

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

April 12, 2017, Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

T. Bennett, Chair (Cambridge) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 6)

Chair's Report - T. Bennett

T. Bennett explained that the MPO draft amendment to the Public Participation Plan which would permanently shorten the comment period for public review of documents was modified to apply to this year only. The public comment period of 21 days will apply to this year's TIP and UPWP and barring a reintroduction of a similar proposed amendment to the Public Participation Plan, the comment period will revert to 30 days.

Minutes - March 8, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 8 meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Transportation Improvement Program Comment Letter - C. Porter, 3C Documents Committee Chair

C. Porter described the TIP worksheet handout showing projects by funding year and categories. In maintaining consistency with the MPO guidelines based on previous TIP funding, major capital funding of large-scale projects are limited in this TIP to two projects spread out over a number of years. The major infrastructure category projects make up 62 percent of the programmed funding. The LRTP target funds make up 34 percent of the spending. Over time, the goal is to see the LRTP target funds and the Complete Streets program increased while having the major infrastructure category consume a smaller

share of the MPO funds.

The category Regionwide Community Transportation is currently a non-funded category but it is in the TIP to identify future program spending needs that are currently being defined. Geographical distribution by community type and sub-region looks at the share of funding in the communities and sub-regions based on the share of employment and population. C. Porter stated that the distribution is generally well-distributed with the inner-core communities being slightly under-represented with regard to funded projects.

C. Porter reported that the 3C Documents Committee discussed a few specific projects with regard to the overall approach to programming and prioritization addressing the new priorities being done by the MPO. He recommended that this is included in the comment letter.

The 3C Documents Committee also favored a comment on the consideration of different types of projects and how they can score differently. As an example, bicycle and pedestrian projects often score lower on the TIP because they do not meet some of the criteria in the evaluation. The staff already pays attention to this distortion effect by "binning off" these projects so that the comparisons are more valid. This is being done in this year's TIP and it should be encouraged in the future as well.

T. Bennett mentioned that the MPO pushed for predictability and transparency by avoiding shifting within the time-bands from year to year. She pointed out that the Newton-Needham project was delayed because of Right-of-Way issues.

D. Montgomery stated that both Needham and Newton are frustrated by the delay.

S. Larrabee mentioned that a local newspaper article suggested that improve bikeways in the design of the project was the cause of the delay. T. Bennett indicated that although there was a change in the treatment of bicycle component to the project it was not the reason for the delay. L. Dantas stated that the delay in programming to another time-band does not necessarily mean a delay of a full year in project activity as it can be a change of just a few months from one fiscal year to the next.

D. Montgomery stated that the project was on the LRTP for 20 years, nevertheless, there is no way to advocate moving the project up because MassDOT simply will not be ready for it due to the ROW issue.

C. Porter stated that regarding the schedule of projects, some projects were over 20 years old yet are still on the TIP. It was determined that MPO staff reaches out to the communities to see if the projects which are still on the TIP after many years still remain on the priority list of the community.

M. Gowing pointed out that the TIP programming is a moving target which can easily change. All money has to be re-arranged if there are changes in some project so it is

important to keep the projects ready to go.

T. Bennett noted that there was a discussion at the MPO meeting about funding the Hull project in a much earlier year since it has been at the outer time-band for so long and it is ready to go. Some cash flow movement from one year to the next allows for the funds for this project to remain the same.

M. Gowing suggested that projects that there might be a weighting factor to be added to projects that linger on the TIP. T. Bennett stated that staff is considering this with regards the much older projects and that inactive projects can play a more significant role in funding scenarios. Some projects might need to be reevaluated to determine if it is still a community priority. C. Porter explained that the indexing of projects that are delayed to subsequent years would emphasize the deteriorating impact that a delay will have on the roadway.

T. Bennett stated that updates to the TIP happen as a result of staff communication with the communities. Staff contacts communities on a regular basis to verify the evaluation scores of any given project and whether they are contested.

C. Porter noted that Community Transportation projects remain to be defined. In the past, projects in the category were CMAQ-type projects like the First-Mile/Last-Mile shuttles. CMAQ does not allow for ongoing operational funding so it is possible Community Transportation projects might help to leverage other related funding sources.

S. Zadakis described the benefit of seed money project which has some evidence of communities continuing to fund projects that originated under the seed-money approach. The difficulty is in finding the projects that are likely to be successful.

T. Bennett stated that after this TIP further guidance on how the Community Transportation program is defined and implemented regarding its sustainability ought to be addressed.

J. McQueen expressed that it is important to keep the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail project on the TIP because it establishes a funding source which is a critical factor for project viability when viewed from the community perspective.

