

Editorial Style Guide

*Guidelines on Writing for the
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization*

December 2019
Updated May 2026

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APPENDIX

Appendix—Planning Terms and Styles

Chapter 1—Report Writing Tips

1.1 EDITORIAL STYLE

Organizations adopt an editorial style to ensure that their written products are presented in a clear and consistent format, so that regardless of authorship the products have like typography, formatting, punctuation, and word usage. The editorial style followed by the staff of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is based on the rules in *The Chicago Manual of Style* and supplemented by this in-house style guide, which provides rules and suggestions for the consistent use of terminology specific to transportation planning.

While the editors for the Boston Region MPO staff adhere to the rules in *The Chicago Manual of Style* when questions arise about grammar, punctuation, syntax, and word usage, authors may incorporate the preferred styles of the federal or state agencies that are funding their work. If a style preferred by the client agency conflicts with Boston Region MPO's style, however, the author and editor should discuss the context in which the document would appear and decide whether to veer from the established style.

The Boston Region MPO's editorial style also incorporates information about preferences identified by management and staff members. The style guide highlights certain terms specific to the transportation-planning field so that descriptions and definitions remain consistent across documents. Refer to the appendix for a list of these terms and usage.

1.2 DOCUMENT PRODUCTION GUIDEBOOK

Before beginning your document, familiarize yourself with the resources on the Boston Region MPO staff's intranet site, <https://intranet.ctps.org/templates-home>. There you will find the *Boston Region MPO Document Production Guidebook*, which provides detailed instructions about document naming conventions, developing visuals, using Word templates, and formatting your document. Instructions are provided for the formatting of reports, memoranda, work plans and programs, meeting minutes and agendas, and letters. The guidebook also provides helpful hints and necessary information about table formatting and style.

1.3 DOCUMENT TEMPLATES

The document templates, available on the intranet, ensure that the Boston Region MPO's written products present a uniform appearance and are accessible to people who use screen-reading software because of vision impairments or other disabilities. Reports submitted to the Editorial group must be in the template form. All templates are available at this site: <https://intranet.ctps.org/templates-home>.

Authors must download a new template each time they begin writing a document to ensure they are using the most current template. The templates are MS Word documents with preselected font styles for headers, subheaders, normal text, table titles, and citations. If you prefer to write the initial draft of your document in another format or in a Word document that does not have the same styles of the template, clear all styles before you copy the text into the template. When writing in the report template, leave the table of contents blank when you submit your report to Editorial; the editor will generate the table of contents as the last step in the editorial process.

An Excel template is available for creating tables. If your report includes tables, you may import them into the body of the report or keep them as separate Excel files during the editorial process. If you choose the latter option, the editor will insert the tables into the document before finalizing the document.

1.4 REPORT STRUCTURE

Before writing your report, create an outline to organize your thoughts and make note of the main points you would like the reader to take away from each section of the report. Consider organizing the content so that the reader can quickly grasp your conclusions or recommendations. Follow with the facts and analysis that led you to those results in the body of the report.

Table 1 provides a sample outline for a report and tips for producing each section. This is only an example. While the sections with the front matter are required, you may organize the chapter topics in the body of the report as you see fit.

Table 1
Sample Report Outline

Sample Outline	Tips
Cover page	Work with Graphics to develop an image for your report cover. (Required)
Title page	The title page lists the report's title, author and contributors, the client, the contract that funded the study, and the date the report will be released. (Required)
Map page	Work with Graphics to create a map of the study area, if applicable.
Abstract	Summarize the topic of the report in one or two paragraphs. This text will be posted on the Boston Region MPO website when the final report goes online. (Required)
Table of Contents	Editorial will create the table of contents as the last step in the editorial process. (Required)
Executive Summary	Lengthy reports must have an executive summary that conveys the salient points from the report. Provide a brief overview of the study that summarizes the problems or issues that inspired the study, major findings, recommendations for ways to address the problems, and the next steps for implementing solutions. The content can be extracted from the main body of the report and revised as necessary to make the text flow. (Required)
Chapter 1: Introduction	
Problem statement	Discuss the issues that inspired the study.
Overview of staff recommendations	Summarize the staff's recommendations for addressing the problems.
Chapter 2: Existing Conditions	
	Discuss the issues in the context of the existing conditions of the study area. Supplement the discussion with maps or photos of the study area, or tables or figures showing relevant data (for example, current roadway volumes or transit ridership). Work with Graphics on visuals.
Chapter 3: Research	
Methodology	Explain the research methodology.
Data	Describe the data sources and any limitations that affected the analysis.
Analysis	Report the results of the analysis.
Findings	Explain the findings.

Sample Outline	Tips
Chapter 4: Alternatives and Recommendations	
Alternatives	Describe all of the options staff examined for addressing the problems.
Recommendations	Detail the staff's recommendation for addressing the problems.
Rejected alternatives	Explain why staff did not recommend the other options.
Chapter 5: Next Steps	
Next steps to implement recommendations	Discuss the next steps that would need to occur for the proposed improvements to be implemented.
Partners in action	Identify the agencies or municipalities that have a role to play in further study, authorizing or permitting construction, or implementing the proposed improvements.
Potential roadblocks to action	Identify obstacles that may have to be overcome to make progress.
Chapter 6: Study Background	
Process for selecting study	Provide information about how this study came about. State if the study was implemented through the Unified Planning Work Program. Explain the MPO's selection process if the study location was selected based on MPO board action. Mention if public input had a role in initiating the study.
Funding source	Credit the federal or state funding source.
For more information	If relevant, provide information about the Boston Region MPO program through which the study was conducted. Offer staff contact information for those who would like to request more information or those who would like to have a similar study conducted in their community.
Appendix A: Supporting Data	Provide additional information as necessary.
Appendix B: Documentation	

1.5 WRITING FOR THE BOSTON REGION MPO'S AUDIENCE

The Boston Region MPO's reports must appeal to a broad audience. These publicly funded studies are read by people with varying degrees of knowledge about the Boston region's transportation system; planning, construction, and engineering concepts; data used to assess transportation issues; and planning processes. A municipal planner or MassDOT highway engineer whose job is to orchestrate or design roadway improvements may possess a high degree of technical knowledge about the subject matter discussed in a report, while a resident who reads a report because it addresses a problem the person is experiencing when using the transportation system may not be well-versed in the terminology and concepts discussed.

