

Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Bicycle-Sharing Program

Request for Information (RFI)



Metropolitan Area Planning Council • 60 Temple Place, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02111 •
www.mapc.org • Main Phone 617.933.0700 • Main Fax 617.482.7185

Request for Information (RFI)

For a Bicycle-Sharing Program

This Request for Information (“RFI”) is being issued by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (“MAPC”) on behalf of the City of Boston (“Boston”), the Town of Brookline (“Brookline”), the City of Cambridge (“Cambridge”), the City of Somerville (“Somerville”), the MAPC Region municipalities, and other to solicit information from qualified for- or not-for-profit organizations to provide Bicycle-Sharing Services. The purpose of this request is to gather information on the state of shared bicycle program services, technologies and the industry in general as MAPC prepares to engage in a formal procurement process. Respondents should not be beholden to the current system’s operations if they feel a better structure for managing the system could be implemented. MAPC seeks creative responses.

This is not a solicitation for products or services.

Information that any interested party wishes to submit will be done so voluntarily and with the understanding that this RFI is for information gathering purposes only. This is not a formal solicitation. A formal solicitation may be issued as a result of, and subsequent to this RFI. Any cost information submitted will be used solely for the purposes of performing a market analysis and estimating a budget for the program. Cost information submitted will not be considered as responsive to any solicitation subsequently issued by MAPC.

The system currently operates in the cities of Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville, and the town of Brookline. Adjacent municipalities that have expressed varying levels of interest to date include:

Arlington, Everett, Malden, Newton, Revere, Watertown, and Winthrop.

Work may include some or all elements of owning, leasing, and operating a bike-share system, including but not limited to: organization development, system oversight, bike and station maintenance, customer service, station installation and removal, bike distribution, permitting, sponsor recruitment, fulfillment, reporting, marketing, membership retention, and IT (including web systems, data collection and management, and other necessary technology to operate the system).

Questions and requests for clarification should be addressed in writing to Heidi Anderson via e-mail at handerson@mapc.org. Responses to questions and requests for clarification will be answered via addenda which will be posted to MAPC’s website at <http://www.mapc.org/publicmeetings> under *Legal Notices*.

Responses to this RFI should be submitted electronically to Heidi Anderson via e-mail at handerson@mapc.org no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 15, 2016. MAPC requests that 5 hard copies of the responses to this RFI also be submitted to Heidi Anderson at MAPC, 60 Temple Place, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02111 no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 15, 2016. MAPC reserves the right to extend this deadline for up to an additional sixty (60) days.

MAPC may elect to interview respondents to obtain further information and to gain a better understanding of their qualifications and experience.

Requirements of responses

Responses to this RFI shall not exceed 30 (8 ½" x 11") pages of text, photos, illustrations, and/or graphics.

Introduction

Hubway is part of a collective vision for a vibrant and healthy urban region that benefits all its citizens. It has played a significant role in making metro-Boston a world-class bicycling location for residents and visitors. In July, 2011 Boston launched the Hubway bike-share system providing third generation automated bicycle rentals in the city. In 2012, the cities of Cambridge and Somerville and the town of Brookline joined the Hubway system. The original system consisted of 62 stations and 610 bicycles. The system has since grown to include 107 stations located in Boston, 38 stations in Cambridge, 12 stations in Somerville, and 4 stations in Brookline. While the system provides a regional and seamless service to users under the Hubway brand, each municipality owns its own equipment and contracts directly with the operations vendor. The current system is composed of stations purchased from PBSC Urban Solutions ("PBSC") and 8D Technologies, Inc. ("8D"); bicycles purchased from PBSC and Motivate, Inc.; and runs on a software platform created by PBSC and 8D.

A map of existing Hubway stations can be viewed at <https://secure.thehubway.com/map/>.

The participating municipalities, through MAPC, seek to explore new technologies and ownership and operational structures that have developed in the bike share industry since the system's inception in 2011. Specifically, MAPC seeks information from qualified entities that are interested in operating bike share systems like Hubway and can address in detail their qualified proposals for each of the system considerations listed below.

