

**Memorandum for the Record**  
**Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting**

**November 17, 2011 Meeting**

10:00 AM – 11:45 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 & 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

David Mohler, Chair, representing Richard Davey, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

**Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- approve the following work programs:
  - *2011 – 2012 HOV Monitoring on I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway*
  - *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections, FFY 2012*
  - *MBTA Systemwide Passenger Survey: Comparison of Results*
- approve the minutes of the meeting of November 3

**Meeting Agenda**

**1. Public Comments**

Wig Zamore, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership/Mystic View Task Force, commented about several work programs and a report on this meeting agenda. Regarding the work program for *MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts*, he noted that in the past staff collected data on inbound commuter rail travel only. He suggested that staff collect data on outbound travel as well. Regarding the work programs for *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership* and the *MBTA Transit Delay Study*, he recommended that staff incorporate anticipated transit delays when it conducts air quality modeling in the future. He also recommended consideration of the environmental impacts of using buses to replace subway service. Regarding the monthly report on the State Implementation Plan (SIP) projects, he suggested giving priority to the modeling of interim replacement projects.

**2. Chair's Report – David Mohler, MassDOT**

There was none.

**3. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports**

There were none.

**4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report – Steve Olanoff, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council**

The Advisory Council met on November 9 and heard a presentation by Jody Ray, Deputy Rail Administrator, MassDOT. Secretary of Transportation Richard Davey will speak at the meeting of January 11.

The Advisory Council's Membership Committee will be contacting members with low attendance. Members are required to attend the majority of meetings each year.

**5. Executive Director's Report** – *Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

MPO members requested that staff provide an organizational chart of Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), with individuals' names included, and a graphic showing how federal transportation funding sources flow into this region. The organizational chart has been sent to members. The funding graphic is being developed.

Members were also provided with quarterly reports showing budgets and expenditures on projects in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), as well as staff assignments, schedules, and funding sources for each project. These reports are usually discussed in detail by the UPWP Subcommittee each quarter but are being distributed to the entire membership this quarter simply to illustrate for new members the kinds of reports generated.

**6. Work Programs** – *Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

At the meeting of November 3, members were presented with three draft work programs: *2011 – 2012 HOV Monitoring on I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway*; *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections, FFY 2012*; and *MBTA Systemwide Passenger Survey: Comparison of Results*.

Following those presentations, members asked for more information for their consideration of the work program for *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections, FFY 2012*, one of an on-going series of studies on safety improvements for selected intersections.

***Implementation Status of Safety and Operations Improvements at Selected Intersections***

Staff provided information on the implementation status of recommendations from past intersection studies in a memorandum. Of the 27 intersections listed in the memorandum (excluding the most recent six, whose recommendations are still in draft stage), 16 have some activity associated with them. Physical improvements have been made at five locations, three projects are under design, and others are in various stages of planning. The status of two is unknown, pending responses from municipal officials.

K. Quackenbush explained that if a project's implementation status is listed in the memorandum as "Pre-TIP," then the project has been approved by MassDOT's Project Review Committee (PRC) and has been assigned a PROJIS number, but it is not programmed in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). If a project is under design it may be listed as "Pre-TIP."

S. Olanoff advised staff to coordinate with the Town of Milton on the *Milton – Neponset Valley Parkway* improvements project. Efi Pagitsas, MPO staff, responded that staff is

working with the town and passing on preliminary recommendations to town staff. The town has expressed interest in implementing the study recommendations.

In response to a question from D. Mohler, E. Pagitsas explained how staff approaches these intersection studies. Staff develops regional priorities first and then approaches municipalities to determine their interest in implementing intersection improvements. Municipal interest is considered when selecting intersections for further study. She noted that staff does not have the ability to require municipalities to follow through on implementation.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), suggested that the MPO ask municipalities supportive of an intersection study to contribute some funding early on in the study process. David Koses, At-Large City (City of Newton), agreed and also suggested that the MPO might want to consider studying locations that municipalities themselves have identified as problematic.

