

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

March 20, 2014 Meeting

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Steve Woelfel and Clinton Bench, Chairs, 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 work program for *FRA NEC FUTURE: Modeling Support*
- Approve the minutes of the meetings of February 20 and March 6, 2014

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

There were none.

2. Chair's Report—*Steve Woelfel and Clinton Bench, MassDOT*

C. Bench gave his Chair's report later in the meeting. His comments are summarized here.

C. Bench reported that the second meeting of the Project Selection Advisory Council took place last week. The Council was established by the state's transportation reform legislation to determine a new set of objective evaluation criteria to be used by MassDOT for project selection. It is unclear at this time how the new criteria would complement or inform the MPO's evaluation criteria. The Council will meet again during the first week of April. Six public hearings will be scheduled later.

He then addressed a topic that was raised at the MPO's meeting of March 6 regarding MassDOT's policies about the acquisition of right-of-way for utility relocation on municipally designed projects. He confirmed that it is MassDOT's policy to require that municipalities secure all right-of-way for the transportation facility to be constructed, but that MassDOT does not mandate that it is the responsibility of the municipality to acquire the right-of-way associated with the utility relocation aspects of a project. MassDOT will reimburse utility companies up to 50% of the utility relocation costs in

order to expedite utility work and avoid the project delays formerly caused by lengthy utility relocation activities.

C. Bench also reminded members that the MPO's meeting on April 3 will include a discussion of projects being considered for the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2015-18 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MPO expects to vote to release the document for public review on May 15.

Lastly, C. Bench raised a topic for members to consider. The Chair and Vice Chair have been discussing whether the MPO members should reconsider how they spend their time during MPO meetings. They asked the members to think about whether the MPO should spend less time discussing work programs in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and more time discussing topics such as policy objectives, state initiatives, MPO visions, and land use planning.

Discussion

Addressing the Chair's last point, Laura Wiener, At-Large Town of Arlington, expressed support for the idea of spending more time discussing policy issues and less time on reporting of work.

John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, agreed. He noted that the MPO votes on the UPWP, so there is no need for the MPO to vote again when work programs for the individual projects documented in the UPWP are presented. He suggested that the UPWP Committee could be responsible for reviewing the individual work programs. Presentations could still be made for work programs that are not in the UPWP, he said.

Lourenço Dantas, Massachusetts Port Authority, suggested that the MPO could better utilize subcommittees to inform the full MPO.

C. Bench noted that this topic will be brought up for future discussion.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports—*Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT*

The UPWP Committee will meet today following the MPO meeting. On the agenda is a review of the draft Universe of Projects for the FFY 2015 UPWP.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*David Montgomery, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

The Advisory Council's March meeting featured a presentation by Rob Guptill, MBTA, on the MBTA's FY 2015-19 Capital Investment Program (CIP) and a presentation by Sean Pfalzer, MPO staff, on the development of the MPO's FFYs 2015-18 TIP. The Council members also discussed concerns about capital expenses associated with the

expansion of MBTA service and about whether noise impacts are taken into consideration for TIP projects.

The Council's Freight Committee also met in March. Guy Bresnahan, MassDOT, gave a presentation on freight planning, and a representative of the Massachusetts Rail Association gave a presentation on priorities and challenges associated with short-line railroads.

The Council is preparing a survey for MPO members.

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

Members were asked to sign a receipt indicating that they have received a form regarding the Open Meeting Law. The receipts should be returned to Pam Wolfe, MPO staff.

6. Work Program for FRA NEC FUTURE: Modeling Support—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff

K. Quackenbush presented the work program for *FRA NEC FUTURE: Modeling Support*. He and Daniel Baer, who represents the client for this work program, the Federal Rail Administration, then addressed members' questions.

Through this work program, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) would provide travel modeling support for the *NEC FUTURE* project, an on-going federal planning effort led by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to evaluate and prioritize investments in the rail system of the Northeast Corridor.

The Northeast Corridor extends from Washington, D.C. to Boston. The project consulting team is developing the capability to model passenger rail travel for the entire corridor. CTPS would provide modeling support for the portion of the study area that is in the MPO region and this would feed into the larger project. The consulting team would develop service plans, conduct market analyses, and test alternatives for growing and improving service.

