

*Technical Assistance Program Application Form
Applicant Information*

Lead Municipality: Needham

Project Manager Name: Anne Gulati

Position/Title: Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations, Needham Public Schools

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Email Address: anne_gulati@needham.k12.ma.us

Note: the Project Manager is the person who will be the day-to-day contact for the project and who will represent the municipality/project team in regular communication with MAPC.

Project Concept

Project Name: Regional School Fleet Electrification in Metro-West Boston

Does this project involve multiple municipalities? Yes

If yes, please list the municipalities who will partner with you on this project.

Ashland Public Schools

Framingham Public Schools

Harvard Public Schools

Holliston Public Schools

Hopkinton Public Schools

Marlborough Public Schools

Medfield Public Schools

Millis Public Schools

Natick Public Schools

Needham Public Schools (Lead Municipality)

Wayland Public Schools

Wellesley Public Schools

Weston Public Schools

Westwood Public Schools

Other Metrowest Communities have been invited to partner as well

Does this project involve other organizations (e.g., additional municipal departments or non-municipal partners such as community-based organizations, Chamber of Commerce, state or other public entities, etc.)? Yes

If yes, please list the organizations who will partner with you on this project. Character limit 1000

School departments will lead the project, in collaboration with the following municipal officials/groups:

- Sustainability staff
- Public works departments
- Municipal finance departments
- Elected or appointed officials (e.g. School committees, Town Meeting members, sustainability committee members, etc.)

Briefly describe the project, including the geographic location. Character limit 2000

We seek MAPC support to study pathways to electrification of school buses and pupil transportation vans in each community, and potentially the entire Metrowest Boston region, with consideration of opportunities for grant funding and regional collaboration, including the use of shared infrastructure and public-private partnerships. We aim for a research and analysis study that results in recommended strategies and considers financial, operational/logistical, political, and equitable access implications.

For context, many of our communities utilize one common vendor to provide school buses and drivers. However, municipalities don't have the ability to work with a vendor on future business models, because they can't legally work with a vendor to guarantee future business and state law limits contracts to three years. There is also minimal competition for school transportation services, and districts often only receive one response to transportation RFPs. Therefore, rather than focusing on a particular vendor, the study may want to focus more heavily on opportunities for regional collaboration and shared investment/assets, such as group procurement, charging infrastructure and regional charging networks.

Finally, a significant consideration is the high up-front cost for vehicles and the related infrastructure. Though there is a wide array of grants intended to defray these costs, each has its own unique requirements and challenges for use. The study should review and recommend specific funding opportunities available to the study's participating communities.

Potential questions for research include:

- How should communities that currently contract transportation services, in part or in whole, proceed in electrifying school fleets, including buses, vans and specialized transportation? What would a phased approach look like?
- How can districts work collaboratively with contract service providers to transition to electric buses, vans and specialized transportation?
- What opportunities exist for regional collaboration from a service, infrastructure, or grant funding perspective?
- What grants or funding sources are available that municipalities could use to pay for charging stations or buses?
- If regional charging stations are a viable approach, what are potential locations for charging infrastructure?
- Beyond electrification, what other opportunities exist to reduce emissions and improve school and afterschool transportation for the region's students?

Please list any relevant previous or current planning efforts that the project may advance. Character limit 1000

At a broader scale, electrification of municipal vehicles is part of our communities' broader push to electrify as many vehicles as possible (some communities have set a goal of 30% electric

vehicles by 2030). Many of our communities' climate action committees and Climate Action Plans specifically cite school bus electrification as a goal. Though municipal vehicles number few relative to privately-owned vehicles, electrification of municipal vehicles allows our communities to lead by example, set a standard, and encourage others.

Districts have had mixed success in advancing school fleet electrification to date. Some communities have included future capital requests for electrification. Other districts have held informal conversations with bus vendors, received initial quotes from "turnkey" service providers, and spoken with contractors for infrastructure construction. However, funding and technical details remain unresolved at this moment, and we require additional support.

Please describe the local capacity and support to advance the project.

Each school district has a Director or Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations to support this project. Some, though not all, municipalities have sustainability directors or climate resiliency coordinators that can support or provide local information. These individuals are accustomed to cross-community collaboration, and have partnered on a variety of MAPC technical assistance grants. The participating school districts are also all members of the Accept Collaborative, which partners on transportation for special education students.

However, each municipality operates independently; there is no individual or study that views the challenge of electrification at a regional level, despite our shared interests and close proximity.

Projects that promote racial and social equity are prioritized during the project selection process. Responses to the following questions help MAPC assess how your project can advance equity.

1. Describe any Environmental Justice communities that may be served with this project.

Describe the location and characteristics of the community (e.g., linguistically isolated, low-income, BIPOC, etc.).

Nearly 100,000 residents across Ashland (18,832), Framingham (63,128), Natick (13,544) and Wellesley (3,638) live in neighborhoods designated as Environmental Justice communities. Together they represent 60 census block groups; the Environmental Justice criteria of these groups include Minority, Income and English Isolation. The minority populations primarily consist of those who identify as Hispanic or Latino, Asian, or Black or African American. In addition, between 19-28% of the population in Ashland, Framingham and Natick identify as foreign-born. The languages that are most commonly spoken apart from English in Framingham are Portuguese or Portuguese Creole and Spanish or Spanish Creole.

