

WHAT THE NEXT MAYOR NEEDS TO DO ABOUT BOSTON'S TRANSPORTATION CRISIS



This White Paper series was created by the Boston Area Research Initiative (BARI), a network of research institutions and experts, to provide our city's next mayor with the perspective of members of our academic community. We stand ready to assist the mayor as experts, residents and stakeholders in Boston's future.

Papers were invited and reflect the views of the authors. They are not intended to reflect the views of their institutions, nor BARI members generally.

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CHALLENGES FACING BOSTON

To move forward on any of the challenges confronting Boston, we have to think about how we are — physically — getting there. Climate change, economic recovery, and racial inequity all intersect with transportation. Thankfully, the transportation conversation has evolved over the last few years and the next mayoral administration is going to take the intersections of this policy issue seriously.

As Boston begins to move towards a recovery from a worldwide pandemic, transportation will return to much of what it looked like pre-pandemic. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Boston already had a crisis of transportation — exemplified by its worst-in-the-nation traffic.¹ As we emerge from one crisis, we are being thrust back into this pre-existing transportation crisis, and near-term traffic is likely to be much worse due to pandemic-induced drops in transit ridership. Recovering from this transportation crisis will involve helping residents of Boston move away from current reliance on solo driving so we can all get where we're going.

The next mayor must take advantage of research-informed policy levers to make incremental change, but they must do so with a serious and optimistic vision for long-term change and steps to get there. The mayor can use realistic policy changes alongside political leadership — a key tool in a mayor's toolbox when Boston's transportation difficulties are not controlled solely by the mayor's office.

Today, we have more evidence to support the mayor's array of policy choices. Making progress on improving transportation, and making that progress quickly, can help accomplish the broader goals of improving the lives of people in Boston. The research community is here to help use our expertise in all the ways we can.

¹ See, e.g., <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/03/09/metro/boston-ranks-worst-us-rush-hour-traffic-second-year-row/>

HOW DOES A MAYOR SERIOUSLY CONFRONT TRANSPORTATION AS A POLICY CHALLENGE AND IMPROVE MULTI-MODAL RELIABILITY, AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS CITYWIDE?

Take Clear Public Responsibility and Create Internal Accountability

- Set the tone for what is possible in transportation policy and create a sense of inevitability that transformation is necessary and coming
- Renew support for the city's commitment to Vision Zero
- Continue to implement the priorities laid out in Go Boston 2030
- Appoint a new Chief of Streets who has ultimate decision-making authority for both planning and implementing transportation policy and hold her/him accountable for accomplishing transportation policy goals
- Evaluate restructuring the city's Department of Public Works and Transportation Department to remove silos, improve coordination and collaboration, and provide defined power and accountability

Collaborate with the State, Advocates and Private Employers to Advance Boston's Interests

- Work with the city's state delegation on Beacon Hill to identify priorities and create a true political strategy that benefits both these legislators and the city government
- Create specific roles in city agencies focused on state agency collaboration and set a clear, collaborative agenda
- Lobby to continue a shared oversight structure such as the Fiscal & Management Control Board (FMCB) with a dedicated seat for the City of Boston/Mayor
- Collaborate with private employers to incentivize and experiment with new programs to induce mode shift while sharing best practices
- Formally partner with advocacy groups who have been doing community-based work to push for sustainable transportation policy improvements

Properly Incentivize Transportation Modes to Reduce Single Occupancy Vehicle Usage within and into Boston

- Use positive incentives to make public transportation a more viable alternative to driving
- Use negative incentives to more appropriately reveal the negative costs imposed by driving
- Accelerate investment in infrastructure that makes walking and cycling more attractive

Appropriately Value Public Street Space and Parking

- Price both residential and commercial parking properly
- Eliminate parking minimums in new developments

Take an Expanded View of Transportation by Prioritizing Multi-Modal Access

- Prioritize within-neighborhood mobility by increasing investment in walkable, bikeable, transit-rich commercial and residential hubs
- Invest in "last mile" access to transit, by prioritizing multi-modal access to transit stations
- Accelerate investment in safe bike infrastructure

