

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Summary of August 12, 2009 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA.

Malek Al-Khatib, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

### **1. Approval of the draft Meeting Minutes of July 8, 2009 – Malek Al-Khatib, Chair**

A motion to approve the draft Meeting Minutes of July 8, 2009, with no changes, was made. The motion passed unanimously. M. Al-Khatib said he would give the Chair's Report after the Accelerated Bridge Program presentation.

### **2. Accelerated Bridge Program Presentation – Tom Donald, Director of Program Development for the Accelerated Bridge Program, MassHighway**

Tom Donald gave members a brief summary of the Accelerated Bridge Program (ABP). Some of the main points from the presentation are listed below. T. Donald is the director of program development for the ABP.

- The ABP is a \$3 billion program to reduce the number of structurally deficient bridges in the Commonwealth.
- The goals and objectives of the program are:
  - Improve the condition of the Commonwealth's bridges.
    - Currently there are 502 structurally deficient bridges in Massachusetts and the goal is to reduce the number to 450.
  - Stimulate economic development and job creation.
  - Save money by completing projects sooner.
  - Complete projects efficiently and innovatively.
  - Access and Opportunity.
  - Transparency and Accountability
    - An ABP Oversight Council reports to the state Legislature every 6 months on the program's budget.
- Approximately five mega-projects, such as the Longfellow Bridge, are on the list.
- Excluding the mega projects, the average project is estimated to cost \$4.5 million.
- Cost estimates are coming in lower than expected by MassHighway.
- Approximately 160 MassHighway projects are on the ABP list. There are also several Department of Conservation and Recreation bridges targeted for improvements.
- The Commissioner refers to the program as the "laboratory of innovation." He wants the ABP to take an innovative approach to meeting its goals.

**Members had the following questions:**

*Do any of the projects address the double-stack initiative over CSX tracks? (Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association)*

Seven ABP projects raise bridges over railroads and most of them are in the western portion of the state. (T. Donald)

*What is being done to mitigate traffic impacts of construction by shifting travelers to other modes during bridge construction? 31 percent of autos traveling from Cambridge to Boston will be diverted at the peak construction period in 2011. (Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge)*

Mode shift is being discussed and I am aware of the problem. A study is presently being conducted to identify the necessary mitigation. A preliminary study identified this problem and the follow up study will identify specific mitigation actions. Members can contact him with any concerns or questions related to this comment. (T. Donald)

*Why is 450 the target for structurally deficient bridges? (Tad Read, Boston Redevelopment Authority)*

A report said that if the problem were left unchecked the number could increase to 750. That goal was established before I became involved with the program. (T. Donald)

*Where is the money for the Accelerated Bridge Program coming from? (Steve Olanoff, Westwood)*

Bonds. State and federal funds will be used to pay for the bonds. (T. Donald)

*How early in the process is the public involved? (Chris Porter, MassBike)*

There is a public design meeting at the 25 percent design level. There may also be meetings before or after depending on the size of the project. For instance, there have been several stakeholder meetings for the Longfellow Bridge. (T. Donald)

*Can changes be made if bridges in more serious condition than those already on the ABP list are discovered? (Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies)*

It has been recognized that the list can be amended. Any changes will go through the Oversight Council and EOT. There is a mechanism in place to respond to a district's request for such a change. (T. Donald)

*What is the ratio of design cost to total cost? (Elliot Rothman, Boston Society of Architects)*

Design is typically 10 to 20 percent of total cost, but it depends on the nature of the design. This ratio is site-specific and can change depending on right-of-way, utilities, and the need for flaggers. (T. Donald)

*What portion of the budget is reserved for change orders? (E. Rothman)*

We are budgeting for 10 percent. That is the estimate at project advertising. (T. Donald)

*Who will address concerns about the footprint of the Boston University bridge? I have received no response from EOT or DCR. (M. Wellons)*

Contact DCR Commissioner Sullivan or Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Bowles. (T. Donald)

*What considerations are being given to recreational boating near the Boston University and Mass Avenue bridges?(unidentified)*

I have heard nothing about restrictions to recreational boating during these projects. (T. Donald)

**Members had the following comments:**

- T. Read expressed concern about the diversion of traffic between Cambridge and Boston during the peak of construction.
- Chan Rogers of Southwest Advisory Planning Committee said he is pleased by the goal of reducing to 450 the number of structurally deficient bridges because the number was as high as 900 for many years.
- S. Olanoff expressed concern that the ABP funding mechanism will reduce the funds available for other projects. The State will start paying off ABP bonds once the Central Artery/Tunnel project is paid for.
- John McQueen of WalkBoston would like public involvement to occur early in the design process. He thinks that involving the non-motorized travelers early in the design process improves the design for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists.
- M. Miller said the engineers should look beyond the cost and take into account the impact on all modes of travel. For instance, each project must be analyzed individually to determine what the cost will be to the traveling public.

**3. Chair's Report – Malek Al-Khatib, Chair**

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee recently voted on the list of projects for the draft amendment to the JOURNEY TO 2030 Plan and the draft 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program. Kristina Johnson of Quincy represented him during much of the TIP discussion because he removed himself from the discussion to avoid a professional conflict of interest with the Crosby's Corner project. The Plan and TIP Committees met to give him input during this process.

