

MPO Meeting Minutes

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

November 5, 2020, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:27 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

David Mohler and Steve 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 17, 2020
- Approve the work plan for the Cape Rail Study
- Approve the work program for Informing the Big Ideas Behind the MPO's Scenario Planning Process
- Approve the revised target for the percent on non-single occupancy vehicle travel in the Boston Urbanized Area
- Approve the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Policy

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance beginning page 8.

2. Chair's Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

S. Woelfel stated that MassDOT's annual Moving Together Conference would be held virtually November 17–19, 2020.

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

T. Teich announced that the Boston Region MPO has become a member of the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), a national membership organization that supports MPOs.

T. Teich provided an overview of the ongoing process to create a five-year strategic plan for the Central Transportation Planning Staff. T. Teich stated that the Strategic Planning Steering Committee will be participating in a retreat focusing on vision, mission, and goals for the agency.

T. Teich provided an overview of recent outreach conducted by MPO staff. The MPO staff hosted two TIP How-To sessions and presented at the Southern New England American Planning Association conference. T. Teich stated that in November staff will attend subregional meetings hosted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to speak about opportunities with the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The next meeting of the MPO's Transit Working Group will be on Thursday, November 12th at 2:30 PM. Staff will also host a virtual information session for the MPO's Community Connections grant program on Monday, November 16th at 4:00 PM. T. Teich added that the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is holding a series of public meetings for the Forging Ahead initiative throughout November and December. Detailed information about these meetings can be found at <https://www.mbta.com/forging-ahead>.

T. Teich noted tentative agenda items for the next MPO meeting: a UPWP Committee meeting, one MPO-funded work scope for approval, the presentation of the MPO-funded study on trip-generation rates, and the FFYs 2022–26 TIP Universe of Projects.

4. Public Comments

1. [DIDB Policy Comment Letter CLF](#)

Johannes Epke (Conservation Law Foundation) stated that CLF is concerned about the lack of the use of negative values in the DI/DB Policy. J. Epke stated that CLF appreciates the opportunity to have a voice in the process but believes the scope of the policy is constrained and does not address existing disparities. J. Epke stated that consideration of negative values would help to lessen existing disparities over time and he strongly urged the board to consider incorporating them.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none

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

L Diggins stated that Mike Bolduc and Carrie Lavallee from MassDOT spoke at the last Advisory Council meeting about project costs and how MassDOT projects are evaluated.

7. MPO Election Results—Welcome New MPO Members

Eric Bourassa (MAPC) stated that all seats in this year's MPO elections were uncontested. Members holding the At-Large City (City of Everett), South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly) seats

were reelected. The At-Large Town (Town of Lexington) did not run. The Town of Brookline was elected to the At-Large Town seat.

E. Bourassa stated that he, Brian Kane (MBTA Advisory Board), and the MPO staff will be working on a survey about municipal engagement in the MPO elections process in order to address concerns the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) highlighted in the MPO's last Certification Review.

Discussion

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town) (Town of Arlington) asked whether other communities expressed interest but decided not to run. E. Bourassa stated that the Town of Wakefield expressed interest but did not submit the correct materials. He added that they will work with the Town next year if the Town is still interested in running. A couple of other communities expressed interest but did not follow up.

Ken Miller (FHWA) asked how many communities voted. E. Bourassa replied that 15 municipalities voted electronically.

8. Action Item: Approval of September 17, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes—Barbara Rutman, MPO Staff

1. [MPO Meeting Minutes September 17, 2020](#)

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 17, 2020, was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane). The At-Large Town (Town of Brookline) (Todd Kirrane) abstained. The motion carried.

9. Action Item: Work Scope, Cape Rail Study—Ben Dowling, MPO Staff

1. [Work Plan Cape Rail](#)
2. [Cape Rail Map](#)

MPO staff are providing support to MassDOT's Cape Rail Study, which considers options for full-time commuter rail service to Cape Cod. The work scope is funded by MassDOT with a budget of \$65,488 and is planned to last eight months. The objectives of the work scope are to support as many as three stakeholder meetings, model and analyze as many as two alternative scenarios, and provide data support and analysis to MassDOT and its consultants and partners.

