



STAFF SUMMARY

TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Frederick A. Laskey, Executive Director 
DATE: February 17, 2021
SUBJECT: Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Program Update
Filing of Environmental Notification Form

COMMITTEE: Water Policy and Oversight

X INFORMATION
 VOTE

Beth Card, Director, Environmental and Regulatory Affairs
Frederick O. Brandon, P.E., Director, Design and Construction
Preparer/Title


Kathleen M. Murtagh, P.E.
Director, Tunnel Redundancy

RECOMMENDATION:

For information only.

DISCUSSION:

This staff summary provides an update on the proposed filing of an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) office for the Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Program.

Staff will provide future updates to the Board at key milestones during the Preliminary Design phase of the Program, such as: recommendation of the proposed tunnel alignment and shaft sites; completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Report; and completion of the Preliminary Design Report and Program cost estimate and schedule.

On February 15, 2017, the Board approved staff's preferred alternative of construction of northern and southern deep rock tunnels from the Hultman Aqueduct and MetroWest Water Supply Tunnel to the Weston Aqueduct Supply Main No. 3 (WASM 3) and to the Southern Spine water mains for the purpose of providing redundancy for the Metropolitan Tunnel System (City Tunnel, City Tunnel Extension and Dorchester Tunnel) and directed staff to proceed with preliminary design, geotechnical investigations and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act review of the project. The MEPA review process is designed to provide meaningful opportunities for public review of potential environmental impacts of certain projects for which certain actions by state agencies are required. The ultimate goal is to use all feasible measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate damage to the environment.

On May 27, 2020, the Board approved the award of Contract 7159, Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Program Preliminary Design, Geotechnical Investigation and Environmental Impact Report to CDM Smith, Inc. This contract includes preliminary geotechnical investigation (deep rock borings), evaluation of preliminary tunnel alignment and shaft site alternatives, preliminary design, preliminary contract packaging, preparation of the required MEPA filings and development of a comprehensive list of the environmental permits needed. The first step of the preliminary design/MEPA review effort is preparing and submitting an ENF for the program.

Environmental Notification Form

Staff plan to submit an ENF to the MEPA office in March 2021. Per MEPA regulations and guidelines, the ENF submittal should clearly identify the MEPA review thresholds that the project meets or exceeds and any agency actions, such as permits, that it may require. The ENF should also include a supporting project narrative with a detailed project description, an alternatives analysis, evaluation of potential environmental impacts, and a description of mitigation measures. Lastly, the ENF must address consistency with relevant Executive Orders and Commonwealth environmental policies, as applicable. Such orders and policies will require emphasis on Environmental Justice and Climate Change in the Authority's ENF and subsequent MEPA filings.

This is the first step in the environmental review process for the proposed Metropolitan Water Tunnel Program. The ENF will present the need for tunnel redundancy, the proposed two-tunnel concept and will propose a study area for identifying and evaluating potential tunnel shaft sites and tunnel alignment alternatives (see Figure 1). The proposed study area for the tunnel alignment includes portions of the following communities: Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Dedham, Needham, Newton, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley and Weston. The ENF will also include an Alternatives Screening Report that documents the comparison and selection of the preferred two-tunnel concept to other surface pipe and tunnel alternatives.

Staff anticipate that the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs will issue a certificate on the ENF that will require Draft and Final Environmental Impact Reports, which will identify the proposed locations of tunnel shaft sites and tunnel alignments and describe environmental impacts of constructing the proposed tunnel. Over the next year, staff will be identifying potential shaft sites giving priority to undeveloped publically owned land where there would be minimal environmental impacts, although any site that may be potentially viable could be considered.

Community, Stakeholder and Regulatory Outreach

As the MEPA process commences, MWRA will simultaneously implement its communication plan to ensure that all communities and stakeholders are informed as to the importance of this effort and what can be expected in the years ahead. Staff have already made contact with all ten communities within the Program Study Area to inform them of the Tunnel Program, and have offered to meet with them (and have already met with some) to provide more information and answer any questions. Staff proposed to form a working group, which will include representatives of each of the ten communities within the Study Area who will participate in regular meetings with the Program Team, be kept informed on Program progress, and provide input on certain elements of the Program. The goals of the working group meetings are to provide a collaborative and transparent process for evaluating alternatives, and yield more informed comments during the MEPA process. Other members of the Working Group include the MWRA Advisory Board and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

