



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

March 11, 2015 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

David Montgomery, Vice Chair (Needham) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM as Chair M. Gowing (Acton) was unable to attend. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 6)

Chair's Report—*David Montgomery, Vice Chair*

D. Montgomery explained that he did not attend the MPO meetings held since the last Advisory Council meeting but any relevant information from those meetings may be addressed at the next meeting upon the Chair (Mike Gowing)'s return.

Minutes - November 12, 2014

Approval of the minutes for the November 12, 2014, Advisory Council meeting was postponed to a future meeting.

Bus and Private Carriers Forum

The Advisory Council held a Bus and Private Carriers Forum at its March meeting. Guest panelists were Mark Sanborn, the Advisory Council representative for MassBus (who also moderated the forum); Kyle Emge, Capital Programs and Operations Manager for the MassDOT Rail and Transit Division; and Ammie Rogers, Park and Ride Program Manager at the MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning.

A. Rogers began by providing an overview of MassDOT's Park and Ride Program, which manages 1,200 parking spaces in 57 lots through a variety of ownership and maintenance agreements.

K. Emge then addressed statewide initiatives for bus transit. He began by introducing a just published brochure containing the New England Regional Transportation Map and associated individual state maps, which depict commercial and other bus, rail, and ferry routes throughout New England.

K. Emge described MassDOT's BusPlus Program, which provides new regional buses to private bus operators to fill gaps in the bus network and bring transit service to previously underserved locations and populations. Thirty-six new buses have been purchased through the program and leased to seven private bus operators; this has increase service by 18 new round trips with no operating cost to MassDOT. MassDOT is now selecting operators for three new inter-city service routes and one new commuter route; with state subsidies these services will offer affordable ticket prices.

Also under the Bus Plus program, MassDOT will oversee a study that follows on the recent Regional Bus Study (conducted by Central Transportation Planning Staff) that identified gaps in service. The new study, called the "Regional Bus Network Build-out," is expected to produce recommendations for potential service changes, new services, and changes to the bus service structure throughout the state, and to guide future investment decisions.

MassDOT is also developing a smart phone ticketing application and website that will allow bus customers to purchase tickets from multiple bus operators from a single sales site. The paperless ticketing system will allow customers to simply show an e-ticket on their smart phone.

Moderator M. Sanborn discussed the goals of MassBus, an organization that advocates for bus operators and private carriers, and he gave recognition to the role that private bus operators have in supporting public policy goals.

MassBus has been working closely with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission on studies about how to better implement strategies to improve bus transit on expressways, such as HOV lanes and bus-on-shoulder operations. M. Sanborn noted that in other states bus-on-shoulder has proven to be an effective strategy that gives buses their own right-of-way during times of high congestion.

MassBus is also advocating for improvements to South Station to upgrade the bus terminal and better connect it to the train station. The organization is looking forward to having conversations about parity for private bus operators in public policy and funding.

DISCUSSION:

In response to a question on the lack of participation by private carriers in the public planning process (S. Olanoff), M. Sanborn stated that American Bus Association, at the national level is becoming more involved in policy participation. New thinking in the association supports the idea that change is more likely to come with their active participation.

In reviewing the newly printed New England Regional Transportation Map, C. Porter pointed out that private carriers play a large role in transportation in this region. With such a level of involvement in transit, he supports private carriers becoming more

involved in the public planning process. A. Rogers added that many private companies are involved in regional transportation initiatives at the project planning level.

In response to a question on information sharing with private carriers during transportation emergencies like this year's blizzards (B. Steinberg), M. Sanborn stated that executive communication to the private carriers was instrumental in solving emergency bus replacement of rail service when needed. C. Porter pointed out that MBTA Commuter Rail service is operated through a private sector company.

M. Sharff described his company's activities during the storm events. He also expressed dismay at the lack of bus terminal inclusion in the building design of the South Station Expansion Project. He was especially concerned that the Environmental Notification Forms made only a passing reference to there being a bus terminal as a part of this multi-modal transportation terminal. M. Sharff expressed that his participation and written comments to the public review process were not acknowledged or responded to, which has discouraged his further participation in the process.

In response to a new question (M. Murray), K. Emge explained, that bus routes on the Regional Map are for inter-city or commuter-based services due to the limited space on the map. There is an online version of the transit map for accessible service.

In response to a question on cost savings for the MBTA through privatizing some expansion services (R. McGaw), M. Sanborn explained that there is already an ongoing commitment from private carriers of service in commuter markets. M. Sanborn stated that this is a question that should be asked of MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning.

Frequency and permanence of bus service provided by private carriers, and the service quality review was addressed by C. Anzuoni in response to a question. (A. Swaine) He expressed the concern that the permanence of subsidized routes provided by private carriers for enhancing public transportation is related to the permanence of the subsidies. K. Emge explained that the subsidies vary based on the type of service. Subsidies cover a gap in developing ridership along various corridors. M. Sanborn described the relationship between long-term service provision and the subsidization and profitability of bus transit corridors.

