

# **Memorandum for the Record**

## **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

### **October 3, 2013 Meeting**

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

David Mohler, Chair, representing Richard Davey, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

### **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- approve the work program for the *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment, FFY 2014*

### **Meeting Agenda**

#### **1. Public Comments**

There were none.

#### **2. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT***

D. Mohler remarked on the government shutdown noting that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) remains open because the Highway Trust Fund remains active. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is shut down, however.

#### **3. Committee Chairs' Reports**

There were none.

#### **4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Steve Olanoff, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council***

S. Olanoff reported that the Advisory Council will meet next on October 9. Members will elect new officers. David Montgomery and Mike Gowing are the candidates for chair and vice chair respectively. MPO staff will make a presentation on the MPO's proposed Freight Action Plan. The Freight Committee will meet prior to the Advisory Council meeting to discuss recommendations to the MPO on the proposed Freight Action Plan.

## **5. Executive Director's Report—*Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff***

The new federal fiscal year began on October 1<sup>st</sup>. K. Quackenbush reported that over the past fiscal year, the MPO staff completed 26 projects and work associated with about 20 other ongoing projects. Over the year, staff continued to improve the processes for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

This coming year staff has plans to update the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Public Participation Plan, and continue to improve the TIP and UPWP processes. New tools will also be incorporated into the MPO's planning work including tools for forecasting land use, economic development impacts, and greenhouse gas emissions.

K. Quackenbush expressed appreciation for the MPO's support over the past year.

## **6. Work Program for Long-Range Transportation Plan Priority Corridors, FFY 2014—*Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff***

K. Quackenbush introduced the work program for the *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment, FFY 2014* project. This project is the third in a program that examines roadway corridor segments identified in the LRTP Needs Assessment. Staff has previously reported on the study of Route 203 in Boston and Route 114 in Danvers. Currently, staff is studying the Route 30 corridor in Framingham and Natick, and the Route 2 corridor in Concord.

For this third project, staff is proposing to use the same process and criteria for corridor selection as was used previously. A list was provided in the draft work program of potential corridor segments for study. All were identified in the LRTP Needs Assessment as having multimodal needs in terms of mobility and safety. There is enough funding available to study one corridor segment this year. After going through the selection process, staff will report back on the selected corridor for the MPO's discussion and approval.

(This program is one of a trio that makes recommendations for roadway improvements. The other two programs, which were approved at the September 12 meeting, focus on safety and operations at intersections and subregional priority corridors.)

### ***Discussion***

John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, reported that staff did an excellent job on the Route 203 study.

Ed Tarallo, North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn), asked for confirmation that staff will present its corridor selection to the MPO for approval. K. Quackenbush confirmed that staff would do this.

David Koses, At-Large City (City of Newton), asked about the next corridors in line for study and whether the selection process would differ from last year's process. K. Quackenbush replied that staff will be working off the list of corridor segments in the draft work program. Staff will be working off this list until the next LRTP Needs Assessment is completed. While staff will not be soliciting new study ideas from municipalities, staff will be engaging municipalities and MassDOT District Offices to gauge their interest in working with the MPO staff to advance study recommendations.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), noted an error in the corridor listing for the Route 62, 225, and 4 corridor.

S. Olanoff noted that several corridors on the list have already been studied.

A motion to approve the work program for the *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment, FFY 2014* project was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa), and seconded by the MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano). The motion carried.

### **7. Livable Community Workshop Program—Beth Isler, MPO Staff**

B. Isler gave a PowerPoint presentation on work that has been conducted since June as part of the MPO's Livable Community Workshop Program.

The Livable Community Workshop Program is part of the MPO's Livability Program. The purpose of the program is to educate communities about the concept of livability and about how to incorporate livability in their residents' lives. It is intended to help people think about how to live without using a motorized vehicle, and how transportation design affects their everyday lives.

The Federal Highway Administration offers six principles of livability:

- Provide more transportation choices
- Promote equitable and affordable housing
- Enhance economic competitiveness

- Support existing communities through revitalization
- Coordinate policies and leverage investments
- Value neighborhoods and communities

The MPO staff invites communities to host Livable Community Workshops through notices in the MPO's newsletter, *TransREPORT*, and announcements at subregional meetings. Staff also plans to distribute an application at this year's Moving Together conference.

