

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of March 11, 2009 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building at 10 Park Plaza, Boston.

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 PM.

1. Introductions

2. Chair's Report – Malek Al-Khatib, Chair and Boston Society of Civil Engineers

M. Al-Khatib requested that the MBTA finance letter be sent to the Legislative Joint Committee on Transportation and the Congressional Delegation, in addition to the Boston Region MPO.

M. Al-Khatib announced that Sue McQuaid will resign as Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council and that the Council will begin preparations to find a replacement.

3. Approval of the Draft Meeting Minutes of February 11, 2009

No action was taken on this item.

4. Member Announcements

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies, announced that the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCE) would hold a seminar on the impacts of global warming on transportation in which an academic panel and heads of various agencies will be present. The seminar will take place at Pier 4 on May 14, 2009 from 8am-3pm.

Frank Demasi, Wellesley, announced that there will be a gas tax meeting tomorrow at the State House and urged members to show their support.

5. Update on Transportation Element of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) – Rachel Bain, Planner, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works

R. Bain briefed members on the status of the transportation element of the ARRA. She explained the planning for the program conducted before the legislation was passed and discussed Massachusetts' plan for implementation. Even before the legislation was enacted, Massachusetts was preparing by creating task forces to begin identifying needs and potential projects and activities to be funded in the program. Municipal officials were invited to submit lists of projects, including transportation projects, that they wanted to see funded with ARRA monies; one thousand transportation projects were identified. These were then screened for readiness to see if any were feasible candidates. Further details about the project list or the ARRA can be found in the governor's website at www.mass.gov/recovery.

The Commonwealth is receiving \$437 million in highway funding and \$320 million in transit funding. The “shovel-ready” rules require that at least \$150 million worth of the highway funds must be advertised within 120 days. Transit funds are distributed through the existing Federal Transit Administration formulas on a slightly different spending schedule. Any unobligated funds under these amounts will be lost and the state will not be able to receive any additional ARRA funding that might possibly become available in the future through redistribution. In order to qualify for funding in ARRA, projects must be federal-aid eligible and have gone through the TIP and MPO process.

The MPOs throughout the Commonwealth programmed the recommended projects and these were folded into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that the federal government has approved. \$330 million in highway projects are programmed for ARRA funds, which exceeds the minimum federal requirement. The next step is to advertise programmed projects.

Questions and Comments:

Illustrative projects have been excluded from the long-term transportation plan, but did the task forces raise the question of illustrative projects in their process? (F. Demasi)

The focus of ARRA funds is quick hit projects due to the specific and constrained guidelines for spending. Since illustrative projects typically require design and planning, they did not rise to the top of the ARRA list. (R. Bain)

Can you clarify the federal aid eligibility requirements? (Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge)

Federal-aid eligible roads are generally arterials or main streets that are compliant with SAFETEA-LU. Detailed criteria for all ARRA funding (energy, economic development, transportation) will be posted on the Governor’s website. There is a very vigorous process of federal oversight of this program. (R. Bain)

High priority projects that the Town of Arlington submitted were not included on the ARRA list, however projects in Arlington, submitted by DCR and MassRides, were included. What happened to Arlington’s priority list in the process? (Laura Weiner, Arlington)

The Lt. Governor’s list is still being reviewed to determine which projects are eligible.

Is the plan to review all of the projects on the list? Who has a handle on the ARRA funds for transportation infrastructure that will not be allocated through the Governor’s office? (Dick Canale)

Yes, all projects will be reviewed. Some funds will be allocated by formula (like the FAA funds) and criteria for funding in the ARRA grant programs will soon be available. (R. Bain)

Are we referring to the highway funds? (M. Al-Khatib)

No, air-mode projects have their own pool of funding.

