

**Draft Memorandum for the Record
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee of the
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

July 21, 2011 Meeting

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 & 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

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

Decisions

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee agreed to the following:

- approve the minutes of the meeting of June 30

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

John Woodsmall, Town of Southborough, provided an update on the *Southborough – Main Street* project. The proponents submitted revised 25% design plans to MassDOT in June, and they are proceeding with the design work. The project cost estimate is \$5.5 million. J. Woodsmall noted that the project was ranked fourteenth in the staff project evaluations, and he asked the MPO to consider funding the project when funds become available.

Jonah Petri, Friends of the Community Path, thanked the MPO members for their support of the *Somerville – Community Path, Phase 1* project and asked that they keep the project programmed in the FFYs 2012 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). He cited the strong community support for the project and noted that the MPO has received about 138 letters of support for it. He also stated that the reallocation of funding for the *Somerville – Beacon Street* project, from the FFY 2012 to FFY 2015 element of the TIP, is not appropriate. And he discussed how dangerous the roadway is for bicyclists.

Roland Bartl, Town of Acton, spoke in support of the *Bruce Freeman Rail Trail* and *Assabet River Rail Trail* projects. He drew attention to the many public comments that the MPO has received supporting trail projects and noted that Congressman Niki Tsongas also submitted a letter.

Kevin McHugh, Coneco Engineers and Scientists, spoke on behalf of the Town of Ipswich regarding the *Ipswich – Reconstruction of Central and South Main Streets (Route 1A and Route 133)* project, and he answered questions from members. He reported that revised 25% design plans were submitted to MassDOT last year and that the proponents are responding to comments. He stated that the project will reconstruct the roadway, which has poor pavement condition, and upgrade a drainage system, which is over 100 years old, to address flooding and drainage problems in the area. He explained that there are plates on the roadway now and that the town is repaving the surface to prepare for

winter, but that the improvements are not a permanent fix. He also noted that catch basins are collapsing. The proponents continue to request funding for the project.

Joshua Ostruff, Board of Selectmen of the Town of Natick, requested the MPO's support for the *Natick/Wellesley – Route 9/Oak Street* project, which he said is one of the ten most dangerous intersections in the state. He discussed the project's economic development aspects as they relate to the expansion of Math Works. He reported that \$450,000 of local funding was used to design the project. The total cost of the project is \$6.5 million and it has a \$1.3 million federal earmark. The proponents are requesting \$4.7 million in TIP funding. He read an excerpt from a letter sent to the MPO by State Representatives David Linsky and Alice Peish and State Senators Richard Ross and Karen Spilka, who spoke to the project's benefits in terms of economic development, safety, and improved access for emergency vehicles. In response to a member's question, J. Ostruff stated that the project's 25% design hearing has been held. Marie Rose, MassDOT Highway Division, added that the project could be ready by FFY 2012.

Martha Duffield, Town of Danvers, requested that the MPO program the *Danvers – Liberty Street* project on the FFY 2012 – 2015 TIP. She reported that the project is at the 100% design phase, permitting is completed, right-of-way is secured, and the project is ready for advertisement. Also, she stated that the Town of Danvers has spent over \$800,000 on the project, and that the town has received commitments from Governor Patrick and Secretary Mullan.

James Marsh, City of Lynn, urged the MPO to restore the *Lynn – Route 129 (Broadway)* project to the TIP. He noted that Route 129 is one of two main thoroughfares into downtown Lynn, and is increasingly becoming a major access route. He also stated that the city has invested \$750,000 in the project area. The project manager added that the roadway handles approximately 39,000 vehicles per day and that even more severe usage is projected for the future. He also noted that the roadway links downtown Lynn to Union Hospital, that a fire station is located in the project area, and that two schools are in the vicinity. The sidewalks are in poor condition and are not ADA compliant. He reported that the project is at the 25% design stage and could be completed by the end of 2012. The cost estimate is \$4.6 million. In response to a member's question about the modes operating on the roadway, he noted that there are buses operating on the roadway and he indicated that a parking issue must be addressed when planning for bicycle lanes.

2. Chair's Report – David Mohler, MassDOT

The MPO has received seven resumes for the position of Director of Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS). They are being reviewed by the selection committee.

3. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report – Laura Wiener, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council

L. Wiener reported that the Advisory Council did not meet in July. The August meeting will include an update from the Massachusetts Port Authority.

5. Director's Report – *Karl Quackenbush, Acting Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)*

K. Quackenbush drew members' attention to two flyers, one announcing the MPO Open House to be held on August 3, and another announcing the environmental consultation process for the LRTP. At the Open House sessions, members of the public will have the opportunity to interact with MPO staff regarding the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The environmental consultation meeting will involve state and federal officials who deal with environmental matters and discussions about the LRTP process as it relates to such matters.

