

# **Memorandum for the Record**

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

### **February 5, 2015 Meeting**

10:10 AM – 11:50 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Clinton Bench, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

### **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- approve Amendment Two to the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2015-18 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- approve the minutes of the meeting of January 8

### **Meeting Agenda**

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

There were no public comments.

#### **2. Chair's Report—*Clinton Bench, MassDOT***

C. Bench made remarks about the transportation problems that have arisen from the recent snow storms and noted that state-of-good repair of the system will be a major topic of discussion going forward.

He noted that the new Secretary of Transportation, Stephanie Pollack, is very interested in the progress of regional transportation plan development, including the MBTA's Program for Mass Transportation, the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the comprehensive service area analyses of the regional transportation authorities (RTAs), and the state's project evaluation criteria. She intends to redouble efforts to bring together those planning processes to ensure they are consistent in identifying mobility problems. She is interested in asking this MPO to pursue a joint public process with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) in the spring. The Secretary expects to chair an upcoming MPO meeting to speak further about these ideas.

Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), expressed support for the idea of collaborating with the EOHEd, and better linking transportation planning with the Commonwealth's housing and economic development goals. He noted that MAPC conducts its demographic work, including the planning for regional priority development areas, in partnership with EOHEd.

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

Michelle Scott, MPO Staff, announced that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee is scheduled to meet on February 19 to discuss the draft Universe of proposed new projects for the FFY 2016 UPWP.

### **4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report**

There was no report.

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

K. Quackenbush notified members that CTPS has a new telephone system and staff members have new phone numbers. The new numbers can be found on the MPO meeting agendas, in the staff members' email signatures, and on the MPO's website. A directory of staff telephone numbers is also available by calling the main number.

### **6. Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Two—*Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff***

S. Pfalzer reported on the public comments received on draft Amendment Two of the FFYs 2015-18 TIP and on updates to project cost estimates since the amendment was released for public review. This amendment was released for a 15-day public comment period on January 8.

Members were presented with a matrix summarizing the public comments received. The comments expressed the following:

- Support for removing references to Medford Hillside as concerns the *Green Line Extension* project
- Opposition to removing the Medford Hillside reference
- Requests to shift funding for highway projects to bicycle and pedestrian projects
- Support for the programming of funds for a program to rebuild and repair parts for MBTA buses
- Request for prioritizing the *Route 1 Improvement* project, which would make improvements to Route 1 from Copeland Circle in Revere to the junction of Route 99 at the Saugus and Malden line

- Support for the programming of grants for the modernization of Ruggles Station and for flood proofing at the Green Line Fenway portal

Updates to project programming include the removal of the bridge replacement project for bridge number D-05-033, Providence Highway over Mother Brook, in Dedham. This project was programmed for FFY 2014 and 2015, however, the funds for the project were obligated in FFY 2014.

There were cost increases to several projects, but they do not affect the MPO's target funding. The *Assabet River Rail Trail* project in Acton and Maynard increased by \$1.9 million; the new cost estimate is based on the 75% design plans for the project. The project for resurfacing and related work on Route 1 in Chelsea and Revere increased by \$2.1 million; the new estimate incorporates the cost of bridge safety barrier retrofits and storm water and drainage improvements. The project for resurfacing and related work on Route 128 in Beverly increased by \$132,811; the new estimate also includes the cost of storm water and drainage improvements.

A project for storm water improvements along Route 1 and Interstates 95 and 93 has also been added to the TIP. The cost estimate for this project is \$2.95 million. The costs for storm water retrofits have been itemized in the TIP tables under the Statewide Stormwater Retrofits program.

Another addition to the TIP is a Ferry Boat Discretionary grant for a feasibility study for the Medford Water Taxi.

Updates to the transit section of the TIP include the programming of federal discretionary grants awarded through the Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program for the *Green Line Fenway Portal Flood Proofing* project and the *Charlestown Seawall Replacement* project. Also programmed is a federal TIGER grant for the *Ruggles Station Modernization* project.

Other updates to the transit section include shifting of funds from the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority's capital program to its ADA paratransit program, and the removal of its project to acquire support vehicles. Several carry-over federal New Freedom grants are also programmed; they fund the Mobility Management program of the North Shore Career Center in Salem.

### ***Motion and Discussion***

A motion to approve Amendment Two to the FFYs 2015-18 TIP, as presented today with the aforementioned updates, was made by the City of Boston (Tom Kadzis), and seconded by the At-Large Town of Lexington (Richard Canale).

