

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

May 21, 2015 Meeting

10:00 AM – 11:35 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

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

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- approve the work program for the *Go Boston 2030: Modeling Support* project
- approve the work program for the *MBTA 2016 National Transit Database: Data Collection and Analysis* project
- approve the minutes of the meeting of April 16

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

There were none.

2. Chair's Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports

Paul Regan, Chair of the MPO's Administration and Finance Committee, announced that the Committee will meet on June 4, following the MPO meeting.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Mike Gowing, Chair, Advisory Council*

M. Gowing reported that the Advisory Council met on May 13 and heard presentations from the MPO staff about the MPO's certification documents – the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – and scenario planning for the LRTP. The Advisory Council will present a comment letter regarding the certification documents to the MPO on June 11.

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

K. Quackenbush announced that the MPO will convene on June 4 at Acton Town Hall.

Sean Pfalzer, MPO staff, provided an update concerning the draft Amendment Three to the FFYs 2015-18 TIP, which is released for public review. He noted that staff is working with MassDOT to incorporate an update to a project cost estimate and changes to project funding sources. There might be an update to the cost estimate for the *Reconstruction on Canal Street (Salem)* project, which could be partially funded with statewide Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds. A bridge project in Salem may be reprogrammed to a later fiscal year due to project scheduling issues. Also, funding sources may change for interstate maintenance and storm water retrofit projects, and for the *Route 128 Add-a-Lane* project.

6. Work Programs—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, CTPS

K. Quackenbush introduced new work programs for the *Go Boston 2030: Modeling Support* project and the *MBTA 2016 National Transit Database: Data Collection and Analysis* project.

Go Boston 2030: Modeling Support

The *Go Boston 2030: Modeling Support* project will assist with the City of Boston's Go Boston 2030 initiative, which aims to develop a new, transformative, transportation plan for the city with a 15-year outlook. This project involves adjusting the Boston Region MPO's regional travel demand model for use in this project, and then generating forecasts with it. The model will help the city understand and plan for the impact of anticipated new development on the city's transportation network.

CTPS staff will produce travel forecasts based on two scenarios for the year 2030. One scenario will be based on the transportation network and land uses assumed in the MPO's LRTP. Another will be based on a land use vision posed by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. The results will include estimates of future transit ridership and traffic volumes. Staff will also conduct air quality and environmental justice analyses for each scenario.

A motion to approve the work program for the *Go Boston 2030: Modeling Support* project was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan), and seconded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa). The motion carried.

MBTA 2016 National Transit Database: Data Collection and Analysis

Through the *MBTA 2016 National Transit Database: Data Collection and Analysis* project, CTPS staff will develop estimates of passenger-miles travelled and boardings for MBTA trackless trolley, heavy rail, light rail, commuter rail, and bus services. This project supports the MBTA's data reporting requirements to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

CTPS has been conducting this work for a number of years. The data collection process will be modified this year so that the MBTA's automatic passenger counter (APC) data will be the sole data source for estimating passenger-miles travelled and boardings on buses and bus rapid transit vehicles. Previously, manual data collection was required to supplement the APC data.

A motion to approve the work program for the *MBTA 2016 National Transit Database: Data Collection and Analysis* project was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent).

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, recommended that staff check whether the APC data captures passengers that board through the rear doors of buses and, if not, whether adjustments are made to the data to account for rear boardings. If rear boardings are unaccounted for, ridership could be undercounted. Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation, then asked how passenger-miles travelled are calculated if the APC data only captures boardings. Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning at CTPS, replied that the APC equipment captures both boardings and alightings from the front and rear doors of the buses.

Members then voted on the motion to approve the work program for the *MBTA 2016 National Transit Database: Data Collection and Analysis* project. The motion carried.

7. Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of April 16 was made by the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham) (Dennis Giombetti), and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

8. Long-Range Transportation Plan—Anne McGahan, MPO Staff

A. McGahan gave an update on the progress of the chapters of the new LRTP, *Charting Progress to 2040*. Members were provided with draft versions of Chapters 1, 2, and 3 for review. All the draft chapters will be posted on the MPO website by June 4. Members were asked to get back to staff with any questions or comments.

