

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

January 9, 2013 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Meeting Summary

1. Introductions

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 6)

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

On December 20, the MPO approved TIP Amendment 3, as well as a work program for Part 2 of an HOV Lane study. MPO staff presented Part I of the HOV study on screening regional highways for possible preferential lane implementation, conducted for the MPO. Staff recently reported to the MPO on Community Transportation Technical Study program studies where specific local traffic problems were analyzed and solutions were recommended to the city or town. These studies are part of the presentation today.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2012—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The December 12, 2012, minutes were approved unanimously, with one abstention.

4. South Station Expansion Project—*Matthew Ciborowski, Deputy Project Manager, MassDOT, Office of Transportation Planning*

The goal of this project is to expand South Station. The project includes planning and engineering work. The expanded South Station would be beneficial for rail service both in and outside the MPO region. The project will include planning for an expanded number of tracks, platforms, and waiting areas. The scope of the project will include creation of railroad layover storage. It will also include enhanced streetscape design and the development of commercial and residential space over the existing South

Providing transportation policy advice to the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Station. The project will partner with South Station and the South Boston neighborhood to provide for best outcomes.

M. Ciborowski described the project area with a graphic. He then discussed the project's main issues:

- South Station is congested and needs added rail capacity to meet expected growth
- South Station and the area need to be served by a sustainable roadway
- The plan should provide for re-opening Dorchester Avenue and creating a Harborwalk extension

The plan envisions track expansion to the east of existing tracks. The largest obstacle to be addressed in the project is the removal of the USPS Post Office along the Fort Point Channel to allow for that.

South Station was opened in 1899 with 28 tracks. Gradually, the USPS bought much of the area where the current Post Office facility exists. Now there are 13 tracks. After years of neglect, the station was almost demolished in the late 1970's but the MBTA bought South Station and undertook a major redevelopment. Demand for rail service has grown to the point where there is major expansion needed today. To that end, the MassDOT was awarded a Federal Rail Administration-funded High Speed Passenger Inter City Rail Grant which includes planning and environmental and engineering work for this project.

- The study activity includes:
 - Civic engagement
 - Looking at transportation issues and rail operational analysis
 - Environmental impact analysis and review
 - Preliminary engineering and architectural designs
 - Review and analysis of joint development
 - Cost and scheduling
 - Analysis of the relocation of the USPS General Mail Facility (GMF)

Activity that has been conducted over the past six months includes:

- Open houses
- Working with Amtrak and the MBTA to understand issues
- Review of traffic and passenger counts in the area for baseline traffic survey purposes

- Environmental analysis; an Environmental Notification Form will be filed later this year
- Looking at layouts and egress analysis
- Reviewing other major US city rail facilities, including those undergoing development activities
- Reviewing the replacement site facilities for the USPS
- Examining potential alternatives for midday layover facilities

The project personnel are working closely with Amtrak and BRA and other major partners to make sure all the needs of all involved are met.

- The status of air rights includes the 40 story Heinz Development tower which currently has its environmental and FAA permits. The existing façade of South Station will remain. The planning completion date for the project is June 2015. This will include three components: planning, environment and 30% design.

Conceptual preliminary artistic drawings of the project were presented depicting the completed project. Items noted in the drawing included the potential development area along the Fort Point Channel and the streetscape along a newly reopened Dorchester Avenue, which reconnects South Boston and the Financial District.

More information on the project is available at the MassDOT website, MassDOT.gov.

M. Ciborowski responded to questions and comments:

John Businger expressed concern over what he viewed as a lack of attention paid to the North-South Rail Link by the South Station Expansion Project. He asked why it is not included in the analysis in light of the support of many residents and leaders?

Several members felt that current planning should address the Rail Link more directly. In addition, they questioned the projected costs of the Rail Link and felt they were too high. Barry Steinberg questioned why the Rail Link was not depicted on the site map and questioned whether care was being made not to build barriers that would block the future development of the Rail Link. He suggested that the plans include a drawn line to indicate the proposed alignment of the Rail Link.

M. Ciborowski responded that even though the scope of the project does not include the North-South Rail Link, nothing is being done from a planning perspective that would preclude the possibility of building a North-South Rail Link in the future.

