

# Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting

## April 16, 2015 Meeting

1:45 PM to 2:45 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

## Materials

Materials for this meeting included:

- A meeting agenda
- Draft minutes from the February 19, 2015 and March 19, 2015 UPWP Committee meetings
- A public comment from Arthur Strang, Cambridge resident, on behalf of the Fresh Pond Residents Alliance
- A comment letter from the City of Cambridge
- A draft CTPS FFY 2016 UPWP budget
- A draft MAPC FFY 2016 UPWP budget
- A list of MPO-Staff-Recommended new projects for the FFY 2016 UPWP
- A list of upcoming UPWP-Committee and MPO meetings related to the draft FFY 2016 UPWP

## Decisions

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes from the February 19, 2015 and March 19, 2015 meetings

## Meeting Agenda

### 1. Introductions

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, Unified Planning Work Program Committee (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) called the meeting to order at approximately 1:45 PM.

UPWP Committee members, MPO staff, and other attendees introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 12.)

## **2. Action Item: Approval of UPWP Committee Meeting minutes**

### *Minutes from the February 19, 2015 Meeting*

A motion to approve the February 19, 2015 UPWP Committee meeting minutes was made by S. Allam and seconded by Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville). The motion carried. Dennis Crowley, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) abstained.

### *Minutes from the March 19, 2015 Meeting*

A motion to approve the March 19, 2015 UPWP Committee meeting minutes was made by S. Allam and seconded by Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The motion carried. D. Crowley and Laura Wiener, At-Large Towns (Town of Arlington) abstained.

## **3. Comments on the Draft FFY 2016 UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects**

M. Scott described two comment letters that were submitted regarding the UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects:

- An email from Arthur Strang, a member of the Fresh Pond Residents Alliance (FPRA). The FPRA emphasizes that the neighborhoods along the Fresh Pond and Alewife Brook parkways and the developments around the MBTA station should be addressed as part of FFY 2016 UPWP studies. They note that there should be a study focusing on mobility in these neighborhoods, particularly the 15 bus lines that intersect the parkways. The FPRA identified six proposed projects in the staff's priority projects list (discussed at the March 19 UPWP Committee meeting) are relevant to these neighborhoods. These include:
  - A-1, Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways: FFY 2016
  - A-2, Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment: FFY 2016
  - A-3, Safety and Operations at Selected Intersections: FFY 2016
  - B-2, Pedestrian Level-of-Service Metric Development
  - F-1, First-Mile-and-Last-Mile Transit Connections Studies
  - F-5, Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay

The letter also notes that proposed project E-6, Transportation Mitigation of Major Developments: Review of Existing Strategies, would also be relevant to the Alewife area.

- A letter from the City of Cambridge regarding proposed project E-11, Alewife Transportation Community Study., The City encourages the MPO to conduct all or part of the study recommended by the Fresh Pond Residents Alliance. Recognizing funding constraints, in the near-term, the City encourages the MPO to follow up on recommendations from a 2009 CTPS study that focused on traffic operations and bus access at the intersection of Route 2 and Route 16 near Alewife station. In particular, the City encourages the MPO to take past recommendations for the Alewife station, including adding a priority lane for buses on the jug-handle section of the Alewife Station Access Road, to the next level of feasibility using up-to-date development and traffic data.

Tegin Teich Bennett, City of Cambridge staff, said she concurred with M. Scott's summary of the City's letter. She added that the City believes that even focusing on bus priority in that specific location would address regional transportation issues in a sustainable way as that location serves many through-trips to other destinations in addition to those in Cambridge.

L. Wiener asked how the 2009 CTPS study differs from the study being proposed. Mark Abbott, MPO staff, said that the 2009 study focused on how to get buses to access and egress Alewife station more efficiently. Staff looked at the driveways, the Route 16 and Route 2 intersection, and the jug-handle service roadway to propose improvements. MassDOT is implementing one of the study recommendations now, which involves widening the Route 2 westbound to three lanes from the intersection to just past the Minuteman Bike path overpass. He said that the proposed study E-11 suggests that MPO staff look more broadly at the Alewife area, not just the station, and examine other modes besides bus.

E. Bourassa said that a number of sites in the Quadrangle area near Alewife are going to be redeveloped, and that the developer has expressed interest in building a commuter rail station in that area. He asked whether the developer's mitigation funds have been spent on conducting studies of how development in the area will affect transportation and access needs. T. Bennett said that there has been discussion with developers about putting funds towards mitigation improvements in the area, though Bill Deignan at the City of Cambridge would have more information. She added the City has been seeking funds for both a commuter rail station and a bicycle/pedestrian path that

would cross that area. She said that mitigation funds have been targeted more towards specific improvements rather a more comprehensive study, such as the one being proposed.