She also gave an update on recent outreach activities. Staff has attended several meetings of the MAPC subregions and gathered feedback. The North Suburban Planning Council expressed support for the *Interchange Improvements to Interstates 93 and 95 (Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield, Woburn)* project. The Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC) expressed support for the *Canton Interchange* project – the *Interchange Improvements at Interstates 93 and 95* and the *Ramp Construction on Interstate 95 (NB) and Improvements on Dedham Street/Canton Street (Canton, Norwood, Westwood)* – and the *Reconstruction of Route 1A (Walpole)* project. TRIC is also supportive of the *Reconstruction of Highland Avenue, Needham Street, and Charles River Bridge (Newton and Needham)* project. The Inner Core Committee will be submitting a comment letter to the MPO.

A. McGahan also reported that staff will be releasing a series of mini-surveys in May and June to elicit feedback from the public regarding the future of the region's transportation system. About eighty people responded to the first survey. Staff will report to the MPO on the responses that come in.

9. Unified Planning Work Program Committee Recommendation— Michelle Scott, MPO Staff

Sreelatha Allam, Chair of the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee, introduced the presentation on the FFY 2016 UPWP, which documents the transportation planning studies that will be conducted in the coming fiscal year and their budgets. She noted that the UPWP has been under development since last fall. Staff has conducted outreach including visiting the MAPC subregions to identify transportation needs and gather project ideas. Those ideas, along with ideas posed by the MPO staff, were compiled in a Draft Universe of Projects. Since February, the UPWP Committee has been working on selecting a preferred group of projects to recommend for the FFY 2016 UPWP.

For today's discussion, members were provided with a list of studies recommended by the UPWP Committee, proposed budgets for the activities that will be conducted by CTPS and MAPC, a schedule for the next steps in the document development, and two written comments that have been received to date.

M. Scott then gave an overview of how UPWP projects are funded, the budget for FFY 2016, and the UPWP Committee's project recommendations for the FFY 2016 UPWP.

The Boston Region MPO receives metropolitan planning funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) totaling about \$5 million a year. The FHWA provides PL funds and the FTA provides Section

5303 funds; collectively these are called 3C funds. Approximately 80% of those funds are provided to CTPS and 20% to MAPC.

The 3C funds support the following types of ongoing work: the MPO's operations and public involvement activities; activities that support MPO compliance with civil rights, air quality, and other requirements; and data collection, analysis, and technical assistance activities. These funds also support new discrete studies, including roadway corridor and transit studies, special data collection, or research activities. The UPWP also includes information about projects that CTPS staff works on that are funded by other transportation agencies.

The budget for the FFY 2016 UPWP is approximately \$5 million. Of that amount approximately \$3.5 million is budgeted for ongoing 3C activities, \$570,000 for new CTPS studies, and \$1 million for MAPC's studies and activities that support the MPO. As the budget was being developed, staff had not yet received information about the amount of Section 5303 funds that will be available from FTA for FFY 2016, therefore, this budget assumes level funding compared to FFY 2015. The budget will be adjusted when FTA provides this figure.

The new studies that the UPWP Committee is recommending for the FFY 2016 UPWP are summarized below:

Roadway Network Performance Projects:

- *Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways: FFY 2016* will study corridors identified through outreach to the subregions.
- *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment: FFY 2016* will study corridors identified through the Needs Assessment of the LRTP.
- *Safety and Operation at Selected Intersections: FFY 2016* will study intersections identified through outreach to the subregions and others.

Transit Projects:

- *First-Mile and Last-Mile Transit Connections Study* will provide technical assistance to municipalities, transportation management associations (TMAs), and other organizations that are interested in providing first- and last-mile connections to and from the transit system.
- *Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay* will identify locations and causes of bus delays and make recommendations for alleviating those delays.

Other Research Projects:

- *Pedestrian Level-of-Service Metric Development* will recommend an index that the MPO can use to monitor the quality of pedestrian travel on the region's roadways.
- *Systemwide Title VI / Environmental Justice Assessment of TIP Projects* will study improved methods of accounting for how sets of projects being proposed for the TIP generate benefits and burdens for environmental justice populations.
- *MBTA Parking Lots: Price Sensitivity Analysis* will analyze the relationship between MBTA parking lot prices, demand, and utilization of lots throughout the system.
- *Research Topics Generated by MPO Staff* will set aside funding for small-scale research on topics that relate to the MPO's planning process that are not covered by a UPWP program or study.

