



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

JANUARY 2019 – DECEMBER 2019

## TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

### POLICY, PLANNING & ADVOCACY

#### COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION FINANCE REFORM

A Better City (ABC) wrote and designed the Funding Transportation Solutions report released in November 2019. This articulated the assumptions and policy goals behind the comprehensive transportation finance plan assumptions. ABC led the analysis, research, and presentation of their comprehensive transportation finance plan recommendations. This plan totals \$50 billion in new transportation revenue necessary by 2040 to meet funding gaps in our statewide state of good repair unfunded projects that would increase capacity and throughput and achieve the resiliency and decarbonization goals of the Future of Transportation Commission.

Our work has been well-received and appreciated and has set the baseline for conversations regarding the scope and scale of investment the Commonwealth needs in order to achieve climate, accessibility and equity goals. While this first step is completed, ABC will continue to work to ensure these finance reforms are implemented at state and local levels.

Managed the Transportation Cluster group to have weekly updates on key legislative hearings, stakeholder's collaboration, and press opportunities related to transportation finance, Governor Baker's bond bill and transportation policy issues at MassDOT and the MBTA.

#### ALLSTON INTERCHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

MassDOT has incorporated in the “3L Alternative” the design option that locates a four-lane Soldiers Field Road over the eastbound Turnpike lanes as had been advocated by A Better City who've articulated the benefits of locating Soldiers Field Road over the eastbound Turnpike lanes. In a series of Task Force meetings, workshops, and meetings with MassDOT officials, ABC has focused advocacy on two locations in the project area: on West Station and adjacent rail and open space configurations in the Beacon Park Yard area, and on construction staging strategies. In December, ABC submitted detailed comments on the Federal Highway Administration’s NEPA Scoping Report. Three sets of comments were highlighted in our cover letter and attachments. First, ABC recommended that the West Station option that should be evaluated in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement includes an open space buffer and continuous path at the southern end of the site rather than two express tracks and extensive layover yard bypassing a two-platform, and a four-track station planned to include Grand Junction passenger service.



Our comments also include a recommended construction staging plan that maintains two-track Worcester Mainline service with minimal intrusion of temporary structures in the Charles River, and a recommendation that the Purpose and Need Statement for the project include a requirement for additional open space to support a multimodal Paul Dudley White path.

## NORTHERN AVENUE BRIDGE TASK FORCE

For the past two years, the President and CEO of A Better City chaired the Task Force established by Mayor Walsh charged with advising the City on the Northern Avenue Bridge design. Task Force deliberations concluded in December with the outcome of a base concept design approach that is ready to advance into 25% design. Uses of the bridge include pedestrians, bicycles, transit, and emergency vehicles. The bridge concept is a fixed span, with good connectivity between the Wharf District and the Seaport. The thoughtful design follows the attitude of go bold and go old.

## SOUTH BOSTON BYPASS ROAD

Successfully advocated MassDOT to extend the South Boston Bypass Road pilot program, thereby ensuring direct vehicular access to continue to be available for non-commercial vehicles from I-93 to the South Boston Waterfront. MassDOT also committed to filing an official Notice of Project Change in 2020 to make this access permanent.

## RESEARCH

### THE TRANSPORTATION DIVIDEND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A Better City successfully submitted a proposal to the Barr Foundation to fund work with the goal of implementing strategies laid out in our 2018 Transportation Dividend report. This grant provides funding over two years beginning in June 2019. In the second half of 2019, ABC hired a fantastic project director, Caitlin Allen-Connelly, who has quickly achieved initial success with engaging the MBTA in our work, developing a detailed scope of work and organizing and convening an internal A Better City Board Advisory Committee for this project.

As a reminder, the main goals of this project are to:

- 1) Help build MBTA capacity to deal with the State of Good Repair by creating resources for internal capacity to better manage project development and delivery systems.
- 2) Support the evolution of our commuter rail system into a true regional rail system by providing MassDOT with a best-practices procurement guide for the next rail contract and developing a “soup-to-nuts” pilot plan for the Worcester/Framingham Line to be implemented concurrently with I-90 reconstruction.



- 3) Provide 2-3 new transportation pricing models appropriate for the Boston region/Commonwealth focused on user fees that encourage necessary behavior change need and increase revenue. Key to sustaining medium and long-term implementation of the Transportation Dividend strategies is funding and market-based pricing is a powerful tool to influence behavior change, achieve transportation goals and provide necessary revenue.

## TRAINING PROGRAM FOR P3 PROCUREMENTS

Working closely with the MBTA's Chief Engineer, Chief Administrator, and Chief Procurement Officer, the TDIP project staff quickly identified two immediate focus areas related to project delivery and procurement that define Phase I of the project and support expedited capital investments for a safe, robust, and modern public transit system: Job Order Contracting (JOC) and Public-Private Partnerships (P3). The TDIP team has benefited from member expertise and guidance on both the JOC and P3 front as well as experts from international organizations and peer agencies across the country. An early win and accomplishment on this front is the identification of a free, US DOT/NHI training on P3 procurement for public agencies. With direction from ABC, the MBTA has requested to host the training (date TBD for spring 2020), which will include members of the MBTA, MassDOT, business, and other relevant stakeholders. The training contents will be customized by US DOT/NHI to best fit the MBTA/MassDOT needs.

