

## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Needham Select Board  
**FROM:** Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager  
Katie King, Deputy Town Manager  
**CC:** David Davison, Deputy Town Manager/Director of Finance  
Chris Heep, Town Counsel  
Lee Newman, Director of Planning & Community Development  
**SUBJECT:** MBTA Communities Act and Funding at Risk  
**DATE:** November 6, 2024

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The Office of the Town Manager has been asked about what funding is at risk if the Town of Needham is not compliant with the MBTA Communities Act. Attachment A outlines known sources of funding that are at risk.

The funding of most concern for the Town of Needham today are the following funding sources because (1) the Town is actively seeking these funds to advance priority projects, (2) these are high-value funding opportunities, (3) application deadlines are in the near term, and (4) we anticipate Needham's applications will be competitive.

### **1. Boston Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Redesign of Highland Avenue**

- The Department of Public Works is actively preparing a TIP application for the redesign and construction of Highland Avenue from Webster Street to Great Plain Avenue. This is a priority project for the Town, with the goal to slow car speeds, better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians, and improve traffic flow.
- The project cost is estimated at \$20 million. Without federal and state funds Major state, regional, and local transportation improvement projects are funded through the TIP. The MPO is responsible for evaluating applications to receive federal and state funding through inclusion on the TIP.
- The application deadline is December 31, 2024. The MPO considers applications in January, provides feedback in February, and scores projects in March 2025.
- The Town has begun the design process in order to submit a competitive proposal that we anticipate will score well based on MPO's criteria.

### **2. Federal Community Project Funding via Congressman Auchincloss' Office – Climate and Infrastructure Projects**

- In FY23, Congressman Auchincloss secured \$2 million for the design of the Centre Street/Central Avenue Bridge. This project is being led by Dover, but Dover and Needham share financial responsibility for its replacement.
- In FY25, Congressman Auchincloss supported the Town of Needham's request of \$3 million for stormwater management and secured \$1.1 million in the House budget.
- Application deadline is anticipated for March 2025.

- This is a flexible source of federal funding that can be used to advance priority water, sewer, roadway, stormwater, and other infrastructure projects in the Town of Needham that would otherwise have to be funded by local tax revenue.

Of note regarding Attachment A, some at-risk funds are identified in M.G.L. Chapter 40A Section 3a, others in the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities' guidelines for the implementation of the MBTA Communities Act and others are at the discretion of the awarding authority. Non-compliant municipalities are either not eligible to apply at all, or compliance status will be taken into consideration when discretionary funding decisions are made, making it highly unlikely that any non-compliant applications will be funded.

This is not an exhaustive list. Various State agencies and other awarding authorities continue to update discretionary grant programs to factor in compliance status. The Town is often not aware if compliance status will be taken into consideration until the requirements for a new round of funding is released.

MBTA Communities Act  
Funds at Risk for Municipalities not in Compliance

Category	Funding Source	Funder	Anticipated Application Due Date (based on prior year)	Types of Projects (past or anticipated Needham projects are highlighted in blue)	Typical Grant Amounts
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	Housing Choice Grant Program	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	June 2025	These funds support planning and zoning initiatives and public infrastructure construction projects in municipalities designated as Housing Choice Communities. Needham received a 5-year designation as a Housing Choice Community for 2022-2027.	up to \$500,000
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	HousingWorks Infrastructure Program	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	June 2025	Fund municipal infrastructure projects (roads, sidewalks, water, sewer, stormwater) to support and unlock housing opportunities. This grant program awards funds based on the project's nexus with housing, transportation, infrastructure, and community development needs.	\$300,000 - \$5 million
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	Local Capital Projects Fund	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	n/a	Funds a portion of the subsidies provided to housing authorities and nonprofit organizations needed due to reduced rentals in housing for the elderly, handicapped, veterans, families and relocated persons.	a formula determines funding amounts
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	June 2025	In FY16, Needham received a \$1.7M grant for infrastructure improvements to 1st Avenue. This program is one of the State's most flexible source of capital funds for municipal infrastructure projects (roads, water, sewer, stormwater, etc.). Grants support municipal projects that spur housing production, new jobs, or private development.	\$500,000 - \$5 million
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Brownfields Redevelopment Fund	MassDevelopment	June 2025	Environmental assessment and remediation of brownfield sites (contaminated land)	Up to \$100,000 for site assessment; up to \$250,000 for remediation
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Collaborative Workspace Program	MassDevelopment	June 2025	Matching grants for the planning, development, and build-out of collaborative workspaces for entrepreneurs, artists, designers, scientists, inventors, and small business owners.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Commonwealth Places Programs	MassDevelopment		To help communities implement placemaking projects that improve public spaces, create foot traffic, and stimulate economic activity.	up to \$25,000
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Community Planning Grants	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	June 2025	In 2023, Needham received \$70,000 to support direct community engagement efforts in the Housing Needham (HONE) Working Group visioning process and the creation of zoning for multi-family housing.	up to \$150,000
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	July 2025	Funding to purchase land for conservation and passive recreation or to purchase a Conservation Restriction.	up to \$500,000
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Massachusetts Downtown Initiative	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	June 2025	In 2022, Needham received \$25,000 in technical assistance/consulting services to develop a marketing strategy aimed at promoting small businesses in Needham Center. Grants can be used to support Business Improvement Districts, placemaking, wayfinding, small business support, and more.	up to \$25,000
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning and Project Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	December 2025	In FY19, Needham received \$33,000 to complete a vulnerability assessment to prepare for the impacts of climate change and develop action-oriented resiliency plans. With this completed plan, Needham is eligible to apply for future MVP Action project grants.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Planning Assistance Grant	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	July 2025	This year, Needham applied for \$45,000 to assist in the Planning Board's review of current parking requirements to reduce impervious cover and implement Low Impact Development (LID) practices. Award decision is pending.	up to \$50,000