The Boston Region MPO's reports must present information that serves the interests of all readers:

- residents who want information that enables them to have conversations with their neighbors, municipal staff, or elected leaders about improving transportation in their community;
- city or town planners who require specific technical recommendations for selecting and implementing improvements;
- municipal, regional, and elected leaders who are in the position to advocate for or provide funding for improvements; and
- federal agencies' staff who monitor the expenditure of federal monies on transportation studies and projects.

Therefore, reports must be written with technical precision while using language that enables the lay reader to understand the content. A few guidelines for making technical documents readable for a broad audience are discussed below.

1.5.1 Transportation Jargon

There is no shortage of terms in the transportation planning profession that may be incomprehensible at face value to the average reader. Providing definitions and meaningful descriptions of terms specific to the transportation planning and engineering fields will help readers who are not well versed in the subject matter to follow the text. If a lengthy definition is required, it may be best to place the definition in a footnote so that it does not distract from the flow of the passage.

Below are examples of sentences that incorporate explanations of the underlined jargon:

The 2040 No-Build scenario envisages the transportation network as it existed in 2016 with no new road or transit construction except for the projects programmed in the FFYs 2019-23 Transportation Improvement Program.

The MPO complies with federal regulations that protect minority and low-income populations—referred to here as transportation equity populations—throughout the planning process.

A new performance measure is annual hours of peak hour excessive delay per capita, which estimates the extra amount of time (above a defined threshold) that populations in urbanized areas spend in traffic congestion on the National Highway System during peak periods each year.

The *Planning Terms and Styles* table in the appendix provides some stock definitions of frequently used terms from previously released Boston Region MPO reports and documents. The text may be used by authors to explain particular terms in reports or simply referred to as food for thought when creating new definitions. This list is also a resource for staff who may want to ensure that similar language and definitions are used in all Boston Region MPO publications. If you, as a subject matter expert, would like to add terms to this table or revise existing definitions, please see a member of the Editorial group.

1.5.2 Word Choice

Documents will be easier to read if word choices are consistent throughout the document. When there are multiple words or phrases that can convey the same idea, choose one to use throughout the report. For example, if the *staff*, *tabulators*, and *temporary workers* are all the same people, it may be confusing to the reader if these descriptors are used interchangeably.

The same is true for spelling choices. When there are alternate spellings of a word, spell the word the same way consistently throughout the document. When there are variant spellings of a word, consult a dictionary—such as [Merriam-Webster](#)—for the common usage. Many words have variants that include a double consonant. The Boston Region MPO’s style gives preference to the terms with the single consonant (for example, *buses* instead of *busses*, *canceled* instead of *cancelled*, *modeling* instead of *modelling*, and *traveler* instead of *traveller*).

Be aware of words that are easily confused with other words or that are commonly misused. Examples include *affect* and *effect*, *elicit* and *solicit*, and *fewer* and *less*. When writing about numbers and volumes, avoid using spatial descriptors—such as *above*, *below*, *higher*, and *lower*. Rather use words such as *more than* or *less than*. Consult a dictionary, if necessary, to make sure you are selecting the word with the meaning you aim to convey.

It is preferable to spell out words completely in formal documents. Do not use contractions, such as *can’t*, *didn’t*, *what’s*, and *won’t*.

Be sensitive when using terms or language that could be offensive or politically incorrect. For example, the term *people with disabilities* is preferable to the term

handicapped in most cases. As another example, the word *resident* is more apt than *citizen* when describing the people that the MPO conducts outreach to because the word *citizen* can be interpreted as referring to a person's citizenship status.

1.5.3 Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns should not be overused in a formal report, but it is appropriate to insert them occasionally to avoid the passive voice or to reduce wordiness. When using a personal pronoun, be clear about who or what organization the pronoun is standing for. A reader should not be confused about whether the pronoun *we* stands for the MPO staff, the MPO board, or the agencies and municipalities that make up the MPO.

In casual conversation and informal writing, the third-person plural pronouns *they*, *them*, and *their* are sometimes used as gender-neutral or generic pronouns to refer to an individual person. In formal writing, this practice is less common. Often a sentence can be reworded to avoid pairing a singular noun with a plural pronoun. If in doubt, replace the pronoun with a noun.

Example:

Incorrect: An attendee at the meeting said that their town is not well served by transit.

Revision: An attendee at the meeting said that the town of Lynnfield is not well served by transit.

A singular agency, company, or organization takes the gender-neutral third-person pronoun *it* rather than a plural pronoun.

1.5.4 Paragraph Structure

An ideal paragraph has a clear structure. The paragraph begins with a topic sentence that expresses the main idea of the paragraph. Sentences that discuss or support the main idea or provide details follow. Often a concluding sentence rounds off the idea or provides a transition to the next paragraph. This structure presents information to the reader in a logical order.

A coherent paragraph that maintains the focus on the point made in the topic sentence is especially important when presenting the results of data analysis. For example, the initial sentence may present a finding that resulted from the analysis. The following sentences may provide the evidence to support that initial statement and an interpretation of the data. The sentences in the body of the paragraph should always relate to the topic sentence and irrelevant information should be excluded.

Example:

The intersection of Route 9 and Dunster Road in Brookline is dangerous for pedestrians and safety improvements are required at the crosswalk. The intersection has the highest crash rate of all the unsignalized intersections in the study corridor. Data from the Registry of Motor Vehicles show that 14 crashes occurred at the location between 2013 and 2018. Two of those crashes involved pedestrians. Both crashes occurred because the drivers of the vehicles did not stop in time after seeing the pedestrians in the crosswalk. Pedestrians would be better protected if yield lines were striped on the pavement approximately 40 feet from the crosswalk and if rectangular rapid-flashing beacons were installed at the crosswalk.

1.5.5 Verb Tense

Select verb tenses by considering when the document will be read by the audience. Tasks in work scopes that have not been undertaken yet should be described in the future or conditional tense. Actions reported in a completed study should be described in the past tense. However, the present tense is appropriate for describing existing conditions in a report.

