

Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region MPO Congestion Management Committee Meeting

March 21, 2013, Meeting

9:00 AM – 9:45 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Lourenço Dantas, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport)

Decisions

The Boston Region MPO Congestion Management Committee agreed to the following:

- The Boston Region MPO Congestion Management Committee voted to endorse the Intersection Improvement Program pending the changing of the reference from “contractor” to “consultant” in the draft memorandum “FFY 2014 Intersection Improvement Program: Purpose and Proposal.”.

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

2. Chair’s Report—*Lourenço Dantas, Massport*

There was none this meeting

3. Approval of Minutes of December 6, 2012, Congestion Management Committee Meeting

The review and approval of the December 6, 2012, Congestion Management Committee meeting minutes was postponed. The committee will review and vote on both the December 6, 2012, and March 21, 2013, meeting minutes at a future Congestion Management Committee meeting.

4. Discussion of FFY 2014 Intersection Improvements Program: Purpose and Proposal

Lourenço Dantas, the chair of the Boston Region MPO Congestion Management Committee, introduced an overview of the proposed Intersection Improvement Program, which had previously been emailed to CMP Committee members. This signal retiming program would allot \$350,000 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds to focus on the signal alteration of approximately 80 intersections. This program would

identify additional short- and long-term recommended intersection improvements, in the form of mini-reports. These additional recommendations could then be implemented through various MPO, state, and federal programs. Even though this is the first year of this Intersection Improvement Program, it is anticipated that this program could become an annually funded endeavor.

The MassDOT Highway Division Architects and Engineers (A&E) Review Board

A committee member asked what the A&E Review Board does. A MassDOT representative explained that the A&E Review Board is a committee comprised of MassDOT Highway Division staff. The MBTA also is a nonvoting member of the board. The primary duty of the board is to select architects and engineers through a streamlined selection process. The ADM-016 Prequalification form needs to be submitted by each prospective consultant.

Types of improvements

If a signal timing improvement is recommended in the intersection analyses, the consultant would perform the improvements. The benefit-cost ratio of performing signal retiming improvements can be as high as to 60 to 1. The two main reasons that signals are not achieving their optimum performance are that many signals are 30 to 40 years old and the detection systems have failed. The reason that MassDOT and MPO staff is overseeing the creation of the templates for the mini-reports is that it is important to monitor who would benefit from signal retiming improvements. This Intersection Improvement Program would help to fulfill the MPO's Congestion Management Process requirements, which must follow the federal MPO requirements to monitor congestion and implement solutions to alleviate congestion.

Other short-term improvements for intersections would be implemented, if it is financially feasible to do so. These short-term improvements would be constructed by either MassDOT or the local municipality, depending on who has jurisdiction of the intersection. The consultant can document any medium- and long-term recommendations to the intersections for the mini-report in a format similar to what they use for road safety audits. A table may be included in the mini-reports; it would display low-cost (less than \$5,000 per project), medium-cost, and high-cost recommended improvements.

Acquiring data and soliciting input from municipalities

The data required for the intersection analysis for this program will include traffic counts. The current CMP program already provides traffic counts at many locations; however, there could be additional locations where traffic counts would be needed to be collected.

The counts that were collected through the CMP program could be used in the intersection analysis as long as the counts are no more than three years old. Crash data, which have already been obtained, would also be used for the intersection analysis.

Ways to solicit input from municipalities would be determined after the preselected intersections are chosen. It is necessary to have municipalities at the table because municipalities need to grant access to the traffic signal controls to retune the signals.

Potential challenges and concerns

An upcoming challenge is determining what medium- and long-term improvements the committee prefers to bring to the table. A committee member asked, "If this Intersection Improvement Program is expanded, could some of the medium-cost improvements be implemented, where a consultant replaces, for example, the faulty signal detectors and signal heads? Care must be taken about including medium- and long-term improvements in the current program because this may decrease the budget very quickly. These types of improvements would preferably be in an ongoing maintenance program." There are several existing programs across the country that are examples of an aggressive, ongoing maintenance program, and it is hoped that the Boston Region MPO's Intersection Improvement Program would also become ongoing.

It was mentioned by the committee that there might be some underestimating of the cost of correcting faulty intersection detection devices. It was clarified that intersection reconfiguration may triple or quadruple the cost of intersection improvement. A separate signal contractor is needed for replacing a faulty intersection detection device.

There was concern expressed by meeting attendees that if the program expands to include design and construction, there may be problems with the streamlining process. One possibility that was suggested for preventing these problems is to give a participating municipality the funds to directly pay the consultant. An example of this project implementation approach is the Newton Signals project. In addition, the Federal Highway Administration has a program called Everyday Counts that focuses on streamlining the implementation of highway projects; this could be used in the MPO's program.

There was another concern expressed about using federal funds for a contractor. Using federal funds for a contract is difficult because of the federal highway process required. It normally takes two months to get a contract approved if there are no federal funds involved. If there are federal funds involved, it can take six months to get approval.

Committee members suggested that geometric intersection improvements should be defined clearly, so the consultant doesn't recommend too small or too large an improvement for an intersection. MassDOT or the respective jurisdiction would develop the detailed recommendations.

Next steps:

- If program is approved, CMP staff would work with the selected consultant to develop templates for the mini-reports so that the consultant can start work on October 1, 2013.
- The writing of the contract by MassDOT and MPO staff will need to begin soon.
- Replace the word "contractors" with the word "consultants" in the draft "FFY 2014 Intersection Improvement Program: Purpose and Proposal" memorandum.
- Present the Intersection Improvement Program to the A&E Review Board and seek approval for the program in May.
- Any other background work, including the intersection selection criteria, should be completed by MPO staff soon.
- The committee will meet more frequently over the coming months to facilitate the implementation of this proposed program.
- The Congestion Management Committee chair will update the MPO on the progress of the Intersection Improvement program proposal.
- The review and approval of minutes for the December meeting will be postponed until the next meeting.

5. Other Business

There was none.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Tom Kadzis
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
MassDOT Highway Division	Marie Rose
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Ed Tarallo
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Calli Cenizal	MassDOT
James Danila	MassDOT
Sandra Efstration	North Shore Career Center
Doug Halley	Acton Board of Health
Sharon Wason	Town of Foxborough
Mark Whitmore	North Shore Career Center

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Hiral Gandhi
Ryan Hicks
Efi Pagitsas
Sean Pfalzer
Pam Wolfe