CTPS's modeling work would use 2040 as the horizon year and land use scenarios that are consistent with the population and employment projections that the MPO uses for its long range planning. The projections would be adjusted, however, to control for macro level forecasts that the consulting team is developing. CTPS would test a no build scenario and up to six build scenarios with two land use scenarios; up to 20 alternatives

could be tested overall. The modeling of the build scenarios will show the ripple effect that potential improvements to the Northeast Corridor may have on the region's transit network. The modeling work would produce ridership forecasts associated with each of the alternatives, as well as data on auto trips and vehicle miles traveled.

This nine-month project will be funded by the FRA through a contract with its consulting firm.

A motion to approve the work program for *FRA NEC FUTURE: Modeling Support* was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (John Romano), and seconded by the MBTA (Ron Morgan). The motion carried following a discussion.

Discussion

During the discussion about the project, Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), inquired why this project is identified as being in the UPWP. K. Quackenbush explained that this project is not identified in the current FFY 2014 UPWP, but would be classified as a planning study in the FFY 2015 UPWP. This project would be paid for by FRA; it would not use MPO funds.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood), asked for more information about the alternatives to be studied. D. Baer explained that the consulting team is evaluating 15 alternatives that were presented to the public and agencies over the past year. These alternatives represent investment possibilities ranging from lower cost improvements to meet commuter demand to the construction of a new high speed rail spine off the existing corridor. It is expected that three to five alternatives packages will be selected for further study.

S. Olanoff asked if the alternatives that include improvements in western Massachusetts will be considered. D. Baer replied that those alternatives will be advanced for additional testing. They would require a higher level of investment than some of the other alternatives. He noted that the consultant team is preparing a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

S. Olanoff asked where the model data for the western portion of the state (outside of the Boston Region MPO's model region) would come from. K. Quackenbush replied that the consulting team is developing a model that would forecast rail traffic between cities. D. Baer added that the consulting team is building a new model for the Northeast Corridor that will evaluate intercity and regional service. Ninety percent of service on the Northeast Corridor is regional service, he noted. The consulting team is working with other MPOs and stakeholders along the corridor to develop the model.

D. Montgomery asked if the Boston Region MPO would be providing freight data. K. Quackenbush noted that the MPO staff does not have the ability to model intercity freight traffic, but that it can provide data related to freight travel to feed into the larger study effort. The MPO's freight modeling capability is confined to the truck mode, which is the mode that accounts for the majority of freight movement in the MPO region.

D. Montgomery asked if the MPO would have access to the NEC model that the consulting team is developing. D. Baer replied yes, that the consulting team is working with the Northeast Corridor Commission on issues regarding the accommodation of freight in the corridor. An outcome of the project, he said, will be tools that states in the corridor can use, including a GIS-based data viewer.

S. Woelfel inquired about the project schedule. D. Baer replied that a final decision on the strategy is expected in 2016. The schedule has been pushed forward due to the approval process for a survey that will inform the development of the model.

S. Woelfel asked about the outreach that is planned for affected communities. D. Baer remarked upon the project's robust stakeholder and public involvement process and noted that implementation of alternatives will not move forward until there is a review by the affected agencies and the public. The project results will be presented to the public when the FRA is comfortable with the alternatives.

L. Dantas expressed concern that CTPS's modeling effort for this project may impact the modeling work for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). K. Quackenbush assured members that this work would not affect the work on the LRTP.

James Errickson, At-Large City of Everett, asked whether the land use scenarios used for this project could be different from the land use scenarios that will be used for the LRTP. E. Bourassa noted that the new land use scenario being developed by MAPC for the new LRTP would not be drastically different from the current land use scenarios.

S. Olanoff noted that a public meeting scheduled for last fall was cancelled because of the government shut-down. He asked when it would be rescheduled. D. Baer replied that public meetings will probably be scheduled for this fall. S. Olanoff suggested that the public be informed of the delay.

7. MPO Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 20 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the MBTA (Ron Morgan). The motion carried. The following members abstained: North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina

Cassidy); At-Large City of Everett (J. Errickson); and Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Hayes Morrison).

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of March 6 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by At-Large City of Everett (J. Errickson). The motion carried. The following members abstained: North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy); Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Hayes Morrison); Massachusetts Port Authority (L. Dantas); and South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) (Christine Stickney).

8. South Coast Rail Corridor Plan Presentation—*Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services, MPO Staff; and Jean Fox, Project Manager, MassDOT*

S. Peterson and J. Fox provided an update on the *South Coast Rail* project. The project reached a milestone last fall with the approval of the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), which allows project to move forward.

