



Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

December 9, 2020, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:15 PM, Zoom

Scott Zadakis, Vice Chair, representing the National Rural Transit Assistance Program

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Scott Zadakis, National Rural Transit Assistance Program, called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page five.)

2. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Study Ideas—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff*

Sandy Johnston, MPO staff, explained that the UPWP is the process and the resulting document that decides how the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will spend the pot of money it gets from the federal government each year. He said that most of the money goes to administering the core functions of the MPO:

- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Transportation Equity programs
- Congestion Management Process
- Travel demand modeling

S. Johnston explained that a certain amount of money is left over each year with which the MPO carries out studies and technical assistance programs. He described two main categories the MPO uses to shape and consider these suggestions for studies:

- Discrete studies—Larger one-time analyses on topics that target regional or subregional interest rather than being targeted at one community
- Technical assistance—Programs targeted at smaller interests, such as a single bus route or intersection; for example, the [Community Transportation Technical Assistance \(CTTA\)](#) program and the Complete Streets program

S. Johnston said the study ideas can be either project oriented or more conceptual, such as regional best practices or data gathering that can guide the vision for the region's

transportation future. He explained that, ultimately, the analyses done through the UPWP will help the MPO update strategic goals and objectives and shape the next LRTP.

Discussion

Andy Reker, City of Cambridge; S. Zadakis; Laura Wiener, City of Watertown; John McQueen, WalkBoston; AnaCristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers; and S. Johnston discussed how municipalities and other transportation planning organizations should deal with various aspects of the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. They agreed that more data should be gathered about ridership numbers of smaller public transit programs. They also discussed how COVID-19 measures that target shared spaces—such as outdoor dining, ventilation, and cleaning protocols—would be dealt with going forward.

David Montgomery, Town of Needham, and Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Ridership Oversight Committee, discussed the need for simplified access to research and innovative projects conducted by MPOs all around the United States.

A. Reker and S. Johnston discussed how diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives should affect municipal planning efforts.

Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association, said she anticipates that bicycling will continue to increase in importance and that planning and policies related to bicycling should not be protected from genuine scrutiny with regard to expenditures and negative effects.

L. Diggins said he would like to see studies on two topics:

- How much people are walking and the potential impact of increased walking
- The impact of tiny “smart” cars and whether their shared use should be encouraged through policy

3. Review of the Community Connections (CC) Program Pilot—Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff

S. Johnston explained that [Community Connections](#) is the Boston Region MPO’s funding program for first- and last-mile solutions and other small, nontraditional transportation projects. He said the most important lesson learned from the program’s pilot year has been that most of the MPO’s partner agencies are not currently well suited to administering very small projects.

Discussion

J. McQueen and S. Johnston discussed whether the Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s [Collective Purchasing programs](#) could be used to purchase snow removal equipment for use on public sidewalks and multi-use paths.

L. Diggins asked for clarification about the prohibitive administrative burden of the small projects funded in the CC program's pilot year. S. Johnston said that the source of this feedback was mostly the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Highway Division.

Franny Osman, Acton Transportation Advisory Committee, asked for clarification about what types of projects are considered ideal for funding through the CC program. S. Johnston said the criteria for scoring proposed CC projects are still being refined; he then gave some examples of the types of programs the MPO is currently accepting applications for:

- Bus location systems and e-ink arrival countdown signs
- Supportive infrastructure for bicycling
- Leasing parking lots for park-and-ride
- New payment systems
- Microtransit services
- Education on how the Boston Region transit system works

4. Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2022-26 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Universe of Projects—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

Matt Genova, MPO staff, gave a timeline of the FFYs 2022–26 TIP Universe of Projects development process. He then listed the new TIP and CC pilot projects that were programmed for FFYs 2021–25. M. Genova explained that cost overrun issues last year severely limited the MPO's ability to fund new projects in the prior round, leaving many scored projects unprogrammed. He then summarized the full TIP project development process—from ideation through construction.

Discussion

D. Montgomery, F. Osman, L. Diggins, and M. Genova discussed how towns and cities can best navigate bringing a project through the design and funding processes. M. Genova said that certain types of projects—for example, major repaving or bridge repair—are a better fit for the MassDOT than for the MPO.

L. Diggins and M. Genova discussed whether project ideas get generated from the LRTP Needs Assessment.

5. Discussion: Chapters 1 and 2 of the Needs Assessment for *Destination 2040*—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins briefly summarized the contents of Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Destination 2040* Needs Assessment. He also discussed the value of having Advisory Council members gain familiarity with the Needs Assessment.

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

L. Diggins mentioned some topics from recent MPO meetings:

- MBTA plans to shift some capital funding to operations, which the MPO needs to approve
- Updated MPO Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden policy
- TIP Universe of Projects for FFYs 2022–26

7. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2019, and December 11, 2019, meeting was postponed due to a technical problem.

8. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

There were no items.

9. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Acton Transportation Advisory Committee (F. Osman) and seconded by the Town of Needham (D. Montgomery). The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
City of Cambridge	Andy Reker
Town of Needham	David Montgomery
City of Watertown	Laura Wiener

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
American Council of Engineering Companies	Fred Moseley
Association for Public Transportation	Barry Steinberg
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaCristina Fragoso
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Agencies (Non-Voting)	Attendees
MassDOT Aeronautics	Steve Rawding

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Sid Kashi	Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.
Todd Kirrane	Town of Brookline
Marilyn Wellons	Riverside Neighborhood Association

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Archer
Sandy Johnston
Matt Genova

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Title VI Specialist

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