

# Memorandum for the Record

## Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

### May 15, 2014 Meeting

10:10 AM – 11:55 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Clinton Bench, Chair, representing Richard Davey, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

### Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- Release the draft federal fiscal year (FFY) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for a 30-day public review period
- Release the draft FFYs 2015-18 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for a 30-day public review period

### Meeting Agenda

#### 1. Public Comments

Members heard public comments in regard to today's discussion about the draft FFYs 2015-18 TIP.

David Knowlton, City of Salem, spoke about the *Salem – Reconstruction on Canal Street* project. The staff recommendation for the TIP proposes to move the project from the FFY 2014 element to the FFY 2015 element. D. Knowlton asked the MPO not to delay the project. He noted that the project addresses a major corridor through the city. The intersection of Canal Street, Jefferson Avenue, and Loring Avenue at the southern end of the project area is owned by MassDOT. The original design called for the replacement of signal heads at that intersection, but the scope of the project has changed to a complete reconfiguration of the intersection. MassDOT is now taking on the design of that intersection. There are right-of-way issues that need to be resolved with that portion of the project. The city's portion of the project, however, will be at the 100% design stage in about three weeks and will be ready to be advertised for construction. D. Knowlton suggested that the MPO split the programming of the project so that the city's portion can advance this year and MassDOT's portion can follow next year.

In response to questions from members, D. Knowlton clarified that the city does not own the approaches to the intersection of Canal Street, Jefferson Avenue, and Loring Avenue and that it was the MassDOT Highway District Office that initiated the redesign of the intersection. He noted that the city has a commitment to residents, businesses, and Salem State University to construct the project. The city also needs to make drainage improvements to this flood-prone area. If the project was split, the city's portion would cost about \$650,000 for construction with about \$1 million for details and other costs.

Roy Sorenson, Town of Bedford, thanked the MPO for keeping the *Bedford, Billerica, and Burlington – Middlesex Turnpike Improvements, Phase 3* project in the FFY 2016 element of the TIP and for keeping the project on track.

## **2. Chair's Report—*Clinton Bench, MassDOT***

C. Bench reported that the Project Selection Advisory Council is scheduled to meet on May 20 in Pittsfield. Materials that will be discussed at the meeting will be posted on MassDOT's website by May 19 for the public to review.

## **3. Committee Chairs' Reports**

Sree Allam, MassDOT, reported that the MPO's UPWP Committee met this morning to discuss the staff recommendation for the budgets and projects in the FFY 2015 UPWP.

Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, reported that a meeting of the MPO's Administration and Finance Committee may be scheduled for June 5. The annual budget for Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) will be discussed.

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

D. Montgomery reported that the Advisory Council's TIP/UPWP Committee met to discuss the comments that the Advisory Council will present in a letter to the MPO regarding the draft TIP and UPWP. The Council's Long-Range Transportation Plan Committee also met on May 14.

MassDOT Secretary Richard Davey will be addressing the Council at its next meeting on June 11.

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

K. Quackenbush reported that the next MPO meeting will be held at the City Hall Annex, 120 Washington Street, Salem. Staff will be sending out directions prior to the meeting.

He also informed members that two CTPS staff members are departing. Efi Pagitsas, Manager of the Traffic Analysis Group, is retiring after over 32 years with the organization. Ying Bao, Manager of the Transportation System Analysis Group, is leaving after three years to take a position in the private sector.

C. Bench noted that open positions at CTPS are advertised on the MPO's website.

## **6. FFY 2015 Unified Planning Work Program—*Michelle Scott, MPO Staff***

M. Scott presented the UPWP Committee's recommendation for the budget and projects for the FFY 2015 UPWP. The UPWP is one of three certification documents produced by the MPO. It programs federal funding to conduct metropolitan planning for the MPO region. A diagram was shown that illustrated the components of the UPWP and how it is funded.

This UPWP programs \$6.7 million in funding; of that amount \$5 million are 3C planning funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and \$1.7 million are non-3C planning funds provided by other transportation agencies and municipalities for studies conducted on their behalf.