Members discussed the amendment prior to taking a vote.

T. Kadzis addressed the comment from the Cities of Malden and Revere and the Town of Saugus, which requests that the MPO prioritize the *Route 1 Improvement* project. He inquired as to whether the project proponents are aware of the process for advancing the project through the MPO's system, and if the project is in design. S. Pfalzer explained that staff has communicated to the proponents that the project, which is programmed in a late timeband of the LRTP, must be addressed through the LRTP process. He stated that the proponents have initiated the project with MassDOT's Project Review Committee, but that the project has not yet advanced to the 25% design stage.

T. Kadzis suggested that there might be a need to manage expectations in this case, considering that the MPO is limited, at this time, from funding the project because it has not reached a design stage that allows it to be programmed on the TIP. C. Bench suggested that although the project is in a late timeband of the LRTP, the proponents may be commenting at this time to keep the project fresh in the minds of the MPO members; he noted that MassDOT has identified the project location as a major bottleneck. S. Pfalzer also noted that in addition to pursuing MPO funding, the proponents are also pursuing funding from the transportation bond bill, which contains a \$10 million earmark for the project.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), remarked on the significant cost increase to the *Assabet River Rail Trail* project and asked if any measures were being taken to keep costs under control. David Anderson, MassDOT Highway Division, explained that the project proponent has hired a new design firm, which produced the new cost estimate. The new estimate does not reflect a significant change in the project scope. MassDOT has received the new estimate recently and has not yet done an exhaustive review of it.

Members then voted on the motion to approve Amendment Two to the FFYs 2015-18 TIP, as presented today with updates. The motion carried.

## **7. MPO Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff**

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of January 8 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried. The Massachusetts Port Authority (Lourenço Dantas) and the At-Large City of Everett (James Errickson) abstained.

## **8. Long-Range Transportation Plan - Scenario Planning Update— Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff, and Anne McGahan, MPO Staff**

A. McGahan gave an overview of progress to date on the development of the new Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), *Charting Progress to 2040*, and discussed the scenario planning work currently underway. For this discussion, members were provided with the following documents: an updated schedule for the LRTP development; a memorandum titled, “Approach and Assumptions for *Charting Progress to 2040* Long-Range Transportation Plan Scenario-Planning Initiative”; and two draft chapters for the LRTP Needs Assessment.

### ***Progress to Date***

To date, the MPO has released a draft set of goals and objectives for the LRTP to the public. The MPO is now considering whether to adopt an objective under the Capacity Management and Mobility goal that would, “Give priority to a congestion reduction program to major arterials and express highways throughout the region which serve transit and/or existing population and places of employment.” This objective is the topic of a scenario planning initiative that the MPO is now undertaking.

Other completed steps in the LRTP development process include recent presentations on the transportation needs of the region and the LRTP Needs Assessment Application. The identified needs will be used as inputs to the scenario planning process.

Staff has also completed two draft chapters of the LRTP Needs Assessment. Chapter Two, *Land Use in the Boston Region MPO*, addresses current and future land use assumptions in the region and provides socioeconomic projections. Chapter Three, *Travel Patterns in the Boston Region MPO*, addresses current and future travel patterns and includes information from the Needs Assessment on travel into the Central Area, the Boston Business District, district to district travel, and travel patterns summarized from the 2011 Massachusetts Travel Survey.

Staff asked members to review Chapters Two and Three and respond with any questions or comments. In the meantime, staff is working on other chapters for the Needs Assessment.

The members were also presented with the draft Universe of Projects at the last MPO meeting.

### ***Next Steps and Schedule***

Staff expects to present an updated draft Universe of Projects at the next MPO meeting.

The results of the scenario planning model runs will be presented to the MPO at the meeting of March 19. The results will be used to finalize the LRTP goals and objectives and will guide project and program selection for the LRTP.

The MPO is currently scheduled to discuss project and program selection for the LRTP in April, assuming that the financial information for the LRTP is available. The MPO will be considering the following questions:

- How much funding should be allocated to major infrastructure projects?
- Should funding be allocated to programs and, if so, how much?
- Should some funding be left unallocated?
- Should highway funds be flexed to transit?

When the MPO selects a draft set of projects and programs for the LRTP, staff will begin modeling the recommended set and conduct air quality, greenhouse gas, and environmental justice analyses.

The MPO is currently schedule to vote on May 7 to release the draft LRTP for public review. The public review period would begin on May18, along with the review periods for the draft TIP and draft UPWP.

Over the next two months, staff will continue writing chapters for the main LRTP document.