S. Allam asked when the City of Cambridge would know about the availability of mitigation funds. T. Bennett said she was not aware of a specific timeline related to the mitigation funds, and noted that these often depend on complex negotiations with developers. E. Bourassa added that there a number of sites being developed, and there are likely specific mitigation plans for each site.

Arthur Strang, Cambridge resident, said that the FPRA had requested a list of potential developments for that area of Cambridge from Scott Peterson, MPO staff, and that the members of the Alliance have a sense of a larger list of current or anticipated developments. He said that the Alliance will provide a list of the developments expected in the next two or three years.

E. Bourassa asked why staff did not identify this project as a priority. Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director, said that the scale of the project was one issue. M. Scott said that staff is aware of a number of other activities taking place in the Alewife/Fresh Pond area, such as the recent City of Cambridge's bus prioritization study, which flagged the intersection of Mt. Auburn Street and Fresh Pond Parkway as an area of concern. Also, the Department of Conservation and Recreation will be examining bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along its roadways in general and will be doing a more focused study of DCR facilities in the Alewife/Fresh Pond area. Staff determined that it might not make sense for the MPO to spend funds in the area at this time; instead, the MPO could wait for some of these planning activities to evolve and then look for opportunities to get involved in the future. She said that the City of Cambridge's letter has provided MPO staff with helpful context. K. Quackenbush added that the question of bus delay could be handled through proposed study F-5, Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay.

#### **4. Discussion of the Draft Proposed Budget for the FFY 2016 UPWP *CTPS Budget***

K. Quackenbush said that MPO staff follows a rigorous budget development process, which includes projecting estimates of what staff will be working on starting October 2015 and estimating what revenues will be available. He said that staff has received an FFY 2016 estimate for its PL funds, which make up the largest share of funds in the CTPS budget. He reminded the Committee members that the content of the budget is still subject to change, although MPO staff is not expecting significant changes. MPO

staff is also now developing its operating budget, which is conterminous with the state fiscal year, and which may trigger some changes to this budget.

M. Scott described the structure of the CTPS budget document. Pages 1-6 describe the proposed budgets for ongoing and continuing work; page 7 summarizes the budgets for ongoing and continuing work, and lists an amount available for new work; and page 8 describes recommended new projects and their proposed budgets. M. Scott reminded the UPWP Committee members that the MPO is responsible for programming FHWA PL and FTA Section 5303 funds, collectively known as 3C funds. Other funds shown in the tables—MassDOT, MassDOT SPR, MassDOT 5303, MBTA, and other types of funds—are associated with contracts that transportation agencies have or will establish with CTPS.

M. Scott noted that the budget for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) program has been increased for FFY 2016, even though the MPO will be wrapping up the plan during FFY 2015. This is because the LRTP program will be maintaining the existing plan, and supporting performance-based planning and scenario planning, among other activities. She also noted that some agency-funded line-items are general contracts for certain types of funds. For example, when MPO members see a work scope for an SPR-funded project, that project is accounted for in the UPWP through a general SPR contract line item.

M. Scott said staff is still awaiting information on their FTA Section 5303 funds for FFY 2016. Based on the funding summary information on page 7, MPO staff estimates that there is \$600,000 available for new studies in FFY 2016. The current staff recommendation for new studies programs \$570,000 of that amount; staff is waiting to program the remaining \$30,000 until a finalized FTA Section 5303 funding amount becomes available. If that information is not available by the next UPWP Committee meeting, the Committee will need to develop the recommendation with the information available.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) asked why the proposed Regional Transportation Advisory Council budget is lower than the FFY 2015 budget. K. Quackenbush said that the budget is based on past expenditures and on the expected level of effort for the coming year. He said he was not aware of changes in the activities or level of work to be done for the Advisory Council compared to previous years, and that MPO staff did not intend to reduce support for the Advisory Council. He requested that Pam Wolfe, MPO staff, review the estimates for the Certification Requirements projects that her group manages, and said that further adjustments may

be made to the proposed budget if necessary. P. Wolfe noted that numbers reflected on the proposed budget were finalized while she was out of town.

#### *MAPC Budget*

E. Bourassa explained that MAPC's FFY 2016 budget is very similar to its FFY 2015 budget, and like CTPS, they are still awaiting finalized FTA Section 5303 estimates. He said that the types of work that MAPC will be doing, which were discussed at earlier UPWP Committee meetings, are the same as what is in the FFY 2015 UPWP. As part of its Corridor/Subarea Planning Studies work, MAPC will continue to identify opportunities for and impediments to transit-oriented development (TOD) in various locations; provide parking management support to municipalities; and research how to measure the appropriate amounts of off-street parking needed for various developments. As part of its Alternative-Mode Planning and Coordination work, MAPC will continue to develop bicycle and pedestrian plans for municipalities and support regional greenway planning, now branded as "LandLine". He said that there are some good LandLine maps available on the MAPC website. MAPC will also be working with municipalities, particularly outside of the Inner Core, to support the implementation of transportation demand management policies as part of development requirements. MAPC recently completed a report on this topic, and will be holding an event on the topic with MassCommute.