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee also voted recently to include a list of illustrative projects in the Plan amendment, which the Advisory Council supported. The Advisory Council's Plan Committee met to produce a recommendation for the illustrative project list. That recommendation was submitted to Advisory Council members in order for everyone to have an opportunity to comment. The list was also submitted to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee prior to their vote on illustrative projects.

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee voted on which projects to include and voting was aligned within the guidelines of the Advisory Council. Specific projects recommended by the Plan Committee may not have been voted on, but the

overall projects that were included on the list were within the guidelines. Furthermore, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee set a limit of only 10 to 12 projects to be included on the illustrative list.

M. Al-Khatib also said that the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee is going to prepare a letter explaining the illustrative projects. The Advisory Council, the MBTA Advisory Board, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and the Executive Office of Transportation will review the draft letter. M. Al-Khatib said the letter is an opportunity for the Advisory Council to present its views.

**Members had the following comments:**

John Businger of the National Corridors Initiative expressed his view that the Chair's votes on the illustrative project list were not responsive enough to the Plan Committee's recommendations. He was particularly concerned that the Chair voted to include Urban Ring Phase 2 and Silver Line Phase 3 on the list. J. Businger also expressed concern that no motion was made to include the North-South Rail Link on the list of illustrative projects. J. Businger, on behalf of the National Corridors Initiative, then asked M. Al-Khatib to resign as Chair of the Advisory Council for what he called a possible conflict of interest (though no conflict was identified).

Kristina Johnson of Quincy explained that the context of the illustrative projects list decision was different last year. The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee vote last year was to exclude an illustrative project list; the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee never voted on specific projects to include on a list last year. Additionally, this year, there were parameters established by the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee to govern the development of the illustrative project list and the Advisory Council Chair had to work within those parameters. It was clearly stated that the list was to be limited to 10 to 12 projects and those must be in an active planning process, such as an environmental impact or design process.

K. Johnson noted that the Plan Committee made a recommendation, which included many projects in addition to the North-South Rail Link. K. Johnson said she believes the Chair did his best given the constraints that were set at the meeting. He worked within the restrictions and had to make difficult decisions.

M. Miller said he is disappointed in the accusations made against the Chair. There is no indication whatsoever that the Chair has a conflict of interest and stated that he supports the Chair.

J. Rosenblum made a motion to limit the discussion to five minutes because of the need to discuss other items on the agenda. K. Johnson seconded the motion and it passed.

M. Al-Khatib said the Council represents the entire region, not specific projects. Some people are passionate about individual projects, but the Council serves the entire region.

M. Al-Khatib said that he thought the projects on the illustrative list should represent a mix of modes and that also guided his actions.

J. Businger questioned the parameters set by the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee and asked for an explanation of why the North-South Rail Link did not fit within the parameters.

S. Olanoff said in 2007 he made a motion to include the North-South Rail Link as an illustrative project. It did not pass, but the Advisory Council has supported the project in the past. The Plan Committee asked the Chair to make a motion. North-South Rail Link was the Plan Committee's top priority.

K. Johnson said the Advisory Council should express its opinions on the illustrative projects list through the comment letter it submits on the Plan Amendment.

**4. Briefing on the development of the draft JOURNEY TO 2030 Plan Amendment –**  
*Anne McGahan, MPO Staff*

A. McGahan gave the Advisory Council background information on the Plan Amendment. The MPO knew the Plan would need to be amended when it was adopted in 2007. The State Implementation Plan (SIP) projects and new land use assumptions from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) MetroFuture Plan needed to be incorporated. Later on it became known that the financial element of the plan would also need to be amended.

Work on the Plan Amendment has been underway for months, but it went into high gear this July when the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOT) brought financial information to the MPO. It showed that less money was available in the Plan (also, some projects had increased in cost) so some projects in the original plan could not remain in the draft Amendment. Staff then recommended projects for the Plan based on updated criteria ratings, design status, and the availability of earmarks. Projects that add capacity to the transportation network or cost more than \$10 million must be in the Amendment.

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee voted on a set of projects and those were modeled in order to analyze the air quality and environmental justice impacts of the Plan. For 2010, 2020, and 2030 the projects in the Plan cannot exceed the emissions budget that has been set by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The environmental justice analysis compares the effect of the Plan on environmental justice communities and non-environmental justice communities.

A. McGahan said the next step is for the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee to review updated text for several chapters of the Plan. The Amendment will include an illustrative projects chapter. The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee will then vote to send the draft Plan Amendment out for a 30-day public review and comment period. Changes will be made, or the Plan will be adopted without

changes, at the conclusion of the public comment period. The draft federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is on the same schedule as the draft Plan Amendment.

