

C M M P O

# Public Participation Plan

## FY2026 UPDATE

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Overview of changes, new sections, and staff review items prepared for alignment with the MassDOT PPP (October 2025)

★ New Sections

Staff Reviewed Items

↑ Updated Content

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
CMMPO Committee Meeting | May 20th, 2026

# Why Are We Updating the PPP?

The FY2022 PPP needs to be refreshed to reflect new federal guidance, changing technology, and best practices



## MassDOT PPP Update

MassDOT released an updated PPP in October 2025. CMMPO must align with state guidance and incorporate new regulatory references.



## Regulatory Updates

New regulations added since 2022: MEPA EJ Protocol (2022), 40 CFR 51 update (2023), NEPA, Section 106, and updated 23 CFR 450 references.



## Outdated Tools

Several platforms referenced in the FY2022 PPP are discontinued (Google Jamboard) or have changed significantly (virtual meeting platforms, survey tools).



## Emerging Technology

Artificial intelligence presents new opportunities for public engagement and new risks that require proactive policy guidance.



## Equity & Accessibility

Stronger Environmental Justice framework, and new demographic tracking requirements.



## Performance Monitoring

Federal guidance expects MPOs to formally track and report on the effectiveness of their public participation processes.

# What's Changing — At a Glance

FY2026 PPP introduces new sections, updated content, and flags items requiring staff review before final adoption

4

Entirely New Sections  
or Appendices

9+

Sections Updated  
or Expanded

15+

Staff  
Items Flagged and Reviewed

★ NEW

Brand-new content added to FY2026 PPP

↑ UPDATED

Existing content revised and expanded

STAFF REVIEW

Content that was flagged and reviewed

# Section 2: Background — Updated Regulatory Tables

↑ UPDATED | Expanded from 6 to 22+ law & regulation citations

## What Was Added

- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1970
- National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Sections 504 & 508
- MEPA Public Involvement Protocol for EJ Populations (2022)
- 40 CFR 51 – Implementation Plans (updated July 2023)
- 23 CFR 450 Subparts B and C (explicit citation)
- FHWA Public Hearings – 23 USC §128
- FHWA Environmental Procedures – 23 CFR 771

## ⚠ Staff Reviewed

Executive Order 13985 (Racial Equity, 2021) was included in the FY2022 PPP but dropped from MassDOT's 2025 PPP update, likely reflecting the current federal environment.

## Carried Forward

- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), 2021
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
- Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987
- MA Public Accommodation Law
- EO 12898 – Environmental Justice
- EO 13166 – Limited English Proficiency
- Governor's Executive Order 526

# Section 4: Goals — 9th Goal Added

↑ UPDATED | All 8 existing goals retained; one new goal added to align with MassDOT 2025 PPP

## Existing Goals — Retained & Refined

1. Meaningful Public Engagement

2. Increase Diversity

3. Ensure Accessibility

4. Provide Relevance

5. Foster Participant Satisfaction

6. Clearly Define Potential for Influence

7. Establish & Maintain Partnerships

8. Assess, Adapt, and Report

## ★ NEW — Goal 9

### Provide Opportunities to Build Trust and Compromise

The CMMPO should ensure that discussions, particularly where there are conflicting views, are structured to allow for dialogue, compromise, and consensus.

Processes that allow for consensus to be achieved are critical to enabling public support for recommended transportation plans and actions.

The CMMPO recognizes that building trust with communities, especially those with historically adversarial relationships with transportation agencies, requires consistent and authentic engagement over time.

# Section 5: Self-Evaluation & Plan Modification

★ NEW | Formalizes the CMMPO's commitment to reviewing and improving its public participation practices

## What This Section Establishes

### Formal 3-year review cycle

CMMPO staff, Advisory Committee, and public review the PPP at least every 3 years.

### 6 tracked metric categories

Outreach, Comments, Accessibility, Impact on Decisions, Demographics, and Partnerships.

### Demographic disaggregation

Performance data broken down by race, ethnicity, income, language, disability, and age.

### Documentation requirement

Every major planning document must include a public outreach summary report.

## 6 Performance Metric Categories



Outreach & Attendance



Public Comment & Response



Accessibility & Accommodations



Impact on Decisions



Demographic Representation



Partnerships & Capacity

*Aligns with: MassDOT PPP Section 1.1.1 (October 2025) and 23 CFR 450*

# Section 6: Tools — New Additions & Staff Review Items

↑ UPDATED | New tools added; outdated platform references flagged for staff verification

## ★ New Tools Added

### Postal Mail

Formal low-tech option for populations with limited digital access. Hard copies available on request.

### Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

Project-specific engagement strategy for major studies (LRTP, CPS). Standard template to be developed.

### Scenario Planning

Structured trade-off exercises, particularly for LRTP and corridor studies.

### Mapping Exercises

In-person or online spatial input tools for infrastructure needs, safety, and project siting.

### Advisories & Alerts

Urgent/time-sensitive communications, distinct from press releases.

