

# Memorandum for the Record

## Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

### October 6, 2016 Meeting

10:05 AM – 12:45 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

David Mohler and Stephen Woelfel, Chairs, 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 minutes of the meeting of September 15, 2016
- approve the work program for the *South Coast Rail 2016* project
- approve the work program for the *Using General Transit Feed Specification Data to Find Shared Segments with Excessively Irregular Headways* study

### Meeting Agenda

#### 1. Public Comments

There were none.

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

D. Mohler reported that on September 26 the Cambridge City Council agreed to contribute \$25 million for the Green Line Extension project. The agreement between the City and MassDOT is on the agenda of the MassDOT Board of Director's meeting today. Approval will authorize the MassDOT Secretary and MBTA General Manager to execute the agreement.

#### 3. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

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

T. Bennett reported that the Advisory Council will meet next on October 12. The agenda includes a discussion about parking pricing strategies and the election of Advisory Council officers.

She then asked for an update on the status of the federal funding for the Green Line Extension project. D. Mohler reported that MassDOT is working with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on the funding approval process and the agencies are making progress. The FTA has requested more information about the procurement process and the MBTA's internal capacity to manage the project.

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

To mark the beginning of a new FFY in October, K. Quackenbush gave an overview of the MPO's accomplishments during FFY 2016 and a preview of work that the MPO staff expect to undertake in FFY 2017. In FFY 2016, the MPO's accomplishments included the following: updating Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project selection criteria; voting to reallocate funding for Phase 1 of the Green Line Extension project; making the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) more accessible; producing recommendations from UPWP studies; and improving transportation equity practices.

In this new FFY, staff plan to engage in the following activities: enhancing performance-based planning; scenario planning; tracking UPWP project outcomes; revamping the MPO's website; improving the public engagement practice; transitioning the *TRANSREPORT* newsletter to a web-based electronic newsletter; acquiring an activity-based travel demand model; and exploring system performance data. K. Quackenbush invited members to provide feedback about these activities.

K. Quackenbush also informed members the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) has reopened the docket for the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform. The MPO submitted a letter to the docket in August expressing concerns about the proposed rulemaking. USDOT will be accepting public comment for another month about the potential impact of the requirement for MPOs within metropolitan planning areas to coordinate on the development of certification documents, potential exceptions to the rule, and the expected cost of implementing the rule.

D. Mohler added that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be hosting forums across the nation on the topic of MPO empowerment. The first forum will be held in the Boston area on October 20.

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

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 15 – with a correction to the attendance list – was made by the At-Large Town of Arlington (Laura Wiener), and

seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan). The motion carried. The Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent) abstained.

## **7. Work Program for South Coast Rail 2016—Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director**

K. Quackenbush introduced the work program for the *South Coast Rail 2016* project. This study revives work that was done several years ago regarding the extension of transit service from Boston to New Bedford and Fall River. This study will focus on a new alternative rail service alignment, called the New Middleborough Option. MPO staff will produce travel forecasts (for the horizon years of 2020, 2030, and 2040) for MassDOT and its consultants. The work will be funded through a MassDOT contract.

Project Manager Jean Fox and Jim Eng of MassDOT, and consultant Charlie Passanisi of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, then distributed a map of the proposed alignment and addressed questions from the members.

### ***Discussion***

The MPO's questions and discussion focused on the overall work being completed by MassDOT and its consultants to analyze the New Middleborough Option. The travel demand modeling tasks presented in the work program for completion by MPO staff, which comprise only one part of the larger effort, were not discussed.

Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), suggested that the study of the New Middleborough Option should compare the rail alignment alternative to a bus alternative. The presenters explained that bus alternatives—including express bus and bus rapid transit—were considered in the previous study, but that those alternatives did not meet the purpose and need of the South Coast Rail project. The bus alternative is problematic because there is no room for highway expansion—leaving buses stuck in the same traffic as cars—and, thus, people would choose to drive rather than take the bus. Further, at six regional meetings recently held about the project, members of the public voiced strong opposition to the idea of bus service and a preference for rail service.

Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, inquired about the Stoughton Electric Straight alignment (the preferred alternative from the prior study), which if implemented would build the first electrified commuter rail line in Massachusetts. He asked if study of the New Middleborough Option would address the cost of buying an electric fleet, and was informed that it would not.