Discussion

Laura Gilmore (Massachusetts Port Authority) asked how MPO staff plan to work with the Cape Cod Commission, which is coordinating the public process for this work. Ben

Muller (MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning) stated that the Cape Cod Commission is undertaking the public process for this study through work funded in the Cape Cod MPO's UPWP budget and will be staffing the advisory board for the public meetings. It is through this board that build alternatives will be decided. Membership of that board includes representatives of the Towns of Wareham and Middleboro, which are in the Southeastern Massachusetts MPO. The representatives of those communities also sit on the board of the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, which is the MPO for southeastern Massachusetts. The project will involve coordination between MPOs.

Vote

A motion to approve the work scope for the Cape Rail Study was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane) and seconded by the At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (D. Amstutz). The motion carried.

10. Action Item: Work Scope, Informing the Big Ideas Behind the MPO's Scenario Planning Process—*Kate White, MPO Staff*

1. [Work Program Big Ideas](#)

The budget for the MPO-funded Federal Fiscal Year 2021 UPWP Study *Informing the Big Ideas Behind the MPO's Scenario Planning Process* has a budget of \$20,695 and the length of the study is eight months.

The objectives of this study are to identify diverse perspectives on key regional transportation challenges, review and incorporate public outreach data on regional transportation issues collected by other originators, and identify potential strategies to address these key challenges to incorporate into scenario planning.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is the MPO's main vehicle for addressing long-term and regional transportation questions. This study will help develop the questions the LRTP scenario planning process will explore to prepare for the completion of the next LRTP in 2023.

Discussion

E. Bourassa (MAPC) asked if MPO staff will coordinate with MassDOT, the MBTA, and municipalities as part of scenario development. K. White stated that MPO staff frequently coordinate with MassDOT and the MBTA, and staff will also be taking lessons from MAPC's MetroCommon scenario planning process.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for Informing the Big Ideas Behind the MPO's Scenario Planning Process was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (D. Amstutz). The motion carried.

11. Action Item: Revised Target for the Percent on Non-Single Occupancy Vehicle Travel in the Boston Urbanized Area—*Ben Muller, MassDOT*

B. Muller stated that MassDOT has submitted a proposed revision to the four-year non-single occupancy vehicle (non-SOV) travel target for the Boston Urbanized Area. The revised target was presented and discussed at an MPO meeting in September. The target was developed using American Community Survey (ACS) data, which considers commute trips and includes telecommuting as a mode of travel. The target data is expressed as a five-year rolling average. New ACS data shows that the proportion of non-SOV travel has increased faster than MassDOT initially projected. The revised target is 35.8 percent non-SOV trips for 2021, an increase from 35.1 percent.

Discussion

K. Miller (FHWA) stated that the performance measure itself should be for all travel, not just commute trips. B. Muller stated that MassDOT does not have reliable data for all travel but is working on improving bicycle and pedestrian trip modeling. K. Miller stated that occupancy information from the model could be used to develop the relationships between work-travel and non-work travel.

Vote

A motion to approve the revised target for the percent on non-single occupancy vehicle travel in the Boston Urbanized Area was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

12. Action Item: Disparate Impact Metrics Study and Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Policy—*Betsy Harvey, MPO Staff*

1. [Disparate Impact Metrics Analysis Study Memo](#)
2. [DI/DB Policy](#)
3. [DI/DB Threshold Tool](#)

Federal regulations require that the MPO identify and address impacts of its transportation investments that would disproportionately affect people because of their race, color, or national origin. In addition, the environmental justice (EJ) executive order requires that the MPO identify and address disproportionately high and adverse effects

of its investments on people with low incomes and minority populations. The final draft DI/DB Policy for the LRTP addresses both requirements by setting a series of three thresholds that must be passed in order for an impact to be identified as a possible DI/DB in the LRTP. The thresholds demonstrate that (1) the impact is *caused* by LRTP projects in the aggregate, (2) the impact is *significant* enough to affect peoples' quality of life, and (3) the impact would disproportionately affect the minority or low-income population *more* than the non-minority or non-low-income population. The thresholds in the final proposed DI/DB policy are as follows:

1. Baseline Uncertainty Threshold: Moderate uncertainty, reflecting what can be expected from the model and the metrics analyzed.
2. Practical impact threshold: 0 percent.
3. Disproportionality threshold: 0 percent, not allowing any difference between low-income and non-low income populations or minority and non-minority populations.