J. Businger questioned the state's coordination with the Northeast Corridor project and whether Massachusetts officials were advocating strongly enough for the future needs of rail transportation in the Northeast. Several members said that they would like to see

more forward vision in the state's planning for rail and expressed fears that Massachusetts is missing opportunities while other regions are planning large scale rail projects. They underscored the view that there is a need for a direct rail connection through Boston to points north.

M. Ciborowski replied that Amtrak and the Federal Railroad Administration have been extensively involved in the review of the South Station project which is considered a keystone of the Northeast Corridor.

M. Ciborowski reiterated that even though the scope of this project does not include the North-South Rail Link, nothing is being done to preclude its possibility in the future. He replied that project planning is careful not to produce products that would preclude future possible construction of the North-South Rail Link.

M. Ciborowski explained that the project is seeking to accommodate the largest number of trains in the design. In addition to sites in the immediate South Station area, Beacon Park is among those areas being reviewed as a possible layover area.

Some concerns were expressed about potential flooding and the rise in sea level.

M. Ciborowski said that these concerns are being discussed with the appropriate state and federal agencies.

In response to a question from Laura Weiner, M. Ciborowski said that the timeline for the completion of the plan for development will be June, 2015.

In response to a question posed by Frank DeMasi on the alignment of routes and the location of refueling and layover considerations, M. Ciborowski said that ideas regarding the location of station support facilities and operational design factors such as these are still in the infancy stages and that many options are still being considered. Some of the issues still being examined relate to finding a refueling and layover area, the relocation of USPS facility and the alignment of tracks approaching South Station.

5. Community Transportation Technical Assistance –*Seth Asante, MPO Staff*

Seth Asante described the recent Community Technical Assistance studies conducted in four municipalities. The theme of the studies often relates to safety and operations, bicycle and pedestrian issues, livability issues and other traffic operations issues.

- In Winchester, travel modeling was used to determine the best lane channelization and to determine how land use changes impact the traffic in downtown.
- In Revere, mitigation of traffic congestion on Crescent Avenue was the main objective. In this study, local lane channelizing and traffic signal analysis was reviewed. MPO staff proposed short-term improvements in channeling, painting and signage, which were implemented. A long-term recommendation proposed converting Winthrop Avenue into a two-way street, signaling an intersection, and expanding lane width with replacement of a bus stop.
- Traffic mitigation concerns in the Swampscott study addressed poor traffic circulation at the intersection of Monument Ave, Burrill St. and Route 129. The intersection is adjacent to Linscott Park. Monument Avenue is a National Historical District which makes major changes subject to considerable additional review. Short-term improvements in painting and signage were implemented as a result of the study. Long-term recommendations included the installation of a roundabout and signalization and lane channelization.
- In Danvers, different types of pedestrian crossing signals were reviewed for effectiveness in alerting traffic at intersections with rail-trail crossings. An improved type of flashing signal will be installed at the rail-trail crossing.

6. New Business:

There was none.

7. Committee Meeting:

The Membership Committee met in January, but will present new wording prior to the February meeting. A vote to accept any changes will be done at the following meeting. The documents will be circulated prior to the meetings.

8. Old Business—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

There was none.

9. Member Announcements—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

There were none.

10. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:25 PM. The motion carried.

ATTENDANCE

MassDOT*	Calli Cenizal
MassDOT - Office of Transportation Planning*	Mathew Ciborowski
MassDOT - Aeronautics Division*	Steven Rawding
BRA*	John Read
Joint Legislative Transportation Committee	Amanda Richard (Sen. McGee)
MassRides	Catherine Paquette
Arlington*	Laura Wiener
Boston*	Tom Kadzis
Canton	William Friel
Lexington*	Richard Canale
Marlborough	Walter Bonin
Millis	Dom D'Eramo
Wellesley	Frank DeMasi
Westwood	Steve Olanoff
American Council of Engineering Companies	Thomas Daley
Association for Public Transportation	Barry M Steinberg
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	Topher Smith
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition	Jenna Bernabe
Massachusetts Bus Association	Chris Anzuoni
MassBike	Chris Porter; P. Armstrong
MoveMassachusetts	John Seward
National Corridors Initiative	John Businger
Riverside Neighborhood Association	Marilyn Wellons
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Guests

Ed Lowney

CTPS Staff

Pam Wolfe	Efi Pagitsas
David Fargen	Seth Asante
Dan Amstutz	

(* Non-voting members)