CTPS and MAPC staff jointly review applications and select candidates based on whether their goals incorporate livability principles and whether their goals can be accomplished within the program budget. Geographic equity is also a consideration. Either CTPS or MAPC staff will run the workshops depending on whether the focus is on transportation or land use issues.

In 2013, workshops were conducted by MAPC in Norwell, and by CTPS in Melrose, Swampscott, and Foxborough. (CTPS was going to undertake a workshop in Scituate, but the town did not have the resources to host a workshop at that time.)

At the workshops staff listens to the communities concerns, conducts a site visit, then tailors specific strategies to address those issues. Staff then prepares a presentation to educate people about livability and facilitates a discussion about how to incorporate livability principles in the community.

Approximately a dozen people attended each of the workshops. The workshop in Foxborough focused on ADA issues, particularly on issues regarding accessible parking and access to the town library. The workshop in Melrose involved the city's bicycle and pedestrian committee. The workshop focused on how that committee could be engaged in the planning process and provide input to the city's planning staff, as well as how to develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan and Complete Streets policy. (A memorandum that summarizes the workshop held in Melrose was distributed to members.) The workshop in Norwell focused on revitalizing the town center, making streetscape improvements, making bicycle and pedestrian connections, and traffic calming. Lastly, the workshop in Swampscott focused on designs that could make Vinnin Square more walkable.

The next steps for FFY 2014 include solicitations for the next round of workshops. Staff will run an article in *TransREPORT*, make presentations to the subregions, and distribute an application.

### ***Discussion***

Laura Wiener, At-Large Town (Town of Arlington), asked how staff encourages people to reduce their auto use besides through design. B. Isler replied that the participants in the workshops are already on board with the idea of reducing auto usage, so the focus has been on how to incorporate livability principles through design.

D. Koses reported that the City of Newton participated in a workshop last year which was excellent. He noted that the document that was produced proved to be a good starting point for moving forward with the redesign of Walnut Street.

Lourenço Dantas, Massachusetts Port Authority, asked if communities have the foundation to apply for other federal grants after participating in a workshop. B. Isler noted that it would depend upon the stage at which a community is in the planning process. A workshop may be provided for educational purposes or, for communities that are ready to implement projects, it could serve as a launching point toward the development of a functional design report.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), remarked that it is mostly advocates who attend these meetings. He noted that often the general community does not become engaged until projects are nearing implementation. At that stage, there can be heated opposition if, for example, parking is being removed for bicycle or pedestrian amenities. He pointed out that municipalities can use help to engage the general community earlier in the process.

### **8. Callahan Tunnel Reconstruction—*John Romano, Neil Boudreau, and Eliza Partington, MassDOT, and Don Cook, Vanesse Hangen Brustlin***

J. Romano introduced a presentation on the rehabilitation of the Callahan Tunnel. MassDOT will be closing the tunnel to traffic for two and a half months, from December 27, 2013 to March 12, 2014.

N. Boudreau gave a PowerPoint presentation. He began by explaining that the rehabilitation is required due to the poor condition of the original concrete deck and road surface, corroded curb lines and gutter inlets, and the failure of wall panels due to corroded metal brackets.

MassDOT explored all options for rehabilitating the tunnel including options for keeping the tunnel open while work is underway. A full closure was determined to be the best option given the tight working space in the tunnel (21 feet 3 inches wide with a clearance of 13 feet 8 inches) and the need to maintain the Fire Department's access to the tunnel's fire suppression system. Also, options for keeping one lane of traffic open

would be problematic for a number of reasons, including unsafe conditions that would be presented from the merging of traffic entering the tunnel, insufficient access from Interstate 93, signal modification needs, emergency response challenges, and the likelihood that the situation would cause gridlock in Downtown Boston.