The recommended policy was shaped by a stakeholder working group and additional analysis by MPO staff. The Disparate Impact Metrics study explored how to measure when an impact is significant enough to affect peoples' quality of life, in order to help set the "Practical Impact" threshold. MPO staff did not find a compelling reason to set the value for this threshold above zero. MPO staff presented the policy to stakeholders in August for their final input before asking for endorsement. MPO staff created the DI/DB thresholds tool to help users visualize the role of each threshold.

If the DI/DB analysis results in a finding of a disparate impact for at least one metric, staff will determine whether there is a substantial, legitimate justification for implementing the program of projects as proposed and present the conclusion to the MPO board. Staff will also determine whether there are one or more alternatives that meet the same goals but that have fewer disparate impacts. If there are, staff will present the alternatives to the MPO board. Any proposed alternative(s) will be subject to the same DI/DB Policy and analysis. Similarly, if the analysis indicates that there would be a disproportionate burden for at least one metric, the MPO staff will recommend to the MPO board steps to take to avoid, minimize, or mitigate these impacts, where practicable. If there are no disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens, the MPO need not take any action.

As written in federal regulations, the DI/DB analysis has a very narrow scope. It requires the MPO to look only at the disproportionately high and adverse effects of future investments and does not refer to redressing existing inequities. It is meant to be a final check on the project design and selection process. The project selection process is

where the MPO has the most influence in redressing existing transportation inequities. The TIP criteria updates that the board approved in October were also designed to address this.

Note: At this time, D. Mohler assumed the Chair's seat.

Discussion

Steve Olanoff (Three Rivers Interlocal Council) (Town of Norwood/Neponset River Regional Chamber) asked B. Harvey to address a comment made by CLF. B. Harvey stated that a negative threshold would essentially require that minority populations receive either significantly more of a benefit than the non-minority population, or reduce burdens on them significantly. S. Olanoff asked how the negative value would be chosen. B. Harvey replied that the values are on a continuum, depending on how large the benefit is. S. Olanoff noted that when the threshold is set at zero, the MPO essentially maintains that any difference between what the minority population and the non-minority population would receive is a matter to look at. B. Harvey agreed and noted that, taking into account uncertainty in the model, any difference would identify a potential disparate impact or disproportionate burden.

L. Diggins asked what the values are for low, moderate, and high uncertainty. B. Harvey stated that the value for low uncertainty was about 10 percent, high was about 90 percent, and moderate was about 50 percent. L. Diggins noted that the moderate uncertainty seemed fairly high and recommended that the board have the ability to look at the uncertainty levels when an analysis is done.

Vote

A motion to approve the DI/DB Policy was made by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins) and seconded by the City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department) (Tom Kadzis). The motion carried.

13.Members Items

There were none.

14.Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane) and seconded by the North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly) (Darlene Wynne). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
	Todd Kirrane
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Heather Hamilton
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
	David Mohler
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel
	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)	Erika Oliver-Jerram
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Jennifer Constable
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset River Regional Chamber)	Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
David Alschuler	Town of Hingham
Colette Aufranc	Town of Wellesley
Joe Blankenship	City of Boston
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT Highway Division District 3
Paula Doucette	
Johannes Epke	Conservation Law Foundation
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
John Gonzalez	DHK Architects
Michelle Ho	MassDOT
Kristina Johnson	Town of Hudson
Sarah Philbrick	MAPC
Ben Muller	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Eric Papetti	Federal Transit Administration
Constance Raphael	MassDOT Highway Division 4
Jeanette Rebecchi	Bedford
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Angela Servello	MBTA
Margot Schoenfelder	VHB
Elizabeth Torres	MassDOT
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Scott Zadakis	Regional Transportation Advisory Council
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Matt Archer

Jonathan Church

Annette Demchur

Ben Dowling

Sabiheh Faghieh

Róisín Foley

Matt Genova

Betsy Harvey

Sandy Johnston

Drashti Joshi

Anne McGahan

Marty Milkovits

Ariel Patterson

Barbara Rutman

Michelle Scott

Kate White

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