Eric Bourassa, MAPC, then gave an overview of MAPC's activities and studies in the UPWP. These include ongoing work that supports MPO activities (such as the organization of the MPO elections and outreach to the public), subregional support activities, and developing demographic and land use data for use in the MPO's travel demand model.

MAPC also conducts Corridor and Subarea Planning Studies, such as studies of MBTA station areas aimed at understanding how improving access to transit can support redevelopment, and studies that help municipalities to better manage their parking. MAPC also addresses bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access issues through Alternative-Mode Planning and Coordination projects. These projects involve helping municipalities and TMAs to implement transportation demand management practices and helping municipalities develop bicycle plans. MAPC is continuing place-based work that began in FFY 2015 through these two programs.

M. Scott then discussed the schedule for the remainder of the UPWP development, which is aligned with the schedule for the LRTP and TIP. On June 11, staff will present any updates concerning the FTA funds to the members and request the MPO to vote to release the UPWP for a public review period that will run from June 22 through July 21. Following the review of public comments, the MPO will vote to endorse the final document on July 30.

She also summarized two public comments that the MPO has received on the UPWP to date. The Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization (MASCO) has requested an operations study of a combined CT2/CT3 bus route, which would build off the CTPS study completed in 2013. A Somerville resident has requested a study exploring the feasibility of constructing a rail trail corridor along the Franklin commuter rail line and a shared use trail and busway along the Forest Hills to Readville corridor.

Discussion

Christine Stickney, South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree), asked whether the *Route 3 South Express Toll Lanes – Public/Private Partnership Study: Modelling Support* project considers the Braintree Split. She expressed that South Shore communities believe that the Braintree Split improvements should be considered as part of any planning for toll lanes on Route 3. M. Scott noted that this study would be funded by MassDOT. K. Quackenbush added that CTPS would be providing modeling support to this MassDOT project and following MassDOT's direction. C. Stickney asked that the concern she expressed be relayed back to the MassDOT project managers.

Jim Gillooly, City of Boston, added his support for C. Stickney's comments. He noted that for an analysis of Route 3 to be beneficial, it would need to consider the Braintree Split.

C. Stickney inquired whether the *MBTA Parking Lots: Price Sensitivity Analysis* study would consider changes in parking rates for the future expansion of parking lots at the end of transit lines that are currently at capacity. M. Scott replied that the study would begin with rates for existing facilities. She offered to relay the comment back to staff.

Laura Wiener, At-Large Town of Arlington, inquired about the right-size parking research included in MAPC's *Corridor and Subarea Planning Studies*, which will result in recommendations for parking. E. Bourassa explained that Eric Halvorsen, MAPC, is leading this work. Through this work, MAPC is aiming to understand the amount of parking at residential developments in Chelsea, Everett, Malden, and Melrose.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), asked whether the *MBTA Parking Lots: Price Sensitivity Analysis* study will take customer experience into account when considering pricing options for parking at stations. He noted that a common complaint from customers has to do with the condition of the parking lots and stations. M. Scott replied that the study will take into account a number of variables, and she offered to relay the comment to staff.

J. Gillooly emphasized the importance of the *MBTA Parking Lots: Price Sensitivity Analysis* study and suggested that the study consider what is the appropriate pricing at parking lots to maintain full usage. K. Quackenbush noted that staff intends to address the questions that D. Giombetti and J. Gillooly raised. Staff would study to what degree the elasticities of demand vary based on factors such as customer experience and cost. Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, cautioned that the MBTA does not have the flexibility to lower parking fees at many lots because the agency needs parking revenues to make bond payments.

Michael Chong, FHWA, asked if there was consideration for geographic equity in the development of the study ideas (for corridor and intersection studies). M. Scott noted that the study locations are not identified at this point, but will be selected in the scoping phase of the projects. At that time, staff will draw from candidate study locations and consider geographic equity.