How will intercity rail projects be funded? (M. Miller)

Intercity high-speed rail funds will be allocated through a competitive grant process with applications submitted by the state. (R. Bain)

Now that the TIP and STIP are federally-approved, are there no more steps that can be taken regarding the projects under review? (J. Rosenblum)

The TIP is an ongoing document that constantly changes and continued input is welcome. (R.Bain)

What is the funding process for use of the remaining ARRA funds going to look like? How do cities and towns get involved in the funding process? (J. Rosenblum)

Funding will be programmed through the MPO process, however there is a limit to the amount of funds available. (R. Bain) There are still about \$100 million statewide that have not been programmed and that MAPC would like to see be available for local projects in 2010. (J. Gallagher)

Who makes the final decision on project funding? (Marvin Miller)

The MPOs approved the TIP amendments, but EOT and MassHighway will examine the Governor's list of projects before issuing a final list. Readiness is a key criterion. (R. Bain)

What does it mean for a municipality to have projects on the un-reviewed list? Is a list of the un-reviewed projects available? (Kristina Johnson, Quincy)

The un-reviewed list is comprised of projects that the transportation agencies were unable to review before the deadlines. Reviewed projects have been reviewed by an agency, particularly for readiness. All municipal projects are on the un-reviewed list, though some have been reviewed and a project may also be on a reviewed list prepared by a non-transportation agency for other purposes. The differences in lists are currently being reconciled. (R. Bain)

Rachel Bain can be contacted by email at rachel.bain@eot.state.ma.us or by phone at 617-973-7635.

6. Presentation: Briefing on the MPO's Adoption of TIP Amendment 2 – Hayes Morrison, TIP Manager, MPO Staff

H. Morrison presented a final version of the TIP Amendment 2 to the FFY 2009 element of the FFYs 2007 – 2010 TIP, approved by the MPO on February 26. She explained the funding programmed in the Boston Region MPO; the amount subject to the "use it or lose it" provisions; and the timeframes for compliance for both highway and transit. (Please see the attached TIP tables available at the meeting.)

Questions and Comments:

Does the MPO purchase the paratransit vehicles for the Cape Ann Transit Authority (CATA)? (Marilyn MacNab)

No, the funds allocated to CATA are reimbursements. CATA and MetroWest RTA are part of a split agreement with the MBTA that divides transit funds throughout the MPO region. (H. Morrison)

How much of ARRA funds will be allocated to the MPOs? (M. Al-Khatib)

30% of ARRA funds must be spent in urbanized areas or MPO areas, therefore \$129.8 million has been spent in the Boston Region MPO and \$336 million of a total \$437.8 million has been programmed by all the MPOs into the STIP in the first wave of ARRA funding. An expected \$101 million of highway funding will be left to spend in the second wave, none of which has to be spent in the Greater Boston MPO. (H. Morrison)

Are the TIP and the STIP going to remain as they are or will there be an opportunity to fund additional projects? (J. Rosenblum)

The selection process has been exhaustive, but amendments to the TIP can be made if valuable projects are submitted in the future. (J. Gallagher)

There is \$101 million still available for a second wave and that this pool of funding may increase if projects are unable to spend allocated funds within the deadlines. Useful information is posted on the www.recovery.gov website, the U.S. government's site (www.usa.gov), and on the Massachusetts' Governor's site, www.ma.gov. (H. Morrison)

Can any party still submit new projects? (D. Canale)

An agency or municipality can submit a project that meets the requirements. They should submit the project to Rachel Bain. Input may also come from the task force or the Governor's office. If the project passes the review process, then the project will be considered for funding by the MPO. (H. Morrison)

Can the MPO include new projects on the FFY2009 TIP or the FFY2010 TIP? (Steve Olanoff, Westwood)

Yes, ARRA-funded projects could be included on either TIP, but the MPO will also have to be prepared for possible redistributions. The TIP will be more active than normal over the next 12-18 months. (H. Morrison)

If a project was not programmed for federal aid, does it have to pass federal requirements to receive highway transportation funds? (K. Johnson)

Yes, to be eligible for highway transportation funding in ARRA, projects must comply with Title 23 federal requirements. (H. Morrison)

Does all TIP funding need to be federal aid eligible? (L. Weiner)

Yes, all TIP money must be federal aid eligible. Non-federal aid projects are funded by state funds and are posted on the Boston Region MPO's TIP, but the MPO does not make decisions regarding those funds. (H. Morrison)

Can federal aid eligible roads be found on the internet? (L. Weiner)