2. Briefly describe how the project addresses community needs. If applicable, reference local plans or studies that identified racial or social disparities, which this project works to diminish. Character limit 1000

The school bus electrification project aims to address several community needs:

- The project seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality in the community by replacing diesel school buses with electric buses, which produce zero

emissions. This is particularly important for children, who are vulnerable to the health effects of air pollution

- The project aims to reduce noise pollution in the community. Electric buses are quieter than traditional buses, which can be a significant source of noise pollution in neighborhoods where they operate.
- The project seeks to diminish racial and social disparities in the region by providing equal access to clean and safe transportation for all students, regardless of socio-economic status. Local studies have shown that low-income neighborhoods and communities of color are often disproportionately impacted by air pollution and other environmental health hazards. The project helps ensure all can benefit from clean and safe transportation.

3. What community or constituency-based organizations do you anticipate being involved in this project?

Climate action planning committees, and their relevant subgroups, from each community have a significant vested interest in this project. Additionally, we anticipate that multiple high school student groups seek to participate in the study as well - as some have already expressed interest.

4. How will you involve historically underrepresented groups (people of color, people with lower incomes, youth, people with disabilities, tenants, seniors, recent immigrants, linguistic minorities, minority- and women-owned small businesses, etc.) in the project? Please describe how the proposed project will directly benefit these groups.

Initially, we expect that MAPC could choose to include focus groups with these individuals as part of the study as well. Once the report is released, we plan to involve these underrepresented groups as part of the conversation (at Town Meeting or City Council) when making decisions about final plans.

As noted above, pollution from diesel vehicles has historically had a disproportionate effect on low-income, underrepresented communities (such as higher rates of asthma among youth). By electrifying fleets, we will begin to undo the harm done to these communities from diesel vehicles.

Briefly describe the product deliverables and outcomes expected from the project. Examples: comprehensive plan, community or corridor plan, draft or adopted bylaw or ordinance, inter-municipal agreement, collective purchasing agreement, etc.

We expect the project deliverable to be a scoping, research, and strategy development project that culminates in specific recommendations for municipalities - and potentially all of Metrowest Boston - to proceed with school fleet electrification. We anticipate that the report would focus on regional opportunities, and include a separate section with municipality-specific advice (e.g. one community that has an available bus yard and owns some buses may consider a different path than another community that licenses all of its buses). Upon culmination of the project, we would hope each district would have a clear path to fleet electrification, and be able to both make capital requests for fleet electrification and apply for external funding.

What is your anticipated timeline for completion of this project?

Ideally, the study would be complete by late summer or early fall 2023, in time for districts to adapt the following year's capital requests as needed (the majority of capital plans are established in December of each year, with funding appropriated in the spring). However, we are open to discussion on this timeline.

Does this project implement any local plans, particularly ones developed with TAP or other public funding sources (e.g., state planning grants)? If this is an initial planning project, please describe how you might hope to implement its recommendations.

Yes; electrification of school fleets is part of many of our Climate Action Plans.

For projects related to Housing Choice implementation, including Section 3A Compliance: Is the proposal a second phase of an ongoing or past MAPC project with the community?

No

Does the proposal promote Affordable housing? No

Which MetroCommon2050 goals are advanced with this project? (select all that apply)

Getting Around the Region Yes

Homes for All

Climate-Resilient Region Yes

Net Zero Carbon Region Yes

Dynamic and Representative Governments Yes

Healthy Environment Yes

Economic Security

Economic Prosperity Yes

Healthy and Safe Neighborhoods Yes

Thriving Arts, Culture, and Heritage

Did you work with an MAPC staff member to develop this project concept? Yes No

If yes, what staff member or department? Alison Felix (Transportation Planning), Julie Curti (Clean Energy), Cara Goodman (Clean Transportation), Marc Fine (Municipal Collaboration)

Do you have a MAPC Council representative? Yes No Not sure

If no, will you be able to appoint a representative prior to starting project work, if TAP funding is awarded? Yes No

What in-kind contributions, if any, are included in the project?

Example: X dollars towards direct costs (e.g., space rental cost, printing, or translation costs, etc.)

The school districts/municipalities will support the project through in-kind participation of multi-departmental staff.

*Does your proposed project have additional funding sources, beyond the requested TAP funds?
Note: Cash match is not required but may help both MAPC and the municipality to prepare and execute a more comprehensive scope of work.*

No

If yes, what is the source of this additional funding? _____

As noted above, this submission is for a planning study, which we do not anticipate to require additional funding. The eventual procurement of any electric buses or installation of any charging infrastructure, however, will require additional funding - likely from local sources or from federal/state grants.

*Has this additional funding been secured, or do you plan to file an application for grants or seek a commitment of municipal resources at the future town meeting/city council meeting?
Please explain.*

The study's recommendations would likely become the basis for any request for municipal resources at a future town meeting/city council meeting.

How did you hear about MAPC's TAP program?

MAPC website

MAPC social media

MAPC Matters newsletter X

MAPC staff (please state who, if possible) _____

Other (please specify) _____

Attachments

Please attach a letter of support for the project from the lead municipality's CEO. For multi-community projects, preference is given to projects that have letters of support from all (or at least some) participating municipalities and organizations. Priority will be given to letters of support that demonstrate municipal commitment to advancing project outcomes.

Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement (REDIS) Acknowledgement

By signing this application, you are committing to carry out project work in alignment with MAPC's Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement and commit to inclusive community stakeholder outreach. If your project is awarded, MAPC will work with you to develop a scope of work that considers how equity can be advanced through community engagement and through other aspects of planning and implementation.

Applicant Name: _____

Applicant Title: _____

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____