

## **MPO Meeting Minutes Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

### **August 17, 2023, Meeting**

9:00 AM–9:55 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

### **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Congestion Management Process (CMP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of March 23, 2023

### **Materials**

Materials for the meeting included the following:

1. [August 17, 2023, CMP Committee Meeting Agenda](#)
2. [March 23, 2023, CMP Committee Meeting Minutes](#)
3. [Summary of Roadway Pricing Interviews Memorandum](#)
4. [Meeting Presentation Slides](#)

Meeting Video

<https://youtu.be/jV4XwZCsGjQ>

### **Meeting Agenda**

#### **1. Introductions**

See attendance on page 9.

#### **2. Approval of Minutes from March 23, 2023, CMP Committee Meeting**

The meeting minutes were approved by the CMP Committee.

#### **3. Roadway-Pricing Interview Results**

Seth Asante (MPO staff) gave an update on progress on the MPO's *Learning from Roadway-Pricing Experiences* study. The objective of the study is to determine the MPO's goals for roadway pricing and determine how to incorporate roadway pricing into the MPO's planning process. S. Asante presented the results of the interviews with stakeholders of roadway-pricing programs in other locations. He mentioned that the

objective of the interviews was to learn how roadway-pricing projects were implemented and the lessons learned.

There are five tasks in the MPO's study:

1. Select and Identify roadway pricing projects.
2. Interview key personnel of candidate roadway-pricing programs.
3. Identify the MPO's goals for roadway pricing.
4. Explore roadway pricing in the MPO's planning process.
5. Document studies and present results.

S. Asante mentioned that Tasks 1 and 2 are already completed. In Task 1, MPO staff identified 13 roadway-pricing programs to evaluate. In Task 2, MPO staff selected five of those programs for interviews with stakeholders, based on feedback from members of the Boston Region MPO and CMP Committees:

- Transportation Network Provider (TNP) Surcharge, Chicago
- Minnesota DOT High-Occupancy Toll Lanes, Minneapolis and St. Paul
- Central Business District Tolling Program, New York City
- Bay Area Express Lanes Program, San Francisco
- Penn Quarter/Chinatown Parking Pricing Program, Washington DC

***Transportation Network Provider (TNP) Surcharge, Chicago***

The TNP Surcharge program was proposed in Chicago in response to the increase in transportation network companies' (TNC) trips in the downtown area. The goal was to relieve congestion in the Chicago Loop by reducing trips by TNPs in the Chicago Loop. With the transparent use of detailed datasets that monitored the TNPs, Chicago was able to bolster its stance on its program. This program was approved by the Chicago City Council in 2019. In its first year, this program generated \$200 million, \$16 million of which was allocated to the Chicago Transit Authority.

***Minnesota DOT (MnDOT) High-Occupancy Toll Lanes, Minneapolis, and St. Paul***

The creation of this program was spurred by the underutilization of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and environmental concerns in the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area. MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council sponsored this project and there was extensive coordination between multiple transportation agencies. The goal was to reduce congestion and travel times. This program was well received publicly, and stakeholders were very transparent with the public about this program. Over time, the program was successful at reducing congestion and enabled transit service improvements by generating revenue. This program was asset heavy and high cost, as it involved lane conversions and the installation of toll equipment.

***Central Business District Tolling Program, New York City***

This program was proposed prior to 2017 and failed to be approved by the New York State government. In 2017, the New York State government allowed the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to begin studying congestion pricing to reduce the state budget shortfall. This project was approved by the Federal Highway Administration in 2023, due to the concessions that were offered to the environmental justice community and other groups. Extensive public engagement and outreach was part of the implementation process as the MTA hosted more than 25 meetings in 2021 and 2022 alone. The program will include tolling a cordoned section of Manhattan south of 60<sup>th</sup> Street. It is projected that this program will reduce congestion and energy consumption and improve air quality. This program is asset light, and the main expenses include installation of tolling equipment near entry points of the cordon.

***Bay Area Express Lanes Program, San Francisco***

This program was developed in response to state legislation that enabled the conversion of HOV lanes to express toll lanes. The state legislation allowed regional transit agencies and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to implement roadway-pricing strategies. The goals of this program include reducing congestion, enabling reliable travel times, and increasing person throughput. The MTC, which is the operator of the Bay Area Express Lanes, engaged with transit boards and planning agencies. This program was asset heavy, which will require HOV lane conversion and precise tolling equipment.

