

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

May 10, 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 8)

Chair's Report - Tegin Teich Bennett

M. Gowing attended the April 20 MPO meeting which covered Draft Amendment 3 to the FFY 2017-21 TIP prior to its distribution for a 21-day public review period. Many project proponents advocated for their TIP projects in the FFY 2018-22 TIP which was released for a 21-day public review period.

MPO staff member, Bill Kuttner, led a presentation and discussion of the approved staff recommendation for the designation of Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFCs) and Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFCs) in the Boston region, which MassDOT would incorporate into the statewide freight plan, following a public review and comment period.

T. Bennett attended the May 4 MPO meeting where it was announced that Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning for the MPO Staff will be retiring. The MPO voted to release the Draft FFY 2018 UPWP document for a 21-day public review period after a presentation and discussion.

A presentation and discussion of the federal transit asset management requirements, MBTA transit asset management practices, and related activities for MPO performance-based planning and programming was made by MPO and MBTA staff.

The Core Capacity Constraints Study was presented by MPO staff with a discussion of the findings of the study that examined existing and future conditions of the transportation system in the core area of the Boston region and the system's ability to accommodate

future growth. T. Bennett stated that the study clarifies the impact of major development on transit capacity and shows the need for considering how these impacts are to be mitigated at a regional level. The study is available on the MPO website.

Today's meeting will be focused on the TIP and UPWP comment letters, and the performance-based planning process presentation.

Minutes - April 12, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 12 meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved with B. Steinberg and M. Wellons abstaining.

3C Documents Comment Letters - Chris Porter, 3C Documents Committee Chair and Sandy Johnston, CTPS

S. Johnston explained the Community Transportation Program Development study in the FFY 2018 UPWP. This study combines two previously proposed studies: low-cost MBTA improvements to rapid transit service and first-mile/last-mile shuttle partnership models. The low-cost project might have been redundant with a contract MBTA has with MIT. The Community Transportation Program (CTP) is funded in the TIP in 2020 and 2021 and will likely offer small capital programs and partnerships across the region. The study is being funded through the UPWP this year to help define the program and identify future investment opportunities.

The CTP funding will invest in small capital projects and partnerships, with emphasis on first and last mile connections especially located near transit stops, and reviewing partnerships with shuttles to and from commuter rail stations. The CTP reflects a wide variety of funding available for relatively small capital investment.

C. Porter reviewed the points that were made at the last Advisory Council meeting for inclusion in the letter. The points included:

- Appreciating MPO staff's attention to materials and presentation of materials related to the certification documents.
- Appreciating the attention to the new priorities in bidding the projects.
- Projects that have lingered on the TIP for many years should be reviewed to see if they are still priorities.
- Importance of keeping the original schedule on the program to attempt to minimize cost overruns.
- Need for a better definition of the Community Transportation Programs and the emphasis that it becomes a sustainable program.
- Encourage MPO to fund projects from sources other than the MPO.
- Keep the issue of cost estimation and realistic budgeting in the forefront.

- Appreciation of staff's consideration of comments made during the development of the UPWP.

L. Diggins suggested that MPO staff reach out to minority and low-income communities when soliciting projects for the Community Transportation Program. The staff outreach could also get information from the communities in terms of how outreach can be better achieved. C. Porter stated that this point could be worked into the letter in reference to the CTP.

R. McGaw made suggestions for various copy edits to the draft letter. He also emphasized the need for local proponents to affirm the continuation of projects that have been on the TIP for many years. T. Bennett indicated that the process of re-evaluating the projects based on TIP criteria keeps projects that are aligned with program goals.

L. Dantas questioned whether there would be an individual letter for the TIP and the UPWP. The members approved the preparation of two separate comment letters. In reference to sources other than the MPO, T. Bennett indicated that these sources were other than MPO target funds.

A motion to accept changes to the draft letter and to send two comment letters, one for the TIP and one for the UPWP was made and seconded. The motion passed.

Performance-Based Planning Process (PBPP): An update on federal reporting requirements and status of the MPO's activities - Michelle Scott, CTPS

M. Scott explained the handouts available to members. Her presentation summarized MPO responses to federal performance-based planning and programming (PBPP) process requirements which the MPO is working to meet through various initiatives. In conjunction with various stakeholders the MPO has sought to improve performance measures, set performance targets, and tie together other pieces of the PBPP process. This effort will continue over the next few months and years.

PBPP is the application of data to inform decisions to help achieve desired outcomes for the region's multi-modal transportation system. This is a three-stage process including planning, programming, and monitoring and evaluating. This process is cyclical and is being implemented during the update to the next Long Range Transportation Plan. As the process continues follow-up activities include setting goals and objectives; exploring other measures; and setting or adjusting targets.

