

Executive Report
Submitted to the Executive Committee
March 19, 2025

Arts & Culture



Creative Sector Policy Agenda Legislative Briefing

On March 4, Dr. Annis Sengupta (center), MAPC Director of Arts and Culture, joined Michael Bobbitt (left), Executive Director of the Mass Cultural Council, and Emily Ruddock, Executive Director of MASSCreative, the state arts advocacy organization, to brief legislators on the creative sector legislative agenda. This session's agenda includes funding asks, including the Downtown Vitality Grant Program; The Creative Space Act, to support the preservation and expansion of space for the creative economy; and the PLACE Act, which would establish a state 'percent for public art' program.

Photo credit: Bethann Steiner, MCC.

Malden OSRP + Art Focus Groups

The Malden OSRP+Art completed its outreach and engagement efforts with a series of focus groups that included the Malden Youth Council and the newly-formed City Council Arts and Culture Committee, and conversations with elders at the Senior Center during a Lunar New Year Celebration, and with students at the Immigrant Learning Center. The conversations focused on specific opportunities for improving access to Malden's parks and open spaces, ways to support a stronger sense of belonging and ownership of spaces, and guidance on future investments in the arts. In total, we have connected with over one thousand individuals in Malden.

New Arts & Culture Projects: MetroWest and Somerville

The Arts and Culture Department kicked off two new projects this month:

- The **Community Foundation of MetroWest** is expanding their arts and culture program, and we held an initial listening session will inform the design and facilitation strategy for a series of listening sessions to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.
- We are working with **Somerville** to kick off a new project to implement the Arts Space Risk Assessment and prototyping a cultural space trust fund at the municipal level. The team identified existing municipal programs that could serve as a model for the prototype and priority research and engagement to inform the work.

Lower Mystic Cool Communications Call for Artists

The Lower Mystic Cool Communications project is a partnership between the Public Health, Clean Energy, Arts & Culture, and Communications teams. In support of the pilot program, the Arts & Culture team released a call for artists to develop creative projects that will enhance communication tools about heat risk. The call invites artists to propose projects that can expand tradition heat messaging tools. We will hold two information sessions this month, and artists will be selected by mid-April to complete their projects by the end of June

Clean Energy

Greater Boston Climate Action Plan

The Clean Energy Department launched a [survey](https://mapc.ma/GBCAPsurvey) (mapc.ma/GBCAPsurvey) to learn about communities' priorities and needs for the **Greater Boston Climate Action Plan (GBCAP)**.

The GBCAP is the first regional climate action plan for the Boston Metropolitan Statistical Area. The survey covers topics such as climate impacts, the prioritization of GHG reduction measures, and co-benefits being developed as part of the planning process. We are working together with partner RPAs, advisory group members, and others to get respondents to the survey, which will shape actions that our municipalities and region can take to reduce emissions and improve quality of life. The [plan](https://mapc.org/resource-library/metro-boston-regional-climate-action-plan) (mapc.org/resource-library/metro-boston-regional-climate-action-plan) will be a roadmap for our region to equitably and rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the next ten years.

Reading Net Zero Action Plan

In March, MAPC finalized the Town of Reading's Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP), a strategic roadmap designed to guide the Town toward achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The NZAP identifies the top ten priority actions across five key focus areas: municipal operations, buildings & energy, transportation, waste, and community engagement. The planning process included a greenhouse gas inventory; an audit of relevant policies, plans, and programs; engagement with the community; and convening stakeholders through two advisory groups. Notably, the Plan features a foreword written by students from Reading Memorial High School's Climate Change Club that emphasizes the importance of youth collaboration in achieving net zero.

Municipal Sustainability and Energy Managers' Training Curriculum

Through a MassCEC Workforce Development planning grant, MAPC is scoping a training curriculum for municipal sustainability and energy managers. The training would support current and future municipal energy and sustainability managers with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively develop and implement local clean energy and climate projects. MAPC has successfully hosted four focus groups with municipal energy and sustainability staff with varied perspectives. In addition to the focus groups, the project team has held interviews with experts to further shape the training curriculum and peer learning network. We are now in the early stages of building out what a curriculum would look like.

Community Engagement

This past month, MAPC hosted a virtual **Community Engagement Conversation** with more than 70 participants, which provided space for planners and community engagement practitioners across the region to learn different ways to make engagement accessible for people of different languages and for persons with disabilities.

Data Services

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities has released their first ever comprehensive statewide housing plan, "[A Home for Everyone: Massachusetts' Statewide Housing Plan](#)." EOHLC contracted MAPC, along with the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute and Dain Consulting, to lead the report's

data analysis and writing. The Data Services department created a range of housing needs scenarios to create a target housing production goal of 222,000 housing units in the next ten years for the Commonwealth. In addition, the Data Services department provided custom analyses for the plan on subjects such as adult children living with their parents, overcrowded households, and homes that may become inundated with future sea level rise. The plan and a statewide housing needs assessment were published recently [here](#) and a full online site will launch in the spring of 2025 with additional data and analysis.