***Penn Quarter/Chinatown Parking Pricing Program, Washington DC***

This is a pilot program that the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) authorized and implemented in 2014. This program provided variable parking prices in the Penn Quarter/Chinatown neighborhoods based on demand. The pilot program concluded in 2019, at which time the price adjustments became permanent. The goals of this program were to provide more parking options, reduce congestion, and use technology for parking management solutions. This program increased parking availability and utilization for low demand parking spaces over time. This was an asset light, low-cost program as the technology used analyzed real-time parking at a block level, rather than at every space.

Challenges that stakeholders of these programs experienced included the following:

- Balancing equity concerns and revenue collection
- Getting political buy-in and public acceptance
- Communicating benefits and addressing concerns about congestion pricing to the public and politicians

- Conducting environmental assessments and monitoring before-and-after results
- The COVID-19 pandemic impacted resiliency of pricing programs
- Mitigating adverse effects geographically (geographic equity)
- Building interagency collaboration on the pricing program
- Navigating state and federal statutes limiting the allocation of revenue

Opportunities from roadway pricing include the following:

- Funding public transportation
- Linking regional goals
- Changing driver behavior
- Taking advantage of smart technologies
- Supporting economic vitality
- Supporting sustainable multimodal transportation
- Expanding data monitoring

Lessons learned about key elements of a successful roadway pricing program include the following:

1. Political leadership and legislation are essential.
2. Involve environmental justice communities early in the process.
3. Emphasize engagement for underrepresented communities.
4. Public engagement and education are keys to success.
5. Show that revenue uses are beneficial, transparent, and linked to transit improvements.
6. Pair pricing programs with alternative travel methods or improvements to ensure that the program is successful from “day one.”
7. Focus on goals and benefits rather than revenue.
8. Use transparent data to aid transportation decisions.
9. Evaluations are key to maintaining the effectiveness of a pricing project.
10. Have adequate and specialized staff.

### ***Questions***

Len Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) asked if the surcharge for the Chicago TNC program was too low. S. Asante answered that yes, it was too low. For a program to have an impact, the program should be priced so that it will encourage commuters to change their behavior. A major challenge for setting a high TNC surcharge is getting political buy-in.

### **Next Steps**

Ryan Hicks (MPO staff) presented the next steps for *the Learning from Roadway-Pricing Experiences* study. He mentioned that Task 3 is for identifying MPO goals for roadway pricing and Task 4 is for determining how roadway pricing will fit into the MPO's planning process. R. Hicks then lead the meeting with an open discussion to seek input from the CMP Committee and MPO board members regarding roadway-pricing goals.

## **4. Discussion on Roadway Pricing MPO Goals**

R. Hicks posed questions for discussion.

*R. Hicks asked, which is the most important goal for roadway pricing? (Discuss all that apply) A) Raise revenue, B) Reduce congestion, C) Provide disadvantaged communities more transportation options, D) Preserve transit, E) Support economic growth, F) Increase person throughput, or G) Other.*

L. Diggins mentioned that he supported economic growth because it connects to the other goals. If economic growth is good, then it is easier to raise revenue and reduce congestion. L. Diggins mentioned that he also agrees with providing disadvantaged communities more transportation options. This would increase potential for human productivity and help the economy.

Jay Monty (City of Arlington) agreed with L. Diggins. J. Monty mentioned that one of the biggest barriers is political buy-in. He mentioned that if a big benefit is not provided at the commencement of a roadway-pricing program related to economic growth or mobility, it will not be successful. Most of the programs that implement a fee provide an alternative benefit to users, if not the program will be unsuccessful. J. Monty stated that stakeholders must show the benefits for everything.

Amira Patterson (MBTA Advisory Board) agreed with both J. Monty's and L. Diggins's comments about providing environmental justice communities with more transportation options. A. Patterson also agreed that all these goals are connected and that preserving transit for economic growth will lead to a raise in revenue while reducing congestion. A. Patterson followed up by saying that transparency is very important so that riders can trust the operators.

Heyne Kim (Boston Transportation Department) mentioned that she supports reducing congestion in a way that it increases mode shifts.

*R. Hicks then asked, which of the following Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) goals does roadway pricing fit best with? (Discuss all that apply) 1. Equity, 2. Safety, 3.*

*Mobility and Reliability, 4. Access and Connectivity, 5. Resiliency, and 6. Clean Air and Healthy Communities.*

J. Monty mentioned that roadway pricing only fits most of these goals if it produces revenue to invest in other modes.

L. Diggins mentioned that Mobility and Reliability is the most important LRTP goal.

R. Hicks mentioned that there are fifteen objectives in the LRTP that are related to roadway pricing.

## **5. Discussion on Roadway Pricing Assessments**

The next questions focused on implementation and the steps that should be taken to implement roadway pricing.