Yes, MassHighway has an interactive map that identifies federal aid eligible roads in the Commonwealth. Note that federal aid eligibility pertains to both federal eligible roadways and transportation enhancement projects such as bicycle and pedestrian improvements and rehabilitation of transportation facilities. (H. Morrison)

When does the 120-day time limit begin? (M. Miller)

The highway time-frame starts on March 3 and transit starts on March 5. (H. Morrison)

If a project is not ready, then the substitute project has fewer days to be completed. Can projects, already scheduled to be advertised, receive ARRA funds? (M. Miller)

Yes, replacement projects will have less time to be completed and projects already programmed in the TIP can't be swapped to receive ARRA funds unless the TIP can be immediately backfilled. (H. Morrison)

Is there a date scheduled for a revised Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and an amended TIP with MPO and ARRA-funded projects? (D. Canale)

The 2010 – 2013 TIP is being developed on its typical annual schedule. The MPO hopes to have an amended RTP and new TIP, including ARRA-funded projects by September 1, 2009. (H. Morrison)

I would like the Advisory Council to be updated of changes in the state access board requirements. (J. Rosenblum)

7. Presentation: Overview of Governor's Reorganization and Finance Plan – Clinton Bench, Deputy Executive Director, Office of Transportation Planning, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works

C. Bench briefed members on the proposed Transportation & Economic Security plan that focuses on reforming, rebuilding, and renewing the transportation structure of the Commonwealth. The plan will secure funding of transportation by increasing the gas tax, eliminating the payment of employees through bonds, forward-funding RTAs, and implementing other reforms to develop a more sustainable transportation system. (See attached powerpoint presentation)

Goals of the Transportation & Economic Security Plan include:

- Achieve true regional equity
- Streamline transportation department
 - 4 main offices: highway, rail/transit, aviation/ports, registry of motor vehicles
- Establish “green” transportation program
- Enact recommendations of finance commission
 - End MBTA pension system
 - Establish uniform group insurance for all state employees
 - Forward-fund RTAs

EOTPW has implemented some of the recommendations of the Transportation Finance Commission already. These include: MBTA reforms, MassHighway improved project delivery, flaggers on construction sites, sustainable transportation group initiative, complete streets initiative, common revenue pot, regional rail projects, RTA funding increases, scorecard of agency spending, 19-cent gas tax, and public-private partnerships.

The revenues generated by the 19-cent gas tax are needed to pay for the following:

- Prevent future toll hikes – 4 cents

- Avoid MBTA service cuts and fare increases – 6 cents
- Innovative gas and toll research – 1 cent
- RTAs -1.5 cents
- Regional roads program –1.5 cents
- Regional rail projects – 3 cents
- Forward funding – 2 cents

Questions and Comments:

Are the Green Line extension and Silver Line projects part of the gas tax increase? (J. Rosenblum)

The state has legal commitments to build the Blue/Red line connector, Green Line extension, 1,000 parking spaces, and the Fairmount Line improvements, but these projects are not yet included in the current Transportation Plan. (C. Bench)

Six cents of the gas tax will be used to avoid MBTA service cuts and fare increases, but zero cents will be allocated for MBTA maintenance. Therefore, it is likely that service will still be reduced as a result of insufficient maintenance and the gas tax will be ineffective. (S. Olanoff, Westwood)

The needs of the Commonwealth are greater than the additional revenue of a 19-cent gas tax. (C. Bench)

How much would the gas tax have to be increased in order to eliminate all the Turnpike tolls? The assumptions and rationale of gas tax should be clarified in order to explain this to the public and gain public support. (J. Gallagher)

The tax assumes that each cent of the gas tax will generate \$25 million in annual revenue. Elimination of Turnpike tolls and other calculations can be based on that assumption. (C. Bench)

What are the innovative gas and toll solutions? (L. Weiner)

They are future pilot programs that may enhance funding of the transportation network. Innovative actions may increase transit ridership and consequently, enhance MBTA revenues, which could be used for maintenance. (C. Bench)

How is the current gas tax being used in relation to how the future gas tax is going to be used? (M. Miller)

I don't have the information about the current taxes with me now. (C. Bench)

The MBTA is exempt from the gas tax. Are paratransit operators exempt as well? Are paratransit operators, that receive gas funding from the MBTA, exempt? (Marilyn MacNab, Boston resident)

I don't have the answer to that question. (C. Bench)

Would the legislature need to vote on the revised Trans Fund? (M. Al-Khatib)

The Trans Fund would need to be voted on by the legislature and would be operated by the Transportation Secretary.