The federal funding in the UPWP supports the following: the ongoing work of CTPS and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to ensure that the MPO meets its certification requirements; maintenance of the MPO's technical capacity, including the regional travel demand model and data sets; the MPO's decision-making process and outreach activities; and the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. The UPWP also accounts for technical assistance programs and limited-term studies carried forward from previous years. The federal funding in the UPWP also supports new discrete planning studies and activities. Staff provided budgets detailing the line items for CTPS and MAPC, and materials on the individual studies in the UPWP.

The MPO staff began conducting outreach last November to generate ideas for UPWP projects and programs. Those concepts were refined by the MPO staff in discussion with the UPWP Committee over the following months.

The UPWP Committee is proposing nine new 3C-funded projects that fall into the categories of roadway network performance; active transportation; safety and security; transportation equity and accessibility; land use, environment, and economy; and other technical support.

The following roadway network performance projects represent the next phases of programs that have been carried out successfully by the MPO in recent years:

- *Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways, FFY 2015*
- *Low-Cost Improvements to Bottleneck Locations, FFY 2015*
- *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment, FFY 2015*

Two projects are proposed under the active transportation category. The *Bicycle Network Gaps: Feasibility Evaluations* project would examine ways to address certain gaps in the bicycle network identified in the recently completed *Bicycle Network Evaluation* study (presented at today's meeting under Item #8). The UPWP Committee voted this morning to replace the second project – *Community Pedestrian Network Studies* – with a new study that would examine ways to enhance bicycle and pedestrian access to stations on the Fairmount Commuter Rail corridor.

A safety and security study, the *Safety Analysis at Intersections Near MAGIC Schools*, would involve mapping and could serve as a pilot project for other such efforts in other subregions. Under the transportation equity and accessibility category, the *Title VI Service Equity Analyses: Methodology Development* project would focus on improving the methodologies used to evaluate the impact of transit service changes.

Under the land use, environment, and economy category, the *Core Capacity Constraints* project would examine constraints on the transit and highway network in the cities of Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville. Lastly, a technical support project, the *Household-Survey-Based Travel Profiles and Trends: Selected Policy Topics* study would be an extension of the work that the MPO staff began last year to examine data from the household survey.

Eric Bourassa, MAPC, then discussed projects that would be conducted by MAPC's staff.

The *Alternative-Mode Planning and Coordination* project would include work that would focus on helping communities in the region with their parking management plans, and on conducting research into options for municipalities that are interested in adding electric vehicles to their fleets.

The *Corridor/Subarea Planning Studies* would include research regarding parking for residential and mixed-use buildings, and how that parking could affect transportation circulation. The *Stream Crossing Inventory for Local Roads* project would identify locations where roads cross water bodies in a particular watershed and identify opportunities to improve those crossings and their infrastructure, such as culverts.

### ***Discussion***

Jim Gillooly, City of Boston, asked if the Boston Mobility Action Plan has been incorporated in the UPWP. M. Scott replied that the project will be reflected in the appendix of the UPWP, which lists other transportation planning projects occurring in the region that are not being funded by MPO dollars.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), inquired about MAPC's *Stream Crossing Inventory for Local Roads* project. E. Bourassa noted that this work would be included in MAPC's *Corridor/Subarea Planning Studies* project.

A motion to release the draft FFY 2015 UPWP, as recommended by the UPWP Committee, for a 30-day public review period was made by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent), and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan). The motion carried.

The public review period will begin on May 21. The MPO is scheduled to vote to endorse the UPWP on June 26.

### **7. FFYs 2015-18 Transportation Improvement Program—Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff**

S. Pfalzer presented changes that have been made to the funding tables in the draft FFYs 2015-18 TIP since members last reviewed the tables at their May 1 meeting.

