

MPO Meeting Minutes

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

August 20, 2020 Meeting

10:00 AM–11:45 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

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 minutes of the June 25, 2020 meeting
- Approve the work program for Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021 Title VI Monitoring
- Approve the Major Infrastructure Program definition

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance beginning on page 11.

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

There was none.

3. Executive Director's Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)*

T. Teich said that focus groups and interviews are planned over the coming weeks regarding CTPS' Strategic Planning process. Outreach surveys are open through August 24, 2020. The Conservation Law Foundation and GreenRoots held a meeting to discuss Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) criteria and integration of equity into goal area criteria. On August 27, 2020, Matt Genova and Kate White will meet with the Transit Matters Advisory Council to discuss TIP Criteria revisions. A meeting on August 25, 2020 will be held with the Stakeholder Group on Disparate Impact/Disproportionate Burden. MPO staff will discuss TIP Criteria testing scoring results at the next MPO meeting.

4. Public Comments

There were none.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council)*

L. Diggins noted that the Advisory Council hosted a meet and greet for members on August 12, 2020. The next meeting will be held September 9, 2020.

7. Action Item: Approval of June 25, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes—*Róisín Foley, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. [June 25, 2020 MPO Meeting Minutes](#)

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of June 25, 2020, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: Work Program for MBTA 2021 Title VI Program Monitoring—*Bradley Putnam, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. [Work Program: FFY 2021 MBTA Title VI Monitoring](#)

B. Putnam explained that the work program complies with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) detailing the MBTA's efforts to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The project is scheduled for 12 months, with a budget of \$73,000, which will be paid for by the MBTA. The Title VI report ensures that the MBTA provides a comparable level and quality of transportation services to all customers without regard to race, color, or national origin. CTPS completed the MBTA's most recent triennial Title VI report earlier this year. For years in which the MBTA does not submit a triennial report, FTA requires the MBTA to complete annual service monitoring and internal reporting to identify and address potential disparate impacts early and to ensure ongoing compliance with Title VI.

The next MBTA Title VI report is due in 2023. This work program is for annual service monitoring for 2021. CTPS will compile and analyze 10 categories of MBTA service data, such as vehicle load, on-time performance, and the distribution of transit amenities. The modes that these data will cover are bus, heavy and light rail, and commuter rail. The final product of this work scope will be a technical memorandum submitted to the MBTA with the results of the data analysis.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for MBTA 2021 Title VI Program Monitoring was made by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: Major Infrastructure Definition—Anne McGahan, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. [Major Infrastructure Memorandum](#)
2. [Major Infrastructure Program Policies Presentation](#)

A. McGahan discussed the Major Infrastructure Program and whether it should be defined by cost threshold, regional impact, or other characteristics. She pointed out that the MPO Calendar features a memorandum summarizing the Major Infrastructure Program and includes a history of the program and staff recommendations for a new definition and program policies. A. McGahan then summarized this information in her presentation.

In past meetings, MPO board members voiced their opinions on the Major Infrastructure program and felt there should be a cost threshold to retain a level of scrutiny for projects that are expensive with most members supporting a cost threshold of \$50 million. The Major Infrastructure definition should also capture projects that have a regional impact, such as an interchange improvement or a significant transit extension.

Historically, the MPO has identified Major Infrastructure projects based on cost or whether they change the capacity of the transportation network. The current definition is any project that changes the capacity of the transportation network or costs more than \$20 million. The MPO's policy is to list all Major Infrastructure projects in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

For capacity changes to the network, the MPO chose to define Major Infrastructure projects that change the capacity of the transportation network included in the travel demand model. A. McGahan stated that this was based on federal requirements related to air quality conformity determination regulations for the LRTP. Because of its air quality designation, the MPO is required to perform conformity determinations and include all regionally significant projects as part of that analysis. Regionally significant projects are specifically defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

FHWA issued guidance, which included cost thresholds for projects that were required to be listed in past LRTPs. In 2008 for *Journey to 2030*, all projects more than \$10

million were required to be included in the LRTP. In 2016 for *Charting Progress to 2040*, all projects more than \$20 million were required to be included in the LRTP. For the most recent plan, *Destination 2040*, there was no cost threshold requirement.

