



State Transportation Building
Ten Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116-3968
Tel. (617) 973-7100
Fax (617) 973-8855
TTY (617) 973-7089
www.bostonmpo.org

Richard A. Davey
MassDOT Secretary and CEO
and MPO Chairman

Karl H. Quackenbush
Executive Director, MPO Staff

The Boston Region MPO is
composed of:

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Transportation
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Massachusetts Bay Transportation
Authority Advisory Board
Massachusetts Bay Transportation
Authority
Massachusetts Port Authority
Regional Transportation Advisory
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MEMORANDUM

DATE December 15, 2011
TO MPO Members
FROM MPO Staff
RE MPO Committees

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization discussed the question of MPO committees at its November 17, 2011, meeting. The staff has prepared this memorandum to provide information for further discussion and to make a recommendation on next steps for MPO consideration.

HISTORY OF MPO COMMITTEES

In the past, the MPO delegated its detailed discussions, reviews of reports and studies, and work addressing MPO programming and operations to a committee of the whole it called initially the Sub-Signatory Committee and more recently the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. This committee was given the most hands-on involvement with the work of the MPO and was populated by designees appointed by the MPO members' chief executive officers.

This MPO committee had several long-standing subcommittees, and after adoption of the 2001 MPO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), it added two additional subcommittees:

Administration and Finance Subcommittee

The Administration and Finance Subcommittee has been responsible for reviewing budgets and other matters pertaining to MPO staff operations and for considering personnel and legal matters. For example, this subcommittee reviews the Central Transportation Planning Staff's annual operating budget and makes recommendations to the MPO concerning its approval. It was most recently engaged in reviewing an Americans with Disabilities Act-related complaint filed concerning MPO public meetings, which involved reviewing the MPO Executive Director's report and recommendations on the matter and advising the MPO Chair on recommendations for the MPO response.

Unified Planning Work Program Subcommittee

The Unified Planning Work Program Subcommittee has been responsible for reviewing and giving guidance to staff on MPO planning studies and activities. This has been important for the development of the UPWP each year and for

monitoring the progress of studies and ongoing planning work and the course of spending throughout the year.

TIP Criteria Subcommittee

The TIP Criteria Subcommittee was set up in 2001 to develop criteria and make process recommendations for the selection of TIP projects. It met frequently over the next several years and not only developed an initial set of criteria, but also continued to address TIP process needs by refining and revising the criteria and TIP development activities several times. In 2010 and 2011, however, the MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee addressed the most current update of the criteria (the incorporation of the new MPO policies) without activating this subcommittee.

Suburban Mobility and Transportation Demand Management / Clean Air and Mobility Subcommittee

The Suburban Mobility and Transportation Demand Management Subcommittee, as it was first named, was created to implement the MPO's program for funding (within specified budget limitations) suburban transit projects eligible for Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program monies. This subcommittee developed a program operations plan, solicited projects, reviewed proposals, provided technical assistance to applicants and to funded project proponents, and made recommendations to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee on transit projects to fund.

It accomplished its initial mission after funding several such transit services, and in 2010 the MPO expanded the mission to include implementation (again within budgets) of a broader set of CMAQ-eligible projects. This subcommittee evolved to become the Clean Air and Mobility Subcommittee. It was charged with the responsibility of developing and implementing the Clean Air and Mobility Program to accomplish the expanded mission described above. Work included creating a description of the program, preparing informational materials, conducting outreach and project solicitation, developing selection criteria, evaluating project proposals, and making recommendations to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee on project selection. The MPO recently reduced funding for this program.

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee also had experience with forming ad hoc committees. Most recently, the Chair created a committee to make recommendations to the MPO on the MPO's MOU.

SUBCOMMITTEES AND MPO DECISION MAKING

The MPO has found subcommittees useful in the past:

- Subcommittees have been forums for lengthy and detailed discussions that have brought important information into consideration and have, because of their more informal, small-group process, facilitated the expression and weighing of differing views. Staff and numerous interested parties have provided extensive information for subcommittee

members' consideration in subcommittee discussions. Examples are the extensive discussions of the universe of UPWP study ideas and the detailed presentations made by project proponents to the Clean Air and Mobility Subcommittee.

- Work in subcommittees has often supported and expedited work of the full MPO. Usually the subcommittee has reached a recommendation to bring to the full Transportation Planning and Programming Committee for further consideration, and this gives a boost toward the next step in decision making.
- Specific subcommittee members have been designated as responsible for developing a special level of expertise on certain issues. Chair-appointed members have been charged with the responsibility to keep well-informed on matters relating to their subcommittee and to participate cooperatively in subcommittee discussions and decisions. Subcommittees have helped foster strong contributions from members who have paid long-term attention to matters related to a particular topic. The views and guidance members contribute supports the MPO staff's ability to bring more-finely-tuned proposals and recommendations to the full MPO.
- Subcommittees provide a way to have closer interaction between staff and MPO members, giving staff the opportunity to discuss options in a more informal setting and to receive feedback and guidance at interim milestones in a program's development. This is one good way to help integrate MPO goals into the development and implementation of programs and activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMITTEES MOVING FORWARD

The staff recommends continuation of several specific committees, creation of a new committee, and endorsement of a process for responding to future needs. The staff recommendations are:

- 1) Retain the UPWP Committee as a standing committee. The staff benefits from being able to bring a broad set of ideas to MPO members for consideration and interacting with members in a more informal forum. MPO members benefit by having the opportunity to learn from detailed and lengthy discussions on study proposals and related topics. The MPO as a whole benefits by being able to begin its work as a committee of the whole with a recommendation developed through an extensive information-gathering and review process.

The staff appreciates the structure of preparing and discussing quarterly progress reports with a group charged with ongoing review of UPWP implementation. These reports are detailed operational matters, and the MPO may continue to choose to keep track of progress through the UPWP Committee.

- 2) Retain the Administration and Finance Committee as a standing committee. The detailed discussions of the MPO staff budget and other operational and policy matters are well-served in these smaller forums.

- 3) Create a new Congestion Management Process Committee. This committee would be charged with the responsibility of working with staff in developing and implementing this important MPO process. The CMP is an ongoing MPO activity and requirement. This committee's work will also focus on the results and recommendations of those MPO studies that pertain to the management and operations of the region's transportation network, and on strategies for implementing these improvements.
- 4) Endorse the practice of establishing ad hoc committees as needed in the future. These would be formed, under the direction of the MPO Chair, as particular needs arise.

Examples of such committees are a Long-Range Transportation Plan Committee, which the staff would like to see convened later this year to assist in preparations for the next LRTP. The staff will soon begin developing performance measures for use both in the LRTP and TIP; preliminary and interim guidance and input from the MPO through this LRTP Committee will be not only beneficial, but needed. In the future, the MPO may choose to more fully fund its Clean Air and Mobility Program, and in this case, staff would recommend recall of this committee for the purpose of reviewing, updating, and implementing the Clean Air and Mobility Program's processes for outreach and for project solicitation, evaluation, and recommendation. In a year or so, staff would also like to take a close look at our TIP criteria and again review our process. At that point, a re-convened TIP Criteria Committee may be helpful, should it be appropriate to overhaul the TIP process. The committee would review staff information and proposals, provide guidance to the staff, and make recommendations to the full MPO on proposals for any major update.

Committee members are appointed by the MPO Chair. The staff recommends that committees have between eight and ten members.

KQ/pw