

Public Health and Transportation Planning in Massachusetts Institutionalizing HIA

Inaugural National Health Impact Assessment Meeting

**Concurrent Breakout Session III: Policy Maker Track
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Outline

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I. Introduction

Transportation Reform Law

In June 2009 Governor Deval Patrick signed the Transportation Reform Law – M.G.L. Chapter 6C



The primary goal was to consolidate all transportation agencies in MA to reduce duplicate efforts and enhance transportation planning



Introduction, cont.

- Under M.G.L. Chapter 6C, Section 33 the Healthy Transportation Compact is directed to:
 - (v) establish methods to implement the use of health impact assessments (HIAs) to determine the effect of transportation projects on public health and vulnerable populations; and
 - (x) institute a health impact assessment for use by planners, transportation administrators, public health administrators and developers.
- Transportation planning projects often have a range of health implications that are not uniformly considered
- MDPH was awarded funds from the RWJ/Pew Health Impact Project to conduct a transportation-related HIA



II. Healthy Transportation Compact

- M.G.L Chapter 6C also called for the establishment of a healthy transportation compact
- The healthy transportation compact shall be composed of:
 - Secretary of Transportation (co-chair)
 - Secretary of Health and Human Services (co-chair)
 - Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs
 - Administrator of Transportation for Highways
 - Administrator of Transportation for Mass Transit
 - Commissioner of Public Health



III. Interagency Working Group

- Interagency Working Group Established
- Members include:
 - Senior staff from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Environmental Health and Bureau of Community Health Access and Promotion
 - Senior planning staff from MassDOT
 - Senior Staff from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs



Interagency Working Group, cont.

- Monthly meetings beginning in late 2009
- Discussion about:
 - What is an HIA – do we need a MA definition?
 - Need for cross agency framing to develop common understanding
- Inventory by agencies of interagency work related to transportation
 - What worked best?
 - What hurdles were met?
- Greater clarity on what is involved in existing transportation planning process
- Identification of a transportation project that could benefit from early incorporation of HIA into decision making process



Interagency Working Group, cont.

Overall Goal to Meet HIA Directives of Transportation Reform

- The goal of the proposed transportation-related HIA project is to work together with MassDOT, EEA and other community representatives to:



IV. Health Impact Assessment Pilot Project

Background on “Grounding McGrath” Study

- Project underway by the MassDOT that the HIA will inform is “Grounding McGrath” Study in Somerville, MA
 - Overall this transportation project aims to determine the future of the Route 28 corridor
 - MassDOT indicated that the size of the investment necessary to restore the highway provided an opportunity to evaluate the feasibility, benefits, impacts, and costs of removing at least a portion of the elevated structure on Route 28/McGrath Highway
 - MassDOT’s existing study protocol lends uniquely to the HIA process including establishment of an Advisory Group composed of community representatives to evaluate alternatives



HIA Pilot Project, cont.

Examples of Baseline Health Data for Consideration in HIA

Health Determinants	Health Outcomes	Data Sources
Air pollution – high gradient near roadways and scientific evidence that continues to emerge regarding health impacts	Respiratory disease/illness (e.g., asthma), cardiovascular disease (e.g., heart attack), all-cause mortality, certain cancers	MDPH Bureau of Environmental Health Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) Portal http://matracking.ehs.state.ma.us/
Access to active transportation and increasing physical activity (e.g., access to sidewalks, bicycle paths)	Benefits for reducing obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, premature mortality, improved mental and physical health	MDPH Bureau of Community Health and Prevention
Access to public transit mobility for vulnerable populations (people with disabilities, elderly)	Access to goods/services that support health, such as groceries, clinics	MassDOT
Traffic Safety	Injury to pedestrians, vehicle drivers, and cyclists	MassDOT
Economic: vitality of small businesses; property values and health care costs that could be reduced based on HIA outcomes	Multiple indirect impacts on health	Economist to be hired
Environmental Justice	Multiple indirect impacts on health	EEA/MDPH EPHT/MassDOT



V. MDPH Challenges / Rewards

Challenges

- 1) Gaining familiarity with extensive MA transportation planning process (e.g. understanding the difference between a “study” and a “project”)
- 2) Better estimating when actual HIA begins – many alternatives proposed but only a few will undergo thorough evaluation
- 3) Determining who from each agency as well as the municipality where HIA is based should attend the training

Rewards

- 1) Establish a process for integrating baseline health data into a transportation project
- 2) Recognition that transportation partners not only see the importance of including health data but also demonstrating knowledge of health databases



V. MassDOT Challenges / Rewards

Challenges

- 1) Identifying appropriate transportation initiatives for inclusion of HIA process
- 2) Incorporation of HIA at appropriate point in the transportation planning/project development process
- 3) Leveraging existing transportation data and analysis to support objectives of HIA to minimize added effort and cost

Rewards

- 1) Broader understanding of transportation impacts and benefits
- 2) Responsiveness to community and stakeholder concerns
- 3) Opportunity to support other state goals of improved public health, improved air quality, reduced congestion, reduced greenhouse gas emissions





DISCUSSION