Improve the Public Process to Build Support

- Engage in a public engagement process that incorporates true democratic voice in transportation planning and decision-making
- Use public input as an opportunity to proactively help the public understand long-term transportation benefits and goals
- Iteratively build support through the process of policy feedback by capitalizing on successful projects

TAKE CLEAR PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY TO FACILITATE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY

To start, the mayor of Boston must take clear responsibility for the policy improvements that a mayor can make. Research has shown that voters are unable to hold city governments accountable for the performance of transportation and other local policy issues in part because of the unclear responsibility over these local policy arenas.² Improving our region's disastrous congestion has potentially positive political consequences for a mayor who takes ownership of this issue. Taking responsibility for transportation challenges externally (to the residents of Boston) needs to be paired with internal accountability within City Hall. The lack of clear responsibility within City Hall will continue to hinder any quick improvements to transportation for the residents of Boston. This is exemplified by the silos within which city employees who work on transportation sit — within both the Department of Transportation and the Department of Public Works.

1 Set the tone for what is possible in transportation policy and create a sense of inevitability that transformation is necessary and coming. The next mayor must help get people on board with the massive mode shifts in transportation that are necessary if we take the challenges of our city seriously. Go Boston 2030 is explicit about this: we need people to get out of cars and into trains, onto buses, and riding bikes. No matter how much work the city puts into making non-car transportation better (more reliable, more accessible, more equitable) the mayor needs to help lead the cultural shift to address this challenge, too. Research shows that people are willing to take on the relatively small costs of these transportation improvements if their leaders show them how this can benefit the city overall.³

2 Continue to implement the priorities laid out in Go Boston 2030. The next administration has a publicly-guided roadmap in Go Boston 2030, but progress on this plan has been slow and lacked transparency.⁴ While it is understandable (and tempting) for each new mayoral administration to show their own leadership in transportation, the City already has a comprehensive transportation plan. The problem has been the lack of follow-through and accountability. When the new mayor takes office in 2022, there will only be 8 years left to accomplish the goals in this plan. Instead of “kicking the can” down the road again, the City can make real progress by using Go Boston 2030 as a baseline and authorizing accountability and the appropriate reassessments to understand what needs to be done in order to achieve the goals by 2030. The plan can then be updated as necessary given this assessment rather than thrown out.

3 Renew support for the city's commitment to Vision Zero. As with Go Boston 2030, the city's steps to support VisionZero need updates and ongoing transparency.⁵ The mayor should update the city's Vision Zero action plan, continue to support the action plan through funding and political support, and acknowledge and address any failures through transparent communication.

4 Appoint a new Chief of Streets who has ultimate decision-making authority for both planning and implementing transportation policy and hold them accountable for accomplishing transportation policy goals. If the mayor has a vision for transportation, this needs to be someone willing to take on this leadership role — without defaulting to the ways that transportation decisions have been made in Boston in the past. This position, as begun under Mayor Walsh, has the power to

2 For example, de Benedictis-Kessner, Justin, “How Attribution Inhibits Accountability: Evidence from Train Delays.” *Journal of Politics* 80(4): 1417-1422. October 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1086/698754> and Sances, Michael. “Attribution Errors in Federalist Systems: When Voters Punish the President for Local Tax Increases.” *Journal of Politics* 79(4): 1286-1301. October 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1086/692588>

3 See, e.g., Palm, M., Handy, S. Sustainable transportation at the ballot box: a disaggregate analysis of the relative importance of user travel mode, attitudes and self-interest. *Transportation* 45, 121-141 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11116-016-9728-0>

4 The city's progress on its own Go Boston 2030 plan, for instance, was described by the group LivableStreets Alliance in a March 2020 report as “on track” in less than half of its city-led projects, and even fewer in projects requiring coordination with the state. Report available online: https://www.livablestreets.info/goboston2030_progress_report.