1.5.6 Brevity

Be concise and avoid redundancy to keep the reader's attention. Superfluous information can distract from the overall message.

1.5.7 Abbreviations

If using abbreviations, acronyms, or initialisms, spell out the word or phrase the first time it appears in the document with the abbreviated form immediately after in parentheses. To make an abbreviation plural, add a lowercase s.

Examples:

Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes

state departments of transportation (DOTs)

A term that appears once or only a few times in the document does not have to be abbreviated. However, if an abbreviation has been introduced, continue to use the abbreviation throughout the document. In documents with chapters, fully spell out the term (with the abbreviation in parentheses) at the beginning of each chapter.

Only use an ampersand (&) if it is part of the proper name of a company or organization.

Chapter 2—Editorial Process

2.1 DOCUMENT REVIEW PROCESS

After you have written your report, the editorial process begins. During this process, an editor will review the report for grammar, spelling, syntax, and style. The editor will also review for organization and clarity. In some cases, the editor will reorganize the content or edit to make the material more comprehensible for a lay audience. The steps for completing a report are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2
Editorial Process

Step	Task
1	Your group manager reviews the report for content and may suggest revisions.
2	The director overseeing the project reviews the report for content and may suggest revisions.
3	Submit the report, as approved by the group manager and director, to Editorial@ctps.org and provide the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project charge number • Requested deadline for the first edit • Deadline for the client’s review copy, if applicable • Final deadline • Special instructions to the editor, if applicable <p>(See Section 2.2 for more information about setting deadlines.)</p>
4	The editor will edit the document using the <i>track changes</i> feature in Word and send you a redlined version with a file name ending with <i>1a</i> . (See Section 2.3 for more details about the file naming convention.)
5	Review the changes in Version 1a and accept the changes you agree with. Note with Word’s <i>comment</i> feature if you disagree with any of the edits. Any other changes you make to the text should be made in <i>track changes</i> . Return Version 2 to the editor.
6	Continue working with the editor until you both agree the document is ready to send to the client for review or to finalize.
7	The editor will create the table of contents when there are no more changes to be made to the document. The editor will return a client review draft or a final file to you. If the document is being reviewed by the client, the editor will review any changes made by the client before producing the final version.

Step	Task
8	Write alternative (ALT) text for complex tables and figures that cannot be read by screen-reading software. (See Section 3.4.5 for examples of ALT text.)
9	Read the Boston Region MPO Accessible-Document Production Process flowchart on the intranet, at https://intranet.ctps.org/accessible_document_production , when you are ready to work with Graphics to prepare your document for posting on the web and presenting to the MPO board. Only the document file labeled <i>FINAL</i> by the editor should be forwarded to the Graphics group.

2.2 SETTING DEADLINES AND ESTIMATING WORK TIME

When initiating an editorial review, you can request as many as three deadlines for the editor to meet:

- The *first deadline* is the date you would like the editor to return the first round of edits to you.
- The *client review deadline* is the date you will need a substantially complete version of the document to provide to reviewers outside of the Boston Region MPO, such as MassDOT, MBTA, or municipal staff.
- The *final deadline* is the date you will need the completed document incorporating any changes from outsider reviewers.

In some cases, the editor may have to work with you to revise deadlines if there are other projects in the pipeline.

Remember to allow sufficient time in your project budget for the editorial process. As a rule of thumb, estimate 30 minutes per page of text for the first round of edits. Additional time will be required for you to review the edits and work with the editor to resolve editorial comments. Factor in time for subsequent rounds of editing, particularly if the assignment is lengthy.

2.3 VERSION CONTROL

Version control is maintained by naming the document file according to a naming convention that includes the date the file was submitted to Editorial, the description of the project, the type of document, the author's initials, and the version number. See the example in Table 3 and the *Boston Region MPO Document Production Guidebook* for more details.

Table 3
Version Control

Version	Action	Example File Name
First draft	The author sends Version 1 to Editorial@ctps.org.	2021-06-17 MWRTA Sunday Service RPT JB 1
First review	The editor returns edits and comments to the author in Version 1a.	2021-06-17 MWRTA Sunday Service RPT JB 1a
Second draft	The author accepts edits, makes comments if there are disagreements about edits, and sends Version 2 to the editor.	2021-06-17 MWRTA Sunday Service RPT JB 2
Client review draft	When both agree on all edits, the editor sends a client review draft to the author who then forwards the file to outside reviewers.	2021-06-17 MWRTA Sunday Service RPT JB 2a_Client Review Draft
Outside reviewers' edits	If the outside reviewers have edits, the author makes the changes and returns a redlined version to the editor.	2021-06-17 MWRTA Sunday Service RPT JB 3
Final version	The editor reviews the changes and sends a final version to the author.	2021-06-17 MWRTA Sunday Service RPT JB FINAL

Notes: The file name on the version the author produces ends with a number and the editor's version ends in the number and letter "a."

Abbreviations can be used in the document file names to indicate the product type: ALT = alternative text. BRO = brochure. FIG = figure. FLY = flyer. JAD = job ad. LRTP = Long-Range Transportation Plan. LTR = letter. MAP = map. MEM = memo. PPT = presentation. PRR = press release. REP = report. SCP = work scope. TBL = table. TIP = Transportation Improvement Program. TXT = miscellaneous text. UPWP = Unified Planning Work Program. WEB = web content.

2.4 EDITORIAL CHECKLIST

Table 4 shows some of the steps the editor routinely takes after the content of a report has been edited and the report is nearly complete.

Table 4
Editors' Checklist

Complete	Task
✓	Check incorporation of edits.
✓	Run a <i>spell check</i> in Word.
	Conduct a final read-through to find any typos missed previously.
	Fix formatting, if necessary, on bulleted lists and tables.
	Spell out acronyms and abbreviations under tables that contain them, if missing.
	Check dates on the cover page and headers and update them, if necessary, to reflect the publication date.
	Check references to map, figure, and table titles and numbers in the body of the text to make sure that they match those on the actual maps, figures, and tables.
	Ensure that appropriate Word <i>styles</i> are applied to headers, figure and table titles, captions, and body text.
	Add blank pages for appendices if they will be included. Apply the <i>chapter style</i> to the appendices' titles so that they will appear in the table of contents.
	Create a table of contents.
	Make sure chapters start on an odd page for proper layout. Add blank pages with page breaks if necessary.
	Use the table of contents to check for any inconsistencies in the naming or numbering of figures and tables, or capitalization errors. Make corrections in the actual figure and table titles. Update the table of contents field afterwards.
	Check that the document name is in Word's <i>Properties</i> field.
	Return the document to the author for approval of changes.
	Remove the <i>DRAFT</i> watermark from the document when ready to finalize.

