

DRAFT Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

July 11, 2012 Meeting

State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Steve Olanoff, Chair (Westwood) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 7)

2. Presentation – Transportation Funding and Legislative Vision; Senator Thomas McGee, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation of the Massachusetts General Assembly

After a brief introduction by Chair S. Olanoff, Senator McGee reviewed the current transportation infrastructure investment shortfall from the perspective of his role as the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation. He said that transportation financing will be the number one issue facing the Commonwealth for the immediate future. One troubling reality is the level of funding the United States commits to infrastructure investment. The US spends about 1.5% of the Gross Domestic Product on transportation infrastructure and development which places it 28th in the world—India, China and Brazil surpass the US transportation infrastructure investment efforts.

Fully funding future transportation needs was supported by two-thirds of the respondents in a recent national poll. The same poll showed that in spite of recognizing the transportation system needs, a large majority of people are against raising additional revenue from conventional financing mechanisms, like the gas tax and open road tolling. Over the next 20 years, Massachusetts will face a shortfall in transportation investment of up to \$1.5 billion per year. A problem of this scale will require funding of a statewide transportation finance plan. Equally important is building a strong consensus among people who understand that the local challenge to transportation is heavily influenced by a statewide investment plan.

Recent legislative debate over the 2012 Public Transportation Finance and Reform Bills ([Chapter 132](#); [Chapter 133](#)) revealed conflicts in perceptions regarding the equitable distribution of transportation funds throughout the Commonwealth. That nine members of the Massachusetts Senate voted against the MBTA funding bill highlights the challenges faced in finding a common solution to the transportation finance problem.

People need to feel that there will be increased revenue to address the transportation infrastructure investment problems and that the investments will be distributed fairly around the Commonwealth.

The Joint Committee on Transportation brings regional and municipal planners and local residents together across the Commonwealth to talk about their concerns, needs and interests in transportation investments. This public outreach helps the Committee understand the possible results of investments so that the Committee can better discuss where to make investments in the future. Future discussions on transportation needs will focus on the transportation system we want, and how to get there.

Most people say the system is in need of improvement. The MBTA has more than \$8 billion in debt, including interest; there is a billion dollars alone in needs for new subway cars; the depreciation of equipment has a direct impact on service delays to the system. People are also aware of the benefits derived from investment in transportation infrastructure. We need to draw on that, build consensus in the Legislature, and work with the Administration in trying to solve the huge financing shortfall we face. That is how we are going to get out of this crisis, reach a comprehensive statewide solution, and also recognize issues that are important to this MPO.

In response to questions, Senator McGee added:

- The problems we face here are mirrored in every other State. The shortfall of infrastructure investment is two-trillion dollars nationally; it is something everyone is trying to take a look at. We must get over the hump in terms of how we pay for transportation investment, and then recognize that we must find a reasonable and fair way to get the dollars to make the investment happen.
- Public-private development is something to look to. It is done in many other countries, and it requires showing the attractiveness of the return on the transportation investment.
- There are those who criticize the management of MBTA, suggesting that management deficiencies are at the crux of all the problems facing the agency; this argument diverts attention from the larger discussion of the real problems we are facing today. Critical factors in addition to the MBTA debt financing include infrastructure deterioration (from Lynn to Boston, five MBTA bridges are over 100 years old); demands for capital/rolling stock outlays (some Orange line trains have operated over five million miles without replacement); commuter rail coaches and locomotives have not been replaced since the 1970's; some system signaling is from the 1930's; and revenues derived from sales tax for

purposes of funding the MBTA do not generate sufficient resources, particularly in a slower economy.

- MBTA bashing goes on inside and outside the MBTA region; however, pointing out inefficiency only, and at the same time asking for more service, makes for a dilemma facing the state.
- High speed rail has transformed Japan and other developed countries. It is linked to the economic development of the country. Higher speed service has the potential of transforming New England, making long term economic growth possible.
- The reality is we cannot focus on this MPO region only. If we do not seek ways to find common ground, and find ways to make investment in our transportation system on a statewide basis, then there will not be enough Legislators coming together for a solution.

3. Chair's Report—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

MPO meetings were held on June 21 and June 28. Both the Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2013-16 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and the FFY 2013 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) were approved for the year. This is the first time they were completed so early. There will be amendments to the FFYs 2012-2015 TIP to deal with end of the year details, but the major MPO documents have been completed for the new fiscal year. There will be neither an MPO meeting in July nor an Advisory Council meeting in August. The next Advisory Council meeting will be September 12.

The Membership Committee has been working on updating the Bylaws of the Council. There will be several proposed changes to the Bylaws and a draft copy of the proposed changes to the Bylaws from the Membership Committee will be distributed soon. Changes will be considered for adoption at the September meeting.

Members of the Nominating Committee are Laura Wiener, Malek Al-Khatib, and Steve Rawding. This Committee will meet in August to recommend nominations for the offices of chair and vice chair. The Committee recommendation will be sent to members in August, and elections will be held at the September meeting.

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes of June 13, 2012—Steve Olanoff, Chair

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The [minutes of the June 13, 2012 meeting](#) were unanimously approved.

