

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update Committee Meeting Minutes Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

January 16, 2024, Meeting

11:00 AM–12:30 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Tom Bent, Chair, representing Mayor Katjana Ballentyne, the Inner Core Committee, and the City of Somerville

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of August 24, 2023

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 6.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Action Item: Approval of August 24, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 24, 2023, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (Jen Rowe). The motion carried.

4. Federal Regulations—*Erin Maguire, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. Federal Regulations ([pdf](#))

E. Maguire stated that federal regulations related to MPO MOUs are housed in Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450, Sections 310 and 314. Key takeaways include that an MPO board shall consist of local elected officials, state officials, and officials from public agencies or operators of major modes of transportation. The MOU should be a written agreement between the MPO, the state, and providers of public

transportation to cooperatively carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Discussion

E. Bourassa asked who the decision-making entity is for MPO board composition.

E. Maguire stated that minor changes, such as those in the purview of the MOU Update Committee, can be approved by the MPO itself, while more substantial modifications are subject to governor approval.

Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board, asked, in practice, whose authority would act as governor approval and what steps would be needed to acquire governor approval.

J. Rowe asked to what degree regulations on MOUs are connected to a Final Rule from the Obama-Fox era.

Tegin Teich, Executive Director, stated that the topic of governor approval required additional attention.

5. Review of Peer MPO MOUs—*Abby Cutrumbes, MPO Staff*

A. Cutrumbes stated that themes investigated in peer MOUs include board education, agency collaboration, MPO governance structure, relationship with regional transit authorities (RTAs), and advisory councils. The MOUs of Seattle, San Francisco, Miami-Dade, Houston-Galveston, New York City, Atlanta, Washington, DC, and Denver were reviewed for this analysis.

A. Cutrumbes stated that MOU structures are variable. Notable findings include that many MPOs have an elected chair, and few have a formalized relationship with RTAs defined in the MOU.

A. Cutrumbes stated that MPO board size varied greatly, from as few as nine to as many as 37 voting members. The MOU documents contained only vague references to agency collaboration.

A. Cutrumbes stated that many peer MPOs have the largest RTA as a voting member on the board, analogous to the MBTA. Beyond this, there was no observed RTA involvement in decision-making among the eight MPOs reviewed.

A. Cutrumbes stated that many MOUs dictate the existence of an advisory council. For some MPOs, this is a standing advisory committee, and for others it is broken down into issue-based advisory committees.

A. Cutrumbes stated that in the reviewed MOUs, there was no formalized agreement related to board member education. Some MPOs invest significant resources in board member education, such as paying for conference attendance or peer exchanges.

Discussion

B. Kane asked if any of the investigated MPOs engaged in the practice of standard-setting and goal-setting to influence regional outcomes. A. Cutrumbes stated that this could be further investigated. T. Teich discussed anecdotal examples, such as the Seattle MPO, where the legislative environment allows the MPO to pursue financing initiatives to influence transit operations. B. Kane discussed opportunities to influence regional priorities.

John Romano, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, discussed the charge of the MOU Update Committee.

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, discussed the appropriate level of detail in the MOU versus the Operations Plan.

J. Rowe asked if other MPOs have received guidance from federal partners to further incorporate RTAs in the decision-making process. A. Cutrumbes stated that staff would like to have further conversations with other MPOs to better understand this issue.

6. MOU Update Topics and Work Plan—*Dave Hong, MPO Staff*

D. Hong stated that there are six modules of work to be covered by the MOU Update Committee: staff-led MOU content updates, revised description of the Advisory Council's role, updated reference to the fiduciary agent agreement, roles of RTAs in decision-making, refined definition of agency collaboration, and expectations for board education and development.

D. Hong asked if the committee would be comfortable with staff having a preliminary discussion with the RTAs, before inviting them to a future committee meeting for deliberations.

Discussion

B. Kane stated that, given the prompting from the certification review, this work could be completed quickly.

J. Romano stated that it would be interesting to know why other MPOs do not further codify RTA representation.

E. Bourassa expressed support for addressing the topic of RTA representation directly and inviting representatives to an upcoming meeting.

J. Rowe discussed the impact that an additional board seat would have on proportional representation for the region's residents.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham), stated that his impression has been that there is interest in one shared RTA seat.

J. Rowe requested that staff present an analysis of board representation by population before making a decision on the matter.

B. Kane suggested investigating ways to reference climate change and regional mobility in the MOU. Mike Sandman, Town of Brookline, expressed support for incorporating climate change in project selection criteria.

T. Bent stated that staff should proceed to meet with the RTAs and schedule them for future committee meetings.

J. Rowe stated that the chairship of the MPO is worth further consideration.

B. Kane requested a high-level review of the purpose of an MOU.

7. Discussion Topics: Municipal Engagement—*Dave Hong, MPO Staff*

D. Hong stated that for municipal engagement on MOU updates, staff propose informing municipalities by email about updates to the MOU in 2024. This email would inform them that there would be a public comment period in November and direct interested parties to connect with MPO staff, attend relevant board and committee meetings, and find relevant materials on the MPO's website.

Discussion

L. Diggins encouraged a more proactive approach to solicit responses and offered to use the Advisory Council as a forum for further engagement.

T. Bent asked when the planned engagement would begin. D. Hong stated that the timing would need to be further developed, and municipal contact lists would have to be further developed. B. Kane offered assistance with identifying municipal contacts for outreach.

8. Members' Items

There were none.

9. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Derek Krevat
	John Romano
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Town of Brookline	Mike Sandman
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
City of Boston	Jen Rowe

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Marzie Galazka	
Marie Louis	MBTA
Jim Nee	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
Tyler Terrasi	MWRTA

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Logan Casey
Abigail Cutrumbes
Annette Demchur
David Hong
Stella Jordan
Erin Maguire
Srilekha Murthy

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