P. Regan inquired about the estimated ridership. The presenters reported that the line is estimated to have about 5,000 riders (each direction) per day.

Jim Gillooly, City of Boston, asked why the first Middleborough alternative was eliminated early-on and how the New Middleborough Option differs from it. J. Fox explained that the first alternative was prohibitively expensive; there is a pinch-point at a single-track area in the Braintree and Quincy area that would require significant infrastructure work, including tunneling, in order to provide full service. The lower-cost New Middleborough Option differs in that it would provide limited service using existing trains.

Ken Miller, FHWA, suggested revisiting the bus option considering that when the previous study was conducted, the rail alternatives would have been less costly to build.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council, reported that he attended a recent public meeting in Canton about the South Coast Rail project. He observed that the other attendees did not have an understanding that the New Middleborough Option would be an interim alternative.

S. Olanoff suggested that the economic benefits of the South Coast Rail project should be factored in when making cost estimates. J. Fox reported that the economic impacts of the project were studied in the past; however, this new study does not include an economic analysis.

P. Regan inquired about the estimated number of net new riders that would result from the project. The presenters reported that there would be an estimated 4,500 net new riders to the rail system. J. Fox also noted that the SouthCoast Development Partnership held a survey and found that respondents were supportive of rail service; they expressed a preference for taking a 90-100 minute train trip rather than travel by car because the train would be more reliable.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), suggested refreshing the economic development study because, since the previous study was completed, there have been changes to companies' preferences for workforce location. J. Fox agreed that much has changed (for example, Amazon chose to locate in Fall River), and she noted that the new rail link would be critical to burgeoning business development in the area.

T. Bent asked if consideration has been given to the growth of residential development in the study area. J. Fox discussed that there is a large amount of housing stock in the

South Coast cities and that some have revised zoning around proposed station sites to allow for mixed-use development.

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, inquired about other benefits to the MPO for expanding or improving the travel demand model that would be used for this study. K. Quackenbush then spoke about how improvements to the statewide travel demand model are value-added enhancements for other endeavors.

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation, raised questions about the New Middleborough Option. The presenters explained that the option would be a way to introduce limited rail service to the South Coast using existing infrastructure and tracks, as the existing infrastructure would not support full service. The option would use an active 7.5 mile freight rail line, the Middleborough Secondary line, to connect to the Middleborough/Lakeville commuter rail line. MassDOT's Capital Investment Plan already has \$22 million programmed for improvements to this freight line. The Stoughton Electric Straight option has not been eliminated, but the interim New Middleborough Option would serve as a means to deliver some service to the South Coast soon without the high cost of building an electrified line.

S. Olanoff suggested reducing the number of variations of the New Middleborough Option to save costs. However, the presenters spoke about the need to study the various alternatives for station numbers and locations, and to understand the travel time of trains under those scenarios.

#### **Vote**

A motion to approve the work program for the *South Coast Rail 2016* project was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (John Romano), and seconded by the City of Boston (Jim Gillooly). The motion carried.

### **8. Work Program for Using General Transit Feed Specification Data to Find Shared Segments with Excessively Irregular Headways— *Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning, and Steven Andrews, MPO Staff***

E. Moore introduced the work program for the *Using General Transit Feed Specification Data to Find Shared Segments with Excessively Irregular Headways* study. The purpose of this study is to research ways to reduce wait times for bus passengers on corridors in which multiple bus routes are operating—trunk sections of the bus network. Since the headways of bus routes operating on trunk sections are determined independently of each other, it may be possible to reduce wait times by adjusting headways on various routes.

The MPO staff will identify corridors of the bus system and bus stops for study; develop a metric to evaluate the regularity of bus arrivals; use General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data of scheduled bus arrival times to evaluate the benefit to riders from coordinating bus headways on trunk sections; and present findings to the MPO.

### ***Discussion***

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, asked how the study locations would be selected. S. Andrews explained that first staff would identify locations where multiple bus routes are operating on a trunk section, then determine if on those sections passengers could realistically take different bus routes to reach their destinations. These would be sections with a frequency of service that allows people to walk up to a bus stop without consulting a schedule.

