

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the September 14, 2011 Meeting

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

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

Laura Wiener, Chair (Arlington) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Attendees introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

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

The public comment period for the MPO's draft Long-Range Transportation Plan and draft federal fiscal years 2012-15 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) ended on September 13. The Advisory Council's TIP and LRTP Committees met to discuss the documents on August 24 and have prepared comments that will be discussed later in the meeting.

L. Wiener announced that the meeting would be her last as Chair of the Advisory Council. She thanked Advisory Council members for their respectful discussions and staff for their support during the last two years.

3. **Approval of the Meeting Minutes of August 10, 2011** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

The minutes of August 10, 2011 were unanimously approved. Walter Bonin of Marlborough and Kurt Mullen of Needham abstained.

4. **Implementing the Bay State Greenway and the Priority 100** – *Josh Lehman, Bicycle-Pedestrian Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Transportation*

J. Lehman first discussed MassDOT's commitment to bicycling and other non-motorized options as modes of transportation. Underlying the commitment is the GreenDOT policy of MassDOT, which calls for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; promoting bicycling, walking, and transit; and supporting smart growth development. Secondly, MassDOT has a complete streets policy that calls for creating safe and appropriate accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists in all transportation projects. Additionally, MassDOT has entered into a Healthy Transportation Compact with the Executive Office on Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. It was created by the reform legislation that created MassDOT. The objective is to promote public health through active lifestyles, which bicycling and walking support.

MassDOT's bicycling vision is based upon the state's 2008 Bicycle Transportation Plan. The vision is to make Massachusetts a leading state for bicycling transportation. Massachusetts is making progress towards the vision and has steadily moved up the ranks

of the nation's most bicycle-friendly states, a rating produced by the League of American Bicyclists. Massachusetts is now ranked ninth in the nation.

The Plan led to the development of the Bay State Greenway, which called for a mix of on-road and off-road facilities. On-road facilities are important to connect the off-road facilities, which are more difficult to provide. Seven statewide corridors of a combined 740 miles are key components of the Bay State Greenway. In the Boston region these include the Mass Central (from New York to Boston), the Boston – Cape Cod corridor, the North Shore corridor (from New Hampshire to Boston), and the Merrimack – Charles River corridor (that incorporates the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail).

The Boston metropolitan region is home to the most concentrated and connected path network in the state. The Minuteman Bikeway and Dr. Paul Dudley White Path are among the most popular facilities in the United States. The path system in metropolitan Boston continues to grow. The Watertown Path will be dedicated soon. It will create a better connection between the Minuteman Bikeway and Charles River. The Minuteman Connector (also called the Alewife Connector) is 55 percent complete. It will provide better connections to Alewife Station along the Alewife Brook. The Mass Central (also known as the Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville Path) is 54 percent done. It will connect Belmont to Alewife and then on to the Community Path in Somerville. The North Bank Bridge is 38 percent completed. It will connect Cambridge and Charlestown.

The Bay State Greenway Priority 100 includes MassDOT's highest priority shared-use paths. Constructing these facilities would increase the Bay State Greenway by 100 miles. They will connect urban centers and maximize the transportation utility of the entire path network. Those paths in the Boston region included in the Priority 100 are:

- Wayside Trail – 24 miles between Waltham and Berlin
- Neponset Valley Greenway Phase 2 – 5 miles between Boston and Milton
- Border to Boston (North and South sections) – 13 miles between Newbury and Georgetown and between Topsfield and Danvers
- Northern Strand Community Trail – 9 miles between Lynn and Everett
- Bruce Freeman Trail, Phases 2A, 2B, and 2C – 8 miles between Westford and Concord
- Reformatory Branch Trail – 2 miles in Bedford
- Somerville Community Path Extension – 2 miles in Somerville

MassDOT is working to implement the Bay State Greenway in several ways. It has formed a partnership with the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism to promote the Greenway. MassDOT is also developing route identification signs, pavement markings, a Bay State Greenway website, and a Bicycle Route Map.

Questions

In response to members' and guests' questions, J. Lehman made the following additional comments:

- The Assabet River Rail Trail is on MassDOT's radar. It will help people access commuter rail at South Acton Station.
- MassDOT studies the environmental impacts of paths, including run off and vegetation issues. Some paths are stalled due to environmental concerns.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires certain surface types. Generally MassDOT builds hard surface paths. However, MassDOT is researching a soft surface suitable to the requirements of ADA.
- The project development process is bottom up. There will always be a give-and-take between the DOT and the MPOs for funding. Some MPO's policies can sometimes be inconsistent with MassDOT policies. There can be tension between the state, regional bodies, and municipalities.

Comments

- There are many environmental impacts from paths. Some are positive, but some are not. Many of the paths are essentially roads with impermeable surfaces and disturb wildlife and urban wilds. It is important to ask if certain paths should not be built in order to preserve urban wilds. (Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association)

5. Comment Letters on the draft Long-Range Transportation Plan and the FFYs 2012-15 Transportation Improvement Program – Monica Tibbits, TIP Committee Chair; and Schuyler Larrabee, Plan Committee Chair

M. Tibbits reported on the TIP Committee's main concerns as expressed in the draft Advisory Council comment letter on the draft federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2012-15 TIP. The Committee is concerned about the loss of funding for the Clean Air and Mobility Program and urged the MPO to restore the funding. The Committee also urged the MPO to conduct more and better freight planning and to strive for a better balance among the modes in its investments.