In responding to this RFI, MAPC would like potential vendors to provide information on the following:

1. Bike-share terms and conditions

Bike-share systems in the U.S. are owned and operated via several models, with ownership and/or operations controlled by a public agency, a not-for-profit, and/or a for-profit company. To accommodate these various models, such organizations and third parties, as appropriate, agree to terms and conditions for bike-share operation.

Please describe your proposed model for bike share operation, focusing on the following:

- The ownership and operational model for a regional bike-shared system such as Hubway recommended by proposer. Each proposer may propose more than one (alternative) model.
 - Include the proposed role of any participating municipalities.
- The types of agreements with other entities and terms of agreements for each model proposed.

- Exclusivity expectations regarding space in the public right-of-way, sponsorship, advertising, equipment, technology, and the like.
- General types of equipment proposed.
 - Plans to make full-use of the expected life of existing equipment (stations and bikes).
 - Compatibility between existing equipment and any new equipment.
- Proposer's interest in bike-share and experience in operating, owning, and/or supporting bike-share systems.

2. Coverage

The distribution of bike-share infrastructure and equipment is fundamental to user experience and to achieving transportation system goals. Bike-share locations must be sited to increase the utility of the transportation system (including the public transportation system)—making bike-share a viable, safe, and attractive option for all kinds of trips. The distribution of stations must encompass the full municipality, to the extent practicable and financially sustainable, though the density of stations should be context-specific.

As guiding information, general coverage goals for each of the four current participating municipalities are as follows:

- Boston envisions bike-share as part of “mobility hubs” located within a 10-minute walk of almost every household in the city. Our residents similarly demand locations throughout the city. Boston currently owns 107 stations and approximately 1100 bikes. Higher densities of equipment should be found in the downtown core and neighborhoods with a density of population and destinations. By locating more stations in these areas, Boston also sees a benefit in appealing to casual riders and tourists, who generate significant revenue for the system. However, the need for these locations does not preclude station-siting in less dense neighborhoods and those further from downtown. Boston expects expanded bike-share in Allston, Brighton, Dorchester, East Boston, Hyde Park, Mattapan, Roslindale, Roxbury, and West Roxbury—and for users to be able to find an adequate number of bikes and docks for bike-share to be convenient and useful.
- Brookline's 4 existing Hubway stations (64 docks) have been strategically placed on major corridors near public transit, commercial areas, and dense residential development. In the future, Brookline envisions an increased density of Hubway stations as a logical next step to better serve residents in underserved areas of the town and to provide better linkage for users throughout the entire system. As Brookline continues to expand its network of bicycle infrastructure by creating new bike lanes, extending existing lanes, adding “sharrow” markers and by installing additional bike racks, the demand for Hubway stations continues to grow. Additional Hubway stations are needed to better serve users both locally and regionally.
- Cambridge (which is approximately 6 sq. miles) currently has 38 stations, with up to 10 additional to be added in 2016. The tremendous popularity of the system has meant that the demand for use is higher than the current supply, particularly in the eastern half of the city,

so increasing density of stations as well as expansion to the uncovered areas is needed. User groups include many categories: residents, workers, university students, high school students (a special program is envisioned for age-eligible high school students), visitors, shoppers, etc. Cambridge continues to see high levels of additional development and providing expanded access to sustainable transportation is critical to enabling more people to live and work in Cambridge without additionally burdening our existing infrastructure. While much of the expansion has been happening in Kendall Square, North Point will see considerably more development, as will the Alewife area, in the coming years. Development is mixed, with office, R&D, retail and residential, with some additional expansion by institutions (e.g., MIT has a major project under proposal in Cambridge, and Harvard is expanding in the Allston area in Boston, which will connect to the Cambridge campus).

