



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

July 13, 2022, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:00 PM, Zoom Virtual Conferencing Platform

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

L. Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 7.)

2. Facing the Challenges of Creating a Pipeline of Transportation Projects in the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization—*Kenneth S. Miller, P.E., Deputy Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration—Massachusetts*

K. Miller presented *Facing the Challenges of Creating a Pipeline of Transportation Projects in the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization*. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) substantially increased funding of transportation from approximately \$45 billion a year to approximately \$70 billion a year. BIL has created more than a dozen new highway programs, including formula and discretionary funding. There are many types of programs with many types of organizations that are eligible for funding.

There are two aspects to creating a pipeline of projects. One is identifying projects for funding, and the second is designing and implementing these projects. Opportunities for identifying good projects include reviewing and prioritizing MPO corridor studies, conducting a regional modal planning and gap analysis, utilizing the MPO's Congestion Management Process, and leveraging information provided by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). For implementation of projects, there are various methods for project development, including by municipal funding, MassDOT funding, and MPO-target funding for municipalities and MassDOT.

The MPO can also directly fund and oversee project development. To identify new projects, there are two considerations for improving the project identification process. There should be a renewed focus by the MPO to find projects instead of waiting for municipalities or other

organizations to propose a project, and the MPO should work to develop new and innovative ways to increase the number of proposed projects and to get projects fully developed.

Discussion

AnaChristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, asked how the MPO ensures that only quality projects are allocated funding. K. Miller responded that the MPO analyzes potential projects based on evaluation criteria to determine how funding is allocated. The MPO is in a position where there are not enough potential projects ready for funding. The MPO could play a larger role in finding good projects to develop.

John McQueen, WalkBoston, stated concern for the condition of vital bridges such as the River Street Bridge in Arlington, especially considering the future construction of *Project #606475: Boston - Replacement of Allston I-90 Elevated Viaduct, B-16-359, Including Interchange Reconstruction Beacon Park Yard Layover & West Station*. The River Street bridge and other bridges are vital to the circulation of automobiles and should be given priority project status to fast-track much needed maintenance and repairs. K. Miller responded that on the federal level, there is additional bridge formula funding now available with fifteen percent of funding set aside for “off-system” bridges. Off-system bridges include bridges that are eligible for federal aid but are not in the federal aid system. This program can include municipally owned bridges. Additionally, MassDOT has recently created a Next Gen Bridge Program.

J. McQueen asked what the requirements were for a structure to be considered a bridge. K. Miller responded that the structure would have to be listed in the State bridge inventory to be eligible for federal funding.

Jen Rowe, City of Boston, shared her concern about the influence of MassDOT on the Boston Region MPO and the kinds of work that can be completed due to the MassDOT’s position as the Chair and MassDOT’s multiple voting seats. K. Miller responded that the 2019 Federal Certification Review recommended the MPO create an Operations Plan to better define the roles of the State, MPO staff, and other partners. The 2011 Memorandum of Understanding states that the MPO staff is directed by the MPO board.

L. Diggins suggested that the influence of MassDOT may not be a problem due to structure but could be a problem due to the lack of board member education. Becoming an active member takes time to learn and understand regional issues and to get involved in proposing studies.

David Montgomery, Town of Needham, asked if K. Miller’s presentation was trying to create action within the MPO board. D. Montgomery suggested it would help to educate the MPO board members to understand larger regional issues. The MPO is uniquely situated to promote regional cooperation. K. Miller responded that he was not trying to create certain

actions within the MPO. In a previous MPO board meeting, K. Miller had offered to present this presentation regarding how to get more projects in the pipeline. L. Diggins was interested and reached out to schedule the presentation for this meeting, the July 13, 2022, Advisory Council meeting.

L. Diggins stated that in respect to MPO engagement and coordination, the MPO has subregional meetings which shows that there is some level of effort to engage subregional entities.

D. Montgomery added that the MPO's subregions are Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) subregions.

K. Miller added that this year, the MPO changed its election procedures so that each of the MPO's subregions will elect their own representative. K. Miller suggested this was a change in the right direction.

D. Montgomery suggested that at a small-town level it is hard to communicate all of the various regional entities that are responsible for planning. There is limited bandwidth to stay on top of all the intricacies of the planning process.

J. Rowe noted that she had recently attended an event hosted by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) that discussed ways to flex federal infrastructure funding to transit projects, including bicycle, pedestrian, and wayfinding projects. The funding could be flexed through the Federal Transit Administration instead of going through the Federal Highway Administration.

3. Discussion on Safe Streets for All Grant (SS4A) Application—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director*

T. Teich stated the new SS4A grant is an opportunity to apply for planning and implementation funds to work to meet Vision Zero goals. The MPO is looking to apply for planning grant funds to create a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for the region, allowing the MPO to apply for implementation funding in future years. The Comprehensive Safety Action Plan is meant to be a collaborative plan to serve as a guide for municipalities to apply for SS4A implementation grants. Currently, MPO staff and MAPC staff are working to develop an application.

Discussion

J. McQueen asked if the project would be funded through Chapter 90 funding. T. Teich answered that the SS4A grant funding would come from a separate group of discretionary funds, not Chapter 90 funds. The SS4A grant, if received, would bring a significant amount of funding for the project.

J. McQueen asked if SS4A project funding could be combined with Chapter 90 funding. T. Teich answered that she was unsure, and that would be a question of implementation funding. For the SS4A implementation grant, a local match is required. The MPO is looking to the State to provide the local match funding.