### ***Scenario Planning***

K. Quackenbush then discussed the role and purpose of scenario planning. The MPO is now operating under the framework of performance-based planning, which requires the MPO to set realistic goals and establish associated performance measures to track progress toward those goals. Scenario planning is a means for the MPO to bring its technical resources to bear on specific policy questions.

An opportunity for scenario planning presented itself at a recent meeting of the MPO when members deliberated about how to interpret one of the goals for the LRTP intended to improve mobility in the region. Two approaches were discussed; one emphasized congestion reduction by investing in high-cost improvements to the highway system, and the other focused on capacity management through operations and management approaches. The MPO's travel modeling and other technical tools can be used to shed light on this policy question and provide information to the MPO to help inform their discussions.

K. Quackenbush noted that this scenario planning is not designed to supplant the MPO's traditional decision-making process, nor are the scenarios intended to represent sets of projects to be selected for draft LRTPs. For this particular policy question, four scenarios will be examined.

### ***Scenario Assumptions***

Then A. McGahan provided detail on the scenarios and the assumptions they are based upon.

Two scenarios have been developed to address the policy question K. Quackenbush discussed:

- *High Capital Investment (High-Cap) Congestion Management scenario*: This scenario includes large capital projects to expand and modernize the highway network through high-cost capital infrastructure improvements such as interchange upgrades and major bottleneck reconstructions.
- *Operations and Management (O&M) scenario*: This scenario includes projects with lower cost operation and management improvements such as intersection improvements and Complete Streets solutions to improve mobility on the roadway network.

Two other scenarios will be run for the purpose of comparison:

- *Current LRTP scenario*: This scenario includes all projects programmed in the current LRTP, *Paths to a Sustainable Region*, that remain to be funded.
- *No-Build scenario*

Basic assumptions used to develop the High-Cap and O&M scenarios include the following:

- Only projects that address needs identified in the Needs Assessment will be included.
- The scenarios will be fiscally constrained to the MPO's target funding and the MPO's share of federal major infrastructure funding. This totals approximately \$2 billion in current dollars.
- Transit expansion and transit state-of-good-repair projects will not be included. However, low cost transit improvements will be included.

Within each scenario, funding would be allocated across the following program areas (see Table One of the memorandum for details):

- *Intersection Improvements*: Cost estimates for this program are based on an average cost of \$2.8 million per intersection.
- *Complete Streets*: Cost estimates are based on an average cost of \$6 million per mile of Complete Streets improvement.
- *Bicycle Network and Pedestrian Connections*: Cost estimates are based on an average cost of \$2 million per mile for bicycle and pedestrian projects.
- *Clean Air and Mobility, Park-and-Ride, Bicycle Parking, Community Transportation*: Cost estimates are based on \$35,000 for each park-and-ride space, \$1.5 million per year for the Community Transportation program, and estimates of between \$100,000 to \$400,000 for Clean Air and Mobility projects and programs.
- *Major Infrastructure, Interchange Modernization, Bottlenecks*: Costs estimates for projects were based on estimates programmed in the current or past LRTPs adjusted to current dollars or costs from studies of selected locations.

These scenarios are being run through the MPO's travel demand model now. Off-model analyses are also being conducted. The results will be presented at the MPO meeting of March 19.

### ***Discussion***

L. Dantas remarked on the grouping of four elements into one program – Clean Air and Mobility, Park-and-Ride, Bicycle Parking, and Community Transportation. He suggested that the Park-and-Ride program be separated out from the group considering the sizable amount of funding that program represents (\$35 million in the High-Cap scenario and \$245 million in the O&M scenario).

E. Bourassa raised questions about the Park-and-Ride program. A. McGahan discussed how staff determined the costs for the program after considering the locations where Park-and-Ride services could be provided in the region. Locations identified included Alewife Station, and transit stations in Braintree, Quincy, Waltham, and other locations throughout the region. The High-Cap scenario would add 1,000 new parking spaces in the region, and the O&M scenario would add 7,000.

E. Bourassa asked if the *Allston Interstate 90 Interchange* project, which will be funded with state dollars, is assumed to be in the Major Infrastructure Program and if it would be modeled. A. McGahan replied that the project would be modeled in the No-Build scenario.