- Hubway Bikeshare supports Somerville's citywide goal of advancing alternative transportation options. Somerville (4.2 square miles) owns 12 stations, which are located along major urban arterials, business districts and neighborhood squares. System expansion will be crucial as Somerville works to make it easier, safer and more appealing to bike for utilitarian and recreational purposes within and across jurisdictional lines. Somerville foresees increased demand for stations along our busiest corridors (e.g. Broadway, Beacon Street, Highland Avenue, and Somerville Avenue), as well as at future MBTA Green Line Extension transit stations. There is also a need for expansion into neighborhoods not currently served by the system, specifically Winter Hill and East Somerville.

Proposals should address:

- The anticipated size and proposed distribution of bike-share infrastructure and equipment to meet goals, in terms such as dock density per square mile, total number of bicycles in system, and/or total number of stations in system.
- Operations of an expanded system, including necessary staffing and resources such as rebalancing vehicles/bicycles, replacement parts and repair needs, and warehouse location(s) to ensure quality of service across the system.
- Proposal for planning, siting, and permitting location of bike-share equipment.
- Proposed regional governance model and level of municipal involvement in day to day operations.
- If proposing to own or lease part or all of the system:
 - Plans to meet each municipalities' goals regarding density and spread of equipment and infrastructure and how additional equipment can be added to the system (purchase and operations) beyond what the respondent's proposal includes (i.e., if a municipality desires to grow their system beyond what the respondent proposes).
 - Intended method to purchase, plan, site, permit, and operate locations of new bike-share equipment.
 - Intended method to re-evaluate locations to best fit community demands, ridership changes, etc.
 - Statement of how future growth to neighboring communities could be achieved.
 - Transition plan to municipalities and/or alternative vendor at the end of the term either due to expiration or early termination.

3. Access

Access to bike-share is defined in two ways: 1) bike-share infrastructure can be used with minimal inconvenience and delay and 2) the pricing structure for bike-share is understandable and appropriate. That is, bike-share equipment is operational and available where and when expected and distance to operational infrastructure is minimized. Further, any costs to members and casual users are simple to understand and can appeal to a wide variety of customers.

Proposals should address:

- Proposed tools and operational systems for real-time management of the system in order to facilitate maintenance, repair, and redistribution.
 - Proposed methods of redistribution to meet demand.
- Proposed metrics to ensure docks and bikes when needed, with bikes and docks readily available.
- Pricing structure that
 - Achieves necessary revenues for operation of system,
 - Is easily understood by both casual users and members, and
 - Allows low-income residents access without undue burden (e.g., is available to people without credit cards, offers the option of a monthly subscription).
- Types and format of data related to bike-share use and memberships, including but not limited to:
 - Active, cancelled, renewed, and new members by day and month;
 - Ridership, including trips per day and hour, origins and destinations, average trip duration, and bicycle miles travelled;
 - Rebalancing activities, including number of bikes rebalanced, number of bikes in service, lists and counts of stations empty or full including duration of either;
 - Visits to stations by technicians and information about station/dock malfunctions
 - Maintenance of bicycle fleet, such as number of bikes checked;
 - Incidents such as crashes involving a Hubway user and number of bikes and stations damaged, vandalized, stolen, lost, or otherwise damaged;
 - Statistics regarding calls to customer services, including primary reason for call and total number of calls;
 - Revenue reporting, including membership revenue by subscription type, usage revenue by subscription type, revenue from other sources; and
 - Non-aggregated usage information regarding home zip codes, dates of birth, gender, and other information collected upon registration (excluding that which must be kept confidential) that will be useful in evaluating the representation of users.
 - User survey and analysis to assess needed improvements.
 - Analysis of any and all data for use by participating municipalities.
- Proposed design and operation of system to maximize availability throughout the year, including winter months (December through March), in all participating municipalities.
 - Detailed explanation of how winter operations (snow clearance, etc.) will be managed.

4. Community and Character of the bike-share system

Transportation generally should serve and support a municipality's goals for access, public health, economy, and ecology. Bike-share, as part of an integrated transportation system, should support local business districts and be available to all residents, workers, students, and visitors.

The bike-share system must be uniquely identifiable to the metro-Boston region. Tourists looking for the "metro-Boston experience" see riding bike-share as part of their travels. At the same time, residents take pride and ownership of a system that reflects their hometown. These perceptions result from marketing and communications campaigns undertaken by a bike-share provider.