He then announced the upcoming retirement of Cathy Buckley, MPO Staff, who has worked at CTPS since 1975 in a variety of capacities including that of Transit Service Planning Manager, a member of the Certification Activities Group, and as a Senior Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner. K. Quackenbush noted that C. Buckley has made a mark at the local, state, and national level as a bicycle and pedestrian planner.

6. Meeting Minutes – *Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, MPO Staff*

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of June 30 was made by John Westerling, Town of Hopkinton, and seconded by Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The motion carried.

7. Long-Range Transportation Plan – *Anne McGahan, LRTP Manager, MPO Staff*

Members were provided with public comments received since June 30, draft Chapters 4 and 9 of the LRTP, and the results of the air quality conformity analysis. (See attached comment summaries, chapter summaries, and air quality results.)

Report on Public Comments

A. McGahan summarized the new public comments, which include the following: two comments in support of the Assabet River Rail Trail, one of which is from Congressman Niki Tsongas; a request to extend the Blue Line to Lynn; a request to build the Northern Strand Community Path rather than widen Route 1; opposition to MassDOT's design for the Fore River Bridge in Quincy; and a request to prioritize light rail over bus rapid transit.

Several comments in regard to the LRTP document were also received, which asked the MPO to include the following: a dictionary of acronyms; strategies to mitigate wildlife impacts; an explanation about how the MPO determines if a trail is for recreation or transportation; a description of the population density needed to support transit; a discussion of trade-offs between spending on maintenance and transportation; and a discussion of the concept of fiscal constraint.

Chapter 4: Transportation System Management and Operations

A. McGahan summarized the contents of Chapter 4, which includes a discussion of three MPO vision topics – System Preservation, Modernization, and Efficiency; Mobility, and Safety and Security – and strategies for achieving those visions. (See attached chapter summary.)

Members then asked questions about the content.

Christine Stickney, Town of Braintree, asked why there is no mention on page 4-8 of the chapter of the dredging of the Fore River. (This subject has surfaced in public comments regarding the *Quincy/Weymouth – Fore River Bridge* project.) Staff noted that the dredging of this area was not included in the LRTP Needs Assessment.

D. Mohler inquired as to how the performance measures included on pages 36 and 37 were developed. A. McGahan replied that the measures shown are examples and that more specific measures can be developed following further discussion with the MPO, after completion of this LRTP.

Chapter 9: Environmental Justice Assessment

A. McGahan summarized the contents of Chapter 9, which provides information on the system-level analysis of transportation equity that the MPO uses to examine the distribution of the transportation system's benefits and burdens among environmental justice and non-environmental justice areas. (See attached chapter summary.)

Members then asked questions and made comments about the content.

David Koses, City of Newton, remarked upon the bar charts shown in the chapter that show comparisons between various factors (such as average travel times to destinations, job access, congestion levels, etc.) as they relate to environmental justice areas and non-environmental justice areas. He noted that the bar charts may not be particularly useful since they show near equal results between the items being compared rather than showing differences or trends. John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, countered that the bar charts are useful in that they provide a quick view of the information.

D. Mohler suggested adding figures to the bar charts to show changes numerically as well as graphically. Scott Peterson, MPO Staff, pointed out the issue of scale and noted that some of the changes reflect a very small percentage of change.

D. Mohler asked if staff had more current data than the 1999 census figures that could be used in this chapter for information such as income. Alicia Wilson, Regional Equity Manager, MPO Staff, noted that the American Communities Survey from the U.S. Census has more current figures but that there is a large margin of error. She stated that staff preferred to wait until the new census data is released to use that as a control. K. Quackenbush also noted that the currently available data is problematic. Differences between the 1999 data and 2011 data will be determined when the new census data is released.

Jim Gallagher asked if staff had done an analysis of the impacts of ultra-fine particulates as part of the environmental justice analysis. A. McGahan replied that the MPO is in conformity, but staff has not done additional analyses for those pollutants. Wig Zamore, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership/Mystic View Task Force, added that the recent state transportation legislation requires the analysis of ultra-fine particulates, which MassDOT is required to conduct.

Tom Bent, City of Somerville, asked if the Green Line Extension *to Route 16* should be among the list of projects that will benefit environmental justice areas, rather than just the extension to College Avenue. A. McGahan stated that staff will check to see if there are environmental justice areas between College Avenue and Route 16.

Air Quality Conformity

Members were provided with the results of the air quality conformity analysis, which shows that the projects in the recommended LRTP are within the emission budgets for three pollutants (VOC, NO_x, and CO) as defined by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Schedule

Michael Chong, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), asked for the schedule for the production of the remainder of the LRTP chapters. A. McGahan replied that the schedule is dependent upon staff receiving transit finances from MassDOT.

