

# HATS seeks explanation on Route 2 widening delays

By Geoff Moore  
Correspondent

After hearing that funding for the Route 2 widening project could be pushed back another three years, members of the Hanscom Area Towns Selectmen tried to get a handle on the allocation process.

HATS met July 27, seeking to understand why the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization proposed pushing back funding for the Route 2 widening project between Crosby's Corner and Bedford Road on the draft Transportation Improvement Plan for fiscal 2007 through 2010.

The group devoted almost the entire evening to an overview of the MPO and its draft improvement plan, which now shows that the work on Route 2 will not start until fiscal 2009.

For Dan Boynton, long-time Lincoln resident, the question was simply, "why can't they just take the houses now and build the road when they can?" Speaking before the start of the meeting he said, "residents are in a no win situation" and went on to describe the dilemma

homeowners whose properties are due to be taken are having in planning maintenance and moving on with their lives.

For 12 years Boynton has attended meetings, disseminated information and provided residents' inputs to proposals as the North Side Route 2 Neighborhood captain, a role and title created at the start of the planning process.

Selectmen Sara Mattes of Lincoln, Concord's Anne Shapiro, Mark Siegenthaler of Bedford and Jeanne Krieger from Lexington listened intently and questioned Bedford Selectman and MPO regional town representative, Gordon Feltman as he provided an acronym-laden, but comprehensive overview of the process.

Feltman began by pointing out that he represents all towns in the Boston Region MPO, which covers 101 towns and cities in Eastern Massachusetts, not just those that comprise HATS. The Boston Region MPO is just one of 13 administered by the commonwealth, but according to Feltman covers half the population and includes

one-third of the roadways.

Funding and work prioritization are two main causes of the project's delay, Feltman said.

When it comes to dividing funding, state mega projects such as the \$59 million Sagamore Bridge Flyover have the highest priority, followed by interstate highway maintenance, cost overruns and contingencies, bridge programs and finally regional "target" projects. Feltman explained that at its predicted cost of \$31.5 million, the Route 2 widening might in the past have been considered a mega project, so as not to burden the Boston region budget and would therefore have the highest priority. However, restrictions on the number of federally-supported mega projects pushed the Route 2 work into the regional budget, which has 256 projects vying for available dollars.

Feltman said the MPO considers Route 2 widening a high priority regional project, but cautioned towns that this can change year-to-year and that any justification that moves

this work to an earlier start will result in another regional project being put back. He also said 100 percent readiness status is an important argument in moving the project up and in maintaining its priority by demonstrating credibility to the state Transportation Pro-

gramming and Planning Committee at future project reviews. The improvement plan shows the Route 2 project design status to be 25 percent approved. Complete right of way availability, including any conservation land that may require change of use legislation, is a

key issue that must be in place before Mass Highway puts out work to tender, Feltman noted.

Further information on the Boston Region MPO, including the draft Transportation Improvement Plan, is available for public review and comment at [www.bostonmpo.org](http://www.bostonmpo.org).

## What's the Boston MPO?

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization covers 101 communities in Eastern Massachusetts, including Lincoln. The group was established to implement a continuing, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process and policy. It also decides how to allocate federal funds for transit projects and both state and federal funds for roadway, bicycle and pedestrian projects.

The Boston Region MPO consists of a number of agencies, organizations and municipalities:

- State transportation agencies**
  - Executive Office of Transportation
  - Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
  - Massachusetts Highways Department
  - Massachusetts Port Authority
  - Massachusetts Turnpike Authority

- Regional organizations**
  - Metropolitan Area Planning Council
  - Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Advisory Board

- Municipalities**
  - City of Boston (permanent member)
  - Three elected cities — Everett, Newton and Salem. Cities must be nominated by five other municipalities and are then elected for a three-year term on an annual rotating basis.

- Three towns — Bedford, Hopkinton and Framingham, elected as above.

- Nonvoting members**
  - Regional Transportation Advisory Council
  - Federal Highways Administration
  - Federal Transit Administration

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