



Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program: Spotlight on Massachusetts

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Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program

- The Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program is a competitive discretionary grant program that was first established in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) passed in the fall of 2021.
- Planning and construction grants are available through the program.
- The RCN Program funds projects that advance community-centered transportation projects, with a priority for projects that benefit disadvantaged communities by:
 - improving access to daily needs such as jobs, education, health care, food, nature and recreation
 - fostering equitable development and restoration
 - reconnecting communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, including to mobility, access, or economic development.

Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program (cont.)

- The first year of the program, 2022, was highly competitive. U.S. DOT received 435 total applications but was only able to award 45 projects.
- In 2023, the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) released a joint Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) and Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) programs – a combination of two major discretionary grants into one NOFO.
- The total amount of funding available in the RCN NOFO for FY 2023 is \$3.353 billion. This is an increase over FY 2022, in which the BIL allocated up to \$195 million for the RCP program, but mostly for construction projects.
 - **Planning Grants:** In FY 2023, DOT may award up to \$50 million of RCP funds and \$135 million of NAE funds for eligible public engagement, feasibility studies, and other planning activities.
 - **Construction Grants:** In FY 2023, DOT may award up to \$148 million of RCP funds and \$2.57 billion of NAE funds for eligible construction activities.

Massachusetts 2022 RCP Recipients

- As part of the first round (in FY 2022), the City of Boston and the City of North Adams were successful in receiving RCN planning grants.
- **City of North Adams:**
 - Project Name: Route 2 Overpass Study (R2OS)
 - Planning Grant Award: \$750,720
 - Estimated Total Project Cost: \$940,720
- **City of Boston:**
 - Project Name: Reconnecting Chinatown
 - Planning Grant Award: \$1,800,000
 - Estimated Total Project Cost: \$2,400,000

North Adams Route 2 Overpass Study



North Adams Route 2 Overpass Study

- Funds will be used to study the removal of an overpass constructed during the urban renewal era, which constitutes a significant barrier to community connectivity.
- The Route 2 Overpass Study will analyze the flow of traffic and multimodal access and examine potential alternatives including redesign and the elimination of the overpass, returning Route 2 to grade level.
- The study will involve considering the re-integration of Route 2 into the downtown, perhaps also allowing additional development in more reminiscent of the downtown prior to urban renewal demolitions.