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2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Real Estate Services Technical Assistance	MassDevelopment	June 2025	Technical assistance for municipalities to explore the redevelopment of a public surplus property or to address streetscape and infrastructure needs in a specific district to plan for growth.	
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Rural and Small Town Development Fund	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	June 2025	Needham is not eligible to apply due to Town population.	n/a
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Site Readiness Program	MassDevelopment	June 2025	Funds municipal due diligence work, master planning, pre-permitting and permitting, engineering studies, capital improvements, demolition and/or property acquisition, that enhances a site's readiness for commercial, industrial, or mixed-use development.	\$50,000 - \$500,000
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Underutilized Properties Program	MassDevelopment	June 2025	Funds projects to improve or redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant, or underutilized properties.	\$50,000 to \$1 million
2 - EOHL MBTA Communities Act Guidelines	Urban Agenda Grant Program	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	June 2025	General operating support for innovative and collaborative community economic development projects.	up to \$100,000
3 - Funder Discretion	Decarbonization Technical Assistance	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	April 2025	In 2024, Needham was awarded technical assistance equivalent to \$30,000 to create a municipal building decarbonization roadmap in support of Climate Leader Communities designation and future funding opportunities.	
3 - Funder Discretion	Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	August 2025	This year, Needham applied for \$75,000 to fully insulate the Mitchell Elementary School attic which currently has no insulation. Award decision is pending.	up to \$300,000
3 - Funder Discretion	Federal Community Project Funding	Congress via Congressman Auchincloss	March 2025	In FY24, Dover & Needham received \$2 million to fund design for replacement of the Centre St/Central Ave Bridge. This year, Needham requested \$3 million for stormwater best management practices. \$1.1 million was approved by the U.S. House and remains pending in the federal budget process.	In FY25, Congressman Auchincloss submitted 15 projects requests ranging from \$600,000 to \$14 million.
3 - Funder Discretion	Green Communities Competitive Grant	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	May 2025	This year, Needham was awarded \$162,848 for conversion of lighting at Eliot Elementary School to LEDs and the purchase and installation of heat pump hot water heaters at Town Hall and 470 Dedham Avenue (DPW). The Town previously received \$148,143 to fund energy conservation measures, lighting, in municipal facilities including Pollard Middle, Mitchell, and Newman Schools.	up to \$500,000
3 - Funder Discretion	MBTA Catalyst Fund	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	rolling application	Available to municipalities that have received an MBTA Communities Act district compliance determination letter from EOHL. The Catalyst Fund will support activities related to housing creation, infrastructure projects associated with housing, and acquisition of property to promote housing.	\$250,000 – \$1 million
3 - Funder Discretion	Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	December 2024	Needham is actively preparing a TIP application due Decemeber 31, 2024 for the redesign and construction of Highland Avenue from Webster Street to Great Plain Avenue. The project cost is estimated at \$20 million. Major state, regional, and local transportation improvement projects are funded through the TIP. The MPO is responsible for evaluating applications to receive federal and state funding through inclusion on the TIP.	Project scopes vary widely; regionally significant projects can receive \$50 million or more.