Executive Summary
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1.0 Background

Consensus for the best mix of transit investments has been difficult to achieve on the North Shore despite the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) previous efforts to develop solutions for the Corridor's transportation problems. Over the last decade, MBTA studies have attempted to evaluate the North Shore on a regional basis, but have evolved into processes that support individual projects. The purpose of the North Shore Transit Improvements Project-Major Investment Study (MIS) is to identify the priorities for transit system investments in the study area and to achieve consensus around a strategy for making transportation improvements that address regional mobility needs.

The MIS study area includes 32 communities from Boston to the New Hampshire border. The MIS offered the opportunity for a current evaluation of multi-modal alternatives and for a more inclusive process that has allowed stakeholders to participate in an open and collaborative process.

This MIS does recognize the significant work that was undertaken in previous evaluation efforts, and has built upon those foundations with an emphasis on consensus-building in the public process. The extensive public process for this Project identified that two kinds of needs exist on the North Shore for transit improvements. Areas from Salem north are better served by improved access to Boston through upgrades to the existing commuter rail system. Lack of highway access for areas from Salem south suggests an investment in a high-density type of transit service. Because of these differing needs and associated solutions, two parallel evaluation processes were established. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is being prepared for the southern Revere to Salem Corridor. Meanwhile, the MIS addresses issues of a regional nature that encompass the entire 32 community study area and all modes of transit, while focusing particularly on improvements north of Salem.

2.0 Development of the MIS

For the MIS, the MBTA established a 15 member project Steering Committee, which was made up of elected officials or their representatives, as well as other major constituency groups from the areas of business, education, environment, labor, social services, and transportation. The purpose of this group has been to represent various interests on the North Shore and to assist the MBTA in the MIS decision-making process. The Steering Committee has worked with the MBTA throughout the MIS process and has been a partner in the development of goals and objectives, the identification and refinement of project alternatives, and the evaluation of projects.

In addition to the Project's Steering Committee, a variety of strategies have been implemented to keep the public both informed and involved during the study process including public meetings; briefings with key stakeholders; and a survey of MBTA riders. The public meetings have been held at strategic points during the course of the MIS to keep the general public advised of the progress of the study and to gain additional input. Some of these meetings have been held at the specific request of neighborhood organizations. At most meetings, Project Team members are available for questions at an Open House, before the meeting begins. MBTA officials and the Project Team have also met with state legislators, local community organizations, conservation commissions, and local planning departments during the course of the MIS development. This outreach provided the MBTA and the Steering Committee with the input needed to make decisions about the North Shore's transportation needs and possible transit solutions.
2.1 Goals of the MIS

A number of the early Steering Committee meetings for the MIS focused on developing goals for the MIS analysis. These goals, finalized at a meeting in May 2001, are noted below:

**Improve Community Access**
- Access to Logan Airport
- Access to Employment Centers
- Intercommunity Access
- Improved Access to Boston
- Provide Service for North Shore Commuter Students
- Access during Off-peak (inbound & outbound)
- Services for Transit Dependent Populations

**Upgrade Existing North Shore Service**
- Improve Transit Feeder Service
- Add more Transit Stops
- Increased Commuter Rail Frequency
- Better Intermodal Connections/Stations
- Additional Parking Capacity
- Additional Transit Capacity
- Provide More User-Friendly Service

**Promote North Shore Economic Growth**
- Encourage New Employers to North Shore
- Keep North Shore Town Centers and Businesses Accessible
- Promote Tourist Connections to the North Shore

**Minimize Adverse Environmental Impacts**
- Air Quality Standards
- Reduce Roadway Congestion

**Encourage Community Oriented Design**
- Multi-use Design
- Promote Bicycle and Walk Alternatives
- Focus on Station Design to Promote Livability in Urban Centers