Environment

North Shore Water Resilience Task Force

The task force, which was established by Charter in 2022 and includes 19 MAPC communities and the Ipswich River Watershed Association, has recently marked several major milestones. MAPC's Leah Robins and Martin Pillsbury continue to serve as facilitators, along with Sara Cohen from DCR.

Our two consultants, Dewberry Engineers and the Horsley Witten Group, completed the first round of technical assessments. Dewberry completed an engineering assessment of water supply and watershed resilience needs and evaluated several regional water supply alternatives for the Task Force to consider. Complementing this assessment, the Horsely Witten Group with Weston & Sampson prepared a hydrologic model of the entire Ipswich River watershed. The model demonstrates the benefits to the Ipswich River of alternative water supply scenarios that allow for reduced pumping from municipal wells along the Ipswich River and its tributaries. With these assessments in hand, the Task Force members are now beginning the process of discussing and negotiating water supply alternatives. The alternatives focus on the lower Ipswich River watershed, which includes nine communities, the Task Force has established and a working subcommittee to help inform the next steps.

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Plans

FEMA has approved several plans that MAPC prepared over the last year, including Hanover, Hull, Medway, and Norfolk. At the beginning of this fiscal year, MAPC began work on five new plans for Ashland, Duxbury, Lynnfield, Swampscott, and Winthrop. This month, contracts were approved to work with two additional communities, Sherborn and Watertown. While Hazard Mitigation plans have typically been prepared by the Environment Department, this year we have expanded the role of other MAPC departments in assisting with these plans, including the Land Use and Municipal Collaboration Departments. All the plans also have significant participation by Data Services to prepare a hazard map series, manage Critical Facilities databases, and conduct vulnerability analyses using FEMA's specialized software HAZUS-MH.

Government Affairs

Remote Meeting Legislation

Partnering with MARPA and MAPC's Communications Team, nearly 100 local officials from over 50 communities from around the state signed onto a joint letter urging the Legislature to take action on the upcoming expiration of flexibilities to hold meetings remotely or hybrid that have been in place since COVID. The letter was shared with State House News which ran an article on the effort

State Budget Advocacy

The Government Affairs team held lobby days in support of MAPC's two top priorities in the FY26 budget. The now annual [MARPA Day on the Hill](#) was held on Feb. 25 to tout the importance of DLTA and GAP funding for municipalities and RPAs and March 12 was [Community Safety Day](#), which highlighted the importance of Shannon funding for communities. We saw record turnout at Community Safety Day, with a near-capacity room full of youth, and a speaking program that included EOPSS Secretary, Terrence Reidy, Charles Shannon III, our local action research partners, Chief McAvene from Gardner, and three incredible youth speakers. The event was led by Georgia Barlow in the Government Affairs Team, with significant support from Karla Kahale, Jennifer Wallitsch, and Amy Reilly from the Municipal Collaboration Team, who oversee MAPC's Metro Mayors Shannon Grant.

Land Use

Model Zoning for Accessory Dwelling Units: Webinar and Guidance Document

MAPC's Housing Team has been working with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) to develop a Model Zoning framework for ADUs. This guiding document is intended to support municipalities in adopting or updating their local zoning to be consistent with the new state law that legalized ADUs by right as part of the Affordable Homes Act that was passed in August of 2024. The Model Zoning was released on March 11, and a webinar to introduce and explain the document was hosted the same day by EOHLC, MHP and MAPC.

Successful final community meeting for zoning changes in East Milton Square

MAPC's Land Use Generalist Team has been working with the Town of Milton's Planning Board and the community of East Milton to develop mixed-use overlay zoning for the past two years. The zoning process is the final implementation effort of years of planning work and multiple planning studies which date back to 2015 and the recommendations of Milton's last townwide master plan. In this final community meeting the proposed zoning was presented in detail to strengthen understanding of and support for the overlay zone. The proposed zoning allows mixed-use development with commercial and residential components by right with site plan review, and has been placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant for adoption in May. All parties involved hope that the support expressed by the community at this meeting will translate to support amongst Town Meeting members.

Successful Good Jobs Metro Boston Coalition convening

As the convening and evaluation partner, MAPC held the Good Jobs Metro Boston Coalition (GJMBC) Convening for this network of skills training providers, community colleges, and employer association partners. One of just 32 metro regions around the country receiving U.S. Economic Development Administration grant funds via its Good Jobs program, GJMBC trains and places people in clean energy, childcare, and healthcare jobs in the region. The convening featured a presentation by peer EDA grantee Philadelphia Works that also trains and places residents in clean energy and healthcare jobs.

