

Background: Complete Streets Program: Support for modification through legislation

BACKGROUND

- MassDOT's Complete Streets program was included in the 2014 Bond bill (Chapter 79 of the Acts of 2014).
- Chapter 79 provided a \$50 million bond authorization, and created the outline of the program in new Chapter 90I.
- Subsequently, a number of municipalities expressed strong concerns that the program requires significant effort for a relatively small amount of funding.
- MassDOT created an alternative Complete Streets program using casino transportation funding (\$12.5 million for FY16 and FY17). Since MassDOT used casino funding instead of the bond authorization, MassDOT streamlined the Complete Streets program.
- Municipalities were particularly concerned about three aspects of Chapter 90I:
 - Towns would have to adopt Complete Streets requirements municipality-wide
 - They could have to develop a Mode Shift target of moving people out of cars and into alternative methods (bike/ped/transit)
 - Annual reporting requirement
- Of the original seven criteria, two are kept in MassDOT's language (file an application, adopt a policy), and MassDOT retained the 90I requirement that 33% of the funding would go to communities with median incomes below state average.
 - MassDOT created a new "Prioritization Plan" which asks municipalities to develop a list of projects on which, depending on the availability of funding, they would like to do "Complete Streets" improvements. Complete Streets improvements are in four categories: Pedestrian, Safety, Bicycle, Transit.
- The remaining requirements are town-wide in the original Chapter 90I language
 - Bike/ Ped inventory town-wide
 - Develop procedures when doing repairs / expansions that conform with Complete Streets
 - Review all private development projects for consistency with Complete Streets
 - Set a municipal goal for mode shift – from driving to walking/biking/transit
 - Submit an annual progress report
- MassDOT has given communities wide flexibility to design projects that makes sense for them, understanding that many small municipalities do not have the capacity for all modes, or large scale changes that may be required to comply with Chapter 90I.
- Seventy-four municipalities have signed up to become part of the program, 30 have passed acceptable policies and 5 have contracted with MassDOT for technical assistance funding.

CONCLUSION

- MassDOT has not spent any of the existing bond authorization on Complete Streets to date, however, to continue the program, they will need access to bond funding. To continue the current program, MassDOT would need a corrective fix the Chapter 90I language outlined in the bond bill.
- MassDOT has worked with such advocacy groups as Transportation for Massachusetts to ensure that they are comfortable with the changes.