

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

June 15, 2022, Meeting

2:30 PM–3:30 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Derek Krevat, Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer of the 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 May 12, 2022, UPWP meeting summary

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. [May 12, 2022, UPWP Meeting Summary \(pdf\)](#)

Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

Derek Krevat, Chair, introduced himself and called the role. (See the attendance list on page 7.)

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Meeting Summary of May 12, 2022—*Approval of this summary*

A motion to approve the summary of the meeting of May 12, 2022, was made by the At-Large Town, Town of Arlington (Daniel Amstutz), and seconded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Eric Bourassa). The motion carried.

4. Discussion: FFY 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies—*Srilekha Murthy, UPWP Manager*

Srilekha Murthy, UPWP Manager, presented on the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies and the results of the study ranking survey. Eight MPO

staff members and seven UPWP Committee members responded to the survey. The survey used a method of ranking studies from eight to one in ascending order of preference. The results were calculated by averaging the rankings of the various survey responses to develop the suggested list of proposed studies. S. Murthy presented graphs representing the rankings by MPO staff and committee members. Many of the scores ranged from three to six, and there were no outliers.

MPO staff then met to discuss which studies should be included in the draft FFY 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies. The main criteria used to determine staff recommendations were capacity of staff in the upcoming year, feasibility of the proposed studies, as well as timing and the repetitiveness of topics being studied by other organizations in the state. As an example, T-3, *Opportunities for Transit in the Boston Region*, was not included in the Universe of Proposed Studies due to the MBTA's ongoing Bus Network Redesign project. Based on these criteria, staff developed a list of studies recommended for inclusion in the FFY 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies. MPO staff requested additional input from committee members about whether these two studies should be included: TE-2, *Equity Analysis of Demand-Response Transit in the Boston Region*, and T-1, *Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service*.

Discussion

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, expressed support for study T-1 and stated that this study would help those who rely on regional transit authorities (RTAs) for transit services.

Daniel Amstutz, Town of Arlington, asked if the TE-2 and T-1 studies were part of the Universe of Proposed Studies. S. Murthy replied that the studies were not part of the Universe of Proposed Studies.

D. Amstutz asked what specific commentary MPO staff was looking for and if there was enough funding in the budget to include one or both TE-2 and T-1 studies in the list of proposed studies. S. Murthy replied that MPO staff was looking for input on whether the committee has an interest in the topics of these studies.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee/City of Somerville, asked for the slides containing the rankings by MPO staff and committee members to be sent to the committee for review. T. Bent asked what the reasoning was for commenting on the TE-2 and T-1 studies. S. Murthy replied that these were the studies that MPO staff was unsure about including in the Universe of Proposed Studies, and that MPO staff was looking for the committee to comment if there were any strong feelings towards the studies. Sandy Johnston, MPO staff, added that MPO staff would provide as much information about the Universe

of Proposed Studies as they can and stated that these were two studies identified that were not priorities for MPO staff, but for committee members.

Steven Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC), asked for the committee's rankings to be compared side-by-side to MPO staff rankings to better understand the difference in study selection.

D. Amstutz stated that he was unsure if the discussion was about including the additional studies if there was extra funding available and he was also unsure about what committee members were supposed to be commenting on.

D. Krevat added that it would be helpful to have a sense of the overall budget for the UPWP and how much funding is left for these discrete studies. In terms of tradeoffs between studies, it would be helpful to give committee members a better understanding of how to prioritize projects. D. Krevat asked MPO staff to give a timeline for finalization of the UPWP, and he asked if there was enough time for staff to produce the requested documents. S. Murthy replied that MPO staff does not have the budget for the UPWP yet, so the committee would not be able to discuss the budget alongside the Universe of Proposed Studies. For finalizing the UPWP, MPO staff is aiming to bring the UPWP to the MPO board on July 7, 2022.

S. Johnston stated that the timeline was based on a discussion between himself and D. Krevat regarding the last possible time the UPWP could be approved. The MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning requested the UPWP be finished and approved by the MPO at the beginning of August so that it could be sent to federal partners by early September.

D. Krevat stated that he would ask about the flexibility for approving the UPWP and that the UPWP would have to be approved by October 1, 2022, at the latest.

L. Diggins asked what the rationale was for not ranking all the proposed studies. S. Murthy replied that the survey was to gauge how strong the survey respondents' opinions were toward each study and to see if any studies spoke more to survey respondents than others.

L. Diggins asked if the committee members could get a distribution of MPO staff rankings. S. Murthy replied that in the past MPO staff have kept their responses anonymized.

Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), stated that between the TE-2 study and the T-1 study, he would prefer TE-2 because the federal Department of

Transportation wants MPOs to have a focus on equity. Additionally, with the cost pegged at \$20,000, the project does not seem to be a huge amount of work. He would be interested to understand if the region is missing certain areas when using demographic and other types of data.

