

MEMORANDUM

TO: Needham Planning Board
FROM: Katie King, Deputy Town Manager
SUBJECT: MBTA Communities Act and Funding at Risk
DATE: April 11, 2025

On February 14, 2025, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) filed emergency regulations (760 CMR 72.00) to implement the MBTA Communities Act (MGL c.40A Section 3A). The regulations are substantially similar to the zoning requirements set forth in EOHLC's previously issued guidelines, except that the regulations provided additional time for MBTA communities that failed to meet prior deadlines to come into compliance with the law. Under the regulations, Needham met its deadline to submit an action plan by February 13, 2025, placing the Town in interim compliance status. The Town now has until July 14, 2025, to submit a district compliance plan with adopted zoning.

Below and Attachment A summarize known sources of funding that are at risk if the Town of Needham is not compliant with the MBTA Communities Act by July 14, 2025. Non-compliant municipalities are either ineligible to apply, or compliance status is taken into consideration when discretionary funding decisions are made, making it unlikely that any non-compliant applications will be funded. Some items of note:

- This is not an exhaustive list. Various awarding authorities continue to update discretionary grant programs to factor in compliance status. The Town is often not aware if compliance will be taken into consideration until details of a new funding round are released.
- Many of these funds support infrastructure projects (e.g. roadways, stormwater, energy efficiency) that the Town has identified as a capital need or priority, unrelated to multi-family zoning.
- Most notable are two high-value funding opportunities that Needham is well positioned for:
 - **The Highland Avenue Improvement Project** from Webster Street to Great Plain Ave. The Town has applied to the Boston Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for state and federal funds to cover most of the estimated \$20 million in project costs.
 - **Climate and infrastructure projects funded via Congressman Auchincloss' Community Project Funding (CPF) requests.** This is a flexible source of federal funding that can be used to advance priority water, sewer, roadway, stormwater, and other infrastructure projects that would otherwise be funded by local tax revenue. In FY23, Congressman Auchincloss secured \$2 million for the design of the Centre Street/Central Avenue Bridge. In FY25, the Congressman supported Needham's \$3 million request for stormwater management. The Town is applying again for FY26 funding for \$3 million to support stormwater management and flood mitigation projects.
- Some of the funding sources that take compliance into consideration allow local housing authorities, non-profit organizations, and others to apply. The Town of Needham's compliance status relating to the MBTA Communities Act impacts those applications. This includes pending requests for state funding to support Needham Housing Authority's redevelopment of Linden Chambers and an anticipated request from the Charles River Center to support the E. Militia Heights development.

MBTA Communities Act
Funds at Risk for Municipalities not in Compliance

Category	Funding Source	Funder	Types of Projects (NOTE: Needham projects are highlighted in blue)	Typical Grant Amounts
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	Housing Choice Grant Program	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	These funds support planning and zoning initiatives and public infrastructure construction projects in municipalities designated as Housing Choice Communities. Needham received a 5-year designation as a Housing Choice Community for 2022-2027. The Needham Housing Authority was awarded \$500,000 in FY25 for the redevelopment of Linden Street.	up to \$500,000
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	HousingWorks Infrastructure Program	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	Fund municipal infrastructure projects (roads, sidewalks, water, sewer, stormwater) to support and unlock housing opportunities. This grant program awards funds based on the project's nexus with housing, transportation, infrastructure, and community development needs.	\$300,000 - \$5 million
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	Local Capital Projects Fund	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	Funds a portion of the subsidies provided to housing authorities and nonprofit organizations needed due to reduced rentals in housing for the elderly, handicapped, veterans, families and relocated persons.	a formula determines funding amounts
1 - MGL Chp 40A Sec 3A	MassWorks Infrastructure Program	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	In FY16, Needham received a \$1.7M grant for infrastructure improvements to 1st Avenue. This program is one of the State's most flexible source of capital funds for municipal infrastructure projects (roads, water, sewer, stormwater, etc.). Grants support municipal projects that spur housing production, new jobs, or private development.	\$500,000 - \$5 million
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Collaborative Workspace Program	MassDevelopment	Matching grants for the planning, development, and build-out of collaborative workspaces for entrepreneurs, artists, designers, scientists, inventors, and small business owners.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Commonwealth Places Programs	MassDevelopment	To help communities implement placemaking projects that improve public spaces, create foot traffic, and stimulate economic activity.	up to \$25,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Community Planning Grants	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	In 2023, Needham received \$70,000 to support direct community engagement efforts in the Housing Needham (HONE) Working Group visioning process and the creation of zoning for multi-family housing.	up to \$150,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Land Use Planning Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	In 2024, Needham applied for \$45,000 to assist in the Planning Board's review of current parking requirements to reduce impervious cover and implement Low Impact Development (LID) practices. Award decision is pending.	up to \$50,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	Funding to purchase land for conservation and passive recreation or to purchase a Conservation Restriction.	up to \$500,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Massachusetts Downtown Initiative	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	In 2022, Needham received \$25,000 in technical assistance/consulting services to develop a marketing strategy aimed at promoting small businesses in Needham Center. Grants can be used to support Business Improvement Districts, placemaking, wayfinding, small business support, and more.	up to \$25,000