*R. Hicks asked, what would your priorities be on early communication and engagement with the public about roadway pricing? What forms of communication channels would be appropriate? Do think that the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC) would be appropriate? Metropolitan Area Planning Council focus groups? Workshops?*

L. Diggins said that the Advisory Council would be interested. He suggested that the MPO should also reach out to the subregions and present a roadway-pricing presentation to the subregions. Once the subregions are engaged, state politicians can be engaged. L. Diggins said that the MPO should engage with the environmental justice communities immediately and work with them along the way.

*What would your priorities be on exploring the effects roadway pricing on equity populations in Boston region?*

J. Monty asked, how do you want to measure mobility? J. Monty then noted that detractors of congestion pricing often say it makes it harder for low-income persons to drive to their job, so then the roadway-pricing program is inequitable. J. Monty then asked, what does this do for mobility for environmental justice communities? He then stated that there must be a way to measure how roadway pricing might disrupt mobility. It must be multiple steps, not just hastily putting a price on the road.

L. Diggins stated that negative effects of roadway-pricing programs on communities include diversions. This can affect all communities, but non-environmental justice communities are the most vocal groups when projects with adverse effects are proposed in their communities. Just because stakeholders do not hear any opposition from the environmental justice communities does not mean that opposition to the project

is not present. L. Diggins then mentioned that we must have a “day one” alternative for commuters to travel to their destination if a roadway-pricing program is enacted. The transit system must be better than ever before. There cannot be a situation where people are waiting a long time for trains. The elasticity for a commuter taking public transit should be high, meaning that there should be superb service or people will not switch to public transit if they were previously driving.

R. Hicks agreed. He mentioned that if there is not a viable alternative provided, a commuter is losing an option rather than gaining an option due to roadway pricing.

*R. Hicks asked, how would you like roadway pricing to be incorporated into future long-range transportation plans?*

L. Diggins mentioned that Marty Milkovits, of the MPO staff, should be involved in any roadway-pricing analysis that pertains to the regional travel demand model (TDM 23). It would be interesting to see if congestion pricing can be built into the model, he said.

R. Hicks noted that modeling analyses have been done in many of the roadway-pricing projects of the organizations interviewed, so it would likely be possible for the MPO to do a model analysis on a potential roadway-pricing project.

A. Patterson stated that the MBTA was running at capacity before the pandemic. She said that if the MBTA cannot shift people to transit during the implementation of roadway pricing due to capacity, then people cannot shift modes from driving. She then mentioned that, in this case, the outcome would be to only raise revenue and take away a commuting option from people who want to shift to transit but cannot because the transit system is over capacity. Roadway pricing should ideally occur after the expansion of the transit system.

Steve Olanoff (Three Rivers Interlocal Council) commented on LRTP goals. He stated that none of these goals stand out pertaining to roadway pricing. S. Olanoff then asked, why are we comparing these goals if nothing stands out? He then mentioned that roadway pricing should fit all the goals.

L. Diggins mentioned that one the goals of roadway pricing should be to change the way that we approach transportation. Priced access should be in place, so users are charged based on their burden on the transportation system. He then stated that we should price the entire transportation system as if it were a transit system, where we pay based on usage and percentage of capacity taken by usage.

***Next steps for roadway pricing project***

R. Hicks then mentioned the final tasks, which will lead to the completion of the *Learning from Roadway-Pricing Experiences* study. He mentioned that MPO staff will take the feedback that was received from CMP Committee regarding Task 3 (goals) and Task 4 (incorporation to the MPO process). Task 5 will consist of MPO staff writing a memorandum or report that will detail the entire study. This deliverable, along with a MPO presentation, will be completed in October.

**6. Other Business**

There was none.

**7. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by L. Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) and seconded by Jay Monty (City of Everett). The motion carried.



## Attendance

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### Members

### Representatives and Alternates

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At-Large City (City of Everett)  
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)  
Massachusetts Port Authority  
MBTA Advisory Board  
Regional Transportation Advisory Council  
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset  
Valley Chamber of Commerce)

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Jay Monty  
Heyne Kim  
Sarah Lee  
Amira Patterson  
Lenard Diggins  
Steve Olanoff

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### MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

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Seth Asante  
Rounaq Basu  
Annette Demchur  
Ryan Hicks  
Erin Maguire  
Ethan Lapointe  
Sarah Philbrick  
Tegin Teich

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