



## ***Our Vision and Priorities for Roadway Improvements in 495/MetroWest***

Adopted by the Board of Directors December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

In accordance with our organization's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan, the 495/MetroWest Partnership's Transportation Committee convened a working group in 2023 to review and update our organizational priorities for roadway projects in our region.

### **The Partnership's Vision for Roadway Improvements:**

- The region's roadways should be safe for all forms of transportation (including but not limited to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians alike); high-crash or high-injury locations should be evaluated and prioritized for improvement and investment.
- Regional equity is a key aim of the Partnership; the organization seeks to ensure that the 495/MetroWest region's roadway concerns receive their fair share of attention and resources.
- The 495/MetroWest Partnership supports expanded public transit options and other alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle commuting, such as biking, walking, carpooling, and other forms of shared transportation; the need for improved roadways does not contradict these goals. The Partnership further supports efforts to expand electric vehicle infrastructure, such as charging stations, and continued investment in new and emerging technologies to improve transportation infrastructure.
- Traffic congestion is both an economic and quality of life concern; these impacts should be considered when prioritizing the allocation of investments.
- The Partnership will advocate for the resources necessary to support needed roadway improvements in our region, including advocacy for specific projects, as well as continued advocacy to support adequate state and federal assistance to municipalities in their efforts to improve and maintain local roadways.
- The Partnership does not support toll collection operations as they currently exist, putting a disproportionate financial burden on residents and business located along I-90; the Partnership supports new or alternative equitable tolling strategies, provided they do not further impact or are specifically and only targeted towards the I-90 corridor.

Our priorities for roadway improvements in 495/MetroWest include:

- **Supporting Municipalities in Addressing Roadway Concerns:**
  - **Support for Chapter 90:** The Partnership supports increased financial support to our communities through increased funding of the Chapter 90 program. Funding for the Chapter 90 program has not kept pace with inflationary pressures.
  - **Support for Design/ Study Funding:** In order to be considered for state and federal funding vehicles, roadway concerns often first require study or preliminary design work to be completed. Municipalities frequently lack the resources to engage in these activities; the Partnership supports expanded assistance to cities and towns to bring potential issues to actionable stages. The Partnership further supports regional planning initiatives designed to bring projects to actionable stages.
- **I-495 and Route 9 in Westborough:** The Interstate 495/Route 9 interchange is a critical transportation node for regional mobility. The interchange provides connections between two of the region's most significant highways and provides access to a regional employment center along the Route 9 corridor that contains several office/industrial parks and significant areas of industrially zoned land. The current design contributes to vehicular queuing during peak hours, and complex weaving due to substandard off-ramps. Both I-495 and Route 9 carry high peak period commuter traffic volumes that correspond with peak travel direction.
- **Routes 1 and 1A at I-495:** Routes 1 and 1A have a significant need for improvements to address multiple safety

and mobility issues. This area is of major economic importance to the 495/MetroWest region as it is home to significant economic engines. With the impending FIFA World Cup coming to Foxborough in 2026, continued focus and investments along this corridor are paramount.

- **I-90 at Route 30 in Framingham/ Speen Street in Natick:** The Golden Triangle, and the surrounding area, is a major regional hub for office space and retail. The area is served by I-90, Route 9, Route 30, and Speen Street as major thruways. Although this area is of tremendous regional significance, its largely uncoordinated development has resulted in confusing and congested roadways. The 2013 Golden Triangle Study highlighted issues and potential improvement projects for this area.
- **Routes 135 and 126 in Framingham:** The Route 135/Route 126 intersection and grade crossing of the Framingham/ Worcester Commuter Rail line in Downtown Framingham continues to be a significant congestion point. The current configuration creates significant recurring congestion during peak commuting hours.
- **Route 126 and I-495 in Bellingham:** Route 126 near its interchange with I-495 in Bellingham is a highly congested area due to its regional commercial economic activity. In October 2014, MassDOT completed a Road Safety Audit (RSA) of Hartford Avenue (Route 126 Corridor) in Bellingham. This corridor was chosen by MassDOT because of the corridor's high crash rate.
- **Route 16 Corridor (Between Milford and Wellesley):** Route 16 is a secondary arterial roadway that provides an alternative means of traveling East-West within the region. Congestion along Route 16 remains a concern for Natick and Sherborn residents. Route 16 is also intersected by Route 109 and Route 140 in Milford and is consistently congested during peak commuting hours.
- **Route 9 at Various Congestion Points:** Route 9 is a vital economic artery for the 495/MetroWest region. The Partnership supports interchange and roadway improvements along Route 9 to relieve congestion and improve safety, which must keep pace with development along the corridor.
- **Route 9 at California Avenue in Framingham:** The Route 9 and California Avenue intersection and the surrounding area provide access to a number of key industrial and office sites. Due to the growth in employment opportunities in this area, long-term planning for the future needs of this location should be prioritized.
- **I-290 and Main Street in Shrewsbury:** The intersection of I-290 and Main Street in Shrewsbury is a major access point to I-290 within the Partnership's service area. I-290 is a significant connector between the I-495 corridor and Worcester, home to a substantial number of employees who work within our service area.
- **Route 140 and Route 122 in Grafton:** Both Route 140 and Route 122 in Grafton are high-volume traffic areas that serve as major arterial roadways, with nearby connection to I-90. The traffic volume and accident rates make it a crucial intersection for continued attention.
- The Partnership has also identified **three priority concerns outside of our service area** that have significant impacts on, or the potential to significantly impact, our region:
  - **I-90 Allston Multimodal Project:** The Partnership is deeply concerned about the lack of a MetroWest-specific mitigation plan aimed at alleviating the impact of travel constrictions that are being discussed as part of I-90 Allston Multimodal Project construction activities. The Partnership supports the creation of a standing working group whose focus is specific to this challenge.
  - **The Route 2 Rotary in Concord:** The Route 2 Rotary in Concord is a major traffic congestion and safety concern. Though not located within our service area, traffic created by this rotary directly impacts commuters coming to and from the 495/MetroWest region to its west.
  - **The Interchange of I-495 and I-95:** The I-495 and I-95 interchange in Mansfield is a crucial regional connection; the volume of traffic carried on both roadways results in a high level of congestion in this area that impacts communities in the southern tier of our service area and has "spillover" impact on Routes 1 and 1A.

Individual projects and concerns identified above are not ranked. Further, the 495/MetroWest Partnership will continue to advocate for further roadway needs not identified herein as warranted.