At that meeting, new information about the cost of the *Middlesex Turnpike Improvements, Phase 3* project was presented. The project has a cost increase of \$6.6 million. Staff has now proposed programming nearly \$21.7 million for the project in the FFY 2016 element and \$6.6 million in the FFY 2017 element of the regional target funding tables. The increased cost of the project would be accommodated by delaying the payments for the *Weymouth and Abington – Reconstruction and Widening on Route 18* project so that funds for the *Route 18* project are programmed in the FFYs 2016, 2017, and 2018 elements, and by adjusting cash flows for the *Needham and Wellesley – Route 128 Add-a-Lane* project. These changes would require the MPO to program \$6.6 million for the *Route 18* project in the next TIP cycle, in the FFY 2019 element.

Staff has made no other adjustments to other funding programs in the TIP. Staff is awaiting figures for projects that will receive statewide Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program funds. When MassDOT provides those figures, they will be included in the TIP.

**Discussion**

J. Gillooly asked if the funds programmed in this TIP for the *Route 128 Add-a-Lane* project would complete that project. S. Pfalzer replied that the project would be fully funded. Only funding for the *Route 18* and *Green Line Extension to Route 16* project would extend into FFY 2019.

Christine Stickney, South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree), inquired about the earmarks for the *Route 18* project. S. Pfalzer replied that the project has a \$14.77 million earmark. Staff is proposing to program \$8.6 million in FFY 2016 and \$6.17 million in FFY 2017.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), asked whether the total cost of the *Route 18* project has changed and about the project's design status. S. Pfalzer replied that the cost estimate of \$57.7 million has been inflated to \$60 million because the four-year project will be starting one year later. The project is at the 75% design stage.

R. Reed asked whether an amendment to the FFY 2014 element of the current TIP would be necessary based on the changes in the FFY 2015-18 TIP. S. Pfalzer replied that staff is preparing an Amendment Three to the FFYs 2014-17 TIP to present to the MPO at its June 5 meeting. The amendment is required to incorporate changes to the target program, as well as to add updates to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) projects, the MBTA's program, and transit grants.

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, asked for clarification regarding the programming of the *Salem – Reconstruction on Canal Street* project. C. Bench confirmed that the project would be eligible to receive funds in October of 2014, the start of FFY 2015.

A motion to release the draft FFYs 2015-18 TIP, as presented today, for a 30-day public review period was made by the City of Boston (J. Gillooly), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent).

During the discussion of this motion, C. Bench noted that the statewide CMAQ figures would not be included in the document released for public review. MassDOT expects to have the figures available within the next week and for the MPO to review at its June 5 meeting. It is in the MPO's purview to add the CMAQ figures into the TIP when the MPO votes to approve the document.

P. Wolfe reported that staff will be holding public meetings about the TIP and UPWP on June 12, 17, and 18. If staff receives the CMAQ figures before those meetings, staff

could incorporate them into the draft TIP and repost the document. Under the MPO's Public Participation Program, changes to a document during a public review period would require the MPO to extend the public review period by 15 days. If the CMAQ figures are included after the close of the public review period, the MPO would have to hold another 30-day public review period.

J. Gillooly asked if the CMAQ list would include additional projects to those already programmed in the TIP. C. Bench replied yes, that the list would include CMAQ projects prioritized at the state level, such as MassRIDES' travel options and ride matching programs, and intersection improvement projects.

Members then voted on the motion to release the draft FFYs 2015-18 TIP, as presented today, for a 30-day public review period. The motion carried.

## **8. Bicycle Network Evaluation—*Beth Isler, MPO Staff***

B. Isler presented the results of the *Bicycle Network Evaluation* study, which was included in a previous UPWP. The purpose of the study was to examine ways to create a more cohesive regional bicycle network and integrate bicycles into the transportation system, not only for recreation purposes but as a means of transportation. The study was guided by a steering committee that included representatives of MassDOT and MAPC. The study was reviewed by representatives of the Massachusetts Bicycle Advisory Board, Livable Streets Alliance, and Northeastern University.