S. Larrabee reported on the Plan Committee's main concerns as expressed in the draft Advisory Council comment letter on the draft Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), *Paths to a Sustainable Region*. Four main points are made in the letter. The Committee urges the MPO to make maintenance of the existing system the highest priority. The MPO should strive to use data and performance measures to select projects to include in the LRTP. When it comes to expansion, the Committee supports investments in rail, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects over highway projects. Finally, the Committee supports including a list of illustrative projects in the LRTP.

Comments

- The emphasis on freight is important and welcomed. (M. Wellons)
- The TIP comment letter should include a commitment to GreenDOT as an Advisory Council priority for TIP development. (John McQueen, WalkBoston)
- The Red Line-Blue Line Connector should be added to the Advisory Council's recommended list of LRTP illustrative projects. (Steve Olanoff, Westwood)

- The Advisory Council's comments should commend the MPO for conducting a needs assessment for the LRTP. However, the MPO has decided to honor existing commitments, regardless of whether or not they address an identified need. The Advisory Council should urge the MPO to use the needs assessment to select projects. (Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge)
- The Advisory Council's LRTP letter should express that rail, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects should be favored over highways for expansion and rehabilitation of the system, rather than just expansion. (J. McQueen)
- The Advisory Council's letter put no emphasis on the importance of the highway system. Highways are important and will need to expand in the future, especially if casinos are built. (Tony Centore, Medfield)
- Rail is expensive, but so are highways. Acquiring land and maintaining the system are expensive. They are not an environmentally friendly way to accommodate travel. (S. Larrabee)

Richard Canale of the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) made a motion to approve the TIP comment letter as presented and Mike Gowing of Acton seconded the motion. It was unanimously approved.

J. Rosenblum made a motion to approve the LRTP comment letter with the addition of the Red Line-Blue Line connector as a recommended illustrative project. S. Olanoff seconded the motion. The motion was approved with J. McQueen and M. Wellons opposed.

6. Advisory Council Election – *Kurt Mullen, representative of Needham and Nominating Committee member*

K. Mullen announced the candidates for the offices of Chair and Vice Chair. S. Olanoff of Westwood was nominated for Chair and accepted the nomination. Monica Tibbits of the 128 Business Council was nominated for Vice Chair and accepted the nomination. The Nominating Committee recommends them both. K. Mullen welcomed nominations from the floor. There were none. K. Mullen asked each candidate to make a statement.

S. Olanoff stated that the MPO is changing due to the new Memorandum of Understanding. There will be seven new members on the MPO. S. Olanoff is concerned about municipal members representing their subregion or own municipal interests, rather than those of the entire region. The Advisory Council should encourage regional thinking at the MPO.

S. Olanoff was unanimously elected Chair of the Advisory Council. J. Rosenblum of Cambridge abstained from the vote.

M. Tibbits thanked the Nominating Committee for their recommendation. She stated that she is excited to serve as the Vice Chair and looks forward to working with S. Olanoff.

M. Tibbits was unanimously elected Vice Chair of the Advisory Council.

7. Announcements

Anne Lynch, executive director of the Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association (MMTA), announced the public comment period for the City of Boston proposed hazardous materials route ends September 23. Boston is seeking to ban trucks carrying hazardous materials from going through the city. Forcing the trucks to use Route 128, rather than travel through the city, will lead to a 50 percent drop in productivity for the affected trucks. In 2010, 800 million gallons of heating oil, 600,000 gallons of diesel fuel, and 2.6 billion gallons of gasoline were consumed in Massachusetts. The MMTA estimates that the 95 communities most affected by the routing change will see an increased cost of delivery of 3 to 5 cents per gallon. The total cost to the affected communities will be approximately \$35 million to \$59 million.

R. Canale announced that the Town of Lexington would be hiring a transportation planner. The person hired will represent the town on the Advisory Council.

8. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for September 14, 2011

Cities and Towns

Mike Gowing, Acton
Laura Wiener, Arlington
Tom Kadzis, Boston
Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge
Walter Bonin, Marlborough
Tony Centore, Medfield
Dom D'Eramo, Millis
Kurt Mullen, Needham
John Gillon, Quincy
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Agencies

Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC)
Karen Pearson, MassDOT
Steven Rawding, MassDOT Aeronautics
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP)
Jennifer Solomon, MassRIDES
Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council

Citizen Groups

Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects
Richard Flynn, Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition
Tom Yardley, MASCO
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association
Monica Tibbits, Route 128 Business Council
John McQueen, WalkBoston

Guests and Visitors

Amanda Richard, Senator McGee's Office
Josh Lehman, MassDOT
Ed Lowney, Malden resident
Dick Williamson, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
Carole Wolfe

MPO Staff

Walter Bennett
Mike Callahan
Karl Quackenbush