**Members had the following questions:**

*Why was the list of illustrative projects limited to 12 projects? Who made that decision? (J. Businger)*

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee made this decision. The illustrative projects are those that would be included in the recommended Plan if funds were available. They did not want to include too many projects because they felt it would make the list meaningless. (A. McGahan)

*Will there be a discussion on the merits of the projects included in the Plan Amendment? (C. Rogers)*

The public comment period will give the Advisory Council an opportunity to express its opinions on the projects in the Amendment. (A. McGahan)

The Advisory Council can comment on the illustrative projects list during the comment period. (M. Al-Khatib)

**Members had the following comments:**

L. Wiener said that a comment letter will be prepared and discussed in September.

S. Olanoff said a Plan Committee meeting should be held and results of the meeting should be distributed to the Advisory Council membership by e-mail.

K. Johnson said she would work with MPO staff to schedule a meeting.

**5. Discussion of the Advisory Council's comments regarding the draft FFYs 2010-2013 TIP –Laura Wiener, TIP Committee Chair, and Hayes Morrison, MPO Staff**

L. Wiener described how the TIP Committee met and discussed a draft set of priorities to guide decisions of the Advisory Council. The Committee feels that the Chair should receive general guidance rather than specific guidance targeted to individual projects. The priorities set by the TIP Committee and recommended to the Council for adoption are:

- Mobility improvements for people and goods
- Regional benefit and connectivity
- Safety
- Modal split balance
- Support of economic development

L. Wiener said that the Plan Committee discussed Crosby's Corner and determined that it stands by its decision to keep the project in the TIP. She instructed Advisory Council members to contact MPO staff with any other suggestions for the letter.

**A member had the following question:**

*When will the second round of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects be incorporated into the draft 2010-2013 TIP? (L. Wiener)*

They will be incorporated into the draft that is circulated for public review and comment. In August, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee expects to receive from EOT the list of projects recommended to receive ARRA funding. (H. Morrison).

**Members had the following comments:**

K. Johnson made a motion to limit the TIP discussion to five minutes and J. Businger seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

J. Rosenblum asked if it's prudent that the Advisory Council's letter say the Council supports the Crosby's Corner project. He said the letter should stress the difficulty of the decision and the need in the future to find a way to better balance large regional and smaller projects. He asked that specific changes be made to the letter to emphasize the difficult choice between TIP options one and two presented by staff, rather than stating that the Council supports Crosby's Corner. C. Porter agreed with J. Rosenblum's comments.

Lauren Rosenzweig said Crosby's Corner is an important project that Acton supports. She said the Advisory Council should move on.

Sue McQuaid of the Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce said that she represented the Advisory Council at the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee on the day of the vote. She emphasized to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee that there are a variety of opinions on the Advisory Council, but the recommendation was to keep Crosby's Corner on the list. Despite the Advisory Council's vote in favor of the project, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee is aware of the Advisory Council's concerns. It was never stated that the Advisory Council is 100 percent behind the Crosby's Corner project.

L. Wiener said to contact Mike with any further recommendations for the TIP letter.

H. Morrison of MPO staff said she would attend the September meeting to answer any more questions that arise about the TIP.

**6. Committee Reports**

Membership Committee – L. Wiener, Chair, said the Membership Committee would like to wait until September to discuss its recommendations for membership requests and changes to the Advisory Council’s bylaws.

Nominating Committee – K. Johnson, Chair, announced the Committee’s recommendation of L. Wiener as the nominee for the office of Chair. L. Wiener accepted the nomination.

K. Johnson said the Nominating Committee is still working on a nomination for Vice Chair and hopes to announce a candidate soon by e-mail. She asked members to send recommendations to MPO Staff or her. The election will be held at the September meeting of the Advisory Council.

M. Crowley said there is an Advisory Council tradition of having the nominees state their reasons for wanting the office before the election.

K. Johnson said that statements of each nominee will be sent to the membership by e-mail.

#### **7. Discussion about themes and topics for the September talk by Transportation Secretary James Aloisi**

M. Al-Khatib asked that ideas be sent by e-mail to Mike Callahan, of MPO staff, or him. A letter will be submitted to the Secretary soon.

#### **Members suggested the following themes:**

- Transportation alternatives
- Ways to increase MBTA ridership and further develop mass transit
- How EOT addresses the relationship between land use and transportation
- Transportation reform and reorganization
- The Accelerated Bridge Program

#### **8. Member Announcements**

There were none.

#### **9. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 PM.

#### **Attachments:**



1. Attendance List for August 12, 2009
2. Accelerated Bridge Program presentation

**ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for August 12, 2009**

***Cities and Towns***

Lauren Rosenzweig, Acton  
Laura Wiener, Arlington  
Tom Kadzis, Boston  
Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge  
Kristina Johnson, Quincy  
Marcy Crowley, Wayland  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

***Agencies***

John Read, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Steven Rawding, Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission  
Donna Smallwood, MassRIDES  
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee

***Citizen Groups***

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies  
Douglas Prentiss, American Planning Association/Massachusetts Chapter  
Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers  
Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects  
Elliot Rothman, Boston Society of Architects  
Chris Porter, MassBike  
Ulla Heski, Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization  
John Businger, National Corridors Initiative  
Sue McQuaid, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association  
John McQueen, WalkBoston

***Guests and Visitors***

Marilyn MacNab

***MPO Staff***

Mike Callahan  
Anne McGahan  
Hayes Morrison  
Sean Pfalzer  
Mary Ellen Sullivan