T. Bennett explained that smaller projects on the TIP list should be considered for advancement when TIP resources are being shifted from one year to another. She also noted that two of the three projects on the TIP are bike paths, three are Corridor Studies and three are intersection projects. The Green line continues to 2021 and then Rutherford continues on to 2024. This mixture of funding fewer capital intensive projects may help to fund a larger number of smaller projects in the outer years.

L. Dantas reminded members to keep in mind when reviewing the full TIP document that it lists all statewide discretionary items which include other bicycle projects as well. The staff

is attempting to have a combined, simplified list of projects showing all of the pertinent information in one place.

T. Bennett and L. Dantas discussed the availability of the MBTA capital investment spending list and the differences from FTA and FHWA based funding sources. MBTA is engaging a fleet maintenance study and a service planning process in the near term which will have an impact on the MBTA's capital investment program.

M. Gowing asked where funding for Green Line signal project was placed. LD explained that it was a Transit project (FTA funding) and not a part of the flexed FHWA funding for transit program. The funds for the Green Line signal project is identified in the transit budget.

D. Montgomery asked if community type addressed the EJ component. L. Dantas stated that the EJ analysis will be in the TIP document. In the current document, TIP projects are distributed in many EJ communities. C. Porter explained that there is a shift to the urban core which reflects EJ funding.

L. Dantas stated that the 128 add a lane and Crosby Corner projects in the past have taken a larger share of funds.

T. Bennett mentioned that the reconstruction of Rutherford funding starts in 2020 and which has high-cost increases; the project was front loaded to distribute the project costs over more years. Redirecting funds to the Rutherford Avenue Project on the TIP will still be needed for years that are beyond the current TIP.

M. Gowing questioned the impact of the current inflation rate on projects. L. Dantas stated that any project from 2019 out includes a 4 percent inflation rate. This means that there are fewer funds available for actual projects.

A. Fragoso explained that projected costs that are based on a 25 percent design are not reliable. F. Moseley and T. Bennett explained that there are contingencies built into these numbers, but there still needs to be more discussion on this process and she suggested that the Council continue a discussion on this topic with MassDOT.

L. Dantas explained that D. Anderson of MassDOT in his presentation to the Advisory Council the cost estimation ideas the state is trying to implement. A. Fragoso suggests that code compliance regarding climate change be included in future cost estimates.

L. Dantas stated that the fifth year of the TIP, for federal review purposes, is illustrative and that the federal agencies view the TIP as a four-year document. There is an option of not programming the fifth year at the MPO level. Placement on the TIP can influence the likelihood of a community supporting a project that has no funding source. T. Bennett stated that a possible solution might be that the MPO does not program a certain percentage of its funding in order to take cost increases into consideration.

C. Porter identified several points to be considered in the comment letter:

1. Appreciating attention to new priorities in the types of projects consistent with the LRTP and the consideration of projects along similar category types (and the binning approach in ranking and prioritizing).
2. The importance of keeping to schedule and having projects kept shovel-ready.
3. Encouraging the MPO to reconfirm old projects and to consider whether they need to be restored in light of new information.
4. Stress that Community Transportation programs, as they are better defined, look for the money can be used to support sustainable services rather than pilot projects.
5. If the opportunity to find other sources comes up, the Advisory Council encourages its use and that the backlog of other needs and priority projects that could easily be replaced on the MPO's funding list.
6. Look forward to continuing the discussion on cost estimation validity and processes to budget realistically to avoid major unexpected cost increases.

T. Bennett commended the MPO staff for reframing some of the communications materials, over the past year, to better convey information in a meaningful way.

L. Dantas reviewed the MPO process remaining for the completion of the TIP. On April 20, the TIP is scheduled to be voted on for release for public comment. The TIP endorsement will be on May 25.

L. Dantas explained that Critical Freight Corridor discussion will be held on the April 20 MPO meeting.

Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

J. Seward announced that May 13 will be BCES Statewide Infrastructure Day at the Fort Point Channel which coincides with the Fort Point Mother's Day Spring Art Walk and Open Studios Weekend.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:20 PM.

Attendance

Municipalities - Voting

Acton
Cambridge
Millis
Needham

Citizen Advocacy Groups

American Council of Engineering Companies
Boston Society of Architects

Boston Society of Civil Engineers
CrosstownConnect
MassBike
MoveMassachusetts
WalkBoston

Agencies Non-Voting

Three Rivers Interlocal Council

Guests

Ed Lowney
Dee Whilleby

Staff

Lourenço Dantas
David Fargen

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Tegin Bennett
Ed Chisholm
David Montgomery;
Rhain Hoyland

Fred Moseley
Schuyler Larrabee
AnaCristina
Fragoso
Scott Zadakis
Chris Porter
Jon Seward
John McQueen

Steve Olanoff

Malden Resident
Boston Resident

Matt Archer
Jen Rowe