

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Summary of November 18, 2009 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Rooms 2 & 3 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA.

### 1. **Introductions** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

Laura Wiener, Chair and representative of Arlington, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

### 2. **Chair's Report** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

L. Wiener made the following remarks in her report:

- The Freight Committee will host a field trip to the Fore River Railroad in Quincy on Wednesday, December 2 from 1:30 – 3:30 PM.
- The Advisory Council is not meeting in December.

### 3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes of October 14, 2009** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

A motion to approve the minutes of October 14, 2009 was made by Bob Campbell, representative of Braintree, and seconded by Marvin Miller, representative of the American Council of Engineering Companies. The minutes were unanimously approved.

### 4. **Presentation - Moving Cooler: An Analysis of Transportation Strategies for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions** – *Chris Porter, Cambridge Systematics*

Moving Cooler is a nationwide study that analyzed the effects of several strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) from transportation. The transportation sector accounts for approximately 28 percent of U.S. GHG emissions. There are four primary strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Moving Cooler focused on two strategies - vehicle miles of travel (VMT) and travel efficiency strategies. The other two - vehicle technology and low carbon fuels - were recently analyzed in a different study.

The following basic assumptions were made for the study baseline:

- VMT will increase 1.4% annually.
- Transit ridership will increase 2.4% annually.
- Fuel costs will increase 1.2% annually.
- Light duty vehicle fuel economy will increase 1.91% annually.
- Heavy duty vehicle fuel economy will increase .61% annually.

The baseline emissions from transportation level off in coming years as vehicle technology improvements compensate for travel increases.

It was found that bundling strategies produced much larger reductions than any one strategy. The bundling effect is between 4% and 24%. Economy-wide pricing (such as carbon pricing, VMT fee, and or Pay as You Drive insurance) approximately doubled the effects of the individual bundles.

C. Porter closed his presentation with the following thoughts. Pricing and operations strategies can be done fairly quickly. Increasing transit service and better coordinating land use and transportation planning can have significant impacts, but in the long term. Transportation gets overlooked often because the strategies do not seem cost effective on the face. But there are many other benefits to these strategies, not just GHG emissions benefits. There are also equity considerations associated with the strategies. For instance, economy-wide pricing can have a severe impact on lower-income individuals. Ways to compensate them should be considered if any pricing strategies are implemented.

**Member comments and questions:**

In response to members' questions, C. Porter added that the study looked at the effect of tolling, at pricing strategies, and at a scenario with transit fare decreases. Increased pricing has equity implications, hurting drivers in rural areas. Pay as You Drive (PAYD) insurance allows drivers to pay on a per mile basis, rather than as a fixed cost per vehicle. This would save most drivers money and give them an economic incentive to drive less.

Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge, suggested that the Advisory Council consider that the MPO's travel model predicts a 50% increase in transit demand but the current long-range transportation plan does not produce any mode shift to transit.

**5. Presentation – Climate Change and the Boston Region MPO – Anne McGahan, MPO Staff**

A. McGahan discussed climate change policy initiatives, current MPO programs that help reduce GHG emissions, staff recommendations on the next steps, and recent activities.

- Climate Change Policy Initiatives
  - New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers adopted the first climate action plan in the United States in 2001.
  - The Commonwealth developed a Climate Protection Plan in 2004.
  - The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative was adopted in January of 2007. This is a market-based approach to reducing emissions from the power generation sector in New England.
  - U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Massachusetts could regulate greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles in 2007 (*Massachusetts vs. EPA*).
  - Governor Patrick signed an executive order requiring state agencies to cut GHG emissions.
  - Large projects requiring state environmental review (MEPA) now consider greenhouse gas emissions.
  - The Global Warming Solutions Act was passed by the state in 2008.
- Current MPO Programs that Reduce GHG Emissions

- Funding projects that give people alternatives to automobile travel.
- Investment in reconstruction of intersections and HOV lanes.
- Funding the use of alternative fuels.
- Funding transit enhancements projects.
- Modeling carbon dioxide emissions for the PMT and the Regional Transportation Plan.
- Staff Recommendations
  - Create a more efficient transportation system through supporting alternative modes and reducing congestion and VMT.
    - Model CO2 emissions, add GHG emissions to the TIP criteria, support more parking at transit stations, support bike and pedestrian projects.
  - Use more fuel efficient and cleaner vehicles.
    - Continue to fund transit vehicle retrofits and more efficient new transit vehicles.
  - Make investments that support land uses that will reduce VMT.
    - Support redevelopment of urban areas and compact development.
- Recent Activities
  - The Boston MPO staff participates on a TRB Expert Task Group on incorporating GHG emissions into the collaborative decision-making process. The staff also participates on committees to implement the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act.

**Member comments and questions:**

In response to members' questions, A. McGahan explained the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program, which was authorized by the ISTEA federal transportation bill in 1991. The MPO has funded suburban mobility and transportation demand management (TDM) projects with CMAQ funds, but is now consolidating these programs and opening up the new program to other CMAQ-eligible projects. Regarding analysis of past CMAQ projects, statewide CMAQ Committee has not performed a study yet. A. McGahan also commented on pending federal legislation to require MPOs to emphasize GHG reductions in future planning. This would require closer collaboration with MAPC on land use issues. A. McGahan responded to a question about the Transportation Enhancements program by saying that a group is currently examining the program for MassDOT and should soon present recommendations.

J. Rosenblum suggested the Advisory Council encourage the MPO to give greater consideration to GHG emissions when selecting TIP and Plan projects. He also said that CMAQ projects to improve intersections might induce demand for travel and increase congestions in the long term.

Frank DeMasi, Wellesley, said he would like to see more freight projects funded with CMAQ.