Municipal Collaboration

Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council

Through NERAC funding, MAPC contracted with a consultant to provide seven municipalities (Essex, Hamilton, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Marblehead, Middleton, Topsfield, and Wenham) with Cybersecurity Incident training.

Emergency Preparedness Practice

MAPC Staff collaborated with the City of Lynn to develop and facilitate a Mass Care and Sheltering Workshop designed to review the city's newly updated Mass Care and Emergency Sheltering Plan, which was updated based on a gap analysis completed by MAPC staff. The goal of the workshop was to clarify the roles and responsibilities of key city stakeholders and identify additional mitigation and preparedness needs. Ten different departments were represented at the workshop, fostering valuable cross-department collaboration that demonstrated how well-prepared the city is to handle a real-life event.

Public Health

Convening: North Suffolk Regional Food Security Opportunity

The Public Health team provides staff support the North Suffolk Public Health Collaborative, and in this role, the team has facilitated six meetings between November and February among those doing food system work in Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop. This work is increasingly important given the changes at the federal level, and we have set an important framework for discussion and collaboration across these communities.

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Plan

The MAPC Council unanimously adopted the Strategic Plan at the May 5 meeting. Thank you to the Executive Committee and especially to the Advisory Committee for your support and contributions to the plan. We are now pivoting into implementation, beginning with aligning our work planning with the Strategic Plan and with advancing key equity initiatives to support staff and improve our projects' impacts.

Barr Mobility and Climate Grant

Last week, we received the great news that we received a 2-year, \$2.2 million renewal for the climate and mobility grant from the Barr Foundation. This funding supports an array of sustainable development and climate work throughout the agency, especially focused on clean energy, climate adaptation, and sustainable and equitable mobility. These resources also support our policy development, research, and engagement priorities for climate-related work.

Transportation

MAPC Comments on Development Projects Through the MEPA Process Are Reflected in Certificates

MAPC recently submitted several comment letters to the Secretary of EEA as part of the state environmental permitting process known as the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The Secretary has issued Certificates for three projects that MAPC commented on, which include *20-23 Cummings Street* in Somerville, *Hartford Avenue Warehouse* in Bellingham, and *The Commons at Trask Lane* in Beverly.

Many of the additional mitigation and analysis in our comments were reflected in the Secretary's certificate, requiring the project proponents to address them in the Final Environmental Impact Reports. Most of our comments focused on the need for clearer mode shift goals away from single occupant vehicle trips, less parking at these sites, and better transportation demand management strategies.

The letters MAPC submitted can be found on our MEPA webpage here: <https://www.mapc.org/our-work/expertise/environment/mepa-review/>

E-Cargo Bikes: Strategies for Municipal Delivery Transition

Staff just completed a body of work with the City of Boston evaluating a pilot program to encourage local deliveries by e-cargo bike instead of a truck or van. The goals of the pilot program included reducing urban congestion, reducing carbon emissions, increasing equity through sustainable deliveries, improving safety, and supporting local businesses. The City contracted with Net Zero Logistics, an e-cargo bike delivery operator, which supplied the e-cargo bikes, managed the deliveries, and oversaw logistics.

The program initially focused on the Allston-Brighton neighborhood, which is home to a diverse population, including students and immigrants from Korean, Vietnamese, Brazilian, and Central American communities. This area was selected due to strong support from local organizations, such as the Allston Main Streets Association and the Allston-Brighton Health Collaborative, which aided in outreach efforts during the pilot. Allston and Brighton are also recognized as Environmental Justice communities that experience disproportionate effects from climate change and environmental degradation. The program had a particular focus on supporting small, women, and minority-owned businesses (MWBES) in the area.

Funding for the pilot was obtained through a \$490,000 grant from the MassCEC's Accelerating Clean Transportation For All (ACT4All). The funding helped cover operational start-up costs for Net Zero Logistics and subsidized the delivery costs for participating businesses. Through the program, around 20,000 deliveries were completed via e-cargo bike. Several small businesses and service providers participated in the program, including City Fresh Foods, OliToki, and Allston-Brighton Health Collaborative.

For more information, visit www.mapc.org/resource-library/e-cargo-bikes, developed alongside co-branded social media outreach in collaboration with Communications.

Bikeshare Presentation a Hit at New England Parking and Transportation Council (NEPTC) Forum

On March 6, Julia Wallerice and Marah Holland presented with staff from Somerville and Cambridge on a panel at the [NEPTC](#) Municipal Forum about Greater Boston's bikeshare program, Blue Bikes, as regional public transit. The conference brought together parking professionals who work in universities, private facilities and municipal parking management roles to engage in conversation and learning about multimodal transportation issues. Other sessions ranged from mobility hubs to curbside management to fare free bus service and concluded with MAPC's very dynamic and well received panel discussion about bikeshare.