5 The city's own action plan for achieving its commitment to VisionZero — a goal of zero traffic fatalities and severe injuries on city streets — was also last updated in 2018.

revamp the way policy is made in this critical area by harnessing political support across departments that touch transportation.

5 Evaluate restructuring of DPW and BTD to remove silos, improve coordination and collaboration and provide defined power and accountability. Many other metro areas — such as Miami-Dade — have or have moved to a single department for these reasons and Boston should consider this internally as well as providing the support for the city hall team to collaborate regionally.

COLLABORATE WITH OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, ADVOCACY GROUPS, AND PRIVATE EMPLOYERS TO ADVANCE BOSTON'S TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

The success of potential collaborations with governments and entities who are responsible for other policy levers outside the mayor's control in the last several years should be expanded and specifically include State and MBTA collaboration.

1 Work with the city's state delegation on Beacon Hill to identify priorities and create a true political strategy that benefits both these legislators and the city government. Priorities could include:

- Equitable MBTA fare policy reform, such as low-income or free bus fares.⁶
- Automated enforcement to improve public safety and reduce racial bias in the role of enforcement. This will have the added advantage of complementing policy goals of the next mayor in terms of policing reform.
- Funding for Complete Streets policy from MassDOT to continue the improvements that have been made so far in Boston's neighborhoods and nearby cities.
- Road pricing that takes into account the congestion in Boston, as well as the real costs that use of roads imposes on the people who live next to those roads (who are often different from those who drive on them). Such road pricing needs to be fair and transparent, and the costs visible to the user.⁷

2 Create specific roles in city agencies focused on state agency collaboration and set a clear collaborative agenda. Increased staffing for positions within the city's government that explicitly collaborate with other regional transportation actors — MBTA, MassDOT, state legislature and agencies and regional planning authorities — is one way to do this. Collaborating with these groups on potential policy improvements can reduce the strain on the city's resources and better accomplish the goals of all governments involved. For a review of how this has worked on the ground in a number of cities, consult the report done by TransitCenter on the topic.⁸ Collaborative priorities should include: transit signal priority, coordinating BRT corridors with other cities to speed the entirety of the bus network, improving safety on dangerous roads in Boston that are DCR- and State-owned, and facilitating transportation access across modes, such as strategically placing BlueBikes stations to increase bus ridership.

6 For evidence from the Boston region that this works to increase mode share, see Rosenblum, J., Zhao, J., Arcaya, M., Steil, J., and Zegras, C. How Low-income Transit Riders in Boston Respond to Discounted Fares: A Randomized Controlled Evaluation. Online: http://equitytransit.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/whitepaper_v8.pdf

7 For a longer treatment of this issue, see Aloisi, J. in CommonWealth Magazine: https://commonwealthmagazine.org/opinion/with-transportation-we-must-not-return-to-normal/?fbclid=IwAR0CA43HzX4bfVG6o7LKTfhl6uMQdwqCHQmgQGyFZZm26l2SroK_fmZZSxY. For evidence that this works to change behavior, see Gibson, M., & Carnovale, M. (2015). The effects of road pricing on driver behavior and air pollution. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 89, 62-73.

8 TransitCenter's report, "The Path to Partnership: How Cities and Transit Systems Can Stop Worrying and Join Forces," is available online: <https://transitcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Collaboration.pdf>

3 Lobby to continue a shared oversight structure such as the Fiscal & Management Control Board (FMCB) with a dedicated seat for the City of Boston/Mayor as the majority of MBTA assets are within the City of Boston.

4 Collaborate with private employers. The mayor can convene and partner with major employers on a comprehensive plan to reduce the city's notorious congestion. Employers need to help their workforce get to Boston in a way that doesn't make our transportation crisis worse. States and cities have successfully regulated this using either mandates or incentives (via tax reductions/increases) to employers to appropriately price their parking or leverage behavioral science to make its costs more visible.⁹ Using the bully pulpit and convening power of the Mayor's office can also create shared accountability and facilitate knowledge-sharing of best practices.