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies, said reducing emissions is a two-pronged approach. The federal government also needs to change its priorities.

## **6. Discussion of Draft Amendment 1 to the FFYs 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Laura Wiener, Chair**

L. Wiener said the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee approved an expedited public comment period on the amendment. The Advisory Council's TIP Committee met in early November to draft comments on the amendment.

The Committee had three primary concerns.

- The process should have been more transparent.
- The Committee does not support the pedestrian bridge project in Foxborough.
- Route 9 has serious drainage issues that the resurfacing project does not address.

### **Member comments and questions about the process:**

- Kristina Johnson of Quincy said the Recovery Act has been stressful for municipalities and state agencies. MassDOT had to work quickly to make projects ready. Advisory Council members should keep this in mind.
- J. Rosenblum said he thought the second round would include more municipal projects. The recommended list did not reflect the municipal priorities that were solicited by the Lt. Governor's office early in the process. The municipalities did not understand the process and how the state made its decisions. There was not enough time for discussion of the recommended list.
- J. Stasik of Metrowest said he shares the Advisory Council's concerns about drainage problems along Route 9. He appreciated the Advisory Council's comments on the project. MetroWest is not sure how that project rose to the level of high priority for the state.

Jeffrey Dirk, representing Foxborough for Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., addressed the Advisory Council. J. Dirk expressed sympathy with the frustration over the process. He said the purpose of the pedestrian bridge is to serve a 16-acre parcel on either side of Route 1 that was designated in 1999 as a targeted economic development area by the state. High tech office space was permitted across Route 1 from the stadium, but the highway is an impediment to development on the site. The development will bring 4,000 jobs to the area and the pedestrian bridge is an important piece of infrastructure for this project to move forward. It will reduce automobile traffic on Route 1 and provide a connection to a proposed commuter rail station in Foxborough.

### **Member comments and questions for J. Dirk:**

*Automobile and pedestrian traffic need to be separated to make the system work. The points made by J. Dirk are valid. (Chan Rogers, SWAP)*

*How many people will use the bridge? Will there be traffic only during football games? (T. Centore)*

The development of the campus and a commuter rail station would lead to more than 1,000 crossings per day on the bridge. An at-grade signalized crossing would back up traffic for several miles. (J. Dirk)

*Who is your client? Who owns the property? How wide is the proposed bridge? (M. Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies)*

The Town of Foxborough is our client. The majority of the ownership is by the Kraft Group, but the economic development area includes several other property owners. The proposed bridge is 24 feet wide. This width is necessary, partly for emergencies such as an evacuation of the stadium. (J. Dirk)

*Is the bridge on private property? (L. Wiener)*

No, it is on Commonwealth of Massachusetts right-of-way. (J. Dirk)

*Would the developers be willing to sign an agreement so that if the uses projected in the plans don't materialize, they will reimburse the Commonwealth? (J. Rosenblum)*

I can't speak for the developers and whether they would consider that. (J. Dirk)

*The Recovery Act requires documentation of job creation. How are you quantifying job creation for development that may or may not occur in the future? (K. Johnson)*

More than 1.5 million square feet of office space have gone through state approvals. The project is expected to create 4,500 construction jobs and 3,000 to 4,000 permanent jobs. The overall economic development area will realize more jobs. (J. Dirk)

*Perhaps the bridge could be viewed as mitigation and the developer could help support it. Has that been considered? (F. DeMasi)*

This project is meant to spur economic development, just like several other Recovery Act transportation projects. The Commonwealth will reap tax benefits from the development and the creation of new jobs. (J. Dirk)

*Is there financing lined up for this project? It seems like, given the economic climate, there would not be demand for the commercial space. (Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association)*

The Commonwealth has received interest in developing the site. The pedestrian bridge is a big issue for those interested in developing the site. (J. Dirk)

*The Kraft Group invested its own money in the stadium project. Stadiums are publicly supported in many other cities. The pedestrian bridge project deserved public support. (C. Rogers)*

L. Wiener requested direction from the Council on how to vote at the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee meeting on November 19. She reminded members of the Advisory Council that there is no guarantee that if the \$9 million were not used for the Foxborough project that it would be used on another project in the Boston Region.

K. Johnson made a motion to accept the comment letter as written. J. Stasik seconded the motion. The letter supports removing the pedestrian bridge from the Transportation Improvement Program proposed amendment.

18 voted in favor. 1 voted against the motion (C. Rogers). There was one abstention (Douglas Prentiss, American Planning Association, Massachusetts Chapter).

**7. Committee Reports** – There were none.

**8. Member Announcements** – There were none.

**9. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.

**Attachments:**

Attendance List for November 18, 2009

**ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for November 18, 2009**

***Cities and Towns***

Laura Wiener, Arlington  
Tom Kadzis, Boston  
Bob Campbell, Braintree  
Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge  
Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
Tony Centore, Medfield  
Kurt Mullen, Needham  
Kristina Johnson, Quincy  
Jon Squibb, Revere  
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

***Agencies***

Steven Rawding, MassDOT – Aeronautics Division  
Donna Smallwood, MassRIDES  
John Stasik, Metrowest Growth Management Committee  
Ed Anthes-Washburn, Seaport Advisory Council  
Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council  
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee

***Citizen Groups***

John Kane, Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA  
Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies  
Douglas Prentiss, APA Massachusetts Chapter  
Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects  
Elliot Paul Rothman, Boston Society of Architects  
Richard Flynn, Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition  
David Ernst, MassBike  
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association  
John McQueen, WalkBoston

***Guests and Visitors***

Romin Koebel, FCDC  
Ed Lowney  
Marilyn MacNab  
Chris Porter, Cambridge Systematics

***MPO Staff***

Cathy Buckley  
Mike Callahan  
Anne McGahan  
Mary Ellen Sullivan