J. McQueen asked if Community Preservation Act funds could be applied to SS4A implementation projects. Annette Demchur, MPO staff, answered that the local match could not be provided by federal funding.

L. Diggins stated that every year, the MPO gets recommendations to follow the State Highway Safety Plan. L. Diggins was impressed by the Vision Zero efforts and the amount of detail that went into the plan. L. Diggins asked how the MPO would coordinate with MassDOT on the SS4A grant. T. Teich answered that the MPO has met with MassDOT early in the process to coordinate the SS4A grant application. Both the MPO and MassDOT agree that there is a scope of work that could take advantage of state and local Vision Zero plans.

L. Diggins asked what the Advisory Council would discuss if the group meets during August. T. Teich replied that the Advisory Council would discuss how the work for the SS4A grant would be completed. Additionally, MPO staff would like to engage municipalities and other stakeholders to seek any input on early coordination. A letter of support from the Advisory Council would also help to advance the SS4A application.

J. McQueen asked if MPO staff could provide examples of projects that could be funded by the SS4A grant within a subregion or a municipality. T. Teich answered that the MPO does not currently have a list of projects or key projects to consider for funding, but the SS4A planning grant would lead to these projects being developed. When the MPO reaches the implementation stage, key regional projects, as well as municipal projects, will be considered.

A. Demchur added that the MPO has the advantage of identifying regional corridors where there should be a priority for projects due to crash rates, as well as rates of death and serious injuries. Some projects will be identified from high priority corridors. The Comprehensive Safety Action plan would allow the MPO to identify general strategies to reach Vision Zero goals of reducing rates of fatalities and serious injuries across the region.

J. McQueen asked if a project consisting of a road diet and improved infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians would be considered for funding. A. Demchur answered that the MPO does not know what projects will be included in the plan today as the MPO is applying for the SS4A planning grant. Projects will be identified for implementation funding, which will involve an engagement element to identify potential projects.

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council would meet on August 10, 2022, to discuss the SS4A grant application.

4. Discussion on Outreach for New Advisory Council Members—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

Stella Jordan, MPO staff, opened the discussion on how to improve outreach for new Advisory Council members to increase membership and participation in the group. S. Jordan stated that she would be taking a more active role in the coordination of the Advisory Council and requested that members suggest new ideas on how to increase participation.

Discussion

L. Diggins asked the Advisory Council what a good number would be for a goal of active Advisory Council members.

A. Fragoso suggested that part of the Advisory Council outreach should help to differentiate the involvement of the various regional organizations in the planning process. A. Fragoso suggested that the names of MAPC and the MPO are very similar, but that it is hard to distinguish what each organization does.

L. Diggins suggested that it would be helpful to have a way of training MPO members and the public about the organization's work and the various aspects of the MPO to get new members up to speed. The MPO could also seek more diversity by working to recruit additional members from underrepresented communities.

5. Early Discussion Regarding the Transition to a New Chair and Vice-Chair—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins stated that he would continue to be the Chair of the Advisory Council for one more year, and that he is looking for a replacement(s) from within the Advisory Council. Scott Zadakis will not be running for Vice Chair this year. If a current member wanted to take the Chair position next year, L. Diggins suggested that person run for Vice Chair this year to help with the transition of knowledge.

6. Chair's Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins stated that the MPO recently was presented the results of the Route 9 Priority Corridor Study in Framingham and Natick, and he suggested that the study could be used as a case study to derive future projects. L. Diggins was interested in what it would take for communities to implement these projects and to fully realize the corridor studies.

Discussion

D. Montgomery stated, regarding outreach on the Advisory Council, that it would be great to have support from MPO staff and have MPO staff periodically meet with the Advisory Council. D. Montgomery suggested sending out a communication from the Advisory Council to encourage new participants to join.

S. Jordan reiterated the importance of the Advisory Council and its importance as a key source of public participation for the MPO.

L. Diggins noted that the MBTA Advisory Board was planning to do public outreach for new members soon. L. Diggins suggested that the Advisory Council could coordinate on public engagement and outreach with the MBTA Advisory Board, in addition to the engagement work already being done with MPO staff.

D. Montgomery noted that in the past the Advisory Council sent out a yearly notice to invite new members to join the Advisory Council. D. Montgomery suggested that a similar notice be sent out as part of the public engagement process.

J. Rowe noted that municipal staff is typically at their work capacity and that non-staff members can be appointed to the Advisory Council.

L. Diggins suggested that non-staff membership distinguishes the Advisory Council from other similar advisory groups in the country.

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. [May 11, 2022, MPO Meeting Minutes \(pdf\)](#)
2. [May 11, 2022, MPO Meeting Minutes \(html\)](#)

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2022, meeting was made by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (AnaChristina Fragoso) and seconded by the Town of Weymouth (Owen MacDonald). The minutes were approved.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (AnaChristina Fragoso) and seconded by the Town of Needham (David Montgomery). The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Boston	Jen Rowe
Needham	David Montgomery
Weymouth	Owen MacDonald

Citizen Advocacy Groups	Attendees
American Council of Engineering Companies	Fred Moseley
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaChristina Fragoso
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Agencies (Non-Voting)	Attendees
Federal Highway Administration	Ken Miller

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Sid Kashi	Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff
Stella Jordan
Tegin Teich
Annette Demchur

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Title VI Specialist

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By Telephone:

857.702.3700 (voice)

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