Chapter 3—Content

3.1 PLACE

References to geographic locations and specific locations on the highway and transit systems should be precise so that a reader could easily find the locations on a map.

Generic terms for geographic locations and places are lowercase when used descriptively and capitalized when part of a name. Note the capitalization in the following terms:

Boston region (the 97 municipalities in the Boston Region MPO's planning area)

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Boston Region MPO's planning area

Boston metropolitan area

eastern Massachusetts

the Northeast

the North Shore

Examples of other commonly used place descriptors are included below.

3.1.1 Boston Region

The 97-municipality area can be referred to in various ways:

the Boston region

the Boston Region MPO area

the Boston Region MPO's planning area

To avoid confusion, do not describe this area as simply the *MPO region* in documents that make reference to other MPOs in Massachusetts.

3.1.2 Model Area

The Boston Region MPO's travel demand model covers all of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and southeastern New Hampshire.

3.1.3 Government Entities

Municipalities

The words *city* and *town* are lowercase when referring to a geographic area and capitalized when referring to a government.

Examples:

Rutherford Avenue is in the city of Boston.

The representative for the City of Boston advocated for improvements to Rutherford Avenue.

States

Capitalize the word *commonwealth* when it is a proper noun referring to a political entity or is used without the state name to denote the political entity.

Examples:

the Commonwealth

the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

a commonwealth

Congress

Capitalize the word *congress* when it is a proper noun.

Examples:

United States Congress

117th Congress

a congressional report

3.1.4 Roadways

When first introducing a roadway name in a report, provide a precise description so that readers are not confused about the location. A commonly used format is as follows: Federal/State Route # (Local Name), Municipality. The local name may be used subsequently.

Examples:

Route 62 (Main Street), Concord

Interstate 93 (Southeast Expressway), Boston

When referring to exit numbers on highways, provide a description that includes the municipality. In some cases, it will be helpful to the reader to provide the connecting street.

Examples:

Exit 14 (Morrissey Boulevard, Boston) on Interstate 93

Exit 14 on Interstate 93 northbound to Morrissey Boulevard in Boston

the exit to Morrissey Boulevard

Spell out words such as *boulevard*, *drive*, *interstate*, *route*, and *street* as a general rule. Abbreviations may be used in some cases where space is limited, such as in tables, figures, maps, and headers, to reduce wordiness.

Note when the word *interstate* is capitalized:

Interstate 95 (I-95)

Interstate System

Interstate Highway System

the interstate

3.1.5 Transit

Note the capitalization styles for transit system components:

Park Street Station

MBTA bus Route 99; Route 99; the bus route

Green Line; the Green Line D Branch

Newburyport/Rockport commuter rail line; Newburyport/Rockport Line

3.2 DATE AND TIME

Specify if a year date is referring to the federal fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) or the state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) by writing *FFY* or *SFY*, respectively, before the year or range of years. Note that the MBTA often simply uses *FY* when referring to the *SFY*, so when writing for the MBTA the author may choose to adhere to the MBTA's style.

If there are a mix of dates including fiscal years and calendar years (January 1 to December 31), you may wish to provide clarification on all dates to avoid confusion. In these cases, add *CY* before the year to denote calendar year.

Examples:

FFY 2022–26 Transportation Improvement Program

SFY 2022 Boston Region MPO budget

CY 2022

Expressions of time should include AM or PM after the digits, including in time ranges, to avoid ambiguity. The 12-hour clock system is typically used, as opposed to the 24-hour clock (as used by the military and in other parts of the world), for expressing time in documents that will be read by the general public.

Examples:

11:00 AM to 1:00 PM

11:00 AM–1:00 PM

3.3 NUMBERS

As a general rule, single-digit, whole numbers from zero through nine are spelled out and numerals are used for larger numbers; however, there are exceptions to the rule as described in Table 5. For example, this rule does not apply to number-rich tables in which case all numerals are preferred. In documents that contain many numbers and where it would be more confusing to the reader to see a mix of words and numerals, the author and editor can agree to use all numerals.

Take care not to overwhelm the reader with numbers in the text of the document. In many cases, numbers can be confined to tables while the conclusions drawn from them are explained in the text. If possible, put numbers in tables as supporting information to bolster your findings.

Table 5
Guidelines for Expressing Numbers

Case	Boston Region MPO Style	Example
Standard	Spell out single-digit, whole numbers from zero through nine and use numerals for all others.	<i>Ridership increased by 15 percent at three commuter rail stations.</i>
Sentence begins with a number	Spell out the number or revise the sentence so that it does not start with a number.	<i>Three hundred twenty-nine parking spaces exist at Salem Station.</i> <i>There are 329 parking spaces at Salem Station.</i>
Report chapters	Use numerals.	<i>Chapter 2 of the Long-Range Transportation Plan</i>
Table and figure titles	Use numerals.	
Tables	Use numerals.	
Numbers with decimal points	Use numerals. Add a zero before decimal points in numbers less than one for clarity.	<i>The eight-hour ozone standard is 0.08 parts per million.</i>
Duration of time	All numerals may be used, if following the standard rule would be awkward. (Numbers starting a sentence should still be spelled out, though.)	<i>Three cars drove through the intersection in 2 minutes 25 seconds.</i>

