

# Memorandum for the Record

## Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

### August 21, 2014 Meeting

10:10 AM – 12:00 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 Draft Amendment Four of the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2014-17 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for a 15-day public review and comment period
- release the Draft Public Participation Plan, as amended at today's meeting, for a 45-day public review and comment period
- approve the minutes of the meeting of August 7

### Meeting Agenda

#### 1. Public Comments

Lee Auspitz, Somerville resident, provided an update on an issue he has been raising about the geographical references used to describe the terminus of the *Green Line Extension* project. He contends that the reference to Medford Hillside as the project's terminus is inconsistent with federal geospatial/mapping standards and is concerned that there will be unwanted consequences, including financial penalties, if the project's references are not made consistent. His concerns relate to MBTA mapping and MPO documents.

L. Auspitz has submitted a public records request to MassDOT and the MBTA asking if they have secured a determination letter from the federal government exempting the *Green Line Extension* project from the geospatial requirements of OMB Circular A-16 and Section 35 of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) Master Agreement. He has not received a response yet.

As a follow up, he has sent a letter to the General Counsel of the MBTA asking for certain documentation and for information about specific steps the MBTA might have taken regarding referencing the location of the terminus.

(A letter detailing the request was provided to the MPO for its records.)

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

There was none.

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

C. Bench reported that Paul Regan, Chair of the MPO's Administration and Finance Committee, has been asked to organize an ad hoc committee to conduct the annual performance review of the Executive Director. P. Regan invited members to contact him with questions or comments.

Lourenço Dantas, Chair of the Congestion Management Committee, reported that the committee met this morning to discuss the Intersection Improvement Program, the scope of work for the Congestion Management Process in FFY 2015, and the Arterial Performance Dashboard. The committee is expected to meet next on September 18.

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

D. Montgomery reported that the Advisory Council's Election Committee met in August. A slate of candidates for the positions of chair and vice chair will be presented at the Advisory Council's September 10 meeting. Nominations will be taken from the floor. Also at that meeting, the Advisory Council will host a Community Transportation Panel discussion.

The October meeting will include an update on the Long-Range Transportation Plan, as well as a discussion of freight issues and the MPO's Draft Public Participation Plan.

D. Montgomery also reported that the Town of Needham will be welcoming the MPO to its meeting there on September 4.

## **5. Executive Director's Report—*Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services, Central Transportation Planning Staff***

There was none.

## **6. FFYs 2014-17 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Four—*Michelle Scott, MPO Staff***

M. Scott gave an overview of the proposed Amendment Four of the FFYs 2014-17 TIP. Staff is seeking approval from the MPO to release the amendment for a 15-day public review and comment period which would begin on August 25 and end on September 8. The MPO then could take action on the amendment at its meeting on September 18.

On the highway side, the amendment would change the MPO's Target Program to remove one project, address project cost increases, and adjust cash flows for the *Route 128 Add-a-Lane* project. It also programs costs changes to projects outside of the Target Program. On the transit side, the amendment reflects the removal of one project and the addition of four projects to the list of Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) projects, and a cost update for a project of the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA).

Specific changes to the Target Program include the removal of the \$4.2 million *Boston—Multi-use Trail Construction from Ruggles Station to Fan Pier* project (a.k.a. *South Bay Harbor Trail*), which was to be funded through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Also, there is a cost increase of \$2.1 million to the *Beverly – Reconstruction and Signal Improvements on Rantoul Street (Route 1A)* project. The new cost estimate for the Beverly project, based on the 100% design plans, is \$22 million. Staff proposes to apply approximately \$1.7 million in TAP funds from the *South Bay Harbor Trail* project and \$360,000 from the *Route 128 Add-a-Lane* project to address the cost increase to the Beverly project. A balance of \$2.17 million would be used to adjust the cash flows for the *Route 128 Add-a-lane* project in the FFY 2014 element.

Other changes to the highway element include the following:

- cost increase of \$1.5 million to the *Somerville – Reconstruction of Beacon Street* project (based on 100% design plans)
- cost increase of \$1.2 million to a project in Bellingham that would demolish a bridge (Route 126 over CSX Railroad) and install a culvert to accommodate a future bicycle path (based on 75% design plans)
- cost decrease of \$1.4 million to the *Winchester – Signal and Intersection Improvements at Four Locations* project (because of a scaling back of the project scope)

Changes to the transit element include the following:

- removal of a project to renovate a CATA's administration and maintenance facility
- programming of RTA Capital funding for four CATA projects that would fund computers, tires, paving, and air conditioning repair on vehicles