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2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning and Project Grants	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	In FY19, Needham received \$33,000 to complete a vulnerability assessment to prepare for the impacts of climate change and develop action-oriented resiliency plans. With this completed plan, Needham is eligible for future MVP Action project grants. Staff are currently shaping the Town's application for FY26.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Real Estate Services Technical Assistance	MassDevelopment	Technical assistance for municipalities to explore the redevelopment of a public surplus property or to address streetscape and infrastructure needs in a specific district to plan for growth.	
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Rural and Small Town Development Fund	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	Needham is not eligible to apply due to Town population.	n/a
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00)	Urban Agenda Grant Program	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED)	General operating support for innovative and collaborative community economic development projects.	up to \$100,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00) and 3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Brownfields Redevelopment Fund	MassDevelopment	Environmental assessment and remediation of brownfield sites (contaminated land)	Up to \$100,000 for site assessment; up to \$250,000 for remediation
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00) and 3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Site Readiness Program	MassDevelopment	Funds municipal due diligence work, master planning, pre-permitting and permitting, engineering studies, capital improvements, demolition, and/or property acquisition, that enhances a site's readiness for commercial, industrial, or mixed-use development. The Needham Housing Authority was awarded \$500,000 in FY25 for the redevelopment of Linden Street.	\$50,000 - \$500,000
2 - EOHLC Regulations (760 CMR 72.00) and 3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Underutilized Properties Program	MassDevelopment	Funds projects to improve or redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant, or underutilized properties.	\$50,000 to \$1 million
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Local Economic Development Grants			
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Library Capital Funds	Mass Board of Library Commissioners	Provides access to capital funds for Library building renovation, construction and repair.	
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Mass. Cultural Facilities Fund	Massachusetts Cultural Council	Provides major facilities improvement grants to nonprofit cultural organizations.	\$8,000 - \$200,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Historic Preservation Grant Program	Massachusetts Historic Commission	A 50% reimbursable matching grant program to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) listed in the State Register of Historic Places.	up to \$75,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Impact Grant Program	Mass Board of Library Commissioners	Provides a grant to eligible libraries for the establishment of new services or enhancement of existing services. Impact grants assist libraries in responding effectively to local needs and align services with local community initiatives or impact areas.	\$5,000 - \$50,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Destination Development Grant	Mass Office of Travel and Tourism	Grants provide funding for projects that expand, construct, restore, or renovate Massachusetts tourism destinations and attractions, and aid in destination recovery and resiliency.	up to \$250,000
3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Priority Development Site Program	MassDevelopment		

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3 - Chapter 238 Acts of 2024	Seaport Economic Council Grants	Seaport Economic Council	Grants help the economic growth of coastal communities. Grants help to create jobs and build resilience to the impacts of climate change.	up to \$1 million
4 - Funder Discretion	Decarbonization Technical Assistance	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	In 2024, Needham was awarded technical assistance equivalent to \$30,000 to create a municipal building decarbonization roadmap in support of Climate Leader Communities designation and future funding opportunities.	
4 - Funder Discretion	Federal Community Project Funding	Congress via Congressman Auchincloss	In FY24, Dover & Needham received \$2 million to fund design for replacement of the Centre St/Central Ave Bridge. Staff are preparing to submit an updated FY26 request for \$3 million to fund stormwater management and flood mitigation projects.	In FY25, Congressman Auchincloss submitted 15 projects requests ranging from \$600,000 to \$14 million.
4 - Funder Discretion	Green Communities Competitive Grant	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)	This year, Needham was awarded \$162,848 for conversion of lighting at Eliot Elementary School to LEDs and the purchase and installation of heat pump hot water heaters at Town Hall and 470 Dedham Avenue (DPW). The Town previously received \$148,143 to fund energy conservation measures, lighting, in municipal facilities including Pollard Middle, Mitchell, and Newman Schools. Staff are preparing to submit an updated FY26 proposal for \$180,701 for LED lighting upgrades at Broadmeadow and attic insulation at Mitchell.	up to \$500,000
4 - Funder Discretion	MBTA Catalyst Fund	Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)	Available to municipalities that have received an MBTA Communities Act district compliance determination letter from EOHLC. The Catalyst Fund will support activities related to housing creation, infrastructure projects associated with housing, and acquisition of property to promote housing.	\$250,000 – \$1 million
4 - Funder Discretion	Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	Needham has submitted a TIP application for the design and construction of Highland Avenue from Webster Street to Great Plain Avenue. The project cost is estimated at \$20 million. Major state, regional, and local transportation improvement projects are funded through the TIP. The MPO is responsible for evaluating applications to receive federal and state funding through inclusion on the TIP.	Project scopes vary widely; regionally significant projects can receive \$50 million or more.

UPDATED: 04/08/2025