8. FFYs 2012 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Program – Hayes Morrison, TIP Manager, MPO Staff

Members were provided with public comments received regarding the TIP since June 9, TIP tables, TIP project evaluations, and federal guidance. (See attached comment summary, TIP tables, project evaluation matrix, and letter of federal guidance.)

Public Comments

H. Morrison summarized the new public comments, which include requests to: program the *Natick – Route 9/Oak Street* project (from the Town of Natick and its state legislators); program the *Lynn – Route 129 (Broadway)* project (from the City of Lynn and its state legislators); and support a community association that wishes to have MassDOT's preferred alternative for the *Quincy/Weymouth – Fore River Bridge* design be made available to the public, and that the MPO not program funding for the project as designed.

Staff received additional public comments just prior to this meeting.

Staff Recommendation

H. Morrison then summarized the TIP development process and provided an overview of changes made to the FFYs 2012 – 2015 TIP since June 9.

There are 138 projects in the TIP Universe of Projects. Of those, 43 have been fully evaluated by staff, and 29 have been partially evaluated. (Staff requires proponents to

submit a functional design report in order to conduct a full evaluation.) Projects are selected for the TIP based on the staff evaluations, project readiness (as determined by MassDOT), geographic equity, and available funding.

Since June 9, the MPO has received the final TIP targets. The FHWA advised that targets be based on \$560 million in base obligation authority. Prior assumptions were based on \$600 million. (See attached letter from FHWA.)

The new staff recommendation, “Version 2”, is outlined in the attached TIP tables showing former and current recommendations. The only new project in Version 2 is the *Belmont – Trapelo Road* project. It is the most highly evaluated project in the Universe of Projects and was included in the last LRTP, *JOURNEY TO 2030*, for programming in the FFYs 2010 – 2015 timeband.

The previous staff recommendation also included the *Lynn – Route 129 (Broadway)* project. Staff is now recommending putting this project on the “First Tier” List of Projects. (See attached “First Tier” list.)

Questions and Comments

Members then asked questions and made comments.

D. Mohler asked why the *Arlington – Massachusetts Avenue* project was not evaluated. H. Morrison replied that staff was not provided with a functional design report for that project. Staff contacted TIP contacts three times since January to request these reports. L. Wiener stated that the Town of Arlington did submit the report, which has since been provided.

Members then discussed options for including the *Natick – Route 9/Oak Street* and *Lynn – Route 129 (Broadway)* projects in the TIP. D. Koses advocated for finding a way to keep the Lynn project on the TIP considering that the MPO is taking into account geographic equity and environmental justice. He asked about the reason for the specific reduction in funding for the *Needham/Wellesley – Route 128 Improvement Program* project in the FFY 2015 element, and suggested that it could be further reduced to fund the Lynn project. D. Mohler noted that the Route 128 project figures are based on cash flows provided by MassDOT.

E. Bourassa and Richard Reed, Town of Bedford, inquired about when the *Concord/Lincoln – Route 2 (Crosby’s Corner)* project would be going out to bid, and whether the TIP could be amended later if the project comes in under bid making more TIP monies available. Marie Rose, MassDOT Highway Division, stated that the project will go to bid in September, but the bid would not be open until December.

M. Rose noted that the project evaluations for environmental justice appear strict and questioned why the Lynn project would not qualify given it would make improvements on roadways carrying buses serving environmental justice populations. H. Morrison noted that evaluations were rigorous. Projects like the one in Lynn may result in

improved bus service because of improvements on the roadway, but there was nothing about the design that was an amenity specifically for bus service. Staff is discussing the possibility of adjusting the application of the environmental justice criteria next year.

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, raised the issue of the possibility that the MPO might experience further federal funding cuts in the near future. He suggested the idea of delaying the TIP funding decisions until there is more clarity from the federal government. D. Mohler indicated that future federal aid is more likely to result in a further reduction of available funds. This would negatively impact the ability for project to be made ready or funded. In effect, for projects to be made ready they must be in the TIP process now.

T. Bent remarked upon the level of frustration project proponents are feeling due to the movement of projects to outer years of the TIP. He asked for more details about how the funding has been shifted around. H. Morrison explained that the *Concord/Lincoln – Route 2 (Crosby’s Corner)* and the *Needham/Wellesley – Route 128 Improvement Program* projects were programmed such that their cash flows are almost even across each annual element. That had an impact upon how other projects were programmed as staff must program projects within the fiscal constraints of each annual element and consider project readiness and fully program each TIP year without being able to split projects across years unless they are in excess of \$25 million.

D. Mohler suggested that the staff recommendation could have included the *Natick – Route 9/Oak Street* and *Lynn – Route 129 (Broadway)* projects in the FFY 2012 element rather than the *Belmont – Trapelo Road* project. H. Morrison stated that the decision to program the Belmont project was based upon the project being listed in the last LRTP and because staff aimed to make as few changes as possible to the programming of the previous staff recommendation as well as to include all projects that had been included in the FFYs 2011 – 2014 TIP that had yet to be advertised.