D. Montgomery suggested that the date of publication ought to be added to the Regional Map and that the online version should be referenced on the map. K. Emge described the updating process. He stated that the online interactive map and the smartphone app version show all modes and all stops are searchable by municipality.

In response to a question on noise pollution (M. Wellons) and whether noise is a factor in making fleet purchases, M. Sanborn said that private sector inter-city motor coaches have the least environmental impacts of all modes. He stated that profit motive guides

the investment in good and modern equipment. K. Emge explained that set purchasing standards guide the purchasing process which conforms to EPA regulations, including noise.

M. Sanborn suggested several ways to make bus transit more efficient in response to a question (A. Strang). He suggested that HOT lanes, HOV lanes and Bus-on-Shoulder options would benefit bus transit on congested roads.

Transportation Improvement Program Update – *Sean Pfalzer, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

This year's TIP began in December with meetings with the MAPC subregions and MPO-sponsored meetings to talk about TIP development and potential projects. As a result of the municipality and other inputs, a universe of projects for roadway improvements was compiled and considered for project evaluation. This year 160 projects in varying states of design were considered for the evaluation of projects. In February, the evaluation of 50 projects for which enough information was available was undertaken.

The evaluation process helps to determine which projects are the best at advancing the MPO's goals and objectives. There are 35 questions pertaining to the different MPO policy categories. This year there were four new projects evaluated; the remaining projects are existing projects whose evaluations were updated. The MPO uses the evaluation and other factors like project readiness, cost, geographic equity and commitments to the Long-Range Transportation Plan in making final project selections for the TIP.

The next step in the process will be to use these results with other factors as staff prepares its recommendations to the MPO of new projects to consider on the next cycle covering federal fiscal years 2016–2019.

DISCUSSION:

S. Pfalzer reviewed the upcoming TIP development cycle in response to a question (D. Montgomery). S. Pfalzer explained that normally, March is the month when funding levels for the TIP become known; in April, projects presented as the staff recommendation are discussed with the MPO; in May, a vote to release the Draft TIP for public review is taken, followed by a 30-day public comment period; in June, public comments are compiled and considered for inclusion in the draft TIP, to be released by the end of June. This year, the LRTP is also in development which may lengthen the process, as the TIP and the LRTP are interrelated.

S. Ringler was concerned that the number and types of projects presented in the evaluations did not adequately address the severity of carbon pollution problem. D.

Montgomery suggested that input to the LRTP and the TIP can be made to the MPO via the MPO's webpage.

Unified Planning Work Program Update – *Michelle Scott, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff*

M. Scott described the UPWP draft universe of new discrete studies which are available online at the MPO's website. ([Click here](#)) The universe includes major stand-alone discrete studies. If projects do not qualify as a full discrete study, many times they can be incorporated into ongoing programs.

The upcoming steps in developing the UPWP include the MPO's UPWP Committee review of the draft universe and discussions that will lead to the UPWP Committee's recommendation for new studies. Ongoing programs will also be incorporated into the FY2016 UPWP.

On March 19, the UPWP Committee will meet to closely review the budget and new studies. In April, the Committee will have more information to work with, including a budget informed by estimated federal funds for the upcoming year. The timing of upcoming committee meetings will be coordinated with the development of the LRTP. The preparation of a draft release of the UPWP for public comment is currently targeted for mid-May.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

ATTENDANCE

Agencies (Voting)

MassRides

Municipalities (Voting)

Belmont
Cambridge
Needham

Citizen Groups (Voting)

AACT
American Council of Engineering Companies
Association for Public Transportation
Massachusetts Bus Association
MoveMassachusetts
National Corridors Initiative
Riverside Neighborhood Association
WalkBoston

Other (Non-Voting)

MassDOT - Aeronautics Division
Westwood

Guests

Ed Lowney
Karen Dumaine
Abby Swaine
Joseph Manning
Chris Anzuoni
Arthur Strang
Michael Sharff
Susan Ringler
John MacDougall
Kyle Emge

Ammie Rogers

Staff

David Fargen
Sean Pfalzer

Attendee

Catherine Paquette

Robert McGaw
Tegin Bennett
David Montgomery

Mary Ann Murray
Thomas Daley
Barry M. Steinberg
Mark Sanborn
Jon Seward
John Businger
Marilyn Wellons
John McQueen

Steve Rawding
Steve Olanoff

Malden Resident
Transaction Association
US EPA
IBEW LU 103
MA Bus Association
Cambridge Resident
MA Bus Association
350MA
350MA
MassDOT Rail and Transit
Division
MassDOT OTP

Maureen Kelly
Michelle Scott