Case	Boston Region MPO Style	Example
Money	The author may decide whether to follow the standard rule or use all numerals. Keep the number style consistent throughout the narrative portion of the document.	<i>seven dollars or \$7.00</i> <i>75 dollars or \$75.00</i>
	Include a zero before the decimal point for amounts less than \$1.00.	\$0.50
	Amounts greater than \$999.99 are generally expressed with the words <i>thousand, million, or billion</i> written out. When expressing dollar ranges, write these words after both figures so that the reader does not misinterpret the first figure.	<i>seventy-five million dollars</i> <i>\$75 million</i>
	The number style in tables may differ from the style in the narrative portion of the report. If all digits are expressed in tables, place commas to mark the hundred, thousand, million, billion spaces. If dealing with all round numbers, the decimal point and cents may be omitted.	<i>\$75 million to \$90 million</i> <i>\$75,000,000</i>
Legislation and regulations	Use numerals.	<i>Title 49, part 625, of the Code of Federal Regulations (Transit asset management) (49 C.F.R. part 625)</i> <i>Chapter 161B, section 27, of Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L. ch.161B §27)</i> <i>Title 310, section 7.00, of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (Air pollution control) (310 CMR 7.00)</i>

Case	Boston Region MPO Style	Example
Dates	Use numerals. When a full date (month, day, and year) is in a sentence, commas are placed after the day and year.	<i>The meeting was held on April 1, 2019, at the State Transportation Building.</i>
		<i>The meeting was held on April 1 at the State Transportation Building.</i>
		<i>The meeting was held in April 2019 at the State Transportation Building.</i>
	When giving a range of years, the second year can be abbreviated, as long as the years are in the same century. Use an en dash between the years.	<i>FFYs 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Program</i>
	When referring to a decade, no apostrophe is necessary.	<i>1990s</i>
Percentages	Use numerals and spell out the word “percent” in narrative text.	<i>8 percent</i>
Ordinals	Spell out the word for single-digits.	<i>First, second, third, etc.</i>
	If using numerals do not use superscript text.	<i>117th Congress</i>
Phone numbers	Periods separate the area code, prefix, and line number.	<i>857.702.3700</i>

3.4 FIGURES, TABLES, AND MAPS

3.4.1 Titles

If the figures, tables, or maps in your report are alike in terms of content, name them such that their descriptions follow a pattern.

Example:

Figure 1—Travel Time on Interstate 95 Northbound: AM Peak Period

Figure 2—Travel Time on Interstate 95 Southbound: PM Peak Period

Figure 3—Travel Speeds on Route 1: AM Peak Period

3.4.2 Models

If a document will contain multiple figures, tables, or maps that are based on a common model, have a sample version edited (or designed) before producing all of them. This step will save time for the author, editor, and graphic designer because the same edits will not have to be made multiple times.

3.4.3 Landscaped Full-Page Figures, Maps, and Tables

Landscaped full-page figures, maps, and tables do not have to be embedded in the document you submit to Editorial. Create a placeholder page in the Word document where the image will eventually be placed. The figure or table number and title must be on the placeholder page with the *fig/table* style applied. (The use of styles, in this case, allows Editorial to create the table of contents by drawing on the stylized text.) A page break is added after the title.

The editor will review the actual figures, tables, and maps, which can be provided in separate files. The editor will check the spelling on text within the figures, tables, and map legends and ensure that the titles match the titles on the placeholder pages in the Word document.

3.4.4 Tables

In the body of the report, avoid describing charts and tables. Focus your writing on the conclusions you drew from your analysis and use the numbers in tables as supporting information to bolster your conclusions.

Provide units of measure, if applicable. The unit of measure can be in parentheses after the column or row title.

Align decimal points in a column. (Or ask the editor to do this for you.)

Footnotes to text in tables can be marked by superscript numbers or letters, or the following symbols:

(*) *asterisk*

(†) *dagger*

(‡) *double dagger*

(§) *section*

*Repeat ... (**), etc.*

3.4.5 Alternative Text

To meet the needs of visually impaired readers, authors must write descriptive alternative (ALT) text for maps, figures, and tables. ALT text is information that is

inserted in the HTML version of a document to describe an image that cannot be interpreted by screen-reading software. The ALT text should provide an overall description of the image or table contents.

Examples:

Figure 7 is a map of the city of Boston highlighting the location of the Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue project. The map depicts the highway and transit network in the vicinity of Rutherford Avenue, including the MBTA Orange Line and commuter rail, Interstate 93, Alford Street, and the Tobin Bridge.

Table 12 is a list of locations in the project area where multiple crashes occurred between 2011 and 2014. For each crash cluster, information is provided about the severity of the crashes, the type of collisions, and the road surface and ambient light conditions during the times of the crashes.

3.5 SOURCE CITATION IN BIBLIOGRAPHIES, ENDNOTES, AND FOOTNOTES

3.5.1 Citation Structure

The Chicago Manual of Style offers detailed guidance about how to cite sources. Please see a member of the Editorial staff if you would like more information.

The basic structure of a note is provided below:

Author (first and last name), *Title of Book/Report* (facts and date of publication), page numbers.

Author (first and last name), "Article Title," Publication, (facts and date of publication): page numbers.

Any notes for references accessed online should include the URL. Check to make sure that web links work in the final version of the document.

Examples:

Massachusetts Department of Transportation, "Massachusetts Freight Plan: Technical Memorandum #1" (Prepared by Cambridge Systematics, Inc., December 2016), 39–40.

Cambridge Systematics, Inc. for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, "Massachusetts Freight Plan: Technical Memorandum #1" (December 2016), 39–40.

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (website), *Charting Progress to 2040, A Long-Range Plan for the Boston Region*, accessed June 19, 2019.
<https://www.bostonmpo.org/lrtp>.

Donald Shoup, "Cruising for Parking," Access 30 (Spring 2007).
<http://shoup.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/02/CruisingForParkingAccess.pdf>.

Reverse the first author's name (last name, first name) if writing an alphabetized bibliography or endnotes. Note the difference if the last citation was in an alphabetized bibliography:

Shoup, Donald, "Cruising for Parking," Access 30 (Spring 2007).
<http://shoup.luskin.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/02/CruisingForParkingAccess.pdf>.

If the same source is cited consecutively, provide a full citation in the first footnote and summarize the information in the following one, noting page numbers if different from the previous citation. The abbreviation *Ibid.* may stand in for the facts of the previous citation, but the *Chicago Manual of Style* discourages this usage in favor of shortened citations.

Example:

1. Massachusetts Department of Transportation, "Massachusetts Freight Plan: Technical Memorandum #1" (Prepared by Cambridge Systematics, Inc., December 2016), 39–40.
2. Massachusetts Department of Transportation, 41.

