

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of July 8, 2009 Meeting

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

Laura Wiener, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

1. Approval of the draft Meeting Minutes of June 10, 2009 – Laura Wiener, Vice Chair

A motion to approve the draft Meeting Minutes of June 10, 2009, with no changes, was made by Elliot Rothman of the Boston Society of Architects, and seconded by Steve Olanoff of Westwood. The motion passed unanimously. Abstaining were Sue McQuaid of the Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce and Dennis Giombetti of Framingham.

2. Chair's Report – Malek Al-Khatib, Chair

M. Al-Khatib said that he would like the following committees to meet prior to the next Advisory Council meeting on August 12:

- Membership Committee – To discuss the addition of new members from the outreach efforts of the MPO staff, and changes M. Al-Khatib is recommending to the Advisory Council bylaws.
- Plan Committee – To discuss the upcoming JOURNEY TO 2030 Transportation Plan Amendment and the Executive Office of Transportation's (EOT) finance plans. M. Al-Khatib would like this committee to meet with EOT if possible and come back with recommendations for Advisory Council comments in August. M. Al-Khatib asked Mike Callahan of MPO staff to distribute EOT's finance plans to the Advisory Council.
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee – To discuss the draft federal fiscal year 2010 UPWP and send recommendations for comments to the Advisory Council.
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Committee – To discuss the development of the draft federal fiscal years 2010-2013 TIP and provide recommendations for comments to the Advisory Council.

M. Al-Khatib said that recommendations should be sent to the Advisory Council and then after discussion they will be sent from the Advisory Council to the MPO. Committees should not send recommendations directly to the MPO.

M. Al-Khatib said the Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation, James Aloisi, is speaking the September meeting of the Advisory Council. The Council should talk ahead of time about what they would like to discuss with the Secretary. M. Al-Khatib also said

that questions for the Accelerated Bridge Program presenters should be sent in advance to him at malkhatib@louisberger.com.

M. Al-Khatib said that he would like someone to represent him during TIP discussions held by the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee (TPPC) because of a personal conflict of interest.

3. Presentation: Briefing on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Hayes Morrison, MPO Staff.

H. Morrison briefed the Advisory Council on the latest developments regarding the TIP. She said that two staff recommendations will be presented to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee (TPPC) on July 9. H. Morrison said she expects the TPPC to review the recommendations but take no final action on them.

She informed members that the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) was recently informed that MPO target funding would be reduced. The Boston Region MPO's target was reduced by approximately \$16 million over three years. The reduction required H. Morrison to make changes to the staff's recommendation for the 2010-2013 TIP.

The reduction was a result of the state needing more funds for improvements to the Fitchburg commuter rail line. The funds will be flexed from highway funding sources including the MPO target funds.

Members had the following questions and comments:

When more funds become available in the future, what will be the status of projects that were eligible for the TIP, but cut due to funding shortfalls? (M. Miller)

More funds are not expected to be available in the next four years. Projects removed from the TIP go back into the universe of projects with an asterisk that the MPO would like to honor the commitment. (H. Morrison)

Is this a result of commuter rail being prioritized? (E. Rothman)

It has to do with the state's need to match federal small starts funding for the Fitchburg project. (H. Morrison)

M. Al-Khatib explained that Crosby's Corner is an expensive project and takes a lot out of the limited TIP budget. Removing Crosby's Corner can allow more projects in more locations to be included on the list. M. Al-Khatib mentioned the possibility of the state funding the Crosby's Corner project if the MPO does not include it in the TIP. He said some members of the TPPC think it should be a state project and not funded solely by one MPO.

H. Morrison said that EOT has been clear in saying that they are unlikely to fund Crosby's Corner. There are no monies available.

R. Canale of the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) emphasized that Crosby's Corner is a priority of the MAGIC subregion and that he would not like another MAGIC project to replace it in the second staff recommendation.

How much has already been spent on the Crosby's Corner project? (J. McQueen, Walk Boston)

Approximately \$6 million on takings and some additional funds on design.(H. Morrison)

M. Al-Khatib said that the state anticipates spending approximately \$24 million more on property acquisition.

How is the second round of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) being incorporated into the TIP? (L. Wiener)

That is being planned now. (H. Morrison)

M. Al-Khatib expressed concern that the Advisory Council membership does not possess enough information about the development of the draft 2010-2013 TIP. He suggested that the TIP Committee meet soon. The entire Advisory Council is welcome to attend the meeting.