T. Bennett inquired about whether cost constraints would be factored in when considering potential improvements. S. Andrews explained that the goal of the study is to quantify potential means for achieving passenger-time savings. That information would be conveyed to the MBTA, which would decide whether to spend funds on implementing changes to achieve those time savings.

J. Gillooly asked if staff will be able to assess the origins and destinations of the passengers travelling on the trunk routes. S. Andrews replied that staff has several sources of origin and destination data.

S. Olanoff inquired about the timeframe for implementing headway adjustments identified in this study. S. Andrews explained that the MBTA implements minor schedule changes on a quarterly basis.

### ***Vote***

A motion to approve the work program for the *Using General Transit Feed Specification Data to Find Shared Segments with Excessively Irregular Headways* study was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan), and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Gillooly). The motion carried.

## **9. Municipal Contributions to Transportation Project Costs—Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director**

K. Quackenbush directed members to a memorandum that details the consensus points from the discussion MPO members had on September 15 on the topic of municipal contributions to transportation project costs. Members then discussed these points further and suggested revisions to the memorandum.

Laura Wiener, At-Large Town of Arlington, suggested fleshing out one point in the memorandum to state the MPO's concern that any requirement on municipalities to increase their up-front contributions to project costs may result in fewer TIP projects for smaller, less wealthy communities. J. Gillooly added that such a requirement would also negatively affect larger urban communities that tend to have more complex and expensive projects.

T. Bent inquired about the Commonwealth's position on requesting municipal contributions for projects that will have economic development impacts. He also discussed the importance of setting clear expectations about what municipalities are expected to pay prior to implementing projects, so that they are not confronted with requests for contributions after projects are underway. D. Mohler explained that MassDOT's Capital Program Committee addressed this issue at its meeting last month and is continuing a dialogue with the MassDOT Board of Directors, which is expected to develop a policy on this issue. He articulated the MPO's position on this matter: the MPO is not in favor of requiring additional up-front contributions from municipalities for projects regardless of whether the projects will have economic development impacts.

[Steve Woefel, MassDOT, chaired the meeting from this point on.]

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), suggested revising a point in the memorandum concerning the lack of mechanisms for municipalities to raise funds for transportation projects in Massachusetts. He clarified that municipalities do have the ability to redirect property taxes. He suggested rewording the bullet point to state that municipalities in Massachusetts do not have the ability to levy special targeted taxes. E. Bourassa agreed and suggested adding that "fewer" abilities exist to raise special targeted taxes.

E. Bourassa suggested adding a new bullet point to the memorandum to state that the MPO is interested in exploring having a statewide conversation about additional tools (such as value capture, for example) for municipalities to raise revenue for projects with economic development potential. He also advised against developing a blanket policy requiring additional municipal contributions to economic development projects because such a policy could be disadvantageous to poorer communities that are most in need of economic development.

J. Gillooly also expressed concern about developing a blanket policy. He remarked on the uniqueness of the Green Line Extension project—which sparked the conversation about municipal contributions—and noted that creating a new policy would be an extreme reaction to this particular project. He expressed the City's position that

municipalities are already contributing sufficiently to project costs by funding design as well as certain non-participating costs of construction.

P. Regan remarked that it is important to state in the memorandum that Massachusetts does not have organized local entities or planning districts for providing the local match to transportation projects. He also noted that the memorandum is a message to the MassDOT Board of Directors, however, it is the state legislature that has the ability to provide the tools for municipalities to raise funds.

Members discussed the message they would convey to the MassDOT Board. They discussed requesting that the MassDOT Board consult the MPO if they plan to change the existing policy regarding the local match contributions. Also, they discussed whether the message should convey that the MPO is interested in exploring tools for municipalities to raise funds for transportation.

T. Bent noted that as MassDOT proceeds with developing a policy, it will be important for the MPO to be at the table, and to convey that municipalities will need the tools to deal with new requirements.

E. Bourassa and J. Monty expressed support for including a statement about the MPO's interest in supporting a conversation with the MassDOT Board about these issues. Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, expressed concern about taking that action (without a motion) because the MPO did not reach consensus on that point at the last meeting. He also expressed concern about the possibility of unintended consequences from sending an unclear message that could be misinterpreted.

T. Bennett recalled that the only consensus among the members was a desire for transparency and the need to be able to set expectations. She suggested that the message to the MassDOT Board acknowledge the MPO's interest in this issue and how a new policy set by the MassDOT Board would affect the MPO.