When footnoting, the superscript character usually is placed at the end of the sentence after the period, as shown in this sentence.¹ If you must insert a footnote within a sentence,² the character should be placed after any punctuation marks (commas, colons, or semicolons).

3.5.2 Legal Documents

When making a reference to an act, statute, regulation, executive order, or other legal document, write out the full title the first time it is mentioned in the document. Abbreviated forms can be used thereafter. Examples are provided in Table 5.

The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation, a style guide for legal citation, is available in the Editorial group for further information about commonly used forms of citation.

¹ See *The Chicago Manual of Style* for more information about footnotes.

² While there are instances when a footnote can be placed within a sentence, it is preferable to place a footnote at the end of a sentence.

Table 5
Legal Documents

Full Form	Abbreviated Form
Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act	FAST Act
Title 23, section 134, of the United States Code (Metropolitan transportation planning)	23 U.S.C. § 134
Title 49, part 625, of the Code of Federal Regulations (Transit asset management)	49 C.F.R. part 625
Chapter 161B, section 27, of the Massachusetts General Laws (Regional transit authority council)	M.G.L. c.161B, § 27
Title 310, section 7.00, of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (Air pollution control)	310 CMR 7.00

Chapter 4—Punctuation

4.1 COLONS

A complete sentence precedes a colon. Usually, the colon precedes a list or another complete sentence that expands on the idea of the first sentence. Often, the colon conveys the meaning of “*that is to say*” or “*as follows*.”

Example:

Repairs to the Tobin Bridge will require lane closures: both the northbound and southbound lanes will be closed starting on April 1.

The study examined ridership on three modes of transportation: bus, trolley, and commuter rail.

4.2 SEMICOLONS

A semicolon joins two connected ideas. Often the semicolon precedes a conjunction (such as *but* or *yet*) or a conjunctive adverb (such as *accordingly*, *furthermore*, *however*, *therefore*, or *thus*) that shows cause and effect or bridges the ideas.

Example:

MassDOT customarily provides the local funding match; thus, projects are typically funded with 80 percent federal dollars and 20 percent state dollars.

A semicolon can also be used to separate a series within a sentence when using commas would cause confusion.

Example:

The transportation system must be safe and resilient; incorporate emerging technologies; and provide equitable access, excellent mobility, and varied transportation options.

4.3 COMMAS

Use a comma to set off nonrestrictive clauses in a sentence. A nonrestrictive clause adds information that is not essential to the overall meaning of the sentence. If the clause were deleted, the meaning of the sentence would not change. If a restrictive clause were deleted the meaning would change; so, no commas would be used in that case. Note that nonrestrictive clauses often begin with the word *which* and restrictive clauses often begin with the word *that*.

Example:

The report lists structurally deficient bridges, which are bridges that have deteriorated such that their load-carrying capacities are reduced, and bridges that have weight restrictions. (The nonrestrictive clause is underlined.)

The report lists bridges that have deteriorated such that their load-carrying capacities are reduced and bridges that have weight restrictions. (The restrictive clauses are underlined.)

The Boston Region MPO's style is to use the Oxford comma, which is a comma placed after the last item in a series of more than three words or phrases.

Example:

The regional transit authorities in the Boston region are the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority, and the Cape Ann Transportation Authority.

4.4 HYPHENS AND DASHES

There are many rules for the use of hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes. Some examples of common usage are provided below.

4.4.1 Hyphens

Hyphens are commonly used when a compound modifier (two or more words acting as an adjective) precedes a noun.

Examples:

The MBTA will fund state-of-good-repair projects.

The MBTA will fund projects that bring the transit system into a state of good repair.

park-and-ride lot

first- and last-mile connections

10-mile segment

left-turn lane

long-range plan

Not all compounds take a hyphen, however. Open compounds stand on their own without the hyphen linking them.

Examples:

Complete Streets projects

smart growth principles

air quality conformity

environmental justice communities

travel demand model

land use

Closed compounds are words that have been put together to form a new word. They are not hyphenated.

Examples:

dataset

greenhouse gas

minivan

Many words with prefixes are written without a hyphen. Check the dictionary if you are uncertain.

Examples:

multimodal

nondiscrimination

nonminority

nonmotorized

Adverbs that end in the letters *ly* are not hyphenated.

Examples:

federally required

previously stated

4.4.2 En Dashes

An en dash is the width of the letter *n*. This dash can be found on the Word toolbar under Symbols and Special Characters. (A shortcut is to hold down the Control [Ctrl] key and press the minus key on the numeric keyboard.)

En dashes are used to connect ranges, inclusive numbers, and times. In some cases, the dash stands in for the word *to*. Use an en dash without spacing on either side.

Examples:

FFYs 2020–24

9:00 AM–1:00 PM

Boston–Provincetown ferry

4.4.3 Em Dashes

An em dash is the width of the letter *m*. This dash can be found on the Word toolbar under Symbols and Special Characters. (A shortcut is to hold down the Ctrl and Alt keys and press the minus key on the numeric keyboard.)

Em dashes are used for emphasis or to set off text. Use an em dash without spacing on either side.

Example:

A Complete Streets design—incorporating continuous sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and pedestrian signals—was selected as the preferred alternative.

Avoid overusing the em dash, especially when the sentence will be clear and direct with the use of correct punctuation.

4.4.4 Parentheses

If an entire sentence is parenthetical, all punctuation should be within the parentheses. If only a phrase is set off within a sentence, the punctuation follows the parenthesis.

Examples:

The MPO staff hosts outreach events during the public review period to elicit comments on the draft document. (See the comments in Appendix C.)

The area covered by the statewide model includes all of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and the southern portion of New Hampshire (from the Massachusetts state line to just south of Concord, New Hampshire).

Brackets are used to set off text within a passage that is within parentheses.

Example:

Complaints filed under federal law (based on race, color, national origin [including limited English proficiency], sex, age, or disability) must be filed no later than 180 calendar days after the date the person believes the discrimination occurred.

4.5 LISTS

Bulleted or numbered lists may make a sentence more readable when there are three or more items in a series. Common choices for punctuating a list are described below.

Bulleted lists containing single words or phrases require no punctuation if the list is introduced by a full sentence followed by a colon.

