



Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

March 10, 2021, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:15 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Ridership Oversight Committee

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Lenard Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. (For attendance list, see page four.)

2. Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Potential Studies—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff*

Sandy Johnston, MPO staff, discussed the initial list of study concepts to be considered for inclusion in the FFY 2022 UPWP by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Discussion

Franny Osman, Acton Transportation Advisory Committee; AnaCristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers; and S. Johnston discussed the North–South Rail Link and why it was not included in this initial list of potential studies.

John McQueen, WalkBoston, and S. Johnston discussed the SouthWest Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP) municipalities' distribution centers mitigation topic. They also discussed the congestion pricing study topic, including the likelihood that federal funding might become available.

A.C. Fragoso and S. Johnston discussed whether the “COVID-19 Recovery” topic could include a study on hygiene control on shared and mass transit. They and Matthew Petersen, TransitMatters, also discussed the electrification topic and whether a new study has utility beyond the ongoing bus electrification project in Quincy.

John Strauss, Town of Burlington, and S. Johnston discussed the topics of “Innovative Transit Financing” and “Microtransit Tracking”; they also discussed the Mobility Working Group and the scope of their work.

Chris Porter, MassBike, and S. Johnston discussed whether studies on travel demand model enhancements get funded through the UPWP or through other internal MPO budgets.

M. Petersen suggested a study of alternative solutions for urban freight and retail delivery.

3. FFYs 2022–26 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Preliminary Funding Scenarios—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

Matt Genova, MPO staff, presented a summary of the MPO's anticipated available funding during each FFY from 2021 through 2026. He also discussed results of the annual TIP Readiness Day meeting in February, including the decisions to delay funding on certain projects. M. Genova explained the impact of unanticipated combined cost increases of more than \$97 million for projects previously programmed for FFYs 2021–25; he then listed baseline assumptions that MPO staff will use going forward in the current TIP:

- All project cost changes are included
- All current funding commitments are retained
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) recommendations for project schedule changes are executed
- Four percent annual inflation added beginning with FFY 2023

M. Genova said the MPO would be slightly over budget for committed expenditures for FFYs 2021–26; this is the case even though no new projects have been programmed for FFY 2026. M. Genova explained that, because the TIP cannot operate over budget during any given FFY, MPO staff are beginning to make adjustments to the TIP so that expenditures for each year will be within budget. M. Genova summarized a "Scenario #1" approach to meeting budget constraints, which would aim to continue funding all previously programmed projects; he explained that this "Scenario #1" approach could mean no funding for new projects for FFY 2026.

M. Genova said the unanticipated project cost increases are mostly due to a few factors:

- Unit price increases
- Misconceptions surrounding contingencies
- Scope changes
- Outdated project designs

M. Genova said discussions on the TIP at upcoming MPO meetings will need to address some overarching questions in lieu of the unanticipated cost increases:

- Continue policy of covering cost increases?
- Maintain funding commitments to all current projects?
- Create funding capacity for adding new projects?

Discussion

M. Petersen, Sheila Page, Town of Lexington, A.C. Fragoso, and M. Genova discussed a few questions:

- Is the expectation of four percent annual inflation accurate?
- How will the four percent be calculated for multiyear projects?
- What is the likely fate of projects that get moved to a later year?
- How much of the cost overrun problem is due to design consultants?

4. Advisory Council Membership—*Chris Porter, MassBike*

Chris Porter discussed whether the Advisory Council's Membership Committee should set a term limit on individuals from each membership organization to encourage turnover and new ideas.

Discussion

L. Diggins said he thinks term limits on membership should only be considered when there is an overabundance of current members, which is not the case now.

A.C. Fragoso said she thinks the continuity of long-time members is a positive because of how long some projects take to complete. F. Osman added that she finds long-time membership a positive because of the networking and learning needed to have an informed opinion.

A.C. Fragoso and M. Petersen discussed the difficulty of getting new members to attend since meetings are during business hours and membership is voluntary and unpaid.

David Montgomery, Town of Needham, said he thinks that efforts to bring in new members should not focus on term limits; rather, he suggested encouraging member towns and organizations to rotate the representative party they send to meetings and also bringing in towns and organizations not currently represented on the Advisory Council.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2019, and January 8, 2020, meetings was postponed to give members adequate time to review them.

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Town of Needham	David Montgomery

Member Citizen Advocacy Groups	Representatives and Alternates
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
National Rural Transit Assistance Program	Scott Zadakis
Acton Transportation Advisory Committee	Franny Osman
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaCristina Fragoso
MassBike	Chris Porter
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Matthew Petersen	TransitMatters
John Strauss	Town of Burlington
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff
Matt Archer
Matt Genova
Sandy Johnston

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