5 Formally partner with the advocacy groups who have been doing community-based work to push for sustainable transportation policy improvements. Rather than reinventing the wheel by independently conducting community engagement to explore the political feasibility of policy changes, partner with these groups and their expert engagement teams. Build upon their work by publicizing it as a valid input to the policy process.

PROPERLY INCENTIVIZE TRANSPORTATION MODES TO REDUCE SINGLE OCCUPANCY VEHICLE USAGE WITHIN AND INTO BOSTON

Make driving alone no longer the cheapest or ostensibly most convenient option, through both positive and negative incentives. These incentives should make alternatives to driving more visibly cost-competitive with driving and make the status quo of single-occupancy vehicle usage more appropriately priced to encompass its negative externalities.

1 Use positive incentives to make public transportation cheaper. While the policy tools to make transit more reliable and frequent are often the purview of other governments or may require massive investments that are beyond the short-term abilities of the city's government, there are still positive incentives that the mayor can use to incentivize transit use. Providing free services on the MBTA's entire network, or even just free bus fares, may be attractive policies due to the fact that public transportation is a tool of economic opportunity for the less affluent residents of Boston. Funding this could be a massive investment — though likely to be at least partially offset in large part by decreased costs of fare collection and the reliability gains from time saved collecting fares — and would need to come from the state government.¹⁰ Some people have also suggested a targeted policy tying fares to income levels as a more effective policy.¹¹ On the other hand, current proposals for a partially-free or a means-tested program ignore how these proposals would impose administrative burdens¹² on low-income transit riders, leading such policies to be less effective than intended. The next mayor should leverage potential federal infrastructure funding to reduce the costs of public transit within, while collaborating with the state and the MBTA to use these types of incentives on a geographically broader long-term scale.¹³

9 For a thorough review of these tools, see Shoup, D. C. (2005). *Parking cash out*. American Planning Association. Online: <https://trid.trb.org/view/875272>

10 A review of the impact of free transit in the Boston area done by LivableStreets Alliance (available [here](#)) suggests that the lost fare revenue is not substantial when compared to the costs of collecting fares combined with the cost of the Fare Transformation Project.

11 For a perspective supporting income-based fares, see Paget-Seekins, L. "Free bus is tempting, but low-income fares better address affordability." *The Boston Globe*, April 23, 2021.

12 For an explanation of this concept, which is typified by administrative "red tape" frequently inherent in means-tested government programs such as SNAP, see Moynihan, D., Herd, P., & Harvey, H. (2015). Administrative burden: Learning, psychological, and compliance costs in citizen-state interactions. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 25(1), 43-69.

13 The report on free bus fares from the LivableStreets Alliance points to several plausible funding mechanisms for both a pilot of free buses and long-term funding of free buses in its [FAQ](#).

2 Use negative incentives to more appropriately reveal the negative costs imposed by driving.

When more people drive, this has near-term costs for everyone in Boston through both emissions and traffic, and long-term adverse health and climatological consequences. Negative incentives have the power to rebalance the scales and make these enormous societal costs more visible to us all. An expanded view of transportation policy needs to account for the budgetary impact of the status quo without these negative incentives. By failing to use common policy tools such as parking pass registration fees or congestion charges that impose these costs directly on people driving, the city of Boston is subsidizing solo occupancy driving behavior. This status quo is inequitable — car owning households are subsidized by less affluent households that do not have cars or — if they do own cars — use them less. Moreover, this subsidy is enormous — to the tune of about \$64 billion for the entire state of Massachusetts according to a recent financial analysis — and primarily paid by the governments and taxpayers of the Greater Boston area.¹⁴ Choosing to confront the fiscal status quo of subsidizing driving alone is a serious challenge for the mayor of Boston: properly pricing the cost of driving alone is unlikely to be popular as a standalone policy in the immediate term. Focus on appropriately reducing the status quo's subsidies and tying any increased costs to the payoffs that residents of Boston will enjoy — in the forms of reduced traffic, cleaner air, improved and better-maintained public space. Such bundling of negative incentives with visible public payoffs can be a winning political position.