5. Presentation – Funding Transportation in Federal Fiscal Year 2013: An Update; Guy Bresnahan, Office of Transportation Planning, MassDOT

G. Bresnahan gave a preliminary briefing on the federal reauthorization of the transportation legislation. The federal legislation entitled Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) was signed into law on July 6, 2012. Key points from [his presentation](#) are summarized below.

MAP-21 provides \$118 billion for highway, transit, and transit safety programs through September 30, 2014. It maintains highway and transit funding at current levels adjusted for inflation in 2014, and it maintains the 80/20 highway/transit funding split. It contains no federal earmarks. Highway funds apportioned to Massachusetts are \$588 million in FFY 2013 and \$593 million in FFY 2014.

Highway programs have been consolidated into four core programs: the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP), Surface Transportation Program (STP), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ). MAP-21 expands the TIFIA credit assistance program significantly. It includes provisions for project streamlining and promotes performance-based investment decisions.

The NHPP consolidates the current Interstate Maintenance (IM) and National Highway System (NHS) programs and the on-system portion of the Highway Bridge Program. States are required to set performance goals to improve the condition and performance of the NHS consistent with national goals and performance management measures.

The STP is expanded to include off-system bridges as well as certain consolidated programs authorized under the new Transportation Alternatives definition including enhancements, recreational trails, ferry boats and terminal facilities, and Safe Routes to School. A new category has been added to address “boulevards and other roadways largely in the right of way of former Interstate routes and divided highways.” Fifty percent of the funds for the Transportation Alternatives are sub allocated to MPOs with populations over 200,000 to operate competitive grant programs.

In response to questions, G. Bresnahan added:

- Regarding performance measures, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation will establish performance measures, and then states will define the standards. In the future, MPOs will be held accountable for their investment decisions.

- There is not a national Bank component to MAP-21, but there is a significant expansion of the TIFIA credit assistance program—up to \$1B through 2014.

6. Presentation – Arterial Traffic Signal Improvements and Coordination; Mark Abbott, MPO Staff

[This study](#) was originally recommended by the MPO's Congestion Management Process and was completed and presented to the MPO in April, 2012. The objectives were to:

1. Verify signal coordination and improve traffic operations
2. Develop recommendations for traffic signal coordination
3. Improve traffic operations and reduce delays and enhance safety at intersections

Traffic signal coordination is a way of promoting efficient traffic at specific intersections that are located within a quarter-mile of each other, queuing vehicles together as the groups travel down the roadway.

Benefits of signal coordination are:

1. Reduced delay
2. Reduced emissions
3. Improved fuel economy

A study by Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates conducted for City of Boston found that signal re-timing and coordination has a benefit-cost ratio of 80:1.

Intersections that were selected for the study were a quarter-mile apart or less, and were included in the pre-TIP category of the 2009-2011 TIP. From this list, four sets of study intersections were selected. The final locations were in Braintree, Lexington/Bedford, Randolph, and Weymouth.

The conditions that were studied included traffic volumes, crash data, signal re-timing, viability of installing signal coordination at selected locations, geometric improvements, and safety issues and concerns. Several alternatives to signal coordination were provided for each of the locations. Benefits were low cost signal improvements, reduced delays, lower fuel consumption, and improved safety by eliminating hazardous conditions.

In response to questions Mark added:

- A community assistance program exists for communities that need help in identifying and correcting bottlenecks before they happen.
- Some of the work conducted in conjunction with the study is considered [Intelligent Transportation Systems](#) (ITS).

7. Members Announcements

There were none.

8. Committee Reports

There were none.

9. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:45 PM. The motion carried.

Attendance

Agencies

MassDOT, Calli Cenizal
MBTA Advisory Board, Brian Kane
Joint Legislative Transportation Committee, Amanda Richard & Steven Smalley

Municipalities

Arlington, Laura Wiener
Belmont, Robert McGaw
Boston, Tom Kadzis
Cambridge, Jeff Rosenblum & Dale Clarke
Lexington, Richard Canale
Marlborough, Walter Bonin
Millis, Dom D'Eramo
Needham, David Montgomery
Quincy, Kristina Johnson
Wellesley, Frank DeMasi
Westwood, Steve Olanoff

Citizen Groups

American Council of Engineering Companies, Tom Daily
Association for Public Transportation, Barry M. Steinberg
Boston Society of Architects, Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers, Malek Al-Khatib
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition, Jenna Bernabe
MASCO, Ulle Hester
Massachusetts Bus Association, Chris Anzuoni
National Corridors Initiative, John Businger
Riverside Neighborhood Association, Marilyn Wellons
Route 128 Business Council, Monica Tibbits
WalkBoston, John McQueen

Guests and Visitors

Mike Jarrup, Peter Pan Bus Lines
Ed Lowney, Everett
Betty Lambert, WALK
Ellie Reisin, Somerville
Topher Smith, Boston Society of Civil Engineers
Wig Zamere, Somerville

MPO Staff

Pam Wolfe, Manager, Certification Activities
David Fargen, RTAC Coordinator
Anne McGahan
Maureen Kelly
Mary Ellen Sullivan
Mark Abbott

Speakers

Sen. Thomas McGee, Joint Committee
on Transportation
Guy Bresnahan, MassDOT