

# **Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting Summary**

## **February 27, 2020, Meeting**

9:00 AM–9:45 AM, State Transportation Building, Transportation Board Room,  
10 Park Plaza, Boston

Benjamin Muller, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

## **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the meeting summary of the January 23, 2020, meeting

## **Materials**

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Meeting summary of the January 23, 2020, meeting
2. Draft federal fiscal year (FFY) 2021 UPWP Universe of Proposed Studies

## **Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion**

### **1. Introductions**

B. Muller opened the meeting, read the accessibility statement, introduced himself as the new chair of the Committee, and asked members to introduce themselves.

### **2. Public Comment**

There were none.

### **3. Meeting Summary of January 23, 2020—Approval of this summary**

A motion to approve the summary was made by Steve Olanoff, Town of Westwood/TRIC Subregion Alternate, and seconded by several members. The motion carried unanimously.

#### **4. Discussion of Updated Amendment Procedures for FFY 2021 UPWP—B. Muller, Committee Chair, and Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager**

B. Muller explained to members that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) had sent out the annual guidance to Department of Transportations and MPOs before the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (or MARPA) conference. The procedures for amendments are more detailed than previously, identifying thresholds and specific triggers for changes to the UPWP. There are also other items, but they are fairly similar to what the Boston Region MPO already does. S. Johnston explained that, from a practical perspective, some additional work would be involved for the Committee. Staff expect it to take six weeks to run an amendment through the whole process, including Committee review; an MPO vote to release for public comment; a final approval vote at the MPO; and review by FHWA. S. Johnston explained that staff's vision includes the UPWP Committee reviewing the amendment and recommending it to the MPO board to save time on the MPO agenda. Each amendment would be subject to a 21-day public comment period, followed by FHWA review. Although the FHWA review is a new procedure, it is anticipated to be quick.

It is most likely that the traditional budget adjustments the MPO has conducted before the beginning of the fourth quarter of each FFY will have to be executed as amendments, since the changes often exceed the newly-defined threshold of 10 percent of an individual budget line. This process is expected to start in early to mid-May of each year going forward, but S. Johnston does not expect it to be a significant amount of work.

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town/Town of Arlington) said he did not recall seeing many previous UPWP amendments, and asked if changes had been handled administratively before. S. Johnston responded that UPWP amendments have been rare and indeed, budget adjustments have been handled internally. Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) asked what the Committee would have to do differently. S. Johnston replied that the primary change would be the need to execute the budget adjustment amendment. B. Muller mentioned that only one such amendment had been processed at the state level, so everyone would continue to be in touch.

#### **5. Initial Discussion of FFY 2021 Universe of Proposed Studies—Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager**

S. Johnston introduced the FFY 2021 Universe to the Committee. He noted that the purpose of the discussion is to allow Committee members to ask questions about the Universe and the studies in it rather than to rank the studies by priority. He explained

that he had simplified the visual format of the Universe for this year, and he is looking for feedback.

Steve Olanoff (Town of Westwood/TRIC subregion alternate) asked whether the budget for proposed study M-5, *Intersection Improvement Program*, would be sufficient for the number of intersections the Universe summary indicated it would have. Mark Abbott (Manager of Traffic Analysis and Design) said that based on previous experience, these are low-cost studies, and the budget would be sufficient. S. Olanoff asked about the possibility of doing a larger-scale, long-range study, and M. Abbott responded that this would be a quick-hitting study. There was some discussion about how this concept relates to the usual “recurring” roadway/corridor studies, numbered M-1 through M-3 in this year’s Universe.

Len Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) asked if staff knew the amount of money available for the discrete studies this year. S. Johnston responded that they do not, but that typically over the last several years, there has been about \$700,000 available, of which the recurring studies take up about half. Tom Bent (City of Somerville/Inner Core Committee) remarked that by his math, the estimated budgets of all of the study concepts in the Universe add up to \$925,000, or so.

D. Amstutz asked about the purpose of study M-4, *Trip Generation Rate Research*. Scott Peterson (Director of Technical Services) explained that CTPS staff believe they can improve on the Institute of Traffic Engineers’ (ITE) estimates with more local data. Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) said his staff had been in contact with CTPS on this question, that it is an important issue, and that ITE is open to thinking about it. L. Diggins agreed that the trip generation rates are an important question and advocated for studies T-2 and T-3, *Access to Commercial Business Districts Phase 2* and *The Future of the Curb Phase 2*. L. Diggins asked clarifying questions about several other studies.

Tegin Teich (CTPS Executive Director) described the importance of study O-3, *Informing the Big Ideas Behind the MPO's Scenario Planning Process*. The idea of the study is to better inform development of the scenario planning process that contributes to the development of the MPO’s Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). This budget line would allow staff to reach out and work with stakeholders over the coming year to identify priorities and test creative scenarios in the LRTP process. T. Teich stated that this is the right time to do this work since the next LRTP development cycle is three years away.

Tom O'Rourke (Town of Norwood/TRIC subregion) asked if this work would lead to bigger studies, and T. Teich responded that it could lead to a variety of work on these big ideas. D. Amstutz said he appreciated the explanation of study concept O-3, as he had been disappointed to see no explicit mention of congestion pricing as a study concept.

T. Bent asked about the relationship between studies T-2 and T-3. Annette Demchur (Director of Policy and Planning) explained that T-2 is about differences between perceptions and reality in how travelers reach business areas, while T-3 is about allocation of curb space going forward. There was discussion about the scope of study concept A-2, *Cost/Benefit Analysis for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Measures*, especially on the question of availability of before-and-after data that would make the analysis feasible. T. Kadzis asked if study T-3 would include all municipalities in the Boston region, noting that a variety of experiments have been implemented in other cities. He wondered what the motivation is behind A-2; what projects it would examine; and whether it would examine usage and safety impacts. M. Abbott responded that the underlying goal is to answer the question of whether MPO projects are meeting MPO goals. There was some further discussion.

Nicole Freedman (City of Newton) noted that analysis of the costs and benefits of bicycle projects, which are often wrapped into larger projects, is difficult and requires nuance. She expressed strong support for study M-4 and urged staff to do a great job with it. L. Diggins said that he would like to see before-and-after analysis built into capital projects so that the UPWP budget does not have to take it on. He expressed support for studies A-1 and L-1.

S. Johnston asked for feedback on the newly simplified format of the Universe. D. Amstutz said it was good, but asked that the relationship between studies and the LRTP goals be color-coded. He remarked that it might be easier to read at 11 by 17 inch size.

S. Johnston recapped the upcoming steps in the UPWP process. Both the Committee members and staff will fill out surveys ranking study concepts by priority, and then staff will present results and a staff-recommended list to the Committee. Several members expressed the desire to hold a further discussion with staff on the Universe to learn more about the importance of the various study concepts.

## **6. Members Items**

There were none.

## **7. Next Meeting**

There was general agreement to hold a further meeting the following Thursday, March 5, 2020.

## **8. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by E. Bourassa and seconded by several members. The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Office of Transportation Planning)	Ben Muller
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
At-Large City (City of Newton)	Nicole Freedman
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
Three Rivers Interlocal Council alternate (Town of Westwood)	Steve Olanoff
City of Framingham (Metrowest Regional Collaborative)	

<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Name	Affiliation
Denise Deschamps	City of Beverly

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### **MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
 Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning  
 Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services  
 Hiral Gandhi, Director of Operations and Finance  
 Mark Abbott, Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager  
 Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager  
 Kate White, Public Outreach Coordinator  
 Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Manager

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