10. FFY 2014 Safety and Operations Study—Seth Asante, MPO Staff

K. Quackenbush introduced the report on the *FFY 2014 Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections* study. Through the Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections Program, the MPO staff has been conducting analyses of intersections and making recommendations for improvement for a number of years. To date, intersections have been examined in 37 municipalities throughout the region. Some of the study recommendations have been incorporated in TIP projects.

S. Asante then gave an overview of the studies conducted in FFY 2014, which examined the following intersections: Medway Road at Kmart Driveway in Milford; Washington and Broad Streets in Weymouth; High Street and Nahatan Street in Westwood; and High Street and Pond Street in Westwood.

To select locations for study, staff began with a candidate list of 18 intersections and then used selection criteria to identify four locations for study. The selection criteria considered safety, congestion, availability of transit service, traffic volumes, and community interest in implementing recommendations from the studies. The MPO approved the selection of study locations.

At the intersection in Milford there is poor access to and from businesses due to the lack of turning lanes, and the intersection is a high-crash location. To address the access and safety issues, staff recommended five short- and long-term alternatives. Short-term solutions include adding left-turn lanes on Medway Road to provide a safe area for vehicles to access business driveways. A long-term solution would be to install a roundabout at the intersection of Beaver Street and Medway Road, which would provide direct access to the Bear Hill Industrial Area.

The Weymouth intersection is also a high crash location, and there is a lack of safety for pedestrians, which is of particular concern because there is an elderly housing complex nearby. The signal equipment at the intersection is outdated, which results in inefficient traffic flow and congestion. In the short-term, staff recommended installing a high-visibility crosswalk and accessible pedestrian signal to improve safety for pedestrians. In the long-term, staff recommended a total reconstruction of the intersection to address the many safety and traffic operations problems there. The reconstruction would include

upgrading signal equipment to MassDOT standards, and adding left-turn lanes and bicycle accommodations.

The intersection of High Street and Nahatan Street in Westwood experiences a high number of crashes because of traffic weaving and merging. There are also concerns about pedestrian safety, particularly as there is a school and a church at the intersection. Congestion occurs there at peak travel periods. Staff recommended six short- and long-term alternatives for addressing these problems. In the short-term, staff recommended reconfiguring travel lanes to reduce weaving and merging, and tightening the curb line radius to improve visibility and slow turning vehicles. The long-term recommendation is to signalize the intersection and tighten the curb line radius.

Pedestrian safety is a concern at the intersection at High Street and Pond Street in Westwood. Pedestrians can be in danger because there is a long crosswalk on Pond Street, vehicles turn at high speeds there, and the sight distance for motorists is poor. Staff recommended three short- and long-term alternatives for addressing these problems. In the short-term, the recommendations include tightening the curb line radii to shorten the crosswalk, slow turning vehicles, and improve visibility. The long-term recommendation is to signalize the intersection and add left-turn lanes.

S. Asante then discussed the various national crash reduction factors that are used to estimate the potential for specific measures to improve safety. For example, increasing intersection visibility may reduce crashes by 35% to 40%, installing a traffic signal may reduce crashes by 70%, and so forth. He also provided estimates for the level of congestion reduction that implementing the study recommendations could yield. Installing a roundabout at the Milford intersection, for example, could result in 8,000 vehicle-hours of delay reduction per year.

As next steps, staff recommended that the municipalities implement the short-term recommendations of the studies and work with MassDOT and the MPO to design and fund the long-term improvements.

Discussion

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, asked why staff is recommending a roundabout at the already signalized intersection in Milford. S. Asante explained that at this location the Town of Milford is interested in converting the currently one-way Beaver Street into a two-way road. This would increase traffic queues at the signalized intersection. A roundabout could address the problem of queues and allow for more efficient traffic movement.

Richard Canale, At-Large Town of Lexington, asked staff to post S. Asante's PowerPoint presentation on the MPO's website.

Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), asked if staff has data on the number of projects that have been implemented as a result of the *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections* studies (besides those funded through TIP projects). K. Quackenbush replied that staff has much of that data from periodic surveys and staff can report this data to the MPO. He noted that some recommendations are implemented through the use of municipalities' Chapter 90 monies and others through MassDOT's roadway maintenance projects or TIP projects.