What is being done to resolve the delays to project implementation due to cash flow constraints? (F. Demasi)

There are cash flow issues throughout the Commonwealth. The gas tax increase and a new transportation structure would improve efficiency and help address this issue.

At its recent winter meeting, MAPC approved of this plan by a vote of 38 to 2. (Chan Rogers)

8. Action Item: Discussion of Recommendation of Membership Committee and Possible Approval of Membership

The motion to accept the Town of Medfield and the Town of Acton as members of the Advisory Council was made by S. Olanoff, and seconded by M. Miller. The motion passed unanimously.

Members discussed the issue of membership and raised the following questions and comments:

Should the Advisory Council consist of members with specialized interests or common interests?

K. Johnson noted that the Membership Committee strived to develop a balanced body of members.

What should be the process for becoming a member?

There are no bylaws specifying qualifications for membership. (M. Al-Khatib)

The Membership committee should notify interested parties what is expected of members. (M. Miller)

Interested parties should attend several sessions before being voted in as members (Chan Rogers) Letters should be sent to interest groups inviting them to attend a meeting to learn more about the Advisory Council. If they do attend and do want to become members, they can then be invited to become members. This might result in more active participation. (J. Rosenblum)

The attendance audit should be updated and discussed at an upcoming Advisory Council meeting. I question whether there is a quorum. (M. Miller)

Letters were recently sent to member organizations whose attendance and participation have declined. (K. Johnston)

Attendance records are archived by the MPO and the audit can be updated. I am encouraged by the Advisory Council's high attendance and constructive participation in both the Advisory Council meetings and at the MPO over the past few years. (P. Wolfe)

Staff will review the by laws and attendance to check if there was a quorum for the membership vote.

9. Committee Reports

None were given.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 pm.

Attachments:

1. Draft Meeting Minutes, February 11, 2009
2. EOTPW Transportation Analysis of Title XII – ARRA
3. List of Prospective Members

1. Attendance List for March 11, 2009

Agencies

Rachel Bain, EOT

Clinton Bench, EOT

Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination

Jim Gallagher, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Douglas Prentiss, American Planning Association Massachusetts Chapter

Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee

Donna Smallwood, MassRIDES

Cities and Towns

Walter Bonin, Marlborough

Frank DeMasi, Wellesley

Kristina Johnson, Quincy

Todd Kirrane, Brookline

Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Patrick Reffett, Natick

Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge

Gail Wagner, Lexington

Laura Wiener, Arlington

Citizens Groups

Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers

Ben Haynes, Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA

Ulla Hester, Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization

Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies

David Ernst, MassBike

Guests and Visitors

Marilyn MacNab

Marras Nevego

MPO Staff

Anne McGahan

Hayes Morrison

Pam Wolfe



COMMITTEE REPORTS

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Committees

Freight - Walter Bonin

The Freight Committee reviewed its charter and prepared to present it to the Advisory Council. Members decided to prepare a concise version to be adopted by the Advisory Council. A representative of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Unit (MEPA) has been invited to brief the Committee (hopefully at its March meeting) on MEPA process and thresholds for environmental reviews. Specifically, members are interested in there will be an environmental review of the impact of closing the Beacon Rail Yards and relocating the facilities elsewhere. Committee members are also concerned about the future of Track 61 and will ask a representative of the Boston Redevelopment Authority to provide an update (possibly at the March meeting).