Proposals should address:

- Structure and staffing of marketing team for metro-Boston region bike-share, with percentage of staff time dedicated to this system vs others proposer may own and/or operate. Please note if a subcontractor would be required.
- Marketing services to be provided, including design, media buying, analytics, corporate sales.
- Plans for membership recruitment, engagement, and retention, with attention to serving tourists, workers, students, and residents and including events, contests, programs, and other initiatives.
 - Plans to support and retain existing partners, including the many private and institutional entities that have sponsored or donated stations.
 - Efforts to engage current and encourage new corporate memberships.
- Plans to engage and reflect a diversity of users, including but not limited to:
 - Ability to share information with those who do not speak or read English;
 - Use of diverse models—age, gender, race, ethnicity—in marketing images; and
 - Reaching audiences in secondary schools, universities, senior centers, and other community organizations.
- If proposer intends to move away from the "Hubway" name and brand, how any new branding and name will or will not provide continuity.
- Plans to partner with or target local business districts through advertising, marketing, and planning.
- Strategies to support user safety, through means such as providing low-cost helmets, offering classes, and sharing materials and safety messages in traditional and new ways.
- Potential opportunities to support broad public health and climate goals.

5. Fiscal sustainability

Though new to the region's transportation system, bike-share already is viewed as fundamental to providing access in each participating municipality. Despite this, its financial future is unknown. It does not have dedicated, long-term funding from any governmental agency at the national, state, regional, or local levels.

Proposals should address:

- Extent to which title sponsorship would be pursued, including total target for title sponsorship.
- Use of station sponsors/donors, including supporting current number of station sponsors/donors, to grow the system.
- Contingency plans if sponsorship levels are not achieved.
- Proposed use of advertising as income source.
- Ability to integrate current advertising contracts, including OutFront Media, in City of Boston, through 2020.
- Ability to address any requirements for existing stations guaranteed under existing sponsor/donor agreements. For example, some agreements do not allow for commercial advertisements on the properties where the stations are located; other agreements expect that a station will remain unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- Expectations of municipal funding
- Expectations and plans for any other funding source(s).

6. Staff capacity

Any owner or operator of a bike-share system must be able to provide adequate staffing, either as in-house or as subcontractor employees, to support ongoing operations and marketing and strong relationship with municipal staff. Further, such organization must be able to provide adequate resources to ensure system operations.

Proposals should address:

- General plans to open and maintain communication lines between municipalities' and proposer's staff and/or subcontractors, as applicable.
- Number of staff people to maintain and operate system (e.g., mechanics, rebalancing staff).
- Equipment and other resources necessary for maintenance and operation (e.g., rebalancing vehicles, valet stations, cranes for station installation).
- General plans for staffing for marketing, customer service, IT, and all other areas of operations.

7. Nimbleness

Bike-share is a new form of transportation system, one that is quickly learning and adjusting. A major issue in bike-share to date has been the inability to procure software and equipment in a timely manner, frustrating users and municipal officials. Any future operator must be able to demonstrate a commitment and a plan for ensuring that new technologies are incorporated as market demands them. Operators must be also willing to adjust operating processes and procedures to best meet service demands.

Additionally, municipalities must take care in offering exclusive contracts to ensure their interests and those of their residents are met adequately. The term of the contract should allow for an operator to acclimatize, but not so long that municipalities are left with a complacent business partner, unmotivated to provide new technologies and services.

Proposals should:

- Reflect a vision for healthy, vibrant regional bike-share.
- Demonstrate understanding of procurement challenges in bike-share.
- Indicate alternative methods for procurement of necessary software and equipment to ensure minimal delay and maximum user experience.
- Demonstrate an understanding of emerging technologies that might bolster the performance of a bike-share system.
- Be creative in addressing all of the above sections.

8. Other relevant information

While the above categories encompass much of what a bike-share system is and could be, respondents may include additional information regarding their vision for bike-share in metro-Boston.