3 Accelerate investment in infrastructure that makes walking and cycling more attractive. There is evidence that improving the experience of walking and cycling can increase the frequency with which people use these modes of transportation. Invest in new cycling infrastructure, particularly low stress facilities that accommodate users of all ages, on an aggressive timeline. Separated facilities accessible to people of all ages riding bikes of all types, not just the bravest urban cyclists, are important to make these improvements broadly popular. Evaluate the maintenance of pedestrian facilities in Boston, where critical infrastructure like sidewalks has been inequitably repaired in some neighborhoods but not others and accelerate the timeline for repairing these inequities. The mayor should explore lowering speed limits as a way to encourage both walking and cycling given the robust evidence that it can improve safety and reduce perceptions of danger that currently make these activities less attractive. A holistic vision of the pedestrian and cycling experiences should motivate investments in everything from streetlights to ensure people feel safe walking at night to bicycle parking facilities that are broadly available across the city. Use data to explore the impact of these investments on mode choice, and to evaluate the safety benefits of these policy tools for all road users.

APPROPRIATELY VALUE PUBLIC STREET SPACE AND PARKING

The pandemic has shown us just how valuable our street space is for things like outdoor dining and for people to enjoy the outdoors without crowding on sidewalks. The next mayor needs to properly value this space such that use of our streets is fair to all residents of the city and does not provide a free subsidy of valuable public space to car owners. One way to do this is via holistic parking reform:

1 Price both residential and commercial parking properly. The mayor needs to systematically overhaul parking pricing, moving beyond pilots that have been previously done but have resulted in little permanent operational changes. As described earlier, pricing is a tool that can level the playing field of subsidies for auto use. One option for this is to implement demand-responsive parking meters to achieve actual targets of parking utilization from the assessments that the city completes.¹⁵ Another

¹⁴ Olson, Stevie, Phil Berkaw, Lucien Charland, Elizabeth Patton, and Linda J. Bilmes. "The \$64 Billion Massachusetts Vehicle Economy." HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP19-038, December 2019. Online: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/publications/64-billion-massachusetts-vehicle-economy>

¹⁵ For a review of these policies and their effects, see Rosenblum, J., Hudson, A. W., & Ben-Joseph, E. (2020). Parking futures: An international review of trends and speculation. *Land use policy*, 91, 104054. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2019.104054>

is the appropriate and equitable pricing of residential street parking, which is currently provided at a net negative cost by the city.

2 Eliminate parking minimums in new developments. Another tool to address the city's parking needs is via zoning reform. Parking minimums on new residential housing development currently act as a tax on renters and owners without cars, or an incentive to purchase a car. Eliminating these policies via zoning reform will change behavior: evidence from gold-standard research on parking minimums shows that people are more likely to use non-auto forms of transportation when their buildings do not have parking.¹⁶ The "Perfect Fit Parking" report conducted by MAPC in 2019 highlighted how much parking is oversupplied in the Boston metro region, and how eliminating parking minimum requirements for private developers of residential housing can help provide more affordable housing units at cheaper cost.¹⁷ Stressing the positive benefits this policy change will have for people who need to park near their homes, such as the elderly or disabled, is important: incentivizing fewer people to bring cars to Boston or purchase ones once they live here will make more street space available to those for whom it is necessary. In line with this, the City of Buffalo eliminated parking minimums in new developments in 2017 as part of a new "Green Code," which led to fewer new parking spaces overall, made adaptive reuse more feasible, and led to more shared parking arrangements. As with many features of transportation policy, making these types of improvements can improve outcomes in numerous other policy areas.

