



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

November 8, 2023, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:15 PM, Zoom

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

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Lenard Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. (For attendance list, see page 5.)

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

L. Diggins highlighted a new committee of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) board: the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee. L. Diggins encouraged the council to review the slide deck from the first meeting to provide questions and feedback. Ethan Lapointe, MPO staff, stated that these meetings are public, and people are encouraged to attend.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the updated minutes of the July 12, 2023, meeting was made by Acton resident (Franny Osman) and seconded by WalkMassachusetts (John McQueen). The minutes were approved.

4. MPO Freight Program—*Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan, Freight Program Manager, MPO Staff*

S. Narayanan presented an overview of the MPO's Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024 Freight Program. S. Narayanan discussed two MPO freight-related studies:

- Integrating Transit and Truck Priority
- Sustainability and Decarbonization in the Freight and Logistics Sector in the North Suffolk Area

S. Narayanan stated the goals of the Freight Program were designed to align with the MPO's goals, which include safety, climate resilience, equity, and dealing with uncertainty. In FFY 2024, the Freight Program will focus on five key areas:

- Data infrastructure
- Safety and decarbonization of freight
- Continued freight-related MPO activities
- Other freight-related activities

After the presentation, S. Narayanan facilitated discussion about future studies using Mentimeter, an interactive presentation platform. The discussion revolved around three main questions:

- What are high-priority topics for freight-related research?
- What are your concerns about delivery vehicles or trucks in general?
- How would you like to continue to be engaged or involved in the Freight Program?

Discussion

Ana Cristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, stated she would be interested in a study about the impact of delivery trucks. S. Narayanan responded that the City of Boston is conducting a similar study in their E-Cargo Bike Delivery Pilot Program and the MPO will likely use their findings and recommendations to develop further studies.

L. Diggins asked for the definition of a freight truck and if it is related to the size of a vehicle.

A.C. Fragoso discussed that while she thinks the City's e-cargo bike program is a good idea, it does not serve as a replacement for heavy-load deliveries. S. Narayanan responded in agreement and mentioned Freight Mobility Hubs as a possible solution.

On the Menimeter platform, there were responses related to the first question about reducing freight congestion, safety, sharing local streets, and regional freight travel patterns.

A.C. Fragoso asked if there is a possibility to study the effect of dedicated freight routes to reduce vehicular and pedestrian traffic. S. Narayanan responded that the state enforces standards and restrictions for trucks on Critical Freight Corridors and these rules are regularly updated on MassDOT's website.

L. Diggins and S. Narayanan discussed the need to understand the business community's perspectives about freight issues.

On the Menimeter platform, there were responses related to the second question about congestion concerns, tradeoffs between availability for deliveries, loading and parking, and other uses of roadways.

L. Diggins asked how often the staff working on the Freight Program would be engaged in seeking feedback from the Advisory Council. S. Narayanan responded that she would stay involved by attending meetings quarterly and conducting check-ins.

Franny Osman, Acton resident, asked how the freight-related work of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the MPO, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) overlap or differ. S. Narayanan discussed the specific responsibilities of each agency while highlighting collaboration across various transportation agencies on freight and general transportation topics.

Travis Pollack, MAPC, emphasized the importance of cross-agency coordination and collaboration on programs and studies.

L. Diggins and T. Pollack discussed autonomous freight vehicles.

5. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Development—*Srilekha Murthy, UPWP Program Manager, MPO Staff*

S. Murthy opened her presentation with an icebreaker activity where participants pinned safety and resilience concerns on an online map of the Boston region using Miro, an interactive platform.

Following the mapping activity, S. Murthy provided an overview of the development of the FFY 2025 UPWP and opened the floor for discussion. S. Murthy noted differences in the UPWP development process this year with an emphasis on the MPO's work programs. The MPO's core programs are the UPWP, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The MPO's support programs are as follows:

- Climate Resilience
- Transportation Equity
- Performance-Based Planning and Programming
- Congestion Management Process
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Support
- Freight
- Public Engagement
- Multimodal Mobility Infrastructure
- Regional Model Development

S. Murthy stated that priority will be given to funding work on topics that can be studied within a program and to ideas that can inform the MPO's work in the future with a preference for smaller scale studies. This allows MPO staff to plan for work over the span of a few years and to assess progress on a continuous basis. Study topics that do not fit neatly into categories may be considered for independent research.

Discussion

A.C. Fragoso discussed her concern about the vulnerability of the Longwood Medical area to flooding and asked how that would be studied. A.C. Fragoso noted Boston's general vulnerability to flooding.

Stella Jordan, MPO staff, highlighted one of the notes from Miro which stated the importance of studying urban heat island effects in inner core communities and strategies to provide relief from heat.

A.C. Fragoso and Andrew Reker, City of Cambridge, discussed the overlap between resilience and safety as issues.

A.C. Fragoso asked if there would be a matrix provided similar to past years used to help the Advisory Council provide feedback on the prioritization of proposed projects. S. Murthy responded that it will be presented in March–April 2024.

A. Reker asked if there would be an opportunity to study hazard mitigation planning as it relates to transportation planning.

F. Osman asked who generally applies for UPWP studies and if outreach is conducted to ensure a broad representation of applicants. S. Murthy responded that applicants are typically individuals and outreach was conducted at MAPC's subregional group meetings and other venues.

A. Reker asked if there are any indications about current UPWP projects that may be studied further.

A.C. Fragoso discussed that she would like to see the results of the studies from past UPWP projects. L. Diggins responded that he could report back on the presentation of results from MPO board meetings or invite staff to present their findings to the Advisory Council.

A.C. Fragoso stated that she would like to see more cohesion with other agencies with similar projects and goals. S. Jordan responded that the Boston Region MPO coordinates with other Massachusetts MPOs and planning agencies through regular meetings.

6. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

F. Osman highlighted a Boston Globe article announcing that Amtrak was awarded \$10 billion for 12 North-East Corridor projects. F. Osman encouraged members to support funding for the North–South rail link.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (Ana Cristina Fragoso) and seconded by the City of Cambridge (Andy Reker). The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Cambridge	Andy Reker
Weymouth	Owen MacDonald

Citizen Advocacy Groups	Attendees
American Council of Engineering Companies	Fred Moseley
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	Ana Cristina Fragoso
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
WalkMassachusetts	John McQueen
National Rural Transit Assistance Program	Scott Zadakis
Resident (Acton)	Franny Osman

Agencies (Non-Voting)	Attendees
MBTA Advisory Board	Amira Patterson
MAPC	Travis Pollack
MAPC	Alison Felix
Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport)	Sarah Lee
Massport	Barry Fradkin
Massport	Max Wigglesworth
MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)	Tyler Terrasi

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Abby Swaine	Brookline resident
Susan Barret	Town of Lexington
Steve Magoon	City of Watertown
Tom Ready	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Stella Jordan

Jia Huang

Dave Hong

Ethan Lapointe

Srilekha Murthy

Sam Taylor

Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan

Abby Cutrumbes

Sarah Philbrick

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Title VI Specialist

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857.702.3700 (voice)

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