Next Meeting: March 25

The following committees did not meet and have not scheduled future meetings:

- Executive - Malek Al-Khatib
- Long-range Regional Transportation Plan (Plan) - Kristina Johnson
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - Sue McQuaid
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - Steve Olanoff
- Program for Mass Transportation – Steve Olanoff
- Membership – Sue McQuaid
- Programs - Richard Canale

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Subcommittees

Suburban Mobility and Transportation Demand Management - Steve Olanoff

The Suburban Mobility and Transportation Demand Management Subcommittee held a pre-proposal meeting on March 5 to answer questions from the entities who submitted letters of interest for funding for projects in the Suburban Mobility Program and to provide technical support if requested. Most of the potential applicants attended. Proposals are due in April.

Next Meeting: Following the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee meeting on March 19; topic – discussion of the letters of interest for funding in the Transportation Demand Management Program

Unified Planning Work Program – Steve Olanoff

Next Meeting: The Subcommittee will meet before the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee meeting on March 19 to discuss the process for developing the FFY 2010 UPWP.

The following Transportation Planning and Programming Subcommittees did not meet:

- Administration and Finance - Malek Al-Khatib
- Unified Planning Work Program – Steve Olanoff
- Transportation Improvement Program – Sue McQuaid

Business Groups

Business Associations

- American Automobile Association – assists clients in many different facets including; travel and lodging; auto buying, leasing, renting, and repair; financial services such as loans and credit cards; and insurance needs. www.aaa.com
- Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association (MMTA) – lobbies the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on behalf of the trucking industry. www.mass-trucking.org

Chambers of Commerce

- Greater Boston – represents more than 1,700 businesses of all sizes from virtually every industry and profession in the Greater Boston region. www.bostonchamber.com
- MetroWest – promotes business interests of the MetroWest cities and towns. www.metrowest.org
- South Shore – assists more than 2,500 businesses to grow their businesses and improving the business climate in our region. www.southshorechamber.org

Environmental

- Environmental League of Massachusetts – advocates for climate issues, protection of habitats and species, land preservation, development of urban parks, smart-growth planning, protection of water resources, and curtailing exposure to toxins in everyday living — the whole range of modern environmental issues that have an impact on our health and quality of life in Massachusetts. www.environmentalleague.org
- Green Streets Initiative – creates safer, quieter, healthier streets for commuters and citizens of all types. www.gogreenstreets.org
- Sierra Club, Massachusetts Chapter – advocates for environmental preservation on issues of transportation, open space, and coastal habitat. www.sierraclubmass.org

Transportation Management Associations

- 128 Business Council – advocates for congestion relief in Waltham and other communities around Route 128, operating shuttle buses and providing other services for member companies. Waltham, Lexington, Needham, Newton, Weston, Woburn and Burlington. www.128bc.org
- A Better City – provides the business and institutional leadership essential for ensuring progress and tangible results on transportation, land development, and public realm infrastructure investments that are vital to sustaining and improving the Boston area's economy and quality of life. Boston. www.abettercity.org
- Charles River – provides a variety of services to help improve transportation for the employees of our member organizations. Cambridge. www.charlesrivertma.org
- MetroWest/495 – strives to reduce congestion and improve air quality by promoting carpooling, vanpooling, taking public transit, biking and walking to work to nearly 40,000 employees of more than 30 member companies in MetroWest. Framingham, Hopkinton, Marlborough, Natick Southborough, Sudbury and Westborough. www.metrowest.org/MW495TMA
- Neponset Valley – reduces the number of cars on the road to alleviate traffic congestion and improve air quality. Norwood, Westwood, Canton, and Dedham. www.nvcc.com/NVTMA

- North Shore – brings together businesses, institutions, developers, organizations and municipalities to address shared traffic-related issues. Beverly, Danvers, Lynn, Peabody and Salem. www.northshoretma.org
- Seaport – encourages easier commutes and reduced local traffic congestion. South Boston Waterfront. www.seaporttma.org
- TransSComm – works collaboratively with local, state, and federal agencies to propose and implement environmentally sound transportation options that decrease traffic congestion and increase air quality for its employees, students, patients, visitors and community members. Boston Medical Center, Boston University Medical Campus which is comprised of Boston University Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine and Public Health, the Boston Public Health Commission and the Boston Police Department, District 4, Area D. www.transcomm.org

