election security scenarios and other at-risk soft targets

in the area. Part 2 taught Rescue Task Force procedures and interoperability. Part 3 brought together the previous materials to role-play response to simulated scenarios including attacks on polling sites. Participants included over 150 members of law enforcement, fire services, EMS, communications, local government administration, school administration, emergency management, and regional hospitals.



Collective Procurement

MAPC successfully procured a new Vehicle Consultant for the GBPC contracting work, Richard “Chip” Barrett. Mr. Barrett comes with well over 40 years of experience working in public service, specifically in the realms of public safety and public works. He has also been a member and been elected president of several vital public works associations, including the Norfolk Bristol and Middlesex Highway Association (NBM), the American Public Works Association (APWA), and the New England Public Works Association, all of which hold key events in the promotion and propagation of the GBPC contracts. He will begin work at the start of the new year, focusing on efforts to connect with current and potential future vendors, as well as bolstering the GBPC membership.

MAPC was also present, alongside Mr. Barrett, at the recent GBPC annual meeting held in Watertown at the Oakley Country Club. The meeting gave a broad overview of the work being done both by MAPC’s procurement collaboratives, as well as the focused work of the BAPERN radio network system. MAPC was happy to provide a check worth over \$40,000 to the membership as a result of the sales made through the MAPC/GBPC contracts. Kelsi Champley, MAPC’s Procurement Services Manager, also gave an update on the status of our contracts, the future prospects of the program, as well as the current focus on electric vehicle availability and access by highlighting what is already available under the contracts today, in addition to what we see coming through the process of rebidding that will occur for several contracts throughout this next year.

Statewide Homeland Security Fiduciary

MAPC worked with the Homeland Security Regions and the Statewide Fiduciary members from FRCOG and SRPEDD to implement several election security projects over the last few months. The Western Region funded extra security at polling locations and the Southeast Region paid for a security training for election workers/law enforcement.

Shannon Community Safety Initiative

On October 8, EOPSS conducted a Shannon Grant site visit at MAPC. Based on the information received during the visit and documentation reviewed, the state program coordinators found that MAPC is in full compliance with the programmatic and financial grant requirements. This was a great opportunity for the agency to share with the state all of the great work that is being done by partners in the Metro Mayors Coalition Community Safety Initiative.

Public Health

Older Adult Climate Liaisons: Input to Action – MetroWest Climate Equity

The Public Health team, in partnership with staff from Framingham, Natick, Ashland and Wayland, worked with a group of older adults with diverse racial and linguistic backgrounds to identify ways that older residents cope with changing conditions (e.g., extreme heat). The group, through shared learning and engagement of their peers, identified a set of actions which we are now moving forward. The group held its kickoff meeting for the series that is focused on climate emergency communications and focused on how to make cooling centers more inviting and inclusive for older adults of all backgrounds.



Authentic Community Engagement Training

The Public Health team is part of the DPH [Root Cause Solutions Exchange](#) and working closely with statewide partners, municipalities, and community organizations to improve conditions that play the biggest role in our health. As part of this work, we partner with the Voices of the Community Initiative (VtC) to shift how we meet and work with community. We recently offered a newly developed workshop with VtC (held at the MW Health Foundation offices) that included more than 25 participants, offered ASL and CART interpretation services, and provided new methods for social service organizations and community agencies in the region.



North Suffolk Regional Food Security Collaboration Series

In response to a funding opportunity from Massachusetts General Hospital, the Public Health team is helping to convene people and organizations working on food security (e.g., ability to access and afford healthy food) in Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop. The convening will include a four-meeting series to collaborate on potential regional food security project ideas that could be funded through a potential MGH \$1M or greater grant. The kick-off meeting, which was the first of its kind on this topic in the North Suffolk region, has taken place and the group is now beginning to explore the initial ideas and possibilities, particularly to build on the many food security efforts underway in the three municipalities and their communities.

