

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

March 3, 2016 Meeting

10:05 AM – 10:50 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

David Mohler, 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 *Plan for Accessible Transportation Infrastructure: Technical Support*
- approve the minutes of the MPO meeting of February 18, 2016

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

Members were provided with copies of two written comments from members of the public. Both commenters requested that the MPO defer a decision about reprogramming funds in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) intended for the Green Line Extension, Phase 2 project.

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

D. Mohler announced two upcoming meetings.

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) will be meeting on March 10 at 10:30 AM in Sutton to discuss funding targets for the FFY's 2017-21 TIP development process.

Also on March 10, MassDOT will hold a meeting at 5:00 PM in the State Transportation Library at the State Transportation Building to report on the proposed Section 61 findings regarding the Wynn Casino project.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports

Bryan Pounds, Chair of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee, announced that the committee will meet next on March 31 at 9:30 AM in the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) Conference Room, Suite 2150, in the State

Transportation Building. The committee will discuss the prioritization of the UPWP Universe of Projects.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Tegin Bennett, Advisory Council Chair*

T. Bennett announced that the Advisory Council will meet on March 9. The Council's Document Certification Committee will meet prior to the general Council meeting.

5. Executive Director's Report—*Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director*

K. Quackenbush reported that staff will be distributing the preliminary evaluation results for projects under consideration for programming in the FFYs 2017-21 TIP.

6. Work Program for Plan for Accessible Transportation Infrastructure: Technical Support—*Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director*

K. Quackenbush introduced the work program for the *Plan for Accessible Transportation Infrastructure: Technical Support*. Through this work program, CTPS staff will provide technical support to the MBTA Office of System-Wide Accessibility as it develops a Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI). The PATI is a long-term strategic plan to remove barriers that impede access to MBTA stations by seniors and people with disabilities.

The MBTA has been improving accessibility of stations since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); however, there is a backlog of work remaining to remove barriers to access at many stations, particularly on the Green Line and commuter rail system. This effort will yield information that can be used to prioritize accessibility improvements at MBTA stations and bus stops. The work will be guided by the PATI Engagement Committee, which will be composed of MBTA officials and stakeholders in the disability community. This one-year project will be funded through a contract with the MBTA.

Discussion

Christine Stickney, South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree), asked whether the MBTA would consider accessibility improvements to garages at MBTA stations as part of this project. Kathryn Quigley of the MBTA Office of System-Wide Accessibility, who is the project manager for the PATI, replied that the focus is on the stations only.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood), remarked that there are stations on the commuter rail that are considered ADA accessible, but that still present difficulties for seniors and people with disabilities because of station layout or

design. For example, at some stations, passengers must make long walks to accessible ramps. He noted that at South Station passengers must walk long distances on the platforms because trains cannot pull entirely into the station due to ventilation problems, and that scaffolding in place has presented barriers to access. He asked the MBTA to consider these types of issues.

K. Quigley then discussed the PATI in more detail. She explained that the MBTA intends to survey 200 stations and 7,800 bus stops to gather data on barriers to access and create a database of the information. The MBTA will then prioritize short- and long-term plans for funding improvements within the constraints of limited resources. The goal is to create a more holistically accessible system.

Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, asked about the focus of PATI in terms of mode and whether the locations surveyed would include those in the Key Station Plan.

K. Quigley explained that survey would focus first on the 200 stations, which include commuter rail and subway stations. New stations that are already built to current accessibility standards, such as Government Center, would not be surveyed. Then the MBTA would survey the 7,800 bus stops. The MBTA intends to re-survey key bus route stops, if finances allow.

Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), asked whether the MBTA has already identified funding for accessibility improvements in its budget or whether the MBTA will wait for the results of the PATI before it identifies funding sources. K. Quigley explained that the PATI is a separate effort from the MBTA's ongoing commitments to update infrastructure for accessibility. D. Mohler added that the MBTA has not yet released its Draft Capital Investment Plan, which details the MBTA's annual budget. More information about the budget will be available this month.

P. Regan remarked that the MBTA has long been committed to accessibility improvements, as evidenced by the well-funded key station programs and the project to update Government Center Station.

A motion to approve the work program for the *Plan for Accessible Transportation Infrastructure: Technical Support* was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

7. MPO Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 18, 2016 was made by the At-Large Town of Lexington (Richard Canale), and seconded by the Inner Core

Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried. The South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) (C. Stickney) abstained.

8. Title VI Service Equity Analysis: Methodology Development—*Nick Hart, MPO Staff*

N. Hart presented the results of the *Title VI Service Equity Analysis: Methodology Development* study, an investigation into the shortcomings and inconsistencies in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) guidelines for conducting Title VI service equity analyses. The study resulted in the development of a new methodology for conducting these analyses.