### **5. Discussion of Proposed New Projects for the FFY 2016 UPWP**

#### *CTPS Recommended Projects*

M. Scott referred members to the list of MPO-Staff-recommended new projects for the FFY 2016 UPWP, which reflects the information on page 8 of the CTPS budget document. The MPO-Staff-recommended new projects document also includes information on the LRTP focus areas relevant to the proposed project, the anticipated project functions, and the proposed project's UPWP focus area ratings.

M. Scott reminded members that not all of the planning funds that MPO staff expects to have available for new studies have been programmed. The list of recommended new projects was determined based on several factors:

- MPO staff's list of priority projects [discussed at the March 19 meeting]
- The results of the UPWP Committee priority projects survey [discussed at the March 19 meeting]
- Having a balanced mix of modes and transportation topics
- Responding to (and not duplicating) other studies taking place in the region

- Whether the MPO, as opposed to MassDOT or the MBTA, would be the best agency to take on the study

She noted that all of the projects in staff's list of recommended projects received solely top-priority votes from Committee members.

She reviewed the list of projects, which include:

- A-1, Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways: FFY 2016.
- A-2, Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment: FFY 2016.
- A-3, Safety and Operations at Selected Intersections: FFY 2016.
- B-2, Pedestrian Level-of-Service Metric Development. M. Scott noted that this study was popular with the Committee.
- D-1, Systemwide Environmental Justice/Title VI Assessment of TIP Projects. M. Scott said that this project was a staff priority and that it had support from Committee members. She added that it would address Title VI issues, which the federal agencies identified as an important focus area in the draft MPO Federal Recertification report.
- E-1, MBTA Parking Lots: Price Sensitivity Analysis. M. Scott noted that this project was not in the list of staff priorities presented at the March 19 meeting, but that the project was of interest to several committee members and the MBTA. The idea for the project also emerged from Congestion Management Process Committee discussions.
- F-1, First-Mile-and-Last-Mile Transit Connections Studies. M. Scott said this study received the largest number of UPWP Committee member "top-priority" votes.
- F-5, Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay.
- G-1, Research Topics Generated by MPO Staff. M Scott said that this project was suggested last year, and Committee members have expressed support for this project in the past.

M. Scott noted that a number of the projects in this list were mentioned in the FPRA letter as projects that were of interest to them because of their potential to serve the Alewife/Fresh Pond area.

S. Olanoff asked why A-4, Low-Cost Improvements to Express-Highway Bottleneck Locations, was not selected, and whether this type of study had been done over the past several years. K. Quackenbush said that staff is working on this project in FFY

2015, and is not doing Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections studies in FFY 2015. He said that MPO staff proposes to alternate these types of projects from year to year, noting that both types would involve the same staff, are popular, and have high-payoffs in terms of utility. e said that MPO staff proposes doing Safety and Operations at Selected Intersections studies in FFY 2016 and perhaps doing bottleneck locations studies the year after.

L. Wiener said she supported project B-2, Pedestrian Level-of-Service Metric Development, based on an experience that took place approximately two years ago in Arlington. The Town analyzed a proposed project that the Town thought included good, safe pedestrian accommodations using a program that examined the level-of-service that would be provided by a proposed project for various modes. The project received a low LOS score for its pedestrian accommodations; L. Wiener said that this score may have been related to the proximity of pedestrians to vehicular traffic. The Town felt these results did not make sense in the context of the project, but project opponents used these results as evidence that the project would not make travel safer for pedestrians. She said that it is important to examine this issue and look at opportunities to improve upon existing tools for measuring LOS. K. Quackenbush said that the point of the project would be to identify the best possible metric for the region.

S. Olanoff noted that project B-1, Bicycle Network Gaps: Feasibility Evaluations: FFY 2016, was not included in the recommendation, and asked whether more work was needed in this area. K. Quackenbush said that in FFY 2015, MPO staff is conducting studies at specific gap locations, which were identified as part of the MPO's Bike Network Evaluation. MPO staff anticipated that Committee members would like to see the results of these feasibility studies before funding additional studies. He said he expects to see good results from these studies, and hopes that the MPO will support staff continuing to do that work. He said that the advantage of this type of project is that it maximizes the utility of the existing bicycle and pedestrian network by closing gaps using relatively low-cost means.