D. Mohler asked about which projects have been delayed in the new recommendation. H. Morrison stated that the *Arlington – Massachusetts Avenue*, *Somerville – Beacon Street*, and *Boston – South Bay Harbor Trail* projects were delayed. Additionally the *Cambridge – Cambridge Common* project was moved from FFY 2012 to 2013 in the recommendation. It was in the FFY 2014 element in the FFYs 2011 – 2014 TIP.

E. Bourassa asked about the possibility of the state receiving federal redistribution funds. M. Chong noted that FHWA reduced MPO targets due to Congressional uncertainty, but that there is a possibility that the state will get redistribution funds for FFY 2011. D. Mohler added that redistribution funds would be able to fund only the projects that could be ready by September 17.

T. Bent expressed that the TIP process is frustrating for members since they are often dealing with a “moving target” with little certainty. He noted that members make decisions based on the information known at the time only to find that things have

changed two weeks later and that if known earlier, that information might have affected previous decisions.

D. Koses voiced agreement and then suggested that the MPO use Clean Air and Mobility funding for other projects at this time. H. Morrison responded that those funds in the FFY 2012 element are fully committed. D. Mohler asked staff to provide a list of all Clean Air and Mobility projects for which the Clean Air and Mobility subcommittee has recommended has funding.

Dennis Giombetti, Town of Framingham, noted that the business community is also frustrated when they plan for job expansion but do not see the expected transportation improvements. He suggested that the MPO explain to them why projects are not getting funding. He also suggested that the MPO consider that it could fund three smaller projects for the price of the *Belmont – Trapelo Road* project (which is new to the TIP).

Mary Pratt, Town of Hopkinton, also stated that the MPO should not advertise for more projects every year given that there is not enough funding for the ones the MPO already knows about.

State Representative William Brownsberger advocated for the Trapelo Road project noting the project's state of readiness, the \$1.5 million investment that the Town of Belmont has already made for the project design, the recent utility upgrades along the road, and the project's impact in terms of economic development.

H. Morrison asked members to keep in mind that changes to the TIP, particularly removing funds from the Clean Air and Mobility Program, could result in the TIP not including enough funding in the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ) to meet the CMAQ target.

T. Kadzis raised the topic of public comments that were presented to the MPO regarding community concerns about the design of the *Quincy/Weymouth—Fore River Bridge* project. He asked whether those issues were raised at MassDOT's design hearing.

9. Members Items

E. Bourassa announced that the Hubway bike share program will be launched on July 26 at Government Center. Customers may sign up before that date and receive a discount on membership.

J. Romano provided an update on the *I-93 Fast 14* bridge replacement project. Six sets of bridges are complete. MassDOT has received good reviews from FHWA regarding the progress of the project.

10. Adjourn

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

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Meeting Attendance
Thursday, July 21, 2011, 10:00 AM

Member Agencies

MassDOT
MassDOT Highway

City of Boston
City of Newton
City of Somerville
Federal Highway
Administration
MAPC

MBTA
Massachusetts Port
Authority
Regional Transportation
Advisory Council
Town of Bedford
Town of Braintree
Town of Framingham
Town of Hopkinton

Representatives and Alternates

David Mohler
Marie Rose
John Romano
Tom Kadzis
David Koses
Tom Bent
Michael Chong

Eric Bourassa
Eric Halvorson
Ron Morgan
Paul Christner

Laura Wiener
Steve Olanoff
Richard Reed
Christine Stickney
Dennis Giombetti
Mary Pratt
John Westerling

MPO Staff/CTPS

Michael Callahan
Maureen Kelly
Robin Mannion
Anne McGahan
Hayes Morrison
Karl Quackenbush
Alicia Wilson
Pam Wolfe

Other Attendees

Roland Bartl
Tom Broadrick
William Brownsberger
Martha Duffield
Jim Gallagher
Laura Goldstein

Jay Fink
Gary Jean Francis
James Marsh
Kevin McHugh

Barbara Miranda

Ali O'Leary

Joe Onorato
Joshua Ostruff

Town of Acton
Town of Duxbury
State Representative
Town of Danvers

Office of State Senator Karen
Spilka
City of Lynn
City of Lynn
City of Lynn
Coneco Engineers and Scientists
(on behalf of Town of Ipswich)
Office of State Representative
William Brownsberger
Office of State Representative
Alice Peisch
MassDOT District 4
Natick Board of Selectemen

Karen Pearson	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Jonah Petri	Friends of the Community Path
Chris Reilly	Town of Lincoln
Morrah Turner	City of Lynn
Alayna Van Tassel	Office of State Representative David Linsky
Sheri Warrington	Office of State Senator McGee
John Woodsmall	Town of Southborough
Wig Zamore	Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership / Mystic View Task Force