### One-on-One Interactions

Formal recognition of direct staff-to-stakeholder engagement as a documented method.

## Staff Reviewed — Outdated Platforms

**Google Jamboard:**  
Discontinued Jan 2025. Identify and document replacement whiteboard tool (FigJam, Miro, etc.).

**GoToMeeting:**  
Verify whether still in use alongside Zoom and Teams. Update platform list.

**Poll Everywhere:**  
Verify current polling tools in use (Zoom Polls, Mentimeter, etc.).

**SurveyMonkey / Survey123 / Typeform:**  
Confirm which survey platforms are currently active subscriptions.

**YouTube Channel:**  
Verify channel is current; confirm captions are up to date on all videos.

**Brochures & Print Materials:**  
Review all brochures for outdated program, legislation, and contact info.

**Social Media Platforms:**  
Update platform list to reflect current accounts; verify Hootsuite/ArchiveSocial.

**StreetMix:**  
Confirm tool is still in active use; note any additional visualization tools adopted.

# Section 7: Methods — New Methods & Review Items

↑ UPDATED | Three new formal engagement methods added; committee and platform info needs review

## ★ New Formal Methods Added



### One-on-One Interactions

Formally recognizes planned and spontaneous direct staff-to-stakeholder engagement. Staff encouraged to document input received.



### Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

Project-specific engagement strategy for major planning efforts. Standard template to be developed for consistency across projects.



### Scenario Planning Exercises

Structured exercises that help stakeholders evaluate trade-offs. Particularly for LRTP updates and major corridor studies.

## Staff Reviewed

### Non-CMMPO Committees & Workgroups:

Reviewed and updated the list of committees where staff participate. Membership may have changed since FY2022.

### Virtual Meeting Platforms:

GoToMeeting referenced in FY2022. Verified which platforms are currently active. Updated feature descriptions.

### Hybrid Meeting Equipment:

Verified Meeting Owl Pro is still in use and confirm current platform integration.

### Underrepresented Populations Strategy:

Updated with specific examples from recent outreach efforts and new strategies since FY2022.

### CMMPO/Advisory Committee Details:

Verify current meeting times, locations, and Bylaws references.

# New Appendix A: Planning Document Public Participation Guidelines

★ NEW | Formalizes minimum comment periods, amendment processes, and update frequencies for all plan types

*For the first time, the CMMPO PPP includes a formal table of minimum public participation standards for every planning document type.*

Plan Type	Min. Comment Period	Amendment Process	Update Frequency
Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	45 days (23 CFR 450.316)	Admin: CMMPO vote. Significant: 21-day public comment + CMMPO vote.	Every 4 years
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	21 days	Admin modifications: no comment required. Amendments: 21 days.	Annual
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	21 days	Advisory Committee review + CMMPO vote; website notice.	Annual
Corridor Profile Studies (CPS)	21–30 days	N/A (single study document)	As needed
Modal Plans	21–30 days	N/A (single study document)	As needed
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	45 days	Significant: 45 days + CMMPO adoption. Minor: Advisory Committee + CMMPO vote.	At least every 3 years

★ All minimum periods are guidelines. Staff are encouraged to exceed them wherever feasible.

# New Appendix B: Staff Guide to Planning Public Engagement

★ NEW | 7-step internal protocol for meeting Title VI and ADA requirements in all public outreach activities



## 1. Know Your Audience

Use demographic tools (EJScreen, REJ+, ACS, ETC Explorer) to identify impacted populations before planning outreach.



## 2. Build Outreach Strategy

Define what you're sharing, what feedback you need, and how to reach diverse populations through multiple channels.



## 3. Location & Time

Select ADA-accessible venues within ¼ mile of WRTA/MBTA stops. Consider evening and weekend meetings.



## 4. Coordinate Notice

Minimum 21-day notice; 30 days for major events. Use CMRPC notice template. Distribute to minority-serving media.



## 5. Prepare for Meeting

Plain-language materials. ADA-accessible documents. Test all technology 1 business day in advance.



## 6. During the Meeting

Announce all services at the start. Document all comments. Support language interpretation channels.



## 7. After the Meeting

Compile comments, post recordings and materials. Document how input was used — this is a civil rights obligation.

★ *Demographic equity tools (Step 1): EJScreen, MassDOT REJ+, CTPS Tool, ETC Explorer, CDC SVI, ACS data*

# New Section 10: Using Artificial Intelligence for Community Engagement

★ NEW | First MPO PPP section in the region to address AI tools for public engagement

*The FY2026 PPP introduces formal guidance on how the CMMPO may use — and must safeguard — AI tools in its public engagement work.*

## Potential Applications



### Plain Language & Translation

AI drafts plain-language summaries and translation drafts — all reviewed by CMRPC staff before distribution.



### Comment Analysis

AI organizes and categorizes large volumes of public comments; staff validate before use in planning documents.



### Outreach Targeting

AI analyzes demographic data to identify underrepresented communities and improve targeted outreach strategies.