Lara Mérida, City of Boston, asked whether study E-6, Transportation Mitigation of Major Developments: Review of Existing Strategies [not included in staff's recommended projects list] would examine mitigation strategies being used in the region or at a national scale. K. Quackenbush explained that this project idea was inspired by the Core Capacity Constraints work scope discussion in January. This project includes an element through which MPO staff, working with MAPC, would examine which developments would generate certain levels of future demand for



transportation. This prompted the question: what are the transportation mitigation policies that core-area municipalities have now, and do they address transit?

K. Quackenbush said that MPO staff is currently meeting with municipalities to learn about and document existing policies, particularly those pertaining to transit. He said that when the Core Capacity Constraints work scope was approved, there was interest in doing a more comprehensive examination of mitigation policies and issues for a larger geographic area, and so that was proposed as a UPWP project. He explained that MPO staff did not recommend it for FFY 2016 because staff does not yet have results from the Core Capacity Constraints project, and so project E-6 might be a better project for FFY 2017, when staff and members have seen the results of the initial research.

L. Merida said it would be interesting to see what types of transportation mitigation policies are used outside of the region, which could improve the policies that the region's municipalities follow. David Koses, City of Newton, agreed, adding that there is a lot of variation in the mitigation approaches that the City of Newton follows, and that and he didn't know what people might be doing in other places. K. Quackenbush said that he hopes that the results of the Core Capacity Constraints research will be useful to the region's municipalities.

T. Bennett noted that the City of Cambridge completed a bus-prioritization study that focused on five bus routes in Cambridge, including two routes in the Fresh Pond area. This study had a scope very similar to the one proposed in project F-5, Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay, and suggested that the Committee take the City of Cambridge's study project into account when selecting projects. S. Allam asked M. Scott to look into the Cambridge bus prioritization study.

S. Olanoff asked which of the not-recommended projects MPO staff might recommend if more money was available. K. Quackenbush said that there was not one stand-out project. M. Scott noted that that other transportation agencies are exploring on climate-change adaptation issues and opportunities. The UPWP Universe included a climate-change adaptation-related project, which was not included in staff's recommendation, but the balance of planning funds that has not yet been programmed could be spent on monitoring other agencies' climate change adaptation studies. MPO staff also initially identified B-1, Bicycle Network Gaps: Feasibility Evaluations: FFY 2016 as a priority, though K. Quackenbush had mentioned staff's reasons for postponing that project for a future year. Projects E-4 and E-5 were also of interest to staff, although they received mixed responses from UPWP Committee members. These are some, but not all of the

possible options that the UPWP Committee could choose from if more planning funds are available.

## **6. FFY 2016 UPWP Development Process: Upcoming Steps and Next Meeting**

M. Scott referred members to the list of upcoming UPWP-Committee and MPO meetings that related to the draft FFY 2016 UPWP. The next UPWP Committee meeting is scheduled for April 30, when staff hopes to have an update on its FFY 2016 FTA Section 5303 funds to support a Committee recommendation on the budget and new projects for the FFY 2016 UPWP. She said staff will need to look at upcoming MPO meeting agendas to determine whether it makes sense for the Committee to meet before or after the April 30 MPO meeting. If the Committee develops its recommendation on April 30, M. Scott would present that recommendation to the MPO on May 7.

S. Allam said that it would be taxing for members to stay after a really long MPO meeting, which have been common in recent weeks, but said she knows that Committee members prefer to meet on the same day as MPO meetings. L. Wiener asked if the next UPWP Committee would be quick, if members were just going to vote on the recommendation. M. Scott said she did not anticipate that the April 30 meeting would be as long or longer than today's meeting, although if MPO staff has new information on projects, they will bring it to the Committee's attention on April 30, and the Committee will need to determine how to spend the as-yet un-programmed funds. L. Wiener said she prefers to attend Committee meetings prior to MPO meetings, but the length of the Committee meeting needs to be taken into account in the scheduling process. E. Bourassa said the Committee should meet when it make sense to takes action, and that he expects it would be a short meeting, though it could be longer if the FTA Section 5303 funds turn out to be lower than expected, and a project needs to be removed from the recommendation.

## **7. Work Program for Safety Analysis of Intersections near MAGIC Schools**

This agenda item was deferred to a future UPWP Committee meeting.

## **8. Member Items**

There were none.

## **9. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by S. Allam and seconded by E. Bourassa.  
The motion carried.

## Attendance

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<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large Cities (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Towns (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Lara Mérida
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Sreelatha Allam
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Steve Olanoff

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Tegin Teich Bennett	City of Cambridge
Arthur Strang	Cambridge resident

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### **MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director  
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director  
Mark Abbott  
Elizabeth Moore  
Scott Peterson  
Michelle Scott  
Pam Wolfe

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