The MPO can consider different characteristics for the Major Infrastructure program, such as cost thresholds, capacity, or specific federal funding requirements for projects that must be included in LRTP, but these may not meet the needs of the MPO. The MPO can also consider roadway functional classification, environmental assessment or environmental impact statement requirements for projects to be listed in the LRTP, projects requiring specific levels of federal or state approval or oversight requirements for projects to be listed in the LRTP, projects that cross MPO boundaries, projects that will be funded (completely or in part) through specific federal discretionary grant programs, projects that serve specific destinations within the region, and other project characteristics, such as whether a project includes an interchange.

MPO staff concluded that functional classification of roadways was the best characteristic to determine if a project is affecting regional travel. Projects that require federal approval or oversight but don't have to be part of the definition of the MPO's Major Infrastructure program will continue to be listed in the LRTP.

FHWA classifies roadways as higher-level and lower-level classifications. Higher-level classifications of roadways include interstate highways, principal arterial freeways or expressway, and principal arterials. Lower-level classifications include, minor arterials, collector roadways, and local roads. The staff's goal was to suggest clear definitions to define the Major Infrastructure investment program in relation to other investment programs and to develop an approach addressing both federal and state requirements that support the scrutiny of projects with higher costs and/or the potential for regional impacts. Staff also considered how these definitions may affect administrative work resulting from amendments to both the LRTP and TIP documents when project costs change.

The MPO board always has the discretion to include a project in this program. In these cases, the classification of a Major Infrastructure project should be done when the project is submitted to the MPO for consideration.

The staff recommends that Major Infrastructure projects be defined separately from projects that are considered regionally significant for air quality analysis and travel demand modeling purposes or projects that must be listed in the LRTP to meet federal or state requirements. This can be done by identifying projects with regional impacts or those that merit increased scrutiny, allocate its dollars across investment programs, and focus on the types of projects it would like to prioritize for funding.

Staff recommended that the cost threshold amount for a project to be designated as Major Infrastructure would increase from \$20 million to \$50 million to allow the MPO to maintain a level of scrutiny for higher cost projects. If a project does not meet the \$50 million cost threshold, it would then be classified as a Major Infrastructure project as long as it makes capital improvements to roadways that are classified as Interstate Highways, Principal Arterial Freeways and Expressways, or Principal Arterial “Other” that have fully or partially controlled access.

MPO staff suggested specifying these roadways to focus the Major Infrastructure program on facilities that are important to regional travel. These roadways not only carry higher volumes of traffic, but are designed to move people from one part of the region to another, as opposed to within municipalities or small groups of municipalities.

If a transit project does not meet the \$50 million cost threshold, it would be classified as a Major Infrastructure project if it creates new connections or extends the MPO’s rail or fixed-guideway rail and transit network or bus rapid transit network.

In examining the impacts of the new definition, most of the changes would occur in the Complete Streets program since projects would no longer be classified based on whether they change the capacity of the roadway network but would be classified based on roadway type. For all other investment programs, other than the Complete Streets program, the main criteria would be if the project costs more than \$50 million. Any intersection, bicycle, pedestrian, or transit modernization project that costs more than \$50 million would be considered a Major Infrastructure project.

Staff recalculated the funding percentages for each investment program for projects that are currently programmed in the *Destination 2040* LRTP and FFY 2021–25 TIP. The new definition helps the MPO move closer to the funding goals established in *Destination 2040* and is in line with the MPO’s policy of continuing an operations and management approach to programming, which gives priority to low-cost, non-Major Infrastructure projects.

Discussion

David Koses (At Large City) (City of Newton) asked if any project having full or partial controlled access would be at a disadvantage because it is now considered a Major Infrastructure and not Complete Streets even though the cost is less. A. McGahan said most of the projects included in the LRTP or TIP with full or partial access fit into one of the categories and are considered Major Infrastructure projects. Projects can be classified in different programs at the MPO’s discretion and should be looked at when a project is submitted for funding consideration. The new (TIP) criteria is now being

categorized by Investment Program, so if the project is classified when it is submitted, the proponents will know how their project will be evaluated.

L. Diggins (Advisory Council Chair) stated the definition provides guidance and the Advisory Council will continue to discuss it at a future meeting.

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town) (Town of Arlington) asked about the transit network and how this would affect a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) improvement; some pilot projects were not true BRT, but BRT pilot projects. A. McGahan said that the transit projects would be similar to the expansion of the Silver Line. Most dedicated bus lanes are now part of the Complete Streets Program.

Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) (Boston Transportation Department) asked if it makes sense to talk about a definition without talking about evaluation. A. McGahan noted that projects are evaluated on how well they meet the goals. T. Kadzis said transit was never put into the category of Major Infrastructure and asked whether or not staff was referring to flex funds when talking about Major Infrastructure with transit. A. McGahan replied in the affirmative. T. Kadzis asked if these are discretionary funds for FHWA. A. McGahan said this definition is for the MPOs Major Infrastructure program, which uses MPO target funds.

Ken Miller (FHWA) stated that he did not feel that inclusion of all “other” principal arterials is appropriate because of their characteristics in the Boston region, which are not limited access if it is a Complete Streets project. He said Complete Streets evaluation criteria should apply even if it is more than \$50 million and then tailor it to Major Infrastructure criteria. A. McGahan said that the Complete Street criteria would be used to evaluate the project, and that the \$50 million threshold is for the MPO to have more oversight to determine its effect on the funding goal. K. Miller suggested taking another look at the Major Infrastructure criteria to tailor them more towards limited access because by definition they will be at a disadvantage to receive points for certain things. K. Miller also suggested that the criteria be consistent with the definitions of the project.

Jim Fitzgerald (City of Boston) (Boston Planning & Development Agency) stated using limited access highways and freeways makes sense, but removing a project that does not add capacity opens the door for maintenance projects. A. McGahan said the target funding is for capital projects. It is always up to the MPO to decide on what projects they want funded under this program and each project can be classified individually.

Samantha Silverberg (MBTA) commented on the transit definition regarding BRT and suggested it would be helpful to look at how the FAST Act defines BRT for purposes of FTA Capital Investment Grant projects for new- and smart-starts projects.

D. Mohler asked if a project that satisfies one or both criteria of the Major Infrastructure roadway or transit project is a Major Infrastructure project and if anything more than \$50 million is a Major Infrastructure project. A. McGahan replied in the affirmative to both of the questions.

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town) (Town of Arlington) asked for clarification if the inclusion of the principal arterial “other” category is contingent upon whether it has partial or complete access control. A. McGahan replied affirmatively.

K. Miller asked about Memorial Drive and its classification. A. McGahan responded that it is classified in the Federal Functional Classification as an “other” principal arterial with partial access.

Sheila Page (At-Large Town) (Town of Lexington) asked if the Lexington project may hover between both thresholds and how might this project be split between these categories. A. McGahan said it depends on the design but looks like it may fit into the Complete Streets program.

D. Mohler asked if it is the intention that Major Infrastructure projects will be separately listed in the next plan regardless of capacity. A. McGahan replied that they have always been included in the plan in the past. It would be up to the MPO if they want to change that.

D. Mohler suggested in the essence of time, rather than to continue further discussion on the definition of Major Infrastructure, the meeting move to the next topic of TIP Project Selection Criteria. There were no objections.

Vote

A motion to approve the definition of Major Infrastructure was made by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The MBTA (S. Silverberg), MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane), City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department) (T. Kadzis), City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency) (J. Fitzgerald), At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (D. Amstutz), At-Large Town (Town of Lexington) (S. Page), Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent), MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham) (Thatcher Kezer III), North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy), and the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset River Regional Chamber) (Tom O’Rourke) voted in favor of the

motion. The Chair (D. Mohler), MassDOT (John Bechard), MassDOT Highway Division (John Romano), Massachusetts Port Authority (Laura Gilmore), and At-Large City (City of Newton) (D. Koses) voted against the motion. The motion carried.

10. Discussion: TIP Project Selection Criteria—*Matt Genova, MPO Staff Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. [TIP Criteria Revisions: Scoring Framework](#)

M. Genova presented the ongoing revisions to the TIP project selection criteria, focusing on the results from the test scoring that MPO staff conducted using the draft new criteria. He began by highlighting the goal for the presentation and some key questions for the MPO.

M. Genova summarized the current scoring system, noting that the 134-point scale is difficult for stakeholders to understand. He also noted that the current system is a one-size-fits-all approach, with no variations in the weights of goal areas across project types, and that the current system lacks criteria for scoring projects in the MPO's new Transit Modernization Program.