4. Briefing on the draft federal fiscal year 2010 UPWP – Mary Ellen Sullivan, MPO Staff

M.E. Sullivan explained the general purpose of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). She then explained the process of developing the document. A universe of projects was developed with input from the MAPC Subregions, members of the public, MPO staff, and the participation of the UPWP Subcommittee. Staff drew on the public outreach efforts of You Move Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's Program for Mass Transportation, too.

The MPO staff reviewed the universe and then developed a recommendation that included studies for multiple modes and a wide geographic scope. The staff recommendation came from a short list of projects that were highly recommended by staff. The staff recommendation originally included a bike network evaluation project, but the MPO's UPWP Subcommittee voted to replace it with a freight study that was advocated by the Advisory Council.

MPO staff coordinated especially closely with MAPC this year. Examples of the coordination effort are the Coordinated Technical Assistance to Communities and Emergency Evacuation and Hazard Mitigation Mapping projects.

M. E. Sullivan then briefly discussed the new projects, which include the following (in addition to the two mentioned in the previous paragraph):

- Low-Cost Improvements to Bottleneck Locations

- MBTA Bus Route 1 Transit-Signal Priority Study
- Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections
- Integrating Land Use in Regional Transportation Models
- MBTA Core Services Evaluation
- Safety Assessments Coordination
- Statewide Freight/Rail Study, Phase 2
- I-93 Access and HOV Improvements (Savin Hill/South Bay Area)

M. E. Sullivan said that comments can be sent to her at (617) 973-7119 or mesullivan@bostonmpo.org. Comments are being received until August 4.

The UPWP Subcommittee will review the comments and present them to the TPPC. The July 22 Open House will also include a presentation on the UPWP and the project to integrate land use modeling with the transportation model.

A member had the following question:

Are the study descriptions general statements or a scope of work? (F. Demasi)

They are descriptions. The scope will be developed in the future. The scope of the freight study will not be determined until the state study is complete. (M. E. Sullivan)

Members had the following comments:

S. Olanoff said that the Advisory Council had an effect on the draft UPWP. The freight study was not initially on the staff recommendation, but he made a motion to add it. However, S. Olanoff said he would like to see the name of the freight study changed because it's not a statewide study. It will advance the statewide study within the Boston MPO area. He also thinks the text describing the study should be adjusted to make it clear that the study is for the Boston MPO area rather than the entire state. He thanked the UPWP Subcommittee for selecting the freight study.

F. Demasi said that he would like the modeling study to incorporate freight movements.

M. Al-Khatib said comments should be sent to him (malkhatib@louisberger.com), S. Olanoff (olanoff@aol.com), the chair of the UPWP Committee, and Mike Callahan (mcallahan@bostonmpo.org) of MPO Staff. The Committee will be meeting to formalize the comments. Anyone wanting to participate in the Committee should contact S. Olanoff.

5. Briefing on the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom grant solicitations – Alicia Wilson, MPO Staff

The JARC and New Freedom programs were authorized by the SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users) federal surface transportation authorization bill in 2005. JARC supports programs and projects that facilitate the transportation of low-income individuals to job activities, emphasizing

transportation needs of workers commuting from central to suburban areas. The New Freedom program supports transportation programs and projects that go beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Boston Region MPO recently solicited proposals from groups in the Boston Urbanized Area (UZA) for the current grant award cycle (for use of the FFY 2007 funds). Approximately \$1 million is available for both programs in the UZA. The solicitation period ended on June 26. The Boston MPO received proposals totaling approximately \$250,000 for the JARC program and \$980,000 for the New Freedom program. The Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) has said that it will allow the use of federal fiscal year (FFY) 2008 program funds if applications exceed the amount of FFY 2007 funds available.