Other

- Fenway Alliance – is a consortium of academic, cultural, and arts organizations collaborating to enhance the cultural, environmental, and economic vitality of the Fenway area. <http://www.fenwayculture.org/>
- Massachusetts Municipal Association – provides advocacy, training, publications, research and other services to Massachusetts cities and towns. www.mma.org
- Massachusetts Seaport Advisory Council – presents a wide range of viewpoints on seaport development and policy, including environmental, maritime commerce, business development, and government perspectives.
www.mass.gov/?pageID=mg2subtopic&L=5&L0=Home&L1=State+Government&L2=Branches+%26+Departments&L3=Governor+%26+Executive+Departments&L4=Seaport+Advisory+Council&sid=massgov2

Title XII “American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009”
Executive Office of Transportation
Transportation Analysis

Highway Funding

- \$27.5 Billion – Nationally
 - 100% federal funding
 - \$437.9 million for Massachusetts
 - 3% must be spent on Transportation Enhancements = \$13.1 million
 - \$153.2 million must be obligated within 120 days (“use it, or lose it”)
 - The remaining \$284.6 million must be obligated within one year of the date of apportionment
 - \$131 million must be spent in federally defined urbanized areas
- Funding is available through September 30, 2010
- Projects must be Title 23 eligible
- Projects must be on an approved STIP

Supplemental Discretionary Grants for a National Surface Transportation System

- \$1.5 Billion - Nationally
- 100% federal funding
- Include but not limited to projects under Title 23 and Title 49
- Available until September 30, 2011
 - Criteria will be released no later than 90 days after enactment
 - Applications must be submitted no later than 180 days after enactment
 - Selected projects will be announced no later than 1 year after enactment
 - Grants greater than \$20,000,000 and less than \$300,000,000
 - No more than 20% of the funds may be awarded to projects in a single State.

Transit Funding

- \$7.65 Billion – Nationally
 - 100% federal funding
 - \$319.7 million for Massachusetts
 - \$262.1 million for 5307 Urban Formula
 - \$5.2 million for 5311 Rural Formula
 - \$52.4 million for 5309 Fixed Guideway
 - \$159.9 million must be obligated within 180 days (“use it, or lose it”)
- \$100 million as discretionary grants to public transit agencies for capital investments to reduce the energy consumption or green house gas emissions of their system
 - No Suballocation to States – Competitive grant awards
- \$750 million for New Starts
 - No application anticipated for Massachusetts
- Available through September 30, 2010

Rail Funding

Capital Assistance for High Speed Rail Corridors and Intercity Passenger Rail Service

- \$8 Billion - Nationally
 - No suballocation to States – competitive grant awards
 - We're working on preparing application materials now for some high priority corridors (e.g., Connecticut River Line)
- 100% Federal funding
- Within 60 days of enactment a strategic plan for using funds will be developed
- Within 120 days the Secretary will issue interim guidance on terms, conditions and procedures for:
 - high speed rail corridor program,
 - capital assistance for intercity passenger rail service,
 - and congestion grants
- Projects not required to be in State Rail Plan
- Available until September 30, 2012

Capital Grants to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak)

- \$1.3 Billion
- Allocated directly to Amtrak
- Available through September 30, 2010
- Not more than 60% of the funds may be used for capital projects along the Northeast Corridor.

Aviation Funding

Supplemental Funding for Facilities and Equipment

- \$200 Million - Nationally
 - No suballocation to States
- 100% Federal funding
- Process for applying, reviewing, and awarding grants will be established no more than 60 days after enactment
- Available until September 30, 2010

Grants – In - Aid for Airports

- \$1.1 Billion - Nationally
- 100% Federal funding
- Distributed as discretionary grants
 - 50% within 120 days of enactment
 - Remaining 50% within 1 year of enactment
- Available through September 30, 2010

Maritime Funding

Supplemental Grants for Assistance to Small Shipyards

- \$100 Million - Nationally

- Obligated within 180 days of distribution to qualified shipyards
- Available through September 30, 2009

FREIGHT COMMITTEE CHARTER

Mission –To advocate for the creation of an effective freight management architecture and system for all freight modes within the Boston MPO to the Regional Transportation Advisory Council and to support freight planning as an integral part of the MPO’s vision and goals.