Example:

The plan has three goals:

- *maintain the transit system in a state of good repair*
- *modernize the roadway system*
- *expand the light rail network*

If bullet points are full sentences, the list is introduced by a full sentence followed by a colon.

Example:

The plan has three goals:

- *The transit system will be maintained in a state of good repair.*
- *The roadway system will be modernized.*
- *The light rail network will be expanded.*

If a partial sentence introduces the list, omit the colon and punctuate the list as you would a sentence. Typically, semicolons are placed after each item in the list except the last item, which is followed by a period.

Example:

The goals of the plan are to

- *maintain the transit system in a state of good repair;*
- *modernize the roadway system; and*
- *expand the light rail network.*

Term	Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition	Style/Preference/Usage	Example
air quality conformity determination		As required by the Clean Air Act, an MPO must demonstrate that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) does not contribute to any new violations of federal air quality standards (National Ambient Air Quality Standards). The air quality conformity determination provides assurance that federal transportation funds are spent on projects that are consistent with federal air quality goals.	Do not hyphenate.	
AM and PM			Capital letters	10:00 AM
Attleboro, City of			Note that Attleboro is the only municipality in Massachusetts that ends in "-boro." The suffix on other towns is "-borough": Foxborough, Marlborough, Middleborough, North Attleborough, Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough.	
average daily traffic	ADT	ADT is the average volume of vehicle traffic on a roadway during a 24-hour period. The total traffic volume during a stated period is divided by the number of days in that period.		
baseline			Do not hyphenate.	
bike share			Do not hyphenate.	
build scenario no-build scenario			Always hyphenate <i>no-build</i> . Capitalize <i>build</i> and <i>no-build</i> when referring to a specific, defined scenario. Also capitalize specific, named alternatives.	the 2040 No-Build scenario a no-build scenario two 2040 build scenarios Alternative Two an alternative
bus bunching		Bus bunching can begin to occur on a route when a bus arrives at a stop earlier or later than scheduled either because it was slowed down in traffic or traveled faster than usual (for example, because it encountered all green signals). A slow bus may become slower because the delay has allowed more passengers to accumulate at a stop, thus lengthening the dwell time while passengers board. The slow bus may have picked up passengers who intended to take the next bus, so the dwell time for the next bus may be shorter and its passenger load lighter. Over the course of the route, as the slow bus becomes slower the following bus may catch up to it. As a result, two or more buses may be arriving at stops in close succession rather than spaced apart according to the schedule. Passengers on slow buses may experience overcrowding and long wait times.		

Term	Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition	Style/Preference/Usage	Example
buses			The plural is spelled either as <i>buses</i> or <i>busses</i> . <i>Buses</i> is commonly used.	
census			Capitalize <i>census</i> when it is a proper noun in the name of a specific census or in the name of the agency.	2010 Census US Census Bureau data decennial census
climate change			Do not hyphenate.	climate change adaptation
Commonwealth			Capitalize when referring to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Lowercase when referring to a geographic area.	
crash			In most cases, the word <i>crash</i> should be used instead of <i>accident</i> .	
crash cluster		A crash cluster is identified by mapping a circle with a 25-meter (82-foot) radius from each crash location and observing where the spheres of two or more crashes overlap.		
data			Strictly speaking, the word <i>datum</i> is singular and <i>data</i> is plural, however <i>data</i> is also commonly used as a singular noun. In MPO documents, treat <i>data</i> as a plural noun. In sentences, therefore, the verb should agree with the plural noun. Use the plural verb with this word.	Data are... Data show....
dataset			Do not hyphenate.	
daylighting		Daylighting is a pedestrian safety measure that improves sightlines for pedestrians at intersection crossings by creating no-parking zones at curbs around the intersection.		
decision-making			Hyphenate.	
disability, people with			The word <i>people</i> should come first when describing people with disabilities, people with limited English language proficiency, etc. Avoid using the terms <i>disabled people</i> and <i>handicapped</i> . An alternative to the term <i>handicapped parking</i> is <i>accessible parking</i> .	people with disabilities

Term	Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition	Style/Preference/Usage	Example
Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Policy	DI/DB Policy	The MPO's DI/DB policy is intended to safeguard against unintentional discrimination when making decisions about investments in the transportation system. As a recipient of federal funding, the MPO must identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse effects of its transportation investments on minority populations and/or low-income populations. (Adverse effects are considered either a denial or a delay of benefits, or the imposition of excessive burdens.) These effects are called disparate impacts (DI) when they affect minority populations and disproportionate burdens (DB) when they affect low-income populations.		
equivalent property damage only	EPDO	EPDO is an index used to assess the severity of crashes. Weighted values are assigned to each crash based on whether the crash resulted in property damage (unweighted), injury (weighted by 5), or a fatality (weighted by 10). MassDOT uses EPDO values to rank the state's top 200 crash locations.		
fare equity analysis			Do not hyphenate.	
federal			Lowercase this term unless your document must adhere to federal style guidelines.	
Federal-Aid Highway Program			not Federal Highway Program	
Federal Highway Administration	FHWA		Use the article <i>the</i> before the full term and the abbreviation in keeping with that agency's style.	The Federal Highway Administration... The FHWA...
Federal Transit Administration	FTA		Use the article <i>the</i> before the full term but not before the abbreviation in keeping with that agency's style.	The Federal Transit Administration... FTA...
first- and last-mile connections				
Foxboro Station			The spelling of the MBTA station is different than the spelling of the town of Foxborough.	
Foxborough, Town of			Note that Attleboro is the only municipality in Massachusetts that ends in "-boro." The suffix on other towns is "-borough": Foxborough, Marlborough, Middleborough, North Attleborough, Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough. Also, note that some places within the town of Foxborough use the "-boro" ending, such as Foxboro Station.	