### Accessibility Tools

AI-powered captioning, transcription, and audio description tools to support ADA and Section 504 compliance.

## Six Guardrails & Ethical Principles



### Human Oversight

AI assists staff, never replaces judgment. All outputs are reviewed before use.



### Transparency

CMMPO discloses AI tool use. Public always has human escalation option.



### Equity & Bias Review

Regular review of AI outputs for bias in outreach reach and characterization.



### Data Privacy

Personally identifiable information not submitted to external AI platforms.



### Accessibility

AI tools must themselves be accessible to people with disabilities and LEP.



### Ongoing Evaluation

AI tool impacts monitored through self-evaluation process (Section 5).

# New Appendices C & D: Public-Facing Guides

★ NEW | Two new appendices to help the public navigate CMMPO processes and virtual meetings

## Appendix C — Frequently Asked Questions

### 12 public-facing Q&A entries covering:

- What is the CMMPO?
- What is the LRTP / TIP / UPWP?
- What is a Corridor Profile Study?
- How can I provide feedback on plans?
- How do I request accommodations?
- How can I stay informed about meetings?
- What is Environmental Justice?
- How are projects selected for funding?
- Who do I contact about a specific issue?
- Can I participate if I can't attend a meeting?

## Appendix D — How to Access Virtual Meetings

### 11 Q&A entries covering:

- What platform does the CMMPO use? (Zoom)
- Do I need an account or software?
- Do I have to join by video?
- How do I find upcoming virtual meetings?
- Do I need to register in advance?
- How do I request accessibility services?
- How do I provide a public comment?
- Are meetings recorded?
- What if I have technical difficulties?
- What if I can't attend at all?
- Low-tech options (phone, mail, library)

# New Appendices E: Municipality Demographic Data

★ NEW | Municipal Demographic Data appendix to help the CMMPO understand their communities better before starting a project.

## Town Profiles

Data Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2024 5-Year Estimates

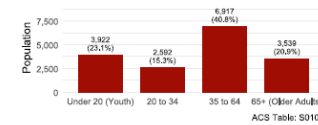
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## Auburn

### Age Distribution

In Auburn, youth under 20 make up 23.1% of the population, while 3,539 residents (20.9%) are aged 65 or older.



### Language & Proficiency

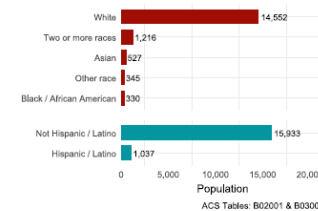
In Auburn, there are 78 households considered to have Limited English Proficiency (LEP), representing 1.1% of total households. The top languages spoken at home for the population 5 years and over (other than English) are:

Language	Estimate
Spanish	620
Other Indo-European	351
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic	235
Vietnamese	186
Other Languages	168

ACS Tables: C16001 & S1602

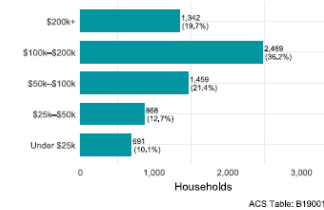
### Race & Ethnicity

In Auburn, White is the largest racial group at 85.8% of the population. 1,037 residents (6.1%) identify as Hispanic or Latino, which is reported separately as it is an ethnicity rather than a racial category.

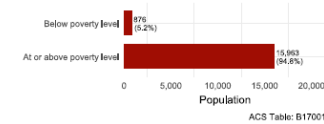


### Income & Poverty

In Auburn, the largest share of households falls in the \$100k–\$200k income range, representing 36.2% of all households. 691 households (10.1%) report income under \$25,000, while 1,342 households (19.7%) report income of \$200,000 or more.



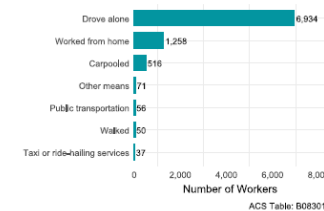
876 residents (5.2%) in Auburn have incomes below the federal poverty level.



### Transportation to Work and Vehicles Available

In Auburn, there are 446 households with no vehicles available, which represents 6.5% of all households in the community.

### Means of Transportation to Work



# Next Steps

Before the FY2026 PPP is finalized and adopted by the CMMPO

1

## CMMPO Presentation

Present the draft PPP to the CMMPO for review and recommendations.

2

## CMMPO Advisory Committee Review

Present the draft PPP to the Advisory Committee for review and recommendation to the CMMPO.

3

## 45-Day Public Comment Period

Per 23 CFR 450, the draft FY2026 PPP must be made available for a minimum 45-day public comment period before CMMPO adoption.

4

## CMMPO Endorsement

Schedule formal endorsement of the FY2026 PPP at a CMMPO meeting. Update endorsement sheet with meeting date and chair signature.

# Thank You

For any questions or comments please email: [nlewis@cmrpc.org](mailto:nlewis@cmrpc.org)