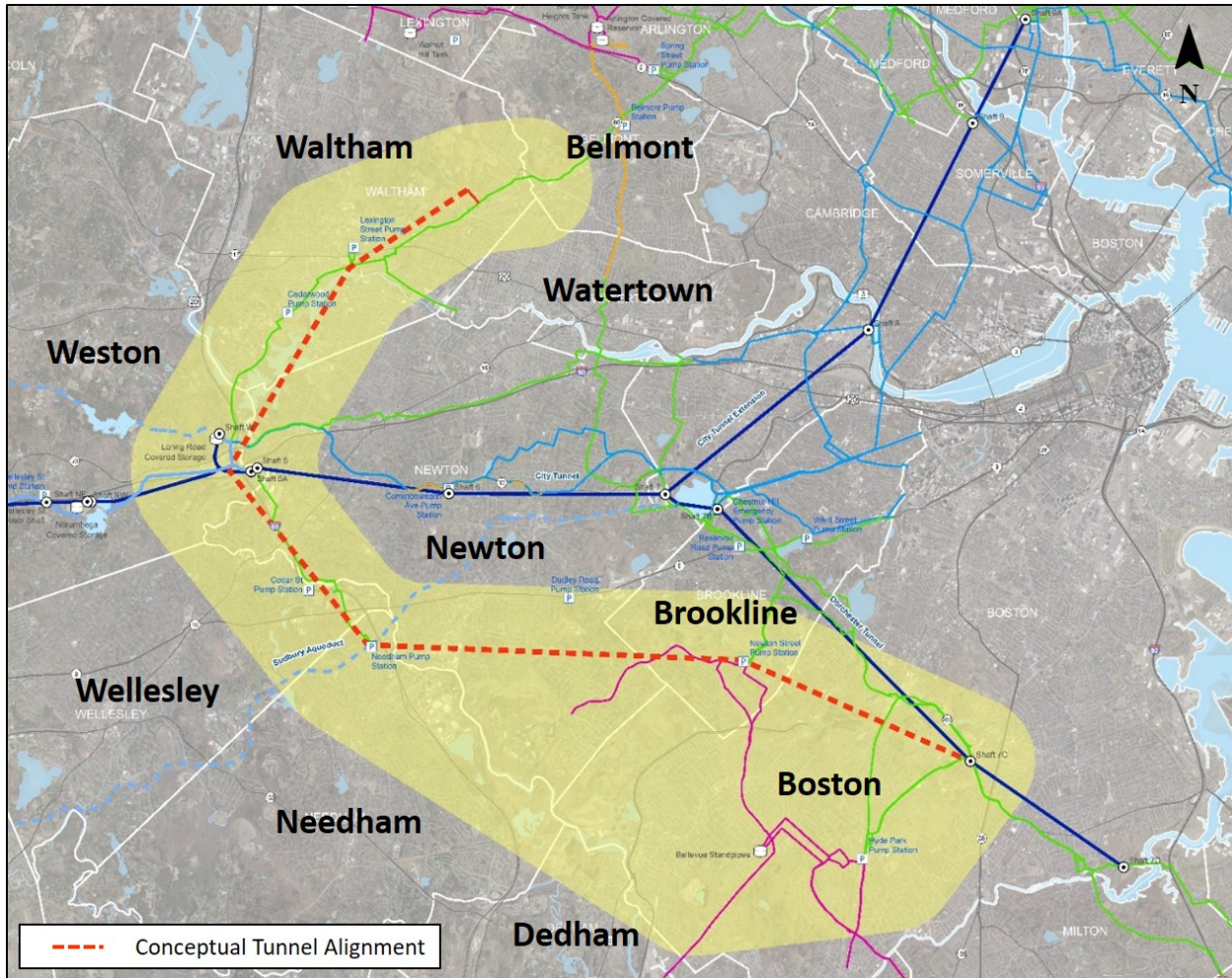


Figure 1. Metropolitan Water Tunnel Proposed Two-Tunnel Concept and Study Area.

In addition to reaching out to communities, staff will also work to schedule a briefing for MWRA’s Legislative Caucus. Staff have also begun to meet with other stakeholders that may be approached for permits, easements and/or land acquisition to support the Program. The state agencies include Mass Department of Transportation, the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance. In the near future, MWRA will reach out to environmental advocacy groups and environmental justice representatives.

The development of the preliminary design and environmental impact reports will require substantial amounts of coordination with environmental regulatory agencies in order to ensure the data and documentation generated result in a robust alternatives analysis in the MEPA process. Staff have already met several times with members of the Department of Environmental Protection and MEPA to present the proposed Tunnel Program, and discuss the regulatory process. This early interaction with regulators will give MWRA staff the opportunity to address comments and concerns raised by agencies in the earlier MEPA phases.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACTS:

The FY21 CIP includes \$1.5 billion for the Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy Program. This budget will be refined at the completion of Preliminary Design.



*Metropolitan Tunnel Redundancy
Program Update
Filing of Environmental Notification Form*

February 17, 2021



Tunnel Program Study Area