PBPP is intended to help us better understand how our choices affect transportation performance as measured by safety, congestion, and other metrics. The performance data will be used to support decision-making focused on specific outcomes. These decisions will be made in an open and transparent process. PBPP will also reinforce linkages

between the LRTP, TIP, UPWP and other studies and initiatives to help the MPO move in a coordinated way.

Federal requirements come from MAP-21 and the FAST Act. These frameworks have trickled down in a series of rules being promulgated by USDOT. These rules specify performance measures. The MPO will start by setting targets for measures related to transit asset management and highway safety where timelines are running for states to fulfill the program requirements.

With highway performance measures, MPOs have a choice of supporting statewide targets or setting their own targets. The transit agency target setting process is different in that overall program goals (such as maintaining asset condition) are set at the federal level and the transit agencies set targets for the areas they serve. The Federal administration is emphasizing coordination between transit agencies, states, and MPOs.

Reporting progress is an important part of the process. Starting in 2018, the MPO will need to identify its targets in future TIPs and LRTPs. The LRTP will identify the condition of the system with respect to the measures and the targets and describe progress achieved since the last LRTP. The TIP will define the relationship between investment priorities and targets and address how the programmed projects will help achieve the target.

The MPO is also exploring other measures, targets, and activities—beyond those required by federal agencies—that it can incorporate into its PBPP process. The MPO planning process already incorporates PBPP principles by setting goals and objectives and integrating goals into the current set of TIP criteria. The MPO currently uses measures for planning on a study by study basis. It has also done work on setting baselines, tracking trends, and collecting and managing data.

A next step in developing PBPP for the MPO will be to establish a formal group of measures that can be tracked over time. Setting targets, updating baseline and trend information and exploring other data sources will be ongoing.

With regards to the programming phase, the MPO has analyzed scenarios in the past. In the most recent LRTP, a scenario was used to determine whether the MPO should pursue a policy of directing its target funding toward major infrastructure projects, or of focusing that funding on lower-cost traffic management and operations type projects.

The MPO already uses performance-driven methods to make programming decisions. For example, the MPO evaluates TIP projects against TIP criteria before deciding which ones to fund. TIP projects are evaluated in terms of their likely accomplishment of goals and objectives.

The next LRTP will incorporate additional scenario planning, and will integrate and refine project criteria for evaluating projects for the LRTP, the TIP and other MPO planning processes. The MPO will continue exploring different strategies and policies for directing

the distribution of funding.

In the monitoring and evaluating phase, the MPO already reports on trends, project outputs and programmatic outcomes. The MPO already has done some work on evaluating the effectiveness of its programming strategies. For example, it has conducted TIP Before and After Studies which review funded and completed TIP projects to identify improvements in safety and mobility and whether the improvements align with the expectations that were established before the project was built.

Work to be completed in implementing PBPP includes updating the types of information the MPO reports and how that information is reported; developing reporting tools; identifying needs and strategies and areas to study through the UPWP process; and gathering information that might shape how the MPO adjust's its goals, objectives, performance measures and targets in the future.

M. Scott introduced a timeline showing upcoming scheduled activities. There will be ongoing activities throughout the next few years including the incorporation of various elements of PBPP into the LRTP; continued reporting of progress in the TIP; and continued communication with various stakeholders.

M. Scott also introduced the "Performance Dashboard" which was recently implemented on the MPO website. The tool helps to visualize different performance trends for the MPO and the municipal level. Suggestions for improved ways to visualize the data are welcome by contacting Michelle at mscott@ctps.org.

Discussion

T. Bennett stated the importance of reviewing the TIP criteria and considering the impacts they have on funding allocation for local projects. She asked if the TIP criteria would be revamped in the future. M. Scott explained that information available helps to identify the nature of the project, but there needs to be a way to estimate the features of the project that comport with quantifiable projections. There will probably be some modifications over time, but the most important thing is to keep the evaluation through TIP criteria as open and transparent as possible.

T. Bennett stated that data needs to be presented in a meaningful way, and asked how stakeholders can reach out to help develop more illustrative analytical tools like the Performance Dashboard. M. Scott stated that any inputs will be considered as they may be helpful for any or all users of the analysis tool.