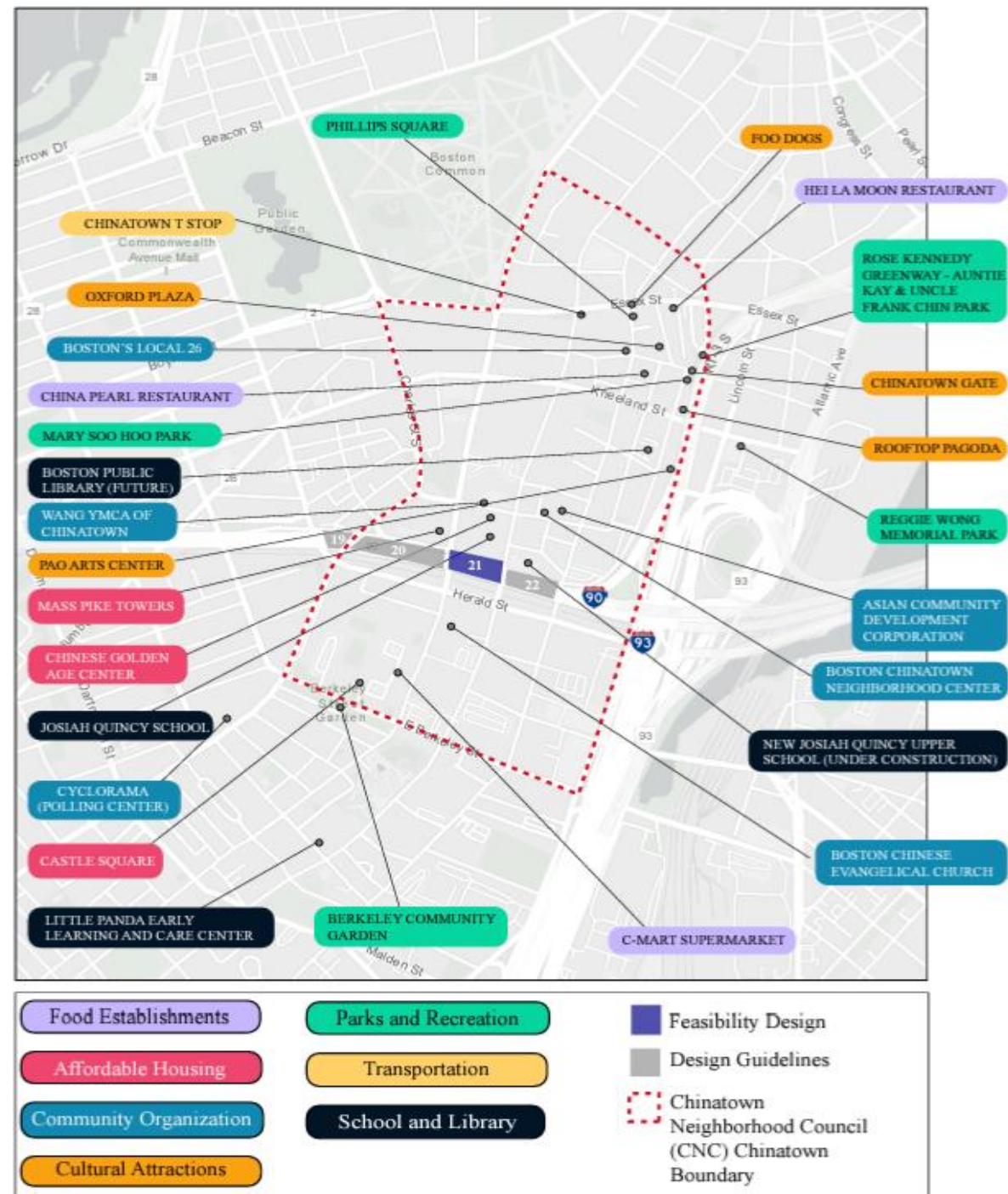


Source: City of North Adams, Route 2 Overpass RCP Application

Boston Reconnecting Chinatown Study

- The construction of the I-90 highway displaced hundreds of families through the demolition of homes and businesses
- In the 1960s, the land for I-90 was taken by eminent domain, leaving residents unable to fight back. Additional families and businesses were displaced as a result of this taking, demolishing Chinatown's fabric of row houses and separating remaining residents from critical community assets.

Source: City of Boston, Reconnecting Chinatown RCP Application, <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23698676/city-of-boston-reconnecting-communities-grant-application-reconnecting-chinatown-2022.pdf>



Boston Reconnecting Chinatown Study

- Funds will be used to assess the feasibility of reconnecting the Chinatown neighborhood separated by the construction of Interstate 90 in the 1960s.
- The project will develop a plan to connect across the open-cut highway by building an open space for the community on Parcel 21 (shown on the right) and prepare design guidelines to link the surrounding streets and facilities on Parcels 19, 20, and 22 (shown on the right).