MassDOT is proposing to rehabilitate the deck and gutter inlets during the first phase of the project when the tunnel is closed to traffic from December through March. The wall panels will be replaced after the tunnel is reopened from mid-March through August, but this work will occur during night-time closures. The timeline for the project has been set with consideration of conflicts with other major construction projects that will be underway in Boston, including work on the Tobin Bridge, the Prudential Tunnel, and Government Center Station.

MassDOT will be providing schedule incentives to the contractor. For every day that the contractor finishes early, it will receive a \$71,500 bonus. And for every day it finishes late, it will be penalized an equal amount. MassDOT is also requiring the contractor to have a plan for the control of dust, noise, and vibration to ensure that people in the area are not inconvenienced by the construction. MassDOT conducted pre-monitoring for these factors so that the baseline conditions are known.

The Callahan Tunnel currently carries about 30,000 vehicles a day, with 1,175 vehicle per hour in the AM peak period and 2,300 in the PM peak period. During the AM peak, 75% of the traffic is going to Logan Airport and 19% to East Boston. During the PM peak, 47% is going to Logan Airport and 30% to East Boston.

CTPS conducted traffic modeling that indicates that 25-30% of vehicles that use the tunnel comes from points north, another 30-35% comes from Storrow Drive and East Cambridge, and 25-40% comes from Downtown Boston. When the tunnel closes, the modeling indicates that that 25-35% of traffic will be diverted to Route 16 and Route 1A, 25-30% to the Tobin Bridge, and 40-50% to the Ted Williams Tunnel.

MassDOT is considering detours and alternate routes to direct traffic to the Ted Williams Tunnel, including a detour to Interstate 93 southbound to Exit 20 (Albany Street U-turn) or Exit 18 (Haul Road), and the use of HOV lanes. Other detour routes include Route 16 to Route 1A. MassDOT is currently working with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to upgrade traffic signals along the Route 16 corridor.

MassDOT plans to erect guide signs to direct motorists to Logan Airport, employ variable message signs, and use "smart work zone" technology to monitor intersection "hot spot" locations. Camera coverage of "hot spots" will be shared with the City of

Boston, State Police, and local police, which are all involved in the traffic management plan. MassDOT also has plans to mitigate a traffic bottleneck on Route 1A north and is in discussion with the City of Boston regarding possible temporary modifications to the intersection of Neptune Road and Bennington Street.

J. Romano then spoke regarding the public outreach aspect of the project noting that MassDOT considers it important to have a consistent message to the public about routing. This was among the factors that led to the decision to close the tunnel for construction.

E. Partington further discussed the public outreach plan for the project, which she said was based on the outreach plan for the *Interstate 93 Fast 14* bridge replacement project. The goal of the outreach program is to give people and businesses timely information to make the best possible travel decisions. MassDOT's communications team has held about a dozen information meetings so far and has plans to hold another dozen.

MassDOT will use a number of communication channels to inform the public. The main channel will be the project's website, which will be live in November. Information on detour routes will be available in accessible formats on the website. There will also be links to the Massachusetts Port Authority's trip planning tool for access to and from Logan Airport, the MBTA's revised bus route maps and schedules, and MassDOT's and MassRIDES' travel planning tools.

The public will be encouraged to use alternate modes of transportation during construction, including Logan Express, the MBTA, and ferries. Government Center Station will remain open during the Callahan Tunnel construction. MassDOT will be setting up an email list service to distribute fact sheets and detour routes.

In closing, J. Romano noted that MassDOT and the Boston Convention Center will hold an informational event on October 29 for the hospitality industry.

### ***Discussion***

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), asked if MassDOT is giving any special consideration for business travelers, such as outreach to hotels. J. Romano noted that the hotel industry will be invited to the event on October 29. Also, MassDOT held a briefing event for the Massachusetts Port Authority, where the airline industry was represented.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), asked if all of the traffic signals on Route 16 are owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). He noted that the signals do not appear to be synchronized. N. Boudreau replied that the signals near Assembly Square are owned by MassDOT, but most on the corridor are DCR's signals. MassDOT has taken inventory of these signals and identified the problems; some have old controllers or loop detectors that do not work. These signals will be modernized and time-based coordinated. D. Cook added that because the detectors are not working in some locations, the signals are not working optimally. The planned improvements include the replacement of old controllers with new ones that have GPS time clocks and some that have "dynamic max" features, which will adjust the signal timing based on actual traffic volumes. Signals will be synchronizing at a number of locations, including six intersections near the Everett line, and on Route 145 and Route 1A).