In response to a question on the inclusion of trucks in total crash data as cited on the Performance Dashboard, A. McGahan explained that they are included. (M. Gowing)

M. Scott stated that the timeline for establishing transit targets is somewhat vague. MPOs are responsible for setting targets within 180 days of when transit agencies set their

targets. There are several transit agencies within the MPO, each at varying stage of target development, but the MBTA's progress will likely have a large influence on target development as it has the largest asset inventory. The Federal Transit Administration has been flexible on the timeline as transit agencies across the nation are at varying degrees of development in PBPP. (M. Gowing)

M. Scott indicated that crash data is broken down by motorized and non-motorized incidents and the Performance Dashboard provides detail on bicycle and pedestrian crashes. A. McGahan stated that the data comes from the RMV and that data for various years is noted in the tables. (J. McQueen)

In response to a member's question on potential competition and politics in distributing federal funds, M. Scott stated that she is not aware of a federal stipulation that says interstate distribution of federal dollars will be affected by performance monitoring under these new requirements. Federal officials looking at an individual state's performance with respect to its targets and give more specific direction to states on how they should use their funding within a certain timeframe. That is, the state might be encouraged to spend more in a given category than another. (B. McGaw)

M. Scott continued by stating that federal agencies will not evaluate MPO-level performance in the same way they will evaluate state-level performance. The federal agencies are requiring MPOs to incorporate PBPP principles into their decision-making processes. Every four years, the federal agencies conduct an evaluation of the MPO and will look at whether these principles are being implemented.

T. Bennett emphasized that the way in which data and the performance measures are framed has an impact on how things are viewed and responded to politically which makes full involvement in the process of developing the measures so critical.

In response to a member's question, M. Scott explained that currently the dashboard tracks data that the MPO has traditionally tracked, but future iterations could include a more expansive data set including roadway conditions. (A. Fragoso)

In response to a member's question on public private partnerships, A. McGahan explained that the last scenario for the LRTP was financially constrained so it was limited to federally funded projects. In the future a non-financially constrained scenario will be advanced in order to see types of projects that might advance the MPO's goals and objectives and this might be a time to introduce these projects. (A. Fragoso)

In response to a member's question, M. Scott indicated that the federal partners are emphasizing coordination of different parties. The Transportation Managers Group (TMG), which is made up of MPO representatives, coordinates on statewide issues. The group has a performance sub-committee which looks at issues pertaining to each of the performance measures, including target setting and coordinating with state-level

agencies. The structure is being set up in hopes of maintaining coordination. Coordination is happening with the transit agencies as well. (M. Gowing)

In response to a members question on the incorporation of freight and rail data into the dashboard, A. McGahan stated that freight will be measured as a congestion measure within the freight reliability tracking. M. Scott indicated that while the dashboard does not have freight features yet, it can be added in the future. The Federal Railroad Administration has not required PBPP yet, but it could be explored. (M. Wellons)

An individual case study would be needed to analyze the impact of moving the Boston Yard Park to Worcester according to A. McGahan in response to a question from M. Wellons. The UPWP could be a way to pursue that study.

L. Diggins asked it was possible for MPO staff to tell if specific projects have an effect on particular metrics. M. Scott stated that this is something that MPO staff hope to move toward in monitoring and evaluations. Currently analysts must rely on macro level information, such as the MassDOT HSIP crash locations. This will have an impact on the how targets are set. She stated that we will have to use a variety of approaches to address the challenge of figuring out which project is going to have the most impact and how to make sure we are directing our resources appropriately.

A. Fragoso asked if congestion data is normalized to population and other effects. A. McGahan explained that the most recent INRIX data just arrived and is being examined at this time.

Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

T. Bennett announced a National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) will sponsor a speaker forum on the evening of May 23, 2017. T. Bennett will be on the panel.

L. Dantas made an announcement of three upcoming deadlines: TIP – 5/15; UPWP – 6/5; and the Critical Freight Corridor Designation – 5/22. He also announced that the MPO votes on the TIP and Corridor Designations on 5/25; and the MPO will vote on the UPWP on 6/15.

The CTPS Open house on 5/16 is designated for discussion of the documents currently out for public review .

J. Rowe encouraged signing up for “MPO Notices” subscriptions on the MPO website.

Adjournment

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

Attendance

Municipalities - Voting

Acton
Belmont
Cambridge
Needham

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Robert McGaw
Tegin Bennett
Rhain Hoyland

Citizen Advocacy Groups

American Council of Engineering
Companies
Association for Public Transportation
Boston Society of Architects

Boston Society of Civil Engineers
CrosstownConnect
MassBike
MASCO
MoveMassachusetts
Riverside Neighborhood Association
WalkBoston

Fred Moseley
Barry M Steinberg
Schuyler Larrabee
AnaCristina
Fragoso
Scott Zadakis
Chris Porter
Paul Nelson
Jon Seward
Marilyn Wellons
John McQueen

Municipalities Non-Voting

Boston

Tom Kadzis

Agencies Non-Voting

MassDOT - Aeronautics Division

Mike Garrity

Guests

MBTA - ROC

Leonard Diggins

E. Boston Resident

Christopher

Malden Resident

Blackler

Ed Lowney

Staff

Lourenço Dantas

Sandy Johnston

David Fargen

Jen Rowe

Anne McGahan

Matt Archer

Michelle Scott