E. Bourassa asked about study T-4, *Funding Free Fares: Possibilities of Eliminating Fares with Value Capture*, and he asked for MPO staff to explain what the study would explore and whether the study would focus on the roles that new development plays in subsidizing fares. S. Murthy responded that she did not have the answer but could connect E. Bourassa with the author of the proposed study description.

T. Bent questioned why the survey only ranked eight studies. S. Murthy replied that the survey had respondents rank the most popular studies among committee members. MPO staff was not entirely dependent on the survey results when making the list of proposed studies.

T. Bent asked about study TE-2 and pointed out the study had been ranked the second highest by committee members. T. Bent asked if TE-2 was a study about ride service and how the project relates to the changes proposed in the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign. S. Murthy responded that MPO staff were unsure about how the proposed project would interact with other studies, and that is why MPO staff had brought the study to the committee for discussion.

T. Bent asked if TE-2 could be combined with T-1 to better understand demand-response transit service in the region and how RTA's flexible fixed-route suburban transit service could help fill transit service gaps.

S. Olanoff requested E. Bourassa's opinion on T-1 and TE-2. E. Bourassa replied that he was not sure what the proposed study was about, while the goals of the TE-2 seemed more clear.

S. Olanoff stated that congestion pricing is a topic that should be studied since it is currently being implemented around the world. Further, the committee has received public comments in the past regarding congestion pricing studies. The topic, however, was pushed to a future discussion.

S. Olanoff also stated that the description of TE-1, *Analyzing the Environment Justice Impact of Congestion Pricing*, was confusing and needed further clarification.

S. Johnston asked an MPO staff member to explain the budget process for committee members and when the committee would have access to the budget number.

Tegin Teich, Executive Director of Central Transportation Planning Staff (the staff to the MPO), emphasized that committee members and MPO staff conduct these types of survey rankings annually, but the survey is only one part of choosing studies that should be included in the Universe of Proposed Studies. MPO staff recommendations are not purely based on those rankings, but also based upon anticipated budget, staff capacity, and what makes sense to study.

L. Diggins was intrigued by T. Bent's suggestion of combining TE-2 and T-1 and expressed interest in seeing if it was possible to combine the studies. L. Diggins advocated for T-1, noting that RTAs would benefit from the study by getting more publicity. L. Diggins suggested that if the committee chose TE-2 for the Universe of Proposed Studies, the committee should also consider swapping out other projects so that T-1 would be also included in the Universe of Proposed Studies.

T. Bent stated that T-1 was the first ranked study among committee members in the survey and asked if this is a type of study that RTAs have requested. S. Murthy answered that T-1 was submitted by MPO staff and she was not sure if RTAs gave any input on the proposed study.

Silva Ayvazyan, MPO staff, stated that MPO staff is currently receiving budget input and will have a draft by early next week.

D. Krevat asked if it was valuable to committee members to compile the information from this meeting and have MPO staff draft different scenarios for the Universe of Proposed Studies. D. Krevat further asked about TE-4 and what MPO staff plans to do with the budget of the freight program, and how TE-4 would integrate with the current freight funding. S. Johnston replied that the freight program budget has not yet been released, but if TE-4 was included in the UPWP it would be substantially beyond anything the freight program has ever done. The TE-4 study would have multiple funding sources, and MPO staff only envisions the study being partly funded through the UPWP. The funding for the TE-4 study is scalable and project funding is flexible.

D. Krevat asked for those in the meeting to speak about when the committee should vote on a recommended list.

E. Bourassa stated his support for all studies except for T-4 and asked for more information to understand what the T-4 study entails. E. Bourassa further questioned if it was possible to incorporate TE-2 and T-1 into the proposed Universe of Studies.

T. Bent stated that he would like more time to examine and understand the study rankings and he said that he was not ready to vote on the proposed Universe of Studies today.

D. Amstutz stated he was not comfortable voting on the proposed Universe of Studies today and suggested it would be helpful to understand why certain studies did not make it into the Universe of Proposed Studies.

S. Olanoff stated that TRIC did not choose TE-3 and could not see the benefits of the project. He wanted to understand why MPO staff choose the project as part of the Universe of Proposed Studies.

S. Johnston stated that he would work with D. Krevat to clarify the approval timeline, then MPO staff would be in contact with committee members about another meeting before approving the proposed Universe of Studies. MPO staff would create tables that contain the results of the survey and MPO staff's comments. S. Johnston further stated that MPO staff would have the budget by next week, which would help MPO staff clarify questions for committee members.

D. Krevat suggested that MPO staff create a list of potential scenarios of studies for committee members to consider during the next committee meeting.

5. Members' Items

There were none.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Lenard Diggins) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee/City of Somerville (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Office of Transportation Planning)	Derek Krevat
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
At-Large City (City of Newton)	
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	
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)	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Mark Abbott
Silva Ayvazyan
Logan Casey
Jonathan Church
Annette Demchur
Hiral Gandhi
Sandy Johnston
Srilekha Murthy
Sean Rourke

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