## NEW MBTA BUS MAINTENANCE FACILITIES AND EVOLVING BATTERY-ELECTRIC BUS TECHNOLOGY CASE STUDY: ALBANY STREET GARAGE

On August 7, 2019, A Better City hosted "Powering the Future: Electrifying and Expanding the MBTA Bus System," a roundtable event that brought together experts who have begun the important task of identifying the challenges and opportunities of moving toward an electric bus fleet and the need for a new major MBTA bus maintenance facility modernization program. The event drew more than 60 attendees and garnered significant press. In concert with this event, ABC released a new report entitled *New MBTA Bus Maintenance Facilities & Evolving Battery Electric Bus Technology: The Potential for Mixed-use, Public-Private Development*. The study showcases the potential for public-private real estate developments to defray costs associated with construction of new MBTA bus maintenance facilities as part of a broader goal of increasing access to MBTA bus transit, which today features approximately 1,000 buses that serve more than 400,000 riders on weekdays. This report was funded by the Barr Foundation and developed in partnership with Jacobs Engineering as consultant. Subsequent to this event and report, the



MBTA solicited bids and procured Jacobs Engineering to service as Program Manager for a new MBTA Bus Maintenance Facilities Modernization initiative.

## **MBTA RED LINE / ORANGE LINE SIGNALS UPDATES PROGRAM**

Research continues to identify what work the MBTA is undertaking with respect to its ongoing signals upgrades program, what the benefits of this work will be in terms of capacity increases in combination with the MBTA's new fleets program, and what kinds of Next-Generation signals may be needed to provide additional capacity increases and passenger conveniences in the future. Preparation for a two-part signals public event hosted by A Better City is underway, with sessions to be held in March and May 2020.

## **SEAPORT LEADERSHIP GROUP**

A Better City is managing a group called the Seaport Leadership Group (SLG), which is a reorganization of the former “South Boston Business Leaders” working group. Since this group was formed, the SLG is making significant progress to unify the voice of business community in the Seaport area and advance important transportation projects and management for this important economic center. The SLG consists of representatives from businesses located in Boston Seaport area, with the top priorities being implementing recommendations from the 2015 South Boston Waterfront Sustainable Transportation Plan. The SLG is making progress on projects, such as delivering new adaptive traffic signals in the district, reopening the South Boston Bypass Road, bringing water ferry service from North Station to Fan Pier in the South Boston Waterfront, and improving mobility services throughout the area

## **LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT**

### **GREENWAY BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

The Greenway Business Improvement District (BID) approved the first BID Enhancement projects. The clean-up of “Parcel 2” has added momentum and excitement for a future park in this space next year. The BID has also developed a strategic plan for addressing specific under-performing areas of the Greenway corridor that will receive future BID enhancement funds. The BID has also reached out to the BPDA in hopes of identifying potential partnerships for enhancement projects when community benefit funds become available as a result of new developments initiated by property owners abutting the Greenway.

The BID updated assessment amounts that are included in the 2020 property tax bills that are sent to specific properties in the BID district. ABC continues to see 100% compliance with these



assessments and these funds continue to assist with the maintenance and horticulture needs of the Greenway parks.

## **ROSLINDALE WEEK-LONG POP-UP PLAZA AND TACTICAL PLAZA DESIGN**

In August, A Better City worked with the City of Boston's Public Realm Director and the landscape architects, Merritt Chase, to finalize the Birch Street Plaza design to submit the required materials to the Public Improvements Commission (PIC) for review. The project was approved after the two required meetings. Following this, Merritt Chase finalized the construction drawings and submitted the final documents to the City. The City of Boston is working to put the project out to bid this fall, and the tactical plaza will be installed on Birch Street in Roslindale in 2020.

## **PARKLET DESIGN IN JAMAICA PLAIN**

The Green Street Parklet in Jamaica Plain was approved by the City of Boston. At the site the slope of the street is six percent, which triggered an additional review by the Division of Professional Licensure Office of Public Safety and Inspections Architectural Access Board. The State review took several months but has been approved now. Merritt Chase has finalized the construction drawings for the parklet. The parklet construction will happen off-site this winter and the parklet will be installed in 2020.