The study began with a base network of shared-use paths, unimproved paths, on-road bicycle lanes, and cycle tracks (or protected bicycle lanes). Gaps in that network – between bicycle facilities themselves and between bicycle facilities and major transit stations – were identified and prioritized based on evaluation criteria that determined whether a new connection bridging a gap would:

- provide access for all trip types
- serve future bicycle and pedestrian trips (based on results from the MPO's travel demand model)
- promote safety (particularly in top crash locations)
- be consistent with previous plans (such as the Bay State Greenway plan, Northeastern University's Green Routes plan, the MPO's Regional Bicycle Plan, and the Livable Streets Alliance's Green Routes plan)

A total of 234 gaps were identified; 36 were considered to be high priorities. Most of the high-priority locations were in the Inner Core subregion. The study made recommendations to address eleven of the highest priority locations.

The top priority was the Community Path in Somerville, which MassDOT has since committed to build as part of the *Green Line Extension* project. Other high-priority locations included parts of the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail and the Upper Charles Trail, the Charlesgate Connection in Boston, and the Canal Street Bikeway in Salem. The complete list is included in the study report.

Next steps involve determining the feasibility of implementing improvements to the top ten remaining high-priority locations. The MPO's Regional Bicycle Plan should be updated and this study should be updated periodically. The GIS-tool developed for this study can be applied anywhere in the state.

This study was consistent with the MPO goals for providing safe, healthy, efficient, and varied transportation options, and advancing transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes. It also supports MassDOT initiatives and the FHWA's Livability principles.

### ***Discussion***

Nicholas Garcia, Federal Transit Administration, asked how the study accounted for roads with sharrows versus separated lanes. B. Isler replied that the study did not focus on roads with sharrows, rather it focused on facilities that would support more cautious riders.

N. Garcia asked if staff considered incorporating a capacity variable as bicycle congestion is occurring in some areas. B. Isler replied no, but noted that staff is working on improvements to data collection methods to get a better understanding of bicycle volumes, so that incorporating a capacity variable would be a good next step.

D. Koses inquired as to the major reason for gaps and whether on-street parking was identified an issue. B. Isler explained that the study identified gaps that have gone unaddressed because of land ownership issues or because there is a lack of momentum or advocacy to make improvements. This was a regional study so it did not focus on on-street parking issues.

Lourenço Dantas, Massachusetts Port Authority, inquired about the next steps for implementation of projects and what support the MPO could provide. B. Isler replied that the MPO could support feasibility studies and efforts to bring projects to the 25% design stage. S. Pfalzer stated that some of the gaps identified in the study overlap with project locations in the Universe of TIP Projects. K. Quackenbush added that there is a study in the draft FFY 2015 UPWP that will explore in greater detail some of the gaps identified in this study.

D. Giombetti asked if staff would study all top ten locations or a subset in the next phase. K. Quackenbush replied that staff would examine three locations more closely.

D. Giombetti asked about what selection criteria would be used to select those locations. B. Isler suggested that staff select the top three scorers in the study. K. Quackenbush added that the MPO would have an opportunity to weigh in on the selection. D. Giombetti asked staff to consider geographic equity when making the selection.

J. Gillooly asked if staff made specific recommendations for routes to connect gaps. B. Isler replied that staff did not make specific suggestions for route alignments.

R. Reed drew the distinction between unpaved bicycle paths that are maintained by municipalities and those that are not. He suggested that some of the unpaved paths could be considered to be gaps in the network and could be considered as priorities. B. Isler agreed and noted that this issue was raised by the study's steering committee. Addressing these locations could be considered in future studies.

Richard Canale, At-Large Town of Lexington, asked how staff plans to identify funding sources for various projects. B. Isler replied that staff could give municipalities or advocates guidance on funding sources on a case-by-case basis. She noted that MAPC offers a Trail Implementation Toolkit.

James Errickson, At-Large City of Everett, suggested that staff be in contact with the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). This agency is promoting bicycle paths by providing funding through its parks program. EOEEA is working with the City of Everett to construct the first part of the Northern Strand Trail, and studying how to connect the trail in Everett to the Chelsea Greenway.

J. Errickson also asked whether staff considered demand between population centers in the study analysis. B. Isler noted that demand did come into play in the evaluation, which used results from the travel demand model that are based on population and employment demographics.