E. Bourassa asked if the *Reconstruction of Highland Avenue and Needham Street* project in Newton and Needham is included. A. McGahan replied that it would be



included in the Current LRTP scenario. The project was not identified as a major bottleneck location in the Needs Assessment.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), asked for clarification regarding programmed TIP projects in the scenarios. A. McGahan confirmed those projects programmed in the current TIP are factored into the Current LRTP scenario. In the other scenarios, those TIP projects are only included if they meet a need identified in the Needs Assessment. R. Reed noted that the MPO has already committed to fund the projects programmed in the TIP, and he asked why those projects would not be assumed to be in all of the scenarios. A. McGahan explained that only projects programmed in the first year of the TIP are assumed in all scenarios because the projects in the later years of the TIP could potentially be subject to funding cuts.

Members discussed concerns about the assumption of only including projects that meet a need in the Needs Assessment. E. Bourassa noted that for the High-Cap and O&M scenarios the specific projects included in each program category could be interchangeable with other like projects, so that it is not necessary to focus on specific projects at this time.

L. Dantas expressed concern that the funding estimates used in the Major Infrastructure program of the High-Cap scenario may not be realistic (i.e. the real costs would be higher), and that it may cause the scenario results to be skewed. A. McGahan stated that staff used the project cost estimates in the current LRTP and inflated costs to current levels. K. Quackenbush added that staff is using current assumptions across the board in all the scenarios. L. Dantas suggested that staff review the project cost estimates prior to modeling the scenarios.

C. Bench reassured members that they will have additional opportunities to discuss the inputs to the scenarios and that the MPO could hold a public information session if necessary.

E. Bourassa reminded members about the MAPC Winter Council meeting on February 25. The LRTP will be discussed.

## **9. Transportation Improvement Program - Universe of Highway Projects and Update—Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff**

Members were presented with the draft Universe of Projects, from which projects will be selected for the FFY 2016-19 TIP. The project list was compiled with input from municipalities in the region that identified their top transportation priorities. The list was

distributed to members in a table that provides the following information on each project: proponent; TIP identification number; status in the TIP and LRTP; and an indication of which projects will be evaluated in this TIP cycle.

This Universe contains 160 projects, many of which were in the Universe in previous TIP cycles. Staff will evaluate 51 of the 160 projects in February. Most of the evaluations will be updates to evaluations done for previous TIP cycles. There are three new projects on the list this year:

- *Reconstruction of Route 126* in Ashland
- *Resurfacing and Intersection Improvements on Route 16* in Milford
- *Cochituate Rail Trail, Phase 2*, in Natick

These three projects have advanced to the 25% design stage and have Functional Design Reports that can be used for the evaluations. There are other projects that have been added to the Universe this year, but they are not yet at the 25% design stage.

Projects in the Universe fall into the following project types:

- Arterials and Intersections – 68%
- Bicycle and Pedestrian – 12%
- Major Highway – 10%
- Bridge – 5%
- Transit – 4%

Staff has not derived an overall value of the projects in the Universe because not all of the projects have cost estimates. The 51 projects that will be evaluated total approximately \$350 million. Fourteen of those projects have already been programmed on the TIP.

### ***Discussion***

R. Reed asked why staff would be evaluating projects that are already programmed in the FFYs 2015-18 TIP. S. Pfalzer replied that staff updates the evaluations each year using updated data, such as new crash history data. This ensures that the most up-to-date information would be available for project comparisons in the event that the MPO's funding gets cut.

C. Bench noted that the Universe does not reflect the complete funding needs of the MBTA. He asked staff to make sure that as the TIP development process continues that it is made clear to the public why certain types of projects are represented in the Universe while others are not. S. Pfalzer noted that transit and bridge projects are

typically funded through other funding sources than the MPO's target funds, such as federal formula funds for transit projects and MassDOT's Bridge Program. C. Bench emphasized the need for the public to understand that the MPO has an intermodal process and authority for all federal funding allocated to surface transportation projects in the region.

### **10.Members Items**

Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, MPO Staff, announced that the next MPO meeting will be held on February 19 and that the UPWP Committee will meet after the MPO meeting.

### **11.Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the At-Large Town of Lexington (Richard Canale), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

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## Attendance

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<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	James Errickson
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Clinton Bench
	David Anderson
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Janice Ramsay
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
MBTA Advisory Board	Micha Gensler
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Richard Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Aaron Clausen
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT Highway District 3
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Brittany Montgomery	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Jay Monty	City of Everett
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)
Arthur Strang	Cambridge resident
Wig Zamore	Mystic View Task Force / Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Maureen Kelly

Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director

Anne McGahan

Elizabeth Moore

Scott Peterson

Sean Pfalzer

Natalie Raffol

Michelle Scott

Pam Wolfe

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