Dennis Crowley, SouthWest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), asked staff to provide members with the criteria used for selecting intersections. E. Pagitsas stated that staff uses vehicle crash data and data on traffic delays, and gives consideration to geographic equity. Also, intersections are selected where there is a high probability that low-cost solutions – that municipalities could implement – may be effective.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), remarked upon the issue of municipal commitment to implement study recommendations. He noted that municipalities do not know what the cost of recommended improvements would be until a study is complete. He also suggested re-evaluating the criteria used to select intersections to include consideration of how much money a municipality can contribute to the improvements.

K. Quackenbush discussed the process for moving forward on this study. Staff will provide members with a list of approximately 20 potential intersections and recommendations for studying a subset of about three of those intersections. He also explained the process for following up on study recommendations. Staff maintains a database of information from a variety of studies, and periodically staff conducts field work to gather information on the status of projects. E. Pagitsas added that staff also communicates with staff of the MassDOT highway districts, which implement some of the projects identified through these studies.

Marie Rose, MassDOT Highway Division, suggested that staff add several columns to the chart describing the implementation status of past study recommendations to indicate if a project is a MassDOT project and if it has PRC approval, and to include the project file number.

### ***Action on Work Programs***

Members then took action on the work programs before them.

A motion to approve the work program for *2011 – 2012 HOV Monitoring on I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway* was made by T. Bent, and seconded by D. Giombetti. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the work program for *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections, FFY 2012* was made by T. Bent, and seconded by D. Giombetti. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the work program for the *MBTA Systemwide Passenger Survey: Comparison of Results* was made by John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, and seconded by T. Bent. The motion carried.

## **7. Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 3 was made by Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, and seconded by T. Bent. The motion carried.

## **8. MPO Member Committee Assignments – David Mohler, MassDOT**

D. Mohler provided an overview of the existing subcommittees of the MPO. He alerted members that there will be future discussions about whether the MPO should continue to have subcommittees.

The existing subcommittees are as follows:

- *UPWP Subcommittee*: This subcommittee works on choosing planning projects that staff will undertake in a given federal fiscal year; it is chaired by MassDOT.
- *Administration and Finance Subcommittee*: This subcommittee deals with the CTPS budget and addresses complaints made to the MPO; it is chaired by the MBTA Advisory Board.
- *TIP Criteria Subcommittee*: This subcommittee was active when the MPO was making revisions to the TIP project evaluation criteria; it is chaired by the City of Somerville.
- *Clean Air and Mobility Subcommittee*: This subcommittee allocates funding for projects and programs that will improve air quality in the region; it is chaired by MAPC.

Staff was asked to prepare more information about these subcommittees, including recommendations for how to proceed with them. D. Mohler asked that staff wait for a month or so before presenting this information in order to give new members sufficient time to become more familiar with the MPO's operations.

P. Regan suggested that staff include the practices of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council for "lessons learned" that could be applied to the MPO subcommittees.

S. Olanoff recommended maintaining the schedule of UPWP Subcommittee in the future.

**9. Work Programs** – *Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

Members were presented with four draft work programs: *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership*, *MBTA Transit Delay Study*, *MBTA Rapid Transit Replacement Service Study*, and *MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts*. K. Quackenbush provided an overview of each one and answered questions from members. Members will vote on these work programs at their next meeting.

The first two work programs are related because both deal with certain aspects of the phenomena of delay and unreliability in a transit system. Many parties, including the Federal Transit Administration, the MBTA, MassDOT, and some MPO members are very interested in this subject, and the first two work programs have the potential to shed light on these phenomena.

***Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership***

The work program for *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership* will study where and when delays on the transit system affect ridership. The regional travel model will be used to determine where significant delays occur on the system and where they have the largest impact on riders. Two scenarios will be modeled; the first scenario will represent the system operating with delays and the second without delays. Those two scenarios will then be compared and staff will make recommendations as to where on the system the reduction of delays would have the largest impact on ridership.