S. Peterson began by describing the MPO's role in the project. The MPO approved a work program in 2007 to support the development of the project's Environmental Notification Form (ENF) and Draft EIR, which are required through the MEPA/NEPA process. This scope of work included expanding the MPO's model set to the south coast of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, developing a screening tool to examine a number of project ideas, and conducting travel modeling for 13 alternatives.

The analytic work involved examining the size and location of parking lots to determine potential demand for usage of those lots, and studying how to link bus service to commuter rail stations. The metrics that were developed included ridership by mode, station, line, time of day, mode of access, and origin and destination. The study also examined potential transfer activity between transit modes, as well as traffic patterns, including an HOV analysis. Air quality, environmental justice, and economic impact analyses were also conducted. These metrics contributed to the project's FEIS/FEIR, which was released in September 2013.

J. Fox continued noting that, following the release of the FEIS/FEIR, two open houses were held in October 2013 to help communities to review the documents. The public review period closed on October 25 and the Secretary of the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs issued a certificate on November 1.

She explained that since the development of the DEIS/DEIR, MassDOT has advanced the designs of the tracks, stations, and layover facilities to address impacts on wetlands

and natural resources. The agency also developed more accurate information on wetlands impacts based on approved delineations, and refined the operating plan, schedule, and ridership figures.

The recommended route, which would be the least damaging to environmental resources, was determined to be along the existing Stoughton line and along an old rail route to Fall River and New Bedford. The proposed plan would add ten new commuter rail stations, and enhance the existing stations in Canton and Stoughton. These facilities would comply with ADA requirements.

As the project transitions from conceptual planning and environmental review to permitting and design, the MBTA will be taking the lead role and forming the design team, which is expected to be formed by this summer. The level of engagement with affected communities will be increasing. MassDOT has been keeping the public apprised of the project to this point with fact sheets, e-mail communications, and task force and community meetings.

Going forward, the *South Coast Rail* project must go through an extensive permitting process that will engage the public and include formal public review processes. As the project design progresses, a final wetlands mitigation plan will be developed.

A key component of the *South Coast Rail* project is smart growth. Over the past six years, the state has been providing technical assistance grants to communities to help them with smart growth land use planning in advance of the rail extension.

The House version of the transportation bond bill authorized \$2.2 billion for South Coast Rail; this amount was increased to \$2.3 billion in the Senate version. MassDOT's CIP includes \$255 million to begin the permitting and design process, to fund early actions on the project, and to hire a construction management and program management team.

Major benefits expected from *South Coast Rail* include the following: a reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per day by 300,000; mode shift of travelers; the protection of 50,000 acres of land; and an increase in economic vitality and job opportunities. Also, MassDOT is now implementing some projects of independent utility in the South Coast area that will improve rail freight operations and several bridges.

Project updates and documentation are available at www.mass.gov/southcoastrail.

Discussion

S. Olanoff asked whether any municipalities made additional requests or comments that were not included in the FEIR. J. Fox replied that the Town of Stoughton has requested

that the rail line be depressed in certain areas. The Town of Easton has expressed concern about potential impacts from noise and vibration. The Town of Canton has expressed concern about visual impacts from catenary wires.

S. Olanoff asked if further study into these issues would increase the project cost. J. Fox replied that they would likely increase the project cost.

Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), asked if any federal funds will be available for the project. J. Fox replied that the project is currently wholly state funded. The federal delegation is fully aware of the utility of this project, however.

D. Crowley inquired about the cost burden that the MBTA will bear for this project, and asked if an analysis has been done. J. Fox noted that there is an expectation that fare box recovery will exceed 35%, and may be as high as 50%. MassDOT is considering other models, such as value capture. J. Fox also remarked upon the legislature's support for investment in strategic expansion of the transportation system. She also noted that the project cost will be partially offset by the economic benefits that it will produce. The project is expected to generate \$500 million in economic development potential.

L. Dantas asked if the plans for *South Coast Rail* assume that South Station will be expanded. J. Fox replied yes.

S. Olanoff inquired about the consideration of electric verses diesel power to run the trains. J. Fox replied that the modeling assumed the trains would be electric.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), inquired about the timeframe for construction. J. Fox replied that construction would take about eight years. The project must go through an extensive and complex permitting process that will involve multiple agencies and municipalities. The permitting process could take two years.

9. State Implementation Plan—*Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT*

S. Allam provided an update on projects that are in the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Regarding the *Fairmount Line Improvement* project, Newmarket Station is complete and the Four Corners Station will be fully completed this year.