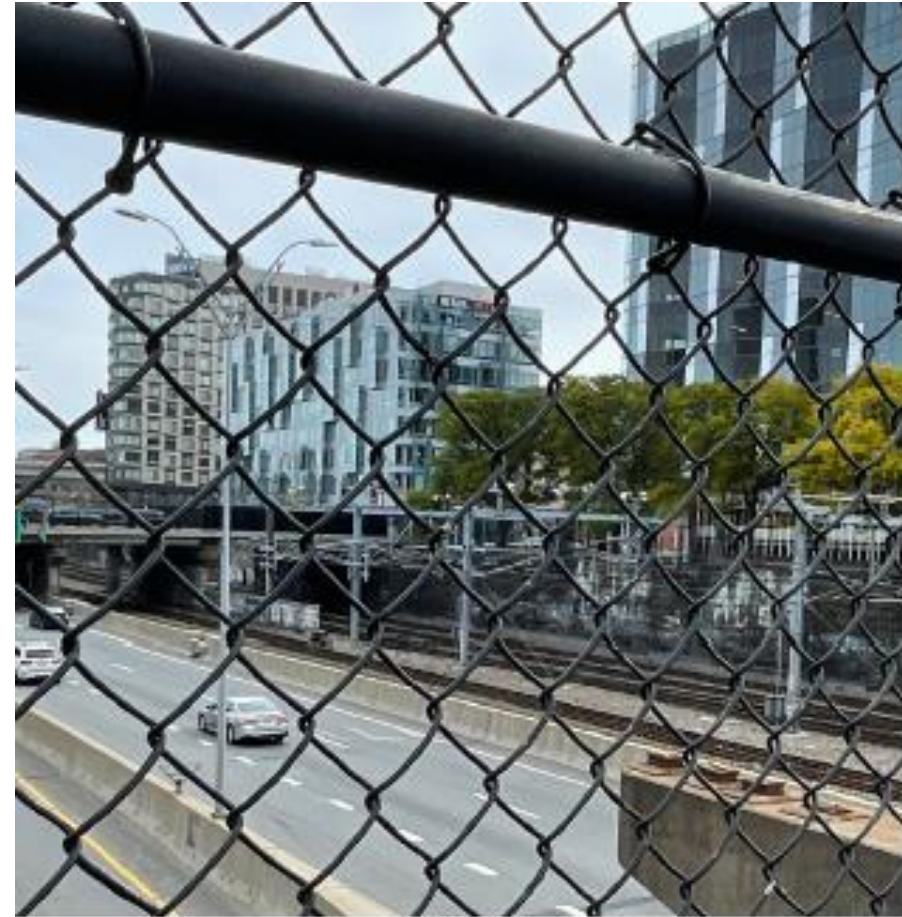
Source: City of Boston, Reconnecting Chinatown RCP Application, <https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23698676/city-of-boston-reconnecting-communities-grant-application-reconnecting-chinatown-2022.pdf>

Boston Reconnecting Chinatown Study (cont.)

- Studies have shown that placing parks on top of highways have the potential to create opportunities for reintegration of previously severed neighborhoods (City of Boston, RCP Application, p. 1).



Source: Southern Gateway Public Green will span Interstate 35E in Dallas.
(<https://www.archpaper.com/2023/06/progress-underway-on-dallas-highway-cap-over-interstate-35e/>)



I-90 bisecting Chinatown between Washington Street and Harrison Avenue

Source: City of Boston, Reconnecting Chinatown RCP Application,
<https://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/23698676/city-of-boston-reconnecting-communities-grant-application-reconnecting-chinatown-2022.pdf>

Other RCN Project Locations for Planning Grants *(for the 2023 round of funding)*

Applicant	Project Name/Location
MassDOT/OTP	Reconnecting Vernon Hill (Worcester)
City of Revere	Routes 60 & 1A
City of Boston/City of Chelsea	Mary Ellen Welch Greenway & Chelsea Greenway
City of Brockton	Vicinity of the Campello MBTA Commuter Rail Station
City of Cambridge	Near Danhehy Park
City of Framingham/MAPC	Routes 135 & 126
City of Lawrence/MVPC	Reconnecting Andover and Lawrence's Futures
City of Haverhill	Ginty Boulevard + Bailey Boulevard (GB3)
City of Everett	Sweetser Circle
FRCOG	Leyden Road from Elm Street to Leyden Woods Apartments

MassDOT's Reconnecting Massachusetts Communities Efforts

- To document locations for which communities are applying for RCN funding (as well as other locations that may be good candidates for the program), MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning is currently developing a map and database of all RCN candidate projects.
- Having this database will serve as a “universe of projects” that may be good candidates for other funding sources if RCN grants are not awarded.

Thank you!