***MBTA Transit Delay Study***

The work program for the *MBTA Transit Delay Study* involves the creation of a spreadsheet-based model that will allow for modeling the manner in which a delay on a transit vehicle can propagate both spatially and temporally through the rest of the transit system. This model will represent all transit routes/lines in the system, all stop-to-stop passenger flows, all stop-to-stop travel times, and will include transfers from one route/line to another. It will be a tool that MBTA planners can use to evaluate the impact of operating strategies to deal with vehicle delays, such as expressing buses.

Members asked questions and made comments regarding these two work programs:

D. Giombetti asked if the *MBTA Transit Delay Study* would also estimate revenues lost from delays on the system. K. Quackenbush replied that staff did not anticipate having that kind of functionality in this model, but he said that he would discuss the idea with the project manager.

P. Regan noted that there are different causes for delays on various modes, such as due to traffic, police actions, and medical emergencies. He asked how such delays would be handled in the *MBTA Transit Delay Study*. He also asked for more specifics about the impact that the study will measure. K. Quackenbush replied that predictable delays, such as those due to recurring traffic congestion, are presumably built into route schedules. Because the model will be based on those schedules, it will incorporate this predictable

delay. The model, once set up, will therefore be used to test the impacts in the system of unpredictable delay. The study will calculate both vehicle delay and passenger delay.

S. Olanoff inquired as to whether the *MBTA Transit Delay Study* would result in formalizing certain operating strategies. K. Quackenbush and D. Mohler explained that this study will not result in the development of protocols, but that the MBTA could use the model to develop strategies.

Lourenço Dantas, Massachusetts Port Authority, suggested using the *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership* study to analyze the potential effect of making capital improvements on the system that could attract more riders.

K. Quackenbush explained that staff would use Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) data and ridecheck data to determine the real travel times of transit vehicles. L. Dantas then suggested conducting a parallel study that would use AVL data to isolate specific road segments where buses are delayed. K. Quackenbush noted that staff has conducted such detailed work in previous studies, but that the current studies would not have that level of detail.

L. Dantas recommended a change to the work program for *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership* to split the tasks listed under Task 1 into two tasks.

#### ***MBTA Rapid Transit Replacement Service Study***

The work program for the *MBTA Rapid Transit Replacement Service Study* will assist the MBTA in updating its protocols for governing the running of buses in lieu of rail service (both for scheduled repairs and unscheduled reasons). CTPS will provide assistance with developing protocols for effectively communicating with customers, and for communicating with operators of replacement buses and MBTA field personnel regarding routing in emergencies.

The tasks of this study include conducting research into the practices of peer agencies, consulting with MBTA personnel about their needs, and developing protocols for the MBTA to consider. CTPS will not be addressing the routing of replacement vehicles in any depth since the MBTA recently reviewed these routings.

Members asked questions and made comments about this work program:

Richard Canale, At-Large Town (Town of Lexington), asked if the work program would study the environmental impacts (such as air quality impacts) of using replacement buses for planned events. K. Quackenbush replied that such a task is not included in this study.

L. Dantas suggested that consideration be given to the role that public safety officials can play to ameliorate the impacts of re-routing transit riders to buses. He suggested that they could play a part by creating ad hoc bus lanes or queue jumps to speed the movement of replacement buses.

***MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts***

Through the work program for the *MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts* staff will collect commuter rail ridership data. CTPS ride checkers and temporary employees will collect data on every weekday trip in the system, for both inbound and outbound trains travelling at peak and off-peak times. The result will be a complete weekday composite count of commuter rail ridership. This work is consistent with passenger counting work that is conducted by CTPS's Transit Service Planning group.

Members asked questions and made comments about this work program:

P. Regan asked about when staff would be counting passengers given that commuter rail ridership can fluctuate seasonally. K. Quackenbush replied that staff would avoid counting at times when there is low ridership, such as during the summer, school vacation weeks, and Monday mornings and Friday afternoons. The counting will occur from the winter into the spring.

S. Olanoff commented that head counts by commuter rail conductors are consistently high.

D. Crowley suggested checking to see if the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad Company (MBCR) is providing ridership data that it is contractually required to submit. D. Mohler expressed confidence that the company is in compliance with its contract. He noted that the contract for the next vendor might have different requirements for data reporting.