Regarding the *Green Line Extension (GLEX)* project, the MBTA is moving ahead on project design, engineering, and real estate issues. The New Starts application for the

project was submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) last fall. The GLEX was included in the FFY 2015 federal budget. The project team met with the FTA on March 15 to discuss the requirements for submitting the full funding grant application that is due in April.

The MBTA is moving ahead with the procurement of additional Green Line vehicles. FTA has approved the relocation of the Vehicle Storage and Maintenance Facility site. Meetings with NSTAR have been scheduled to discuss property acquisition.

Phase 1 of the project includes the replacement of the Harvard Street Bridge in Medford. All cast in place concrete work is completed, and work on the southeast retaining wall will begin in May. Storm drainage replacement work is also underway.

Discussion

Michael Chong, Federal Highway Administration, asked if there has been any news regarding the status of the *Red Line-Blue Line Connector* project. C. Bench said that there is no further progress to report.

[At this point in the meeting, C. Bench gave his Chair's Report. See agenda item #2 for details.]

10. Members Items

J. Romano reminded members that the work on the Prudential Tunnel ceiling will begin this weekend, starting at 9:00 PM on March 21, and a lane reduction on the Turnpike will be in place. The work will occur over four weekends: March 21, March 28, April 4, and April 25. More information about the project is available at this website: <http://prutunnelproject.info>. J. Romano also reported that the MBTA's Government Station will be closing on March 22 for two years.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), inquired about the schedule for the TIP and whether staff would distribute a draft version of the TIP prior to the MPO's meeting on April 3. P. Wolfe replied that staff is working on a staff recommendation for the TIP and a First Tier list of projects; staff expects to have these materials ready before the meeting of April 3.

L. Wiener inquired about the status of the transportation bond bill. E. Bourassa reported that the House and the Senate passed slightly different versions of the bill and that the bill is now in conference committee.

D. Crowley raised an issue about a portion of FY 2014 Chapter 90 monies that have not been issued to municipalities. He remarked upon the importance of those funds for

small municipalities that are planning roadway repairs. These towns are finding themselves at an impasse as they are planning for this year's work because they do not know if those Chapter 90 monies will be available to them. He suggested that the MPO consider preparing a letter to the Governor and state legislature urging them to come to a resolution and inform towns, one way or the other, whether those funds will be distributed.

In response, C. Bench reported that the state will not be releasing any more FY 2014 Chapter 90 monies to municipalities. J. Romano added that the *Governor's Way Forward* plan called for \$300 million for annual Chapter 90 funds, however, that figure was based on MassDOT getting all the revenue it requested from the legislature, which it did not. D. Crowley asked that MassDOT inform the municipalities that they should not be expecting any additional FY 2014 Chapter 90 monies, so that towns may factor that into their planning for the coming year.

11. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford) (R. Reed), and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

| | |
|---|---------------------|
| At-Large City (City of Everett) | James Errickson |
| At-Large City (City of Newton) | David Koses |
| At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) | Laura Wiener |
| At-Large Town (Town of Lexington) | Richard Canale |
| City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority) | Lara Mérida |
| City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department) | Patrick Hoey |
| Federal Highway Administration | Michael Chong |
| Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) | Hayes Morrison |
| Massachusetts Department of Transportation | Clinton Bench |
| | Steve Woelfel |
| | David Anderson |
| MassDOT Highway Division | John Romano |
| Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) | Ron Morgan |
| Massachusetts Port Authority | Lourenço Dantas |
| Metropolitan Area Planning Council | Eric Bourassa |
| MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham) | Dennis Giombetti |
| Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford) | Richard Reed |
| North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly) | Denise Deschamps |
| North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) | Tina Cassidy |
| Regional Transportation Advisory Council | David Montgomery |
| South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) | Christine Stickney |
| South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) | Dennis Crowley |
| Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood) | Steve Olanoff |

| Other Attendees | Affiliation |
|------------------------|---|
| Sreelatha Allam | MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning |
| Daniel Baer | Parsons Brinckerhoff |
| Richard Benevento | World Tech Engineering |
| John A. Businger | National Corridors Initiative |
| Joe Onorato | MassDOT Highway District 4 |
| Leah Sirmin | FHWA |
| Roy Sorenson | Town of Bedford, Department of Public Works |
| Sheri Warrington | MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning |

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Maureen Kelly
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director
Anne McGahan
Scott Peterson
Pam Wolfe