## **PLAZAS, PARKLETS, AND POP-UPS IN THE PUBLIC REALM**

On Tuesday, December 3, 2019, A Better City hosted a half-day event called Plazas, Parklets, and Pop-Ups in the Public Realm. There were 50 people who attended the event despite the snow and school closures. To kick-off the event there was a panel presentation on recently completed tactical placemaking project, including Downtown Boston plaza projects, Birch Street Plaza in Roslindale, Gove Street Crossing on the East Boston Greenway, Green Street Parklet in JP, pavement murals in and around Boston, and Mathscapes in Cambridge. This was followed by lively conversations to ask questions in breakout groups where participants connected directly with professionals who've recently implemented projects. Finally, the keynote speaker, Mike Lydon with Street Plans in NYC, presented on "7 lessons for how Boston can Continue to Build Great Streets By Everyone, For Everyone." The Mike Lydon highlighted projects across the county that showed how pilots, pop-ups, and demonstration projects help to test ideas, gain support, and to lay the groundwork for future long-term projects



# ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT PRIORITIES

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT POLICY AGENDA

The Energy and Environment Unit has been busy attending hearings, providing testimony, meeting with legislators and the administration, and attending cross-sector coalition meetings. As a result of extensive feedback from Energy and Environment Advisory Committee members, the Executive Committee, and others, the A Better City Policy Agenda for the 2019-2020 legislative session was approved by ABC's Executive Committee at their October 23rd meeting. The goals of the policy agenda are mitigating the progression of climate change, adapting to the effects of climate change, and promoting energy reliability. Key priorities include the establishment of a Massachusetts Climate Commission, decarbonization pathways for large buildings, encouraging the state-wide adoption of a net-zero by 2050 target to match the City of Boston's climate targets, resilient and efficient building codes, and monitoring the resiliency and reliability of New England's energy supply.

## COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS RESEARCH AND POLICY ADVOCACY PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT

A Better City is developing a technical report on the thermal electrification of large buildings looking at the feasibility, current market, technologies, policy pathways and opportunities to incorporate electrification into capital planning and major renovations over the medium (2030) and long-term (2050). The report will include case studies of buildings in the Boston climate zone.

ABC has created a coalition of ABC and The Green Ribbon Commission (GRC) members interested in advancing energy efficient and resilient building policy in the Commonwealth and in developing an advocacy pathway in response to City and State level building policy underway. Two meetings were held with a focus on the state's proposed stretch code update, and the City of Boston's developing carbon emissions performance standard for existing buildings and a net zero carbon standard for new construction.

## PROTECTING CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

On November 1st, 2019, A Better City and The Green Ribbon Commission (GRC) hosted an event on *Protecting Critical Infrastructure: Planning & Investments in Boston*, bringing together some of the Boston area's key infrastructure providers to discuss progress made in climate resilient planning, design, and implementation—and the work that still lies ahead. The session also explored strategies for supporting coordinated, regional efforts to improve resiliency in the face of growing climate impacts. Opening remarks were provided by Dr. Valerie Roberson, President of



Roxbury Community College, and our panelists included: Andrew Brennan, Senior Director for Energy & Environment at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority; Andis Kalnins, Senior Manager at Verizon; Fred Laskey, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Mike Meyran, Acting Port Director of the Massachusetts Port Authority; and Amy Smith, Director of Business Process and Planning at National Grid.

## BUILDING OPERATOR CERTIFICATION TRAINING

A Better City partnered with Eversource and National Grid to host a Building Operator Certification training for thirty member facilities staff. This eight-day training that began at the end of March and will continue until mid-June had over capacity registration! We are taking evaluations at the end of each day of training so we can review options for additional training opportunities for our member building staff in the future.

## CLIMATE RESILIENCE GUIDELINES FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

Launched in March, the climate resilience guidelines for commercial buildings are now available on the Sustainable Buildings Initiative website. The guidelines include a template for buildings to help commercial real estate property owners and managers prepare their facilities for climate change, a workbook to capture facility specific data and a vendor list of climate resiliency service providers.

## MEMBERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS

### 2019 NORMAN B. LEVENTHAL AWARDS

This year's Norman B. Leventhal Awards honored four leaders for their many contributions to our built environment. The following awards were presented: Infrastructure: Joe Albanese, Environment – L. Rafael Reif, Land Use – Rosemarie Sansone, and Lifetime Achievement – Raymond Flynn. A Better City set ambitious goals in sponsorship participants, attendees, and fundraising for the 2019 event and all were successfully met and surpassed.

## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Through a variety of activities and initiatives focused around our main priorities of Transportation & Infrastructure, Land Use & Development, and Energy & Environment, the member engagement events held in 2019 included: Carbon Free Boston, The Future of Transportation, The Future of Carpooling, Powering the Future, the second edition of Carbon Read Boston, the second edition



of Protecting Critical Infrastructure, and the Plaza, Parklets & Pop-Up event. There have been several Greenway BID, Seaport Leadership Group, and SBI meetings.

## MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

In 2019 A Better City has brought on four new members Arrowstreet, A.W. Perry, Jacobs, and Perkins + Will. ABC continues to add alternates, nominate emerging leaders, reappoint new board members, appoint advisory committee members and strengthen our membership contact database.

## ADMINISTRATION

### NEW EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

The organizational assessment recommended the creation of a new Executive Vice President role to serve as the organization's Chief Operation Officer, as well as the public-facing expert on energy and environmental issues, including climate resilience. In May 2019, after an exhaustive search, A Better City hired Kate Dineen in to fill this role. Prior to joining A Better City, Kate served as the Chief of Staff for State Operations in the Office of New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, where she garnered significant management experience as well as noteworthy expertise in energy and environmental policy.