2.2 Universe of Projects

As previously noted, the identification and development of alternatives involved extensive outreach to the public. The first step included a review of previous studies conducted throughout the study area. This set of projects was supplemented by ideas presented at Steering Committee and public outreach meetings early in the process. Finally, the list of potential projects were presented to the Steering Committee and public for concurrence. The result of this collaboration was the following Universe of Projects for the MIS (see Figure ES-1):

- Gloucester Station Improvements;
- Beverly Depot Station Improvements;
- Salem Station Improvements;
- North Shore Bus System Improvements;
- Newburyport Branch and Rockport Branch Increased Frequencies;
- Winthrop to Boston Ferry Service;
Draft North Shore Transit Improvements Project-MIS

- Rockport Station Improvements;
- Lynn to Boston Ferry Service;
- Revere Commuter Rail Station;
- South Salem Commuter Rail Station;
- Salem-Danvers via Peabody Commuter Rail Service;
- Newburyport/Rockport Line Coaches;
- Newburyport Branch and Rockport Branch Station Improvement Program;
- Newburyport Branch and Rockport Branch Highway Grade Crossing Improvements/Elimination Program;
- Beverly to Boston DMU/Shuttle Service;
- Newburyport Branch and Rockport Branch Signal System Upgrades;
- Second Salem Tunnel; and,
- Salem to Boston Ferry Service.

2.3 Project Evaluation

Each individual project in the North Shore Transit Improvements Project MIS was first evaluated regarding how it met the study’s established goals and objectives. Following this review, each project was then analyzed with regard to its projected benefits and potential technical, social and environmental impacts. Assessments were conducted to identify what the overall impacts were of the project. This information was then used to identify the challenges that would need to be overcome to implement a project.

The final element of the MIS analysis involved a review of these projects within the system-wide constraints of the MBTA. This system review is an essential part of the analysis because it identifies system constraints, conflicts, or other unknowns that need to be considered when advancing the project. Each project needs to be measured against not only the needs, resources and planned improvements of the North Shore, but also of the remainder of the MBTA’s service area. This final review allowed the proposed projects to be prioritized in accordance with the limited resources of the entire MBTA system.

These three reviews were then compiled to prioritize MIS projects into Short-Term, Medium-Term and Long-Term categorizations. The expected time frame that corresponds to those priority ratings are as follows:

- Short-Term: 0 to 10 years
- Medium-Term: 11 to 20 years
- Long-Term: Greater than 20 years

The time frame for implementation or priority for any one individual project could change as a result of a change in conditions, community desires, or financial support from sources outside of the MBTA.

2.4 Recommendations

The following table (ES-1) provides a summary of the North Shore Transit Improvements Project MIS priority recommendations.
Table ES-1  MIS Universe of Projects

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<th>Project</th>
<th>Short-Term</th>
<th>Medium-Term</th>
<th>Long-Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Beverly Depot Station Improvements</td>
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3.0  Relation of MIS to Other MBTA Processes

The MBTA recently completed the 2003 Program for Mass Transportation (PMT). The PMT is a central element of capital planning at the MBTA, and is the foundation for transit infrastructure planning and programming in Eastern Massachusetts. The PMT defines a vision for regional mass transportation and sets priorities for infrastructure investments in the areas of system preservation, service enhancements, and system expansion. The PMT is a financially-unconstrained, objective evaluation of project ideas. As the long-range “master plan” for the MBTA, the PMT spells out the MBTA’s investment priorities for addressing system preservation and maintenance, yet recognizes the increasing demand for enhanced and expanded service.

The North Shore MIS plays an important role within the MBTA’s capital planning process, as it presents further detail related to the prioritized transit needs of the North Shore. Through greater analysis and consensus building, the MIS provides the MBTA with a more informed prioritization of potential transit investments for the North Shore.
Figure ES-1
Project Locations

Legend
- Grade Crossing Improvement
- Increased Track Capacity
- New Rail Service Corridor
- Water Ferry Service
- Station Improvements
- Major Highways
- Commuter Rail Service
- DEIS Corridor Municipalities
- Study Area Municipalities
- Other Municipalities