

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



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Summary of the March 14, 2012 Meeting

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

1. Introductions – *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

Steve Olanoff, Chair (Westwood) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 5)

2. Chair's Report – *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

S. Olanoff announced that the Advisory Council sent a letter to the MPO with a request to forward the letter to the MBTA regarding the proposed fare increase and service reductions being considered.

There have been two MPO meetings. On Feb. 10, the MPO approved the study, “Improving the Southeast Expressway, a Conceptual Plan”. The March 1 meeting was held in Beverly. The MPO Memorandum of Understanding requires four meetings per year in locations around the Boston region. The first one of this year was in Beverly. Most people drove but transit was available. Next meeting outside of Boston will be in Lexington on June 7.

The 2010 Freight Study findings will be presented by Mike Callahan at the March 15 MPO meeting. The study is now available on the MPO website. S. Olanoff also noted that Hubway bike racks are being set up already.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes of February 8, 2012 – *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as amended in discussion. The minutes of the February 8, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved.

4. Developing the Transportation Infrastructure and Streetscape Improvements to Support the Future Adams Green Park Space in Quincy Center – *Kristina Johnson, Principal Planner, City of Quincy; Keri Pyke, P.E., Howard/Stein-Hudson, Engineering Firm, presentation of the design study.*

Following a brief introduction by Chair Olanoff, Kristina Johnson addressed the meeting as the panel coordinator. K. Johnson is the Project Manager for Adams Green Park Project. Co-panelists were Dennis Harrington, Planning Director for City of Quincy; Howard/Stein-Hudson – lead civil engineering firm for the project; Halvorson Design Partnership – landscape design

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firm; Toole Design Group – Bike/Pedestrian specialist; and TrafInfo Communications – micro-simulation and modeling.

An illustrative plan overview was introduced. The plan connects the existing Quincy Center MBTA station with a recently completed concourse to Adams Green. The goal of the development will be to make this a multi-modal facility and TOD development.

Adams Green is a contiguous park space uniting Quincy Center Station and City Hall with United First Parish Church. This new park space will result in the discontinuation of Hancock St. in the immediate area. The idea for the project came from the “visioning” process conducted in 2006. This will be the centerpiece of a revitalized downtown.

Design and construction of the Adams Green infrastructure improvements (streetscape, utilities, and traffic) will be funded with a SAFETEA-LU Earmark while the design and construction of the park will be partly funded with a Gateway Cities Grant. Other means of financing the project continue to be considered.

K. Pyke gave an overview of Phase I of the project. The timeline of the project proposes to have the design completed by this fall and have the plan be in construction by next year. Bob Euli, the space architect reviewed some of the streetscape plans of the project, showing some of the likely circulation plans for the affected area. The Promenade will be the heart of downtown with connections to many destination sites like the library and the First Parish Church, a major historical attraction. The new high school is within the boundaries of the design and it will be a common destination for many teachers and students who use transit services available at the Quincy Center MBTA Station. The Streetscape Project will be part of the greenway park phase of the project.

The analytical study of the area for transportation mitigation issues was conducted from the perspective of walkable and sustainable development. The website adamsgreen.info was introduced as a central project information clearinghouse. Public outreach presentations are currently being planned.

K. Johnson responded to questions posed by those present:

- There will be a way-finding component included once the design advances. The National Park Service is a partner in this process.
- Closing Hancock St. in the Adams Green parkway area was heavily considered in the feasibility study as the project was initially proposed.
- Accessibility is a key piece of the design of the project.
- The plan has considered general emergency services, and access to the park will be on a response basis not a general access basis.
- The project will be integrated with a large number of historical sites in the City.
- Complete funding for the design of the park is through a Gateway Parks Grant while construction funding will be provided through the public works budget.

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- The Quincy Downtown Redevelopment Plan area has a fifty-cent per square foot assessment for the purpose of upkeep and maintenance and streetscape improvements in the downtown area.
- National Parks operate downtown trolley bus on a seasonal basis (April-November).
- An ongoing study with VHB and the MBTA is considering the best multi-modal mix of transportation services at the Quincy Center hub.
- The Adams Green Park will be integrated with downtown development.

5. Improving the Southeast Expressway: A Conceptual Plan – Bill Kuttner, Project Manager, MPO Staff, presented findings of the recently completed study.

B. Kuttner introduced the results of the study discussing improving the Southeast Expressway connecting the HOV lanes, double-tracking the commuter rail line, and improving the Red Line. The problem of congestion on this road was first considered by CTPS in a general conceptual study approved by the MPO. Upon defining specific problems being encountered, one possible solution to the problem was explored - a reversible HOV lane and underground rail lines.