P. Regan added that fare collection was a focus when the MBCR contract was written and that there is a correlation between fares and ridership. D. Mohler noted that when this study is complete, the composite day of ridership could be compared to average daily revenue.

Ron Morgan, MBTA, reported that in the past the MBTA has used the months of May and October as seasonal benchmarks for ridership counts and has avoided conducting counts in January and February. K. Quackenbush noted, however, that CTPS would have to conduct counts during winter months in order to complete this project on schedule, before the summer.

Christine Stickney, South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree), asked whether commuter rail passengers at transfer stations would be counted, and whether data would be gathered on how passengers traveled to transit stations. (She noted that survey data for the Greenbush commuter rail line is several years old.) K. Quackenbush reported that passengers at transfer stations would be counted, and that staff knows exactly where in a station to observe passengers in order to ensure counting all passengers. However, data would not be collected for this study regarding their means of accessing the stations. Other survey data exist regarding access to stations. P. Regan added that the MBTA and other regional transit authorities collect data on parking lot usage, which reflects passengers who access stations by car. That data does not reflect passengers who access

stations by walking or bicycling, or who are dropped off by a driver who does not park at the station.

Members then returned to the topic of work programs discussed earlier.

C. Stickney asked if ferry service is included in the models that would be used for the work programs for *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership* and the *MBTA Transit Delay Study*. K. Quackenbush replied that the first does include ferry service but the latter does not.

Regarding the work program for *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership*, Tom Kadzis, City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department), suggested that the reliability of communication to passengers may have an impact on ridership given that some passengers would tolerate known delays but not uncertain delays.

#### **10. State Implementation Plan Update – David Mohler, MassDOT**

MassDOT's monthly report on the status of projects in the State Implementation Plan (SIP) was released. Since the last update, a tentative date for the completion of the *Fairmount Line Improvement* project has been set.

Also, MassDOT met with the Department of Environmental Protection on November 16 to discuss all outstanding issues with the SIP projects, including the *Construction of 1,000 New Parking Spaces*, *Fairmount Line Improvement*, and *Green Line Extension* projects, and MassDOT's petition to remove the *Red Line – Blue Line Connector (Design)* project from the SIP.

MassDOT, the MBTA, and CTPS are now working to develop offset projects to mitigate for the delays in the *Green Line Extension* project. MassDOT expects to hold a public process on this topic starting in January 2012.

#### **11. Members Items**

In response to a question from S. Olanoff, D. Mohler stated that the schedule for next year's TIP and UPWP will be on the agenda of the meeting of December 1.

#### **12. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Romano, and seconded by T. Bent. The motion carried.

**Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting Attendance  
Thursday, November 17, 2011, 10:00 AM**

**Members**

At-Large City (City of Everett)  
At-Large City (City of Newton)  
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)  
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)  
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)  
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)  
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
MassDOT Highway Division  
  
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)  
Massachusetts Port Authority  
MBTA Advisory Board  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham)  
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)  
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)  
Regional Transportation Advisory Council  
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)  
SouthWest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)  
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)

**Representatives and Alternates**

Marzie Galazka  
David Koses  
Laura Wiener  
Richard Canale  
Lara Mérida  
Tom Kadzis  
Tom Bent  
David Mohler  
Marie Rose  
John Romano  
Ron Morgan  
Lourenço Dantas  
Paul Regan  
Eric Halvorson  
Dennis Giombetti  
Denise Deschamps  
Ed Tarallo  
Steve Olanoff  
Christine Stickney  
Dennis Crowley  
Tom O'Rourke

**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Walter Bennett

Michael Callahan

David Fargen

Maureen Kelly

Robin Mannion

Anne McGahan

Efi Pagitsas

Sean Pfalzer

Matthew Plager

Mary Ellen Sullivan

Alicia Wilson

**Other Attendees**

Callida Cenizal

Rafael Mares

Joe Onorato

Wig Zamore

MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning

Conservation Law Foundation

MassDOT Highway

Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership / Mystic View Task  
Force