Nine projects submitted to the Boston Region MPO last year received funding. Five of those were funded with JARC program funds and the other four with New Freedom funds. A. Wilson then went over some of the projects that received funding last year. Examples include the following:

- The Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority was awarded FFY 2006 JARC funds for the provision of additional transit service to low-income workers in Franklin and Bellingham.
- The North Shore Workforce Investment Board was awarded FFY 2006 JARC funds for the expansion of an employment transportation and mobility management program.
- The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants was awarded FFY 2006 JARC funds for a planning study to determine the methodology to provide transportation services to low-income refugees and immigrants seeking seasonal farm work.
- The Town of Acton was awarded FFY 2006 New Freedom funds for a taxi voucher program for elderly people and people with disabilities.
- New England Paralyzed Veterans of America was awarded FFY 2006 New Freedom funds for the purchase of an accessible vehicle.

Three proposals for FFY 2007 JARC or New Freedom funds came from groups that received funds last year.

Members had the following questions & comments:

Are these funds available every year? (M. Al-Khatib)

They are available through FFY 2009. (A. Wilson)

What is the timeline for getting an application to the MPO? (S. McQuaid)

Solicitation letters were mailed in late May and a workshop was held on June 8. (A. Wilson)

Who received the letter? (S. McQuaid)

Many social service agencies in the region, the Councils on Aging in the region, and Regional Transit Authorities received the letter (A. Wilson)

S. McQuaid suggested that a presentation about the programs should be given throughout the region prior to the next solicitation period. She thinks this is a great program and that staff should work to raise awareness of it. L. Wiener voiced her agreement. E. Rothman agreed that it's a thoughtful program and thanked A. Wilson for her presentation.

Is the MBTA eligible to apply for the JARC and New Freedom programs? (M. Miller)
I think so. (A. Wilson)

What differentiates JARC and New Freedom? (E. Rothman)
New Freedom does not have to be job related. (A. Wilson)

What is the role of the TPPC in this process? (L. Wiener)
The TPPC votes on a recommendation of projects to send to EOT for their review and decision on awards. (A. Wilson)

6. Advisory Council Committee Reports

Freight: The Freight Committee Chair, Walter Bonin, spoke briefly about the last two meetings of the freight committee, which were held on June 10 and July 8. The Committee hosted Kristina Egan and Paul Nelson from EOT on June 10. W. Bonin gave a presentation on the economic development effects of freight rail on July 8.

MBTA Ad Hoc: F. Demasi proposed sending a follow-up letter to Secretary Aloisi about the finances of the MBTA. The first letter did not receive a response. M. Al-Khatib said that the MBTA's finances were discussed at the TPPC meeting on July 2.

S. Olanoff said that the MBTA's repair backlog is not fully addressed by the EOT finance plan, although repairs to maintain the current state of the system will be made. The situation is not good and the numbers need to be better presented to the public.

M. Al-Khatib expressed concern that the maintenance costs will escalate if the repairs are not addressed soon. He gave an example of the Longfellow Bridge and the escalation of its maintenance costs since an estimate was produced in the 1990s.

M. Miller said that he thinks more funds must be used on maintenance. There is too much emphasis on building.

7. Member Announcements

R. Canale said that many people are upset about the changes to the MBTA Advisory Board brought on by the state's Transportation Reform Bill. He suggested that the Advisory Council should make a decision about its opinion on the reform bill. S. Olanoff agreed that the Advisory Council should make a statement.

J. McQueen of WalkBoston commented on the proposals to cut commuter boat service. This service is used by approximately 3,500 people per day according to J. McQueen. This is comparable to the number of people served by the Greenbush commuter rail line and the proposed South Cost rail line. He said that it serves a vital constituency and reduces congestion. He thinks the Advisory Council should take a stand in support of the commuter boats.

M. Al-Khatib suggested that the Ad Hoc MBTA Committee include this in their letter.

F. Demasi asked the Advisory Council members to send him comments.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Attachments:

1. Attendance List for July 8, 2009

ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for July 8, 2009

Cities and Towns

Laura Wiener, Arlington
Bob Campbell, Braintree
Dennis Giombetti, Framingham
Walter Bonin, Marlborough
Jon Squibb, Revere
Marcy Crowley, Wayland
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Agencies

Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination

Citizen Groups

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies
Dennis Baker, American Council of Engineering Companies
Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers
Sue McQuaid, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce
John McQueen, WalkBoston

Guests and Visitors

Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council
Romin Koebel, Fenway Community Development Corporation
Marilyn MacNab

MPO Staff

Mike Callahan

Hayes Morrison

Sean Pfalzer

Mary Ellen Sullivan

Alicia Wilson