D. Koses remarked on the decision to exclude sharrows as an option for addressing gaps. He noted that sometimes sharrows are the only viable alternative. B. Isler noted that the study's steering committee wanted to push for protected facilities.

## **9. State Implementation Plan Update—*Sree Allam, MassDOT***

S. Allam gave an update on the *Green Line Extension* project, which is among the projects in the State Implementation Plan (SIP). The project has been included in President Obama's FFY 2015 budget.

A series of meetings were held by the project team and FTA in March and April to discuss the activities that must be completed before the full funding grant agreement is submitted in September 2014. In the coming weeks, an updated program cost and schedule will be developed, and the finance plan will be updated to include contingency costs. FTA will require six to nine months to review the application.

Real estate acquisition packages have been sent to the MBTA to initiate appraisals. The project team met with Tufts University regarding access to properties and staging area needs for the construction of the College Avenue Station. The team also met with NSTAR regarding property acquisition near Gilman Square.

In April, Governor Patrick announced that the Community Path will be constructed from the Lowell Street Station to Lechmere Station. A public meeting was held about the design of the Community Path project in May. Also in May, a meeting was held with the residents of the Brickbottom artists' building to discuss their concerns about the rail project.

The project schedule remains in effect, although it is being reviewed as a result of the MBTA's and FTA's risk workshop held this past winter. Any changes to the schedule will be included in the New Starts application for the full funding grant agreement.

## **10. Members Items**

J. Romano announced that the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) will be holding three public meetings and one hearing regarding the increase in RMV fees. The meetings will take place on May 20 in Worcester, May 22 at the State Transportation Building in Boston (a public hearing and a meeting), and May 27 in Springfield.

Michael Chong, FHWA, announced that the Obama Administration has released new surface transportation legislation, the Grow America Act. The Administration proposes to increase funding for high-performing MPOs that coordinate well with neighboring MPOs and employ performance measures as part of their planning. Accelerated project delivery would also be encouraged.

C. Bench then discussed the issues surrounding federal funding for transportation projects. The current surface transportation legislation, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), is set to expire this September. Also, the Highway Trust

Fund, which is underfunded because of lagging gas tax revenue, is nearing insolvency and may reach that point this summer. The Obama Administration is proposing to toll interstate highways to keep the Highway Trust Fund solvent. C. Bench encouraged members and attendees to review information on this topic on the U.S. DOT's website and contact their member of Congress.

L. Dantas reported that the Massachusetts Port Authority launched a new transit service from Boston's Back Bay to Logan Airport three weeks ago. The service is expected to provide relief to Green Line riders who may be affected by the closure of Government Center Station. More information on the service is available on the MBTA's and the Port Authority's websites. The service is attracting 300 riders a day so far, and that number is climbing.

C. Bench announced that the new ferry from the Blossom Street Terminal in Lynn to Long Wharf in Boston will begin operating on May 19. The ferry will be free for the first week of operation. Free parking is available at the Blossom Street Terminal. C. Bench also noted that the Port Authority has opened an expansion of Terminal B at Logan Airport.

P. Wolfe announced that there will be ferry service on weekends between Long Wharf in Boston and Hingham and Hull from Memorial Day at least through Labor Day.

## **11. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano) and seconded by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
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)	Jim Gillooly
	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Michael Chong
Federal Transit Administration	Nicholas Garcia
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Clinton Bench
	Sree Allam
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
MBTA	Benjamin
	Bloomenthal
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
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)	Aaron Clausen
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)	Tom Holder
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

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**Other Attendees Affiliation**

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David Knowlton	City of Salem
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Owen MacDonald	Town of Weymouth
Brian Myers	AECOM
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)
Joe Onorato	MassDOT Highway District 4
Nick Rubino	AECOM
Roy Sorenson	Town of Bedford
Joe Viola	Town of Brookline

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director  
Maureen Kelly  
Robin Mannion  
Anne McGahan  
Scott Peterson  
Sean Pfalzer  
Michelle Scott  
Pam Wolfe

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