In response to the Title VI federal statute, public transit agencies must evaluate any major changes to transit service to determine whether those changes will have a discriminatory impact based on race, color, or national origin. In the Boston region, the MBTA defines major service changes as those that would have a significant effect on transit riders, resource requirements, route structure, or service delivery.

FTA guidance also calls for transit providers to develop a policy and threshold for determining when adverse effects of service changes are borne disproportionately by minority populations. The MBTA's Disparate Impact Policy states that a disparate burden would be found if the minority customers sustain more than 20% additional burden than the total burden the non-minority customers sustain.

FTA guidance offers two approaches for determining disparate impact. One uses ridership data or survey data, and the other uses population data from the U.S. Census. There are shortcomings, however, to using both of FTA's methodologies in the Boston region.

Ridership data for the MBTA system is available from the 2008-09 Systemwide Passenger Survey; however, the required number of survey responses needed to achieve a 95% confidence level (in determining statistically significant differences) was not received for 101 bus routes in the system (64% of routes). In addition to not accounting for all existing riders, the survey data does not account for potential riders. Nor does the FTA's methodology allow for consideration of the degree of adverse effects in relation to the type of service change (i.e. adding or eliminating service or adjusting headways).

The methodology that relies on population data also does not account for all existing and potential riders (such as those who make transfers from other parts of the system).

It also does not allow for the consideration of the degree of adverse effects in relation to the type of service change.

A new methodology was developed through this study to address the shortcomings of the FTA's methodologies. The new methodology uses population data that represents all riders affected by the service change (including those who have direct access to the service being evaluated, and those who make transfers to that service). Further, it objectively quantifies the varying degrees of adverse effects of different types of service changes, and accounts for the availability of alternative transit options that might reduce the adverse effects of service changes.

The new methodology incorporates a Modified Transit Opportunity Index (MTOI), which assigns a score to each census tract based on the level of transit service available and the opportunity available for accessing service. The factors that go into determining MTOI are access opportunity (percentage of population within a census tract that has walking access to transit service), trip opportunity (number of trip opportunities between an origin and destination pair), and temporal comparability (travel time).

To conduct a disparate impact analysis for a particular service change, this new methodology would be used to identify the change in MTOI for each census tract that the proposed service change would produce, and to determine whether minority populations bear a disparate burden from the proposed service change.

Discussion

P. Regan asked if FTA has accepted the new methodology for use in the MBTA's equity analyses. N. Hart indicated that FTA has not made that determination yet. John Lozada, MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR), added that FTA allows for the presentation of new methodologies for consideration in equity analyses.

T. Bennett asked if the new methodology could apply to analyses of proposed fare changes or to populations using various fare media. N. Hart explained that the new methodology applies only to proposed service changes and that another methodology is used for fare change analyses.

D. Mohler asked how staff would distinguish between actual impact and potential impact on minority populations (i.e. the impact on the population that uses the service as opposed to the population in a census tract that could potentially use the service), and how staff would ensure that minority riders are not under-estimated in the analyses.

N. Hart suggested the possibility of incorporating ridership data from surveys into the analyses as a weighting measure. J. Lozada added that ODCR and CTPS are working on new approaches to improve outreach and ridership data collection.

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation, observed that the approach that uses ridership data compares ridership on the route in question to total bus ridership, while the population-based approach compares the route ridership to ridership on the entire MBTA bus and rapid transit system. He asked why the ridership method does not also compare the route ridership to the ridership on the entire bus and rapid transit system. N. Hart explained that it is difficult to develop a systemwide figure for comparison considering that the analyses factor in riders who make multiple trips on each mode.

9. Members Items

T. Bent reported that a well-attended public meeting about the Green Line Extension (GLX) project was held in Somerville on March 2. Approximately 400 people were in attendance. Attendees from Somerville and surrounding municipalities, the Mayor of Medford, members of Somerville's state legislature delegation, and Somerville representatives voiced support for the project and welcomed the discussion about how to move the project forward. T. Bent praised the GLX team for their work and transparency in sharing information.

D. Crowley and Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, inquired about the change in schedule for a potential vote by the MPO regarding the reprogramming of funds currently directed to the Green Line Extension, Phase 2 project. D. Mohler replied that MassDOT no longer expects to make a presentation to the MPO about the Green Line in March, as discussed at the MPO's last meeting, and that the MPO will not be asked to vote on this issue in March.

10. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Lara Mérida
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Richard Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Aaron Clausen
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Tegin Bennett
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
Ed Carr	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Sarah Lee	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
John Lozada	MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Byron Nash	Boston resident
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)
Bryan Pounds	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Kathryn Quigley	MBTA Office of System-Wide Accessibility

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director

Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services

Lourenço Dantas

Maureen Kelly

Alexandra Kleyman

Sean Pfalzer

Jennifer Rowe