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Plan

Over the fall, internal teams have been developing draft recommendations for practice changes to help the agency improve its impact and outcomes. Directors provided input on these drafts this week. Recommendations address:

- focusing more on implementation activities;
- being more proactive in project initiation and selection; and
- undertaking more multi-municipal and regional work.

As part of the strategic planning process, we are also developing suggested improvements to our charge code practices and improvements on the equity outcomes and approaches of our work.

Transportation

Federal Highway Administration Congestion Relief Grant

In October, MAPC received a \$21.6 million from the [Federal Highway Administration's \(FHWA\) Congestion Relief Program](#). The funds will support new Bluebikes stations and add several new shuttle routes to supplement MBTA service throughout the City of Boston. The grant will also fund research into ways of reducing driving and encouraging transit, walking and cycling. Check out the complete [list of awarded projects](#), from which MAPC was one of seven.

Over the next four years, the new shuttle network will expand public transit in key Boston neighborhoods, including the Seaport, Charlestown, and Allston-Brighton. The Bluebikes expansion will add nearly 400 new bikes to the system, a quarter of them electric bikes (e-bikes), as well as new stations throughout the system (not just Boston). Approximately half of the new stations will be electrified, allowing e-bikes to recharge while docked, extending their range and reducing their dependency on manual battery swapping. Some existing stations will also be relocated from on-street to off-street sites to enable them to operate year-round. The first phase of the work will be to plan specific station locations in existing Bluebikes communities, including Arlington, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Newton, Revere, Somerville and Watertown. Check out the press release [here](#).

MetroWest Trail Summit

On October 17, Ashland and MAPC hosted the annual Metrowest Trail Summit. Around 80 people attended, including elected officials, municipal staff, nonprofits, and advocates. Speakers included Senate President Karen Spilka, Senator Jamie Eldridge, Representative Jack Lewis, and many others. The focus of the event was to provide updates on projects, particularly working toward completing the connected trail network as outlined in the LandLine Greenway vision. With a focus on Ashland, the Summit participants discussed advancing the Upper Charles Trail in the town, including connections to the East Coast Greenway in Framingham as well as to Ashland and Hopkinton State Parks. After the speaking portion of the event, there were two walks to adjacent trails.



Town of Needham Street Design and Policy Guidelines

Needham requested MAPC assistance in writing a scope of work to develop a Street Design and Policy Guide that will form the basis for the town's transportation policy and multimodal capital improvement planning. The proposed Guide will help to shift the town's transportation policy towards a more proactive one. The Guide will be a fundamental first step toward effective transportation policy and planning, capturing the needs of all users through coordination and informed decision making.

MAPC researched similar street design guidelines in Newton and Boston, as well as similar plans and guides outside Massachusetts. MAPC developed the proposed scope of work with Needham staff and met multiple times with their Mobility Planning Committee to receive input and feedback. The town will now use the scope of work and budget prepared by MAPC to procure a consultant to create the Street Design Policy and Guidelines. The final product will include an online GIS version to inform the public about the design guidelines for town streets.

New Staff

Lafayette Cruise joined the Arts & Culture Department in November as a Regional Arts and Culture Planner II. Lafayette holds a Master's Degree in City Planning from MIT and comes to MAPC with experience in regional transportation planning as well as in using arts and culture to imagine new futures. He serves on the leadership team for the Guild of Future Architects and teaches courses in research and world building at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Sarah Philbrick joined the Research Division of the Data Services Department in November as the new Research Manager. Sarah previously worked at MAPC in Data Services as a Senior Research Analyst on the Research team. Since her time with MAPC, she has worked as Manager, Data and Evidence Portfolio at the Partnership for Public Services, and most recently as Manager of MPO Planning and Policy at the Boston Region MPO (CTPS). Sarah has a B.A. in Economics and an M.S. in Geographic Information Science, both from Clark University; she also holds a Post Baccalaureate certificate in Regulatory Affairs for Cannabis Control. We are thrilled to welcome Sarah back to MAPC!