11. Project Selection Advisory Council Update—Steve Woelfel, MassDOT

S. Woelfel reported that a draft final report from the Project Selection Advisory Council has been released and will be provided to the legislature by June 30. The Council was formed by the legislature to develop criteria for prioritizing transportation projects for funding.

Discussion

E. Bourassa and L. Wiener inquired about how the Project Selection Advisory Council's criteria are expected to interact with the MPO's project evaluation process. S. Woelfel replied that the Council's scoring system will apply to modernization projects and capacity projects (the latter are projects that add new connections or expand the transportation network). MassDOT will use those scores to inform how the agency will vote at MPO meetings.

S. Woelfel noted that a summary of the report is available on MassDOT's website.

12. State Implementation Plan Update—Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT

S. Allam provided an update on the progress of projects in the State Implementation Plan (SIP). A written report was also distributed.

Regarding the *Fairmount Line Improvement* project, she reported that the 90% design plans for the Blue Hill Avenue Station are expected to be ready in July. Construction on the station is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2016 and the station is expected to open in the summer of 2018.

Regarding the *Green Line Extension* project, she reported that Phase 2 – the portion of the extension from Lechmere Station in Cambridge to Washington Street and Union Square in Somerville – is anticipated to be completed in mid-2018. Recent public outreach activities have included a meeting with the residents of the Brickbottom Artist's Building in Somerville to discuss concerns about the project in that area, and a meeting

with the Friends of the Community Path and staff of the City of Somerville to discuss the design of the Community Path project. Meetings are scheduled later this month in Medford and Somerville to provide updates on the Ball Square and College Avenue station designs.

Discussion

R. Mares noted that the written SIP report states that interim measures to mitigate for delays in the *Green Line Extension* project were required to be implemented by December 31, 2014. He asked if those air quality measures have been implemented. He also asked whether MassDOT has received a response from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to its Petition to Delay.

S. Woelfel reported that the measures relating to providing additional bus service along the Green Line corridor and the purchase of new hybrid electric vehicles for THE RIDE have been implemented. R. Mares asked that MassDOT report that information and the status of the petition in the next report.

13. Members Items

E. Bourassa announced that MAPC will hold its Annual Council meeting in Salem on May 27. Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack will be the keynote speaker. He encouraged people to attend.

P. Regan announced that the MBTA Advisory Board has launched the Transit Diary, a web-based tool that will gather information on transit customer satisfaction. The public can provide feedback by visiting the website, transitdiary.com. The data gathered over the next year will provide information on the typical commute.

R. Canale made a disclosure relevant to upcoming discussions on the TIP and LRTP. He stated that Joseph Pato, of Lexington's Board of Selectman (and an MPO member), resides on Massachusetts Avenue in Lexington. A project on Massachusetts Avenue is among the projects the MPO is considering for funding.

The MPO will be meeting at the Town Hall in Acton on June 4. M. Gowing noted that Acton is a "green community" and he encouraged members and attendees to use transit when coming to the meeting. There is commuter rail service from Boston to South Acton Station and Crosstown Connect will be providing shuttle service from the station to the Town Hall. On the return trip CrossTown Connect will provide service to Alewife MBTA Station.

J. Gillooly thanked members for their vote today to approve the *Go Boston 2030: Modeling Support* project. He noted that Go Boston 2030 is a part of a comprehensive

planning effort underway by the City of Boston. The city has recently conducted housing and climate preparedness studies. The Go Boston 2030 team will be available to brief the MPO at a future meeting.

14. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan), and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
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 Transportation Department)	Jim Gillooly
	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Michael Chong
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel
	David Anderson
MBTA	Janice Ramsay
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
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 Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Mike Gowing
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Christine Stickney
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Sreelatha Allam	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Owen MacDonald	Town of Weymouth
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council
Constance Raphael	MassDOT
Joe Reynolds	Town of Braintree
Ellen Spring	Office of State Representative Denise Garlick
Wig Zamore	Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership / Mystic View Task Force

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director

Maureen Kelly
Anne McGahan
Elizabeth Moore
Sean Pfalzer
Michelle Scott
Pam Wolfe