J. Gillooly remarked on the traffic planning aspect of the project and on MassDOT's excellent work in scheduling various construction projects, including the work on the Longfellow Bridge and the Tobin Bridge. He also remarked on the good faith that has been built up between the City of Boston and MassDOT as various traffic management plans have been implemented. He discussed the important role Boston's Traffic Management Center (which was funded by the MPO) has been playing in the Longfellow Bridge project, as well as the benefits of having traffic cameras downtown and information sharing between agencies managing traffic. He voiced the need for continued support for intelligent transportation improvements.

L. Dantas noted that many motorists are getting information about roadways through GPS or digital formats. He asked if there is a mechanism for notifying digital map providers about road closures. N. Boudreau replied that MassDOT is using Open Source, so its data is publically-available. J. Gillooly noted that even though a map provider has updated its source maps, users must update their devices in order to access the updated maps. N. Boudreau suggested that MassDOT could include that message on its email outreach materials.

Marie Rose, MassDOT Highway Division, thanked the presenters. She informed members that the \$26 million project is funded with MHS funds, not TIP funds.

## **9. Report: SWAP Regional Public Transit Feasibility Study—Jonathan Belcher, MPO Staff**

Members were provided with the report on the *South West Advisory Planning Committee Regional Public Transit Feasibility Study*. J. Belcher gave a PowerPoint presentation on the study, which was conducted by CTPS and MAPC staff at the



request of the South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP). SWAP requested an analysis of the subregion's existing public transit network and a study of how to increase ridership and improve connections to housing, employment, and commercial centers.

Existing transit services in the SWAP subregion include MBTA commuter rail service (on the Franklin and Worcester/Framingham line), MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) bus service, Greater Taunton Attleboro Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) shuttle services, and other in-town services such as Council on Aging and veterans' services.

Staff analyzed current commuter flows, the location of activity centers, population distribution, population density, and employment patterns in the subregion, and made suggestions for possible new transit services and connections. J. Belcher displayed maps depicting this information.

Commuter flows were identified based on a survey taken of MBTA riders. The greatest flows to commuter rail stations were within Franklin, and on routes from Medway to Norfolk and from Bellingham to Franklin. Two RTAs operate shuttles within the subregion, MWRTA to the north and GATRA to the south.

American Community Survey census data was also analyzed to determine home-to-work flows for SWAP communities. Staff considered flows to be significant enough to record if 400 or more people per day were making the trip. The greatest work flow from the subregion is from Franklin to Boston. The second greatest flow is from Milford to Framingham. There is also a significant flow between Hopkinton and Boston. Within SWAP communities there are flows between the towns of Bellingham, Franklin, and Milford. There are also flows from Worcester and Uxbridge to Milford, and from Rhode Island to Franklin.

The heaviest population densities and activity centers were found to be in Milford and Franklin, though there are also retail centers in Bellingham and Wrentham. The densest populations of people age 19 or under and people age 65 or older – who are people likely to use transit services – were found to be in Milford and Franklin. The same pattern was found for the density of minority populations. Low income populations were most heavily concentrated in Milford. Zero-vehicle households were also most concentrated in Milford, and there were other smaller concentrations in Franklin and Medway.

In addition to the data analysis, staff held meetings with town planners in the subregion to discuss their concerns and interests. There was some interest in providing alternatives for seniors and students that do not have access to cars.

Staff identified potential new service routes that could be implemented in SWAP in the short-term and the long-term. The study findings show that the greatest potential for improving service soon would be to resume full service on MWRTA's Milford to Framingham route and to add more shuttle routes to commuter rail stations. The Town of Millis has expressed interest in joining GATRA and having a shuttle stop in Millis, for example. Other possible service connections to commuter rail could be considered for Wrentham and Hopkinton.