TAKE AN EXPANDED VIEW OF TRANSPORTATION BY PRIORITIZING MULTI-MODAL ACCESS

These types of improvements have the double benefit of serving both those people who want to complete their trips by walking or rolling and also those who wish to use public transportation. In the Boston where we currently live, not every resident or visitor feels comfortable, wants to, or is able to walk or bike for all of their trips. But to reduce the barrier to these people using non-car modes of transportation, the entire travel experience — which nearly universally incorporates some degree of sidewalk travel — must be acknowledged with city transportation policy. This holistic view of transportation can focus on improving the infrastructure that enables our daily lives to happen efficiently and pleasantly when we travel.

1 Prioritize within-neighborhood mobility by increasing investment in walkable, bikeable, transit-rich commercial and residential hubs. A large percentage of trips that people make are outside the direct path between their home and their job, and the shift to working from home in some industries may accelerate neighborhood-centered travel patterns. Whether traveling to the grocery store, to school, or for social connections, these trip types deserve more attention. These trips are especially hard to target with blanket policies that simply target peak commute hours or popular routes to and from the city's downtown.

2 Invest in "last mile" access to transit, by prioritizing multi-modal access to transit stations. The narrow view of Boston's transportation challenges often ignores the trips people make on foot or by wheels that make use of multiple modes (walking or rolling, in addition to public transit, for instance). Research from the MassDOT/MBTA Office of Performance Management and Innovation (OPMI) shows that the overwhelming majority of people traveling by the MBTA get there by walking

16 Millard-Ball, A., West, J., Rezaei, N., & Desai, G. (2021). What do residential lotteries show us about transportation choices? *Urban Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098021995139>

17 See also Gabbe, C. J., & Pierce, G. (2017). Hidden costs and deadweight losses: Bundled parking and residential rents in the metropolitan United States. *Housing Policy Debate*, 27(2), 219-229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2016.1205647>

or biking.¹⁸ Recent research from the Boston area also indicates that coordination between bikeshare facilities and public transportation can reduce auto dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁹ Basic improvements to the pedestrian experience, such as wider and better-repaired sidewalks and more visible street crossings that make being a pedestrian easier and safer are also key. Thus policies aimed towards increasing transit ridership within the city need a holistic view of the trips that people make.

IMPROVE THE PUBLIC PROCESS TO BUILD SUPPORT

Many of the current practices involved in changing the way our streets look are slow and can be biased towards powerful interests or a small number of vocal residents. These changes also often — though not always — lack connection to other improvements being made in the city. Improving the process can help the mayor better accomplish transportation policy goals.

1 Engage in a political engagement process that incorporates true democratic voice in transportation planning and decision-making. The current vision of what is possible for transportation in Boston often reflects the loudest voices in the room and a deference to the status quo. These voices represent a biased picture of true political support.²⁰ To better reflect the support (or opposition) of residents of Boston around transportation improvements, the city should see the public input process as a chance to engage the public in discussions around both the status quo and the changes the city wants to make. Recent opinion polls highlight why this is important. In a recent MassINC poll of Boston-area residents, large majorities of people supported general policies that would change local streets, such as protected bike lanes, more space for outdoor dining, wider sidewalks, safer crosswalks and bus priority lanes. Yet often, the opinion of people who participate in the formal public input process around concrete local policy changes in transportation and other arenas does not reflect this overwhelming support. The mayor should place these types of opposition in the broader context of primarily public support in their communication about transportation priorities both internally within City Hall and externally to the public. Using the mayor's office to do so can help level the playing field between the voices of those who often have outsize power and the voices of those who often are not at the table. Creating a more legitimate public input process that is truly democratic can lead to more public support for policy changes in the future.²¹ Especially in policy areas where most constituents are unlikely to know all the research on effectiveness or costs, political leadership can play an outsize role in shaping people's support for policy.²² The mayor of Boston can use the tools of political leadership and communication to build public support for sustainable transportation policy. Strategic framing of these policies that appropriately highlights the costs of the status quo, as mentioned previously, will prove especially effective.²³

18 MassDOT/MBTA Office of Performance Management and Innovation (OPMI). "Do T Riders Use Active Modes to Access Transit?" December 2019. <https://www.mbtackontrack.com/blog/109-measuring-access-to-transit>

19 See Basu, Rounaq, and Joseph Ferreira, "Planning car-lite neighborhoods: Does bikesharing reduce auto-dependence?" *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment* 92, March 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2021.102721>

20 See Einstein, K., Glick, D., & Palmer, M. (2019). *Neighborhood Defenders: Participatory Politics and America's Housing Crisis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781108769495 and for an update based on participation via Zoom, see Einstein, Palmer, Puig, and Glick (2021), [online](#).