M. Genova then reviewed feedback received from an MPO-member focus group on the TIP criteria held on July 27, 2020. During that meeting, MPO members stated that the Safety goal area should be weighted heavily, followed closely by System Preservation. They also stated their desire to have Capacity Management points focused on non-auto modes; to specifically highlight Equity points in the scoring system; to see a reduction in point disparities across goal areas; and to have an overall scoring system that is easier to understand than the current one.

The proposed new scoring seeks to implement much of this feedback from MPO members. The new scoring system emphasizes the importance of Safety and System Preservation while reducing the disparities between the highest- and lowest-scoring goal areas for most investment programs. The new system also aims to make the final overall score one that is easier to understand. Finally, the proposed system increases the overall weight of Equity and highlights these points in the overall scoring system.

M. Genova then discussed the proposed scoring system in detail. The new scoring system is proposed to be on a 100-point scale. Unlike the current system, the points distributed to each goal area vary across investment programs. By reducing the overall number of points, the proposed scoring system necessitates a more focused set of criteria, as there are fewer points to distribute broadly to a range of items within any given criterion. The point values for the goal areas within each investment program are tailored to the projects aimed for funding. The new system weights Equity more highly

and will result in a more accurate measurement of the benefits of projects for Equity populations while better recognizing those benefits in a project's overall score. After providing this summary of the proposed system, M. Genova then walked through the scoring process for an example project to demonstrate how the new scoring would work in practice.

M. Genova concluded the presentation by outlining the next steps for the criteria revision process. At the next MPO meeting on September 3, 2020, MPO staff will present the first round of project test scores using the new criteria. At this meeting, MPO staff will also present the results from the second round of public outreach on the criteria, including a summary of both the ongoing survey and several focus groups with key stakeholders. If necessary, MPO staff will present further rounds of test scores at subsequent MPO meetings, with the intention to reach a final draft of the new criteria around the start of the new federal fiscal year on October 1, 2020.

Discussion

L. Diggins noted that, though the new scoring system is slightly more complex than the existing system, transportation is also complex so it makes sense to score these projects in a nuanced way. L. Diggins stated his support for the work being done on the criteria.

D. Amstutz also stated his appreciation for the work of MPO staff on the criteria and likes the direction of the project as a whole. He asked if it would be possible to see the total scores first, not including the equity scores, to compare against each other based on various factors. He also said it would be helpful to show the equity score with the project's equity multiplier to better understand how the score was calculated and to support comparisons across projects. M. Genova agreed this would be a good way to present the scores when the criteria are implemented for the upcoming TIP cycle.

S. Silverberg supports different goal weightings across different investment programs.

L. Gilmore supports transitioning to a 100-point scoring system.

Rich Benevento (World Tech Engineering) appreciated the presentations today. He asked if any projects that are already programmed in the TIP will be rescored using the new criteria. R. Benevento is concerned that cities and towns that have already made a significant investment in advancing their projects through the design process could discover that through the new scoring system they no longer have a higher score and they get bumped. M. Genova said that anything programmed through the TIP and scored through 2025 would not be rescored. Any projects scored but not yet programmed would be rescored using the new criteria if approved.

11. Members Items

D. Mohler stated that the next MPO meeting will be held on September 3, 2020, with the follow-up discussion on Major Infrastructure.

12. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by MAPC (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA (S. Silverberg). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

At-Large City (City of Everett)	
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Sheila Page
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Ken Miller
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
	John Bechard
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Samantha Silverberg
Massachusetts Port Authority	Laura Gilmore
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Thatcher Kezer III
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset River Regional Chamber)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Constance Raphael	MassDOT Highway Division District 4
Dan Hennessey	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Elizabeth Torres	City of Boston
Erika Oliver Jerram	City of Framingham
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Jeanette Rebecchi	Town of Bedford
Joe Blankenship	City of Boston
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Michelle Ho	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Pat Brown	Citizen of Sudbury
Rich Benevento	World Tech Engineering
Steve Olanoff	TRIC Alternate

**MPO Staff/Central Transportation
Planning Staff**

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Annette Demchur
Róisín Foley
Matt Genova
Betsy Harvey
Sandy Johnston
Anne McGahan
Benjamin Muller
Ariel Patterson
Scott Peterson
Barbara Rutman
Michelle Scott
Kate White

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A complaint form and additional information can be obtained by contacting the MPO or at http://www.bostonmpo.org/mpo_non_discrimination. To request this information in a different language or in an accessible format, please contact

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