In the short-term, new connections could be added between Bellingham, Franklin, and Milford. Opportunities for long-term expansion of service are new routes and connections between other towns in the subregion.

### ***Discussion***

D. Mohler noted that staff has recommended, for long-term improvements, that the Town of Sherborn have two new bus routes. He inquired about this recommendation given that the town has a small population and little employment. J. Belcher noted that the recommendation represents concerns and interests of the community. He added that based on current data, the idea does not have merit for implementing in the near-term.

S. Olanoff inquired about the home-to-work flow from Hopkinton to Boston, and asked how those residents are getting to Boston. J. Belcher replied that many are driving to commuter rail stations in Ashland or Southborough, or driving or carpooling to Boston. The existing flows to the commuter rail stations show the potential for new shuttle services to those stations. Such services could also alleviate parking constraints at stations. S. Olanoff noted the potential for convincing drivers to take the train.

L. Dantas asked if commuter rail ridership might be higher if some parking constraints were alleviated. J. Belcher replied that some parking constraints have eased in recent years because of parking facility expansions and parking rate hikes. A shuttle could alleviate the situation where there are parking constraints, however.

D. Koses commented on the fact that GATRA's shuttle route between Norfolk and Medway passes through Millis, but does not serve that town. He asked is there is a demand for shuttle service in Millis. J. Belcher noted that GATRA is looking for a parking lot along the existing where it could make a stop in Millis. Millis is not a member of GATRA, but does pay an assessment to the MBTA.

D. Mohler asked if there is resistance on GATRA's part to serving Millis since the town does not pay an assessment to the RTA. J. Belcher reported that he is not aware of any

reluctance on GATRA's part. The shuttle does, however, experience crowding in the PM peak period, so if service were expanded to Millis residents that town would probably have to contribute to the costs.

D. Giombetti then discussed the MWRTA's experience with the Town of Milford. While the town was encouraged to join the RTA, it chose not to join. The MWRTA still provided service to that town because it was an important enough destination point for member communities. In the case of Millis, he noted that the route would be more successful if expanded, but there may be resistance because the town is not a member of GATRA.

### **10. State Implementation Plan Update—David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning**

D. Mohler provided an update on the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

MassDOT's annual report on the SIP projects has been released for public review. The report is available on MassDOT's website.

In September, MassDOT award a \$93 million contract for the construction of Phase 2 and 2A of the *Green Line Extension* project.

### **11. Members Items**

E. Bourassa reported that the nomination period for MPO elections has closed. The seats for the MetroWest Regional Collaborative and the Inner Core Committee are up for election. The Town of Framingham and the City of Somerville, respectively, are candidates for those seats.

D. Mohler reported that FHWA and FTA have approved the FFY 2014 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Due to the government shutdown, however, there is no funding currently available. MassDOT has the ability to advertise projects in the STIP as Advance Construction projects in the meantime, until the federal government can reimburse the Commonwealth, though it is unclear if MassDOT will take this approach.

In response to a question from L. Weiner, D. Mohler noted that funding is currently still available for FFY 2013 projects. Michael Chong, FHWA, added that projects funded through the Highway Trust Fund do have funding.

In response to a question from S. Olanoff, D. Mohler reported that MassDOT does not expect the shutdown to slow down the *Green Line Extension* project.

## 12. Adjourn

## Attendance

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### Members

### Representatives and Alternates

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At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Lara Mérida
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jim Gillooly
	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Michael Chong
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
	Marie Rose
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Ron Morgan
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Richard Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Denise Deschamps
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Ed Tarallo
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Steve Olanoff
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Christine Stickney
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Sreelatha Allam	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Neil Boudreau	MassDOT Traffic
Neema Chalban	Conservation Law Foundation
Don Cook	Vanesse Hangen Brustlin
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
David Montgomery	Regional Transportation Advisory Council
Joe Onorato	MassDOT Highway Division
Eliza Partington	MassDOT

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director  
Jonathan Belcher  
Beth Isler  
Maureen Kelly  
Robin Mannion  
Elizabeth Moore  
Scott Peterson  
Sean Pfalzer  
Pam Wolfe

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