The study proposes connecting the existing Southeast Expressway HOV lane with that of the Central Artery. There is currently a gap. Costs were not part of this study, but it seems reasonable to conclude that connecting the two facilities would be a very expensive undertaking. The study area is a serious bottleneck resulting from the several on-ramp merges, including the merges at the Central Artery/Tunnel HOV lanes and at Southampton Street.

The study concluded that addressing those problems would require a widening of the right-of-way. This could be accomplished by depressing the rail lines that run parallel to the Southeast Expressway, which would make room for regular travel lanes and a reversible HOV lane, which would add to the capacity of the corridor. Areas where right-of-way could be widened are identified in the study. No residential homes would need to be taken.

After the presentation, B. Kuttner was available for showing a more detailed view of individual tracts that would be considered for right-of-way if a project were to advance.

B. Kuttner responded to questions posed by those present:

- Due to design considerations, tunneling would be the only option available to contend with the intersecting road/rail sections. Rail bridges or decks require a very gradual slope placing them in conflict with Savin Hill Avenue which eliminates the possibility of a train overpass or bridge solution.
- Costs of a plan like this would be in the realm of a billion dollar project. It would be in the order of cost of something like the Southwest Expressway. This plan would involve upgrading the rail system and the Red Line which need improvement in the future anyway.

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- Project assumptions were to accommodate existing traffic and not to modify the mix. The work would benefit all users equally. There are other solutions to the congestion problem. This study looked at just one solution which was studied in great detail.
- Limiting the lane to 1500 vehicles per hour would still leave congestion in other lanes, thereby creating an incentive to form a carpool. The queue for HOV non-users would shorten, but this is not a panacea, and will only improve the congestion incrementally.

6. FFY 2013 Unified Planning Work Program Development – David Fargen, MPO Staff.

The schedule of the UPWP, like the TIP, is being prepared in a new and much shorter time frame so that the development can be completed before the summer months. The UPWP programs the federal planning funds that come from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). It also programs funds for CTPS to conduct studies on behalf of the funding agencies at their request.

Since the last meeting, staff visited the MAPC Subregions to explain the process of submitting requests for funding of planning studies to be considered in the upcoming Federal Fiscal Year 2013 universe of projects. Staff did receive several project proposals from the subregions as a result of the outreach process. Projects can be followed online by reviewing the documents and materials available for the upcoming meetings.

We are on an expedited schedule. The next step is to distribute the universe of proposed planning study projects to the UPWP Committee of the MPO on March 15. By the end of the month the complete budget will have been developed and the UPWP committee will select (at their March 29th meeting) a set of proposed new studies to recommend for consideration by the full MPO.

The MPO will meet on April 5 to review and discuss the UPWP Committee's recommendation. On April 19, the MPO is scheduled to vote on a Draft FFY 2013 UPWP for public review which will begin on April 30. The public review process will occur in May. After evaluating public comments, the MPO is scheduled to vote to endorse the document on June 28.

D. Fargen responded to questions from those present:

- The meeting on March 15 is to review any new projects to be listed in the UPWP.
- In the past, there have been between 350 and 400 thousand dollars for new studies.

7. Member Announcements:

- Association for Public Transportation–Thursday, April 19, 2012, dinner for Railroad Enthusiasts in Malden with lecture.
- Frank DeMasi commented that Global Oil will be attempting to expand their facility in Chelsea to receive ethanol rail cars. The Freight Committee supports rail and port use but is concerned about the proposed hazardous cargos that will be in proximity to dense population centers. March 28 is the final date to comment. East coast refineries are being closed according to him.

8. Committee Reports – There were none.

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9. Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 PM.

10. Attendance List –

Cities and Towns:

Acton, Mike Goring
Arlington, Laura Wiener
Boston, Tom Kadzis
Lexington, Richard Canale
Millis, Dom D'Eramo
Quincy, Dennis Harrington
Wellesley, Frank DeMasi
Westwood, Steve Olanoff

Agencies:

MBTA Advisory Board, Brian Kane
MassDOT, Calli Cenizal
MAPC - SWAP, Chan Rogers
MAPC - MAGIC, Franny Osman
MAPC - Inner Core, Kristina Johnson
BRA, Tad Read
MassRides, Catherine Paquette
Seaport Advisory Council, Louis Elisa

Citizen Groups:

AACT, Mary Ann Murray
Association for Public Transportation, Barry Steinberg
MASCO, Tom Yardley
Massachusetts Bus Association, Chris Anzuoni
MassCommute, David Kucharsky
MoveMassachusetts, Jon Seward
Riverside Neighborhood Association, Marilyn Wellons
WalkBoston, John McQueech

Guests and Visitors:

David Black, National Park Service
Romin Koebil
Ed Lowney

MPO Staff:

Daniel Amstutz
Mike Callahan
David Fargen