Term	Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition	Style/Preference/Usage	Example
Highway Safety Improvement Program crash cluster		An HSIP crash cluster is a location in which the number and severity of crashes—as measured on the Equivalent Property Damage Only (EPDO) index—ranks the location among the top five percent of crash clusters in the region. The EPDO method assigns weighted values to each crash based on whether the crash resulted in property damage (unweighted), injury (weighted by 5), or a fatality (weighted by 10).		
interstate			Lowercase this word unless it is used as a proper noun, naming a specific interstate highway. The abbreviation (e.g., I-93) may be used in reports after the name is spelled out in full (e.g., Interstate 93).	an interstate Interstate 93 I-93
junctions		A junction is a meeting of two or more roads. An interchange is a grade-separated highway junction, usually with one or more ramps. An intersection is an at-grade junction of roads.		
land use			Do not hyphenate unless necessary to avoid confusion in complex phrases.	
lane-miles			Hyphenate this term and similar ones: passenger-miles, person-hours, person-weeks, revenue-miles, and vehicle-miles.	
leading pedestrian interval	LPI	A signal with an LPI function typically gives pedestrians a three to seven second head start when entering an intersection before vehicles traveling in the same direction get a green signal to proceed.		
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority	MBTA			
metropolitan planning organization	MPO		Only capitalize if part of a proper name.	Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization a metropolitan planning organization
miles per hour	mph		Lowercase abbreviation without periods.	65 mph
National Ambient Air Quality Standards	NAAQS	The Clean Air Act requires the US Environmental Protection Agency to set NAAQS for concentrations in the air of pollutants that are harmful to public health and the environment. Federal standards apply to six "criteria" pollutants: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particle pollution, and sulfur dioxide.		1997 ozone NAAQS

Appendix: Planning Terms and Styles

Term	Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition	Style/Preference/Usage	Example
nitrogen dioxide	NO ₂			
nitrogen oxides	NO _x			
no-build scenario build scenario			Always hyphenate <i>no-build</i> . Capitalize <i>build</i> and <i>no-build</i> when referring to a specific, defined scenario. Also capitalize specific, named alternatives.	the 2040 No-Build scenario a no-build scenario two 2040 build scenarios Alternative Two an alternative
on-ramp			Hyphenate	
ozone	O ₃			
park-and-ride lot			Hyphenate <i>park-and-ride</i> when used as an adjective. Do not use an ampersand.	
particulate matter	PM, PM _{2.5} , PM ₁₀			
passenger-miles			Hyphenate this term and similar ones: lane-miles, person-hours, person-weeks, revenue-miles, and vehicle-miles.	
peak hour peak period			Hyphenate only when used as an adjective.	peak-period traffic volumes
percent			Spell out this word in text passages rather than using the % sign. The % sign may be used in tables.	
performance measures		Performance measures are statistical indicators that are used to monitor system performance and track progress toward a goal.		
person-hours person-weeks			Hyphenate this term and similar ones: lane-miles, passenger-miles, revenue-miles, and vehicle-miles.	
pick up pickup			As a verb, <i>pick up</i> is two words. As an adjective or a noun, <i>pickup</i> is one word.	Pick up the passenger. pickup and drop-off area pickup truck

Appendix: Planning Terms and Styles

Term	Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition	Style/Preference/Usage	Example
public engagement activities			Do not hyphenate.	
public comment period public review period			Do not hyphenate.	
regionwide			Do not hyphenate.	
revenue-miles			Hyphenate this term and similar ones: lane-miles, passenger-miles, person-hours, person-weeks, and vehicle-miles.	
ride-hailing ride-sharing			Hyphenate.	
right-of-way	ROW		Hyphenate.	
sea level			Do not hyphenate.	sea level rise
seasons			Lowercase the words <i>winter</i> , <i>spring</i> , <i>summer</i> , and <i>fall</i> .	
service equity analysis			Do not hyphenate.	
speed humps		Speed humps are a section of roadway with a gradual rise in the pavement surface, designed to slow vehicles. The rise is not as abrupt as with <i>speed bumps</i> .		
staff			<i>Staff</i> can be a singular or plural noun depending on whether it is referring to a collective group of employees or individual staff members. If the staff is acting as a single unit, use the singular verb. If staff is referring to various individuals doing different things, use the plural verb. Use the plural of the word when referring to multiple staffs.	The Boston Region MPO staff is attending the all-staff meeting. The staff are modeling traffic flows and correcting grammar. The Boston Region MPO and MAPC staffs (or staves) are collaborating on the project.
state of good repair			Only hyphenate if the term is preceding a noun (acting as an adjective).	state-of-good-repair projects
stations			Capitalize the word <i>station</i> when it is part of the station's name (a proper noun).	Belmont Station the Belmont commuter rail station
street signs			In most cases, it is not necessary to use quotation marks or capitalization when indicating the type of street sign. Note the hyphenation in the examples.	stop sign wrong-way sign right-turn-only sign
systemwide			Do not hyphenate.	

Term	Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition	Style/Preference/Usage	Example
TIP Adjustment TIP Amendment			Write out the amendment number.	TIP Amendment Three
town line			Two words	the Brookline town line
train consist		A train consist is a line up of rail cars, with or without a locomotive, that form a unit.		
trainset		A trainset is a locomotive plus rail cars.		
traffic message channel	TMC	TMC codes are used in a location reference system that identifies unique roadway segments for the purpose of conveying traffic information, such as vehicle speeds and travel times.		
transportation analysis zone (or traffic analysis zone)	TAZ		The term <i>transportation analysis zone</i> reflects the idea of all modes.	
transportation control measure	TCM			
transportation equity populations		Transportation equity populations include people who identify as minorities; have limited English proficiency; are 75 years of age or older or 17 years of age or younger; have a disability; or are members of low-income or transit-dependent households. People who identify as minorities are those who identify as Hispanic or Latino/Latina/x and/or a race other than "white."		
transportation network company	TNC	A TNC offers a digital network (accessed online or by a mobile device) that allows people to prearrange transportation service and connect with vehicles providing service.		
turning-movement counts			Hyphenate <i>turning-movements</i> when it precedes a noun.	
uniform resource locators	URLs		Do not add formatting, such as underlining, to URLs. Keep the automated style that Word applies.	
United States	US		Use <i>United States</i> as a noun and <i>US</i> as an adjective.	Constitution of the United States; US dollars
vehicle-occupancy counts			Hyphenate <i>vehicle-occupancy</i> when it precedes a noun.	
versus	vs.		Spell out this word in text passages. The abbreviation may be used in tables.	
volatile organic compounds	VOCs			