Role – The role of the committee is to update the Advisory Council on freight issues and to make recommendations to the Council for their review and decision.

Methodology – Maintain a knowledge base relating to:

- Advances in freight and transportation technology
- Existing and planned legislation, rules and regulations at State and Federal level
- Knowledge and attitudes of key officials and leaders
- Business plans and strategy of key companies
- Programs of leading states in freight systems
- Identification of barriers to effective freight development
- Sources of related grant programs
- Public/private partnerships

Walter Bonin
March 9, 2009

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



February 12, 2009

David Mohler, Chair
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
State Transportation Building
Ten Park Plaza, Room 4150
Boston, MA 02116

RE: MBTA Fiscal Challenges

Dear Mr. Mohler:

The Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council) wishes to express its grave concerns about the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) dire fiscal condition and to request that the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) encourage the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW) and the MBTA to work with the legislature to promptly adopt solutions in order to reduce the likelihood of service cuts and fare increases.

In recent months, the Advisory Council has received detailed presentations from Paul Regan and Brian Kane of the MBTA Advisory Board regarding the funding gap for system preservation activities and the MBTA's bleak fiscal outlook. The MBTA's deficit derives significantly from unexpectedly low sales tax revenue—1.2% less than anticipated annually since 2001. As a result, capital spending to maintain a state of good repair of the MBTA's system is consistently underfunded by approximately \$100 million annually. In FY 2010, the MBTA faces a \$160 million deficit—some estimates put the figure at \$180 million—and the Authority's \$8 billion debt is the highest debt of any transit authority in the nation. These shortfalls will likely lead to service cuts and fare increases at a time when personal budgets are constrained and the need for transit is stronger than ever.

While the MBTA has proposed reactive strategies to incrementally increase revenues, like increased parking fees at rapid transit and commuter rail parking lots, it seems that the MBTA (and perhaps the transportation system entirely) requires comprehensive assistance to alleviate its extraordinary debt while maintaining current service levels. Political leaders, independent commissions, and citizen advocacy groups have formulated and presented possible solutions for addressing the MBTA's short-term and long-term financial needs.

Instead of targeting one revenue stream and relying heavily on greater returns from it, the Advisory Council supports moderately expanding or establishing a variety of funding streams to provide more consistent, dependable financial support for transit. These new funding streams should be sensitive to tomorrow's transportation climate and innovative in scope. To this end, the Advisory Council supports the following proposals:

Region Transportation Advisory Council
Re: MBTA Fiscal Challenges
2/12/2009

- While there has been considerable discussion about increasing the state gas tax, the Advisory Council supports instituting an automotive-fuel tax that would assess not only gasoline but also the additives that increasingly comprise automotive fuel or another source of fuel entirely (e.g. ethanol, natural gas, hydrogen or electricity).
- To further encourage reduced vehicle use as well as improved air quality, the Advisory Council supports a vehicle-miles-traveled fee to be assessed during annual inspections and an emissions tax to be assessed at the time of a vehicle's purchase.
- Revenues from these three proposals should be dedicated to an infrastructure bank for the maintenance and expansion of the State's transit network.
- Responsibility for costs relative to the Central Artery/Tunnel project should be transferred from the MBTA to the Division of Capital Asset Management.

Discussion and possible implementation of these actions should take place immediately. Again, the Advisory Council requests that the MPO encourage the EOTPW and the MBTA to work with the legislature to promptly adopt possible solutions in order to reduce the likelihood of MBTA service cuts and fare increases. In addition, we suggest that the MPO work closely with its federal partners to support hefty transit funding allocations during the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU.

As you know, the Advisory Council strongly advocates for transit as a means to: encourage economic development; mitigate environmental impacts; support mobility for all residents of the region's diverse population; and maintain the region's high standard of living. We ask that the MPO support advancing the aforementioned solutions.

Thank you for your consideration. The Advisory Council looks forward to working with the Boston Region MPO to address this very important transportation issue affecting our region.

Malek Al-Khatib, Chair



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

CC: Boston Region MPO Members
Massachusetts Legislative Joint Committee on Transportation
Massachusetts Congressional Delegation