21 For an application of this theory to road pricing, see Jagers, S. C., Matti, S., & Nordblom, K. (2020). The evolution of public policy attitudes: comparing the mechanisms of policy support across the stages of a policy cycle. *Journal of Public Policy*, 40(3), 428-448.

22 For experimentally-controlled evidence of this, see Lenz, G. S. (2009). Learning and opinion change, not priming: Reconsidering the priming hypothesis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 821-837. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2009.00403.x>. For a thorough review of these types of effects across policy areas and countries, see Lenz, G. S. (2013). *Follow the leader?: how voters respond to politicians' policies and performance*. University of Chicago Press.

23 For an example of this phenomenon applied to climate policy, see Stokes, L. C., & Warshaw, C. (2017). Renewable energy policy design and framing influence public support in the United States. *Nature Energy*, 2(8), 1-6.

2 Conduct a proactive bi-directional public engagement process. Public engagement processes around transportation projects too often take the form of public meetings. But public engagement does not need to only be about listening to opposition from the groups of people who have the resources and time to show up to these meetings. People often see the visible costs of policies and have an immediate reaction to those costs. Getting people on board with specific policy changes despite those potential costs involves helping people reconcile their principles with the actual policy implementation of those principles. The mayor should use the public input process as a chance to help people understand the transportation needs of neighborhoods and the city as a whole, and why changes to the street will help accomplish those goals and improve on the status quo. Doing this will help put near-term costs in context of longer-term net benefits.

3 Iteratively build public support based on evidence from pilot projects. The mayor should use successful projects in one neighborhood as evidence of the benefits of these projects when expanding improvements to new neighborhoods in Boston. A public process that harnesses incremental improvements can result in what political scientists call policy feedback to help to build future support.²⁴ Policy feedback occurs when making policy changes builds a constituency that supports that policy — and extending that policy even further. A classic example of this is Social Security, which through its initial implementation and subsequent expansions built a constituency of people who would further support it, as well as gave them the information and the means to be able to mobilize in the political processes that could expand their desired policy options. This kind of process is likely to occur with transportation improvements that build the constituency of support. For instance, the research on the construction of protected bike lanes indicates that they will encourage new people to use bikes for both commute and non-commute trips.²⁵ These people — new to the use of bike infrastructure — may then be mobilized to support expansion of needed transportation infrastructure. Moreover, this success can be used as evidence to convince other neighborhoods of the value of these policies through the public engagement process. Instead of narrow policies or policies that restrict their benefits to a certain demographic or geographic constituency, use policies that build a broader constituency to ensure future support.²⁶

24 For a recent example of this phenomenon applied to Medicare and the Affordable Care Act, see Lerman, A. E., & McCabe, K. T. (2017). Personal experience and public opinion: a theory and test of conditional policy feedback. *The Journal of Politics*, 79(2), 624-641. <https://doi.org/10.1086/689286>

25 For example, see Mitra, R., Khachatrian, A., & Hess, P. M. (2021). Do new urban and suburban cycling facilities encourage more bicycling?. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 97, 102915. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2021.102915>

26 For a helpful practitioner-facing guide to leveraging this area of research, see Hertel-Fernandez, A. (2020). How Policymakers Can Craft Measures That Endure and Build Political Power. Roosevelt Institute. Online: <https://rooseveltinstitute.org/publications/how-policymakers-can-craft-measures-that-endure-and-build-political-power/>