J. Gillooly added that the MPO's message should make clear that it is not supportive of a requirement to raise more local match money and that the MPO would like to be kept abreast of the MassDOT Board's thinking before the board makes any binding decisions.

Members agreed to make points of clarification to the memorandum without adding more content. R. Reed and P. Regan offered revised language to state that "no special ability exists in Massachusetts for municipalities to levy special, targeted or other taxes."



## **10. Freight Planning Support: Rest Locations for Long-Distance Truck Drivers in Massachusetts—*Bill Kuttner, MPO Staff***

B. Kuttner presented the results of a study about rest locations for long-distance truck drivers in Massachusetts. This topic is relevant to the MPO because the Boston region is heavily dependent on long-distance trucking. The study was conducted under the MPO's Freight Program.

The adequacy of rest locations for truckers is a nationwide problem that is being addressed by federal law. By law, truck drivers must rest for ten hours after 11 hours of driving. A section of the earlier MAP-21 authorization referred to as "Jason's Law" mandated a study to address the lack of safe rest locations for truckers. The more recent FAST Act allows the use of federal funds to strengthen the rest location system.

B. Kuttner showed a map of existing rest stop locations in the region and discussed the importance of a good rest location for safety and efficiency. Large commercial truck stops offer several advantages for truckers, but they are currently lacking on the northwest arc of Interstate 495.

He then described the features envisioned for future truck stops in the region, which would provide significant benefits to motor carriers. These stops would contain a viable commercial business mix and offer services such as fuel, lodging, and restaurants. They would also incorporate impact mitigating design and technology, such as truck stop electrification to provide household current to truck sleeper units and power for refrigerator units while truckers are on their ten-hour break. This technology allows trucks diesel engines to be turned off during the break period.

As a result of this study, staff outlined several actions that could improve the rest location system. These include identifying and possibly procuring locations suitable for a large commercial truck stop, seeking federal approval for public-private partnerships to maintain and improve public rest areas, using under-utilized highway facilities such as obsolete weigh stations, or striping Park & Ride lots to allow some truck parking.

### ***Discussion***

Ken Miller, FHWA, reported that the USDOT issued a request for comments in the Federal Register regarding the issue of commercialization of rest areas. He also noted that the FAST Act created a new funding category for freight projects; approximately \$22 million is available to Massachusetts. He encouraged the state and MPO to discuss how to apply for available federal funding.

## **11. Updates on Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)**

### **Transportation Planning Activities in FFY 2016—*Eric Bourassa, Sarah Kurpiel Lee, and David Loutzenheiser, MAPC Staff***

E. Bourassa introduced the transportation planning work that MAPC undertook in FFY 2016, which included regional parking research and regional greenway planning.

S. Kurpiel Lee and D. Loutzenheiser, MAPC, then made presentations on these topics and answered questions from members. The agenda also included a presentation on MAPC's transit-oriented development planning work, however, this presentation was postponed to another meeting.

#### ***Parking Studies***

S. Kurpiel Lee discussed the results of the parking management studies MAPC conducted in a number of municipalities in the region this year using the recent studies in the cities of Everett and Malden as examples. MAPC approached these studies with to goal of making parking easy and affordable for visitors and using the rule of thumb that aims for 85% parking occupancy goal.

MAPC planners conducted each study by identifying the study area – which was usually a business district – and then collecting, analyzing, and mapping the data, and developing solutions. The maps depict information such as existing parking regulations in the study areas, peak-hour parking space occupancy and capacity, and the duration of vehicle parking. S. Kurpiel Lee discussed issues that emerged from the studies, such as pricing, the number of parking spaces available for the public, enforcement of parking regulations, and signage and time restrictions.

#### ***Discussion***

J. Monty expressed appreciation for the study in Everett, which is helping the City of Everett with their parking planning.

Aaron Clausen, North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly), asked if the study recommendations included demand management pricing. S. Kurpiel Lee stated that demand management pricing was recommended for Malden.

D. Koses asked if the studies considered commuter parking. S. Kurpiel Lee noted that the study in Malden involved commuter parking, as will an upcoming study in Stoughton. All of the study reports are on MAPC's website.

T. Bent asked whether the City of Malden is implementing the study recommendations. S. Kurpiel Lee explained that the City has not yet implemented the recommendations because it is focused on other priorities.

### ***Right-Sized Parking Studies***

S. Kurpiel Lee discussed MAPC's right-sized parking studies, which address parking in multi-family residential areas with the aim of facilitating the development of dense, walkable communities. The studies are modeled on the work of the Center for Neighborhood Technology.

MAPC's studies focused on the municipalities of Arlington, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, and Melrose. MAPC planners identified 124 multi-family developments in these municipalities and surveyed property managers and owners to gather data about the housing type and parking availability. Then they conducted evening parking counts and created a model to assess the influence of various variables on the number of parking spaces. Overall, parking utilization in the five communities was found to be lower than expected.

As result of the Arlington study, the town passed a zoning amendment to allow for a reduction in multifamily residential parking in some special districts. Going forward, MAPC will be collecting more data for Inner Core communities and creating a tool or website as a resource for communities interested in modifying their parking requirements.

### ***Discussion***

J. Gillooly inquired about the possibility that the parking counts were low because they might not have included vehicles absent because a resident was traveling or working during the time of the counts. S. Kurpiel Lee suggested that there could be some variability in the data, however, not enough to reach the 85% parking utilization goal.

T. Bent remarked that the City of Somerville is considering changing the requirements on new developments to lower the number of required parking spaces, since studies are finding that spaces are not being utilized. He asked if MAPC studied the availability of bicycle parking at residential developments. S. Kurpiel Lee replied that the survey to property managers and owners asked about indoor and outdoor bicycle parking.

T. Bent raised the issue of residents who may use public parking spaces to avoid paying for residential parking spaces. S. Kurpiel Lee discussed that MAPC is recommending that municipalities and developers charge for parking. She also discussed the need for regulations or agreements limiting on-street parking for residents of developments.

### ***Complete Streets Prioritization Plans***

S. Kurpiel Lee discussed the Complete Streets Prioritization Plans that MAPC, partnering with Toole Design Group, helped Acton, Medford, and Winchester develop.

MAPC and Toole Design Group provided technical assistance to the municipalities and identified projects that would improve bicycle and pedestrian access. The plans that were developed allow the communities to access funding provided through MassDOT's Complete Streets Program for implementing complete streets projects on local roads. All three municipalities were fully funded (\$400,000) through the MassDOT program. All projects must be constructed by next June.

### ***Landline***

D. Loutzenheiser gave a presentation on the Landline, a vision for a developing an active transportation network in the region. He began by providing examples of active transportation networks in other urban areas.

The Landline would have two corridor types. Regional greenways would be accessible by foot, bicycle, and wheelchair and separated from vehicular traffic as much as possible. Regional walking trails would have more of a conservation focus. The network is currently disconnected. He provided maps showing the existing and envisioned portions of the network.

He discussed opportunities to transform streets by implementing traffic calming measures, and creating bicycle lanes and shared roadways. Then he discussed the status of the trail projects in the region.

## **12. Members Items**

J. Gillooly announced two upcoming public meetings. A meeting about the Sullivan Square portion of the *Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue (Boston)* project will be held on October 26, and a meeting about the *Reconstruction of Melnea Cass Boulevard (Boston)* will be held on November 9.

E. Bourassa provided an update on the MPO elections. All four municipalities occupying the open seats are running unopposed. The election will be held at the MAPC Fall Council meeting on October 26.

## **13. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent), and seconded by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

## Attendance

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### Members

### Representatives and Alternates

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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	Ken Miller
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
	David Anderson
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
MBTA	Eric Waaramaa
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
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
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Tegin Bennett
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Melissa Santucci
	Rozzi
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Steve Olanoff

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### Other Attendees

### Affiliation

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Jim Eng	MassDOT
Jean Fox	MassDOT
Matthew Jiang	
Sarah Kurpiel Lee	MAPC
David Loutzenheiser	MAPC
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Charlie Passanisi	Vanasse Hangen Brustlin
Bryan Pounds	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning

Constance Raphael

MassDOT District 4

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director

Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning

Lourenço Dantas, Manager, MPO Certification  
Activities Group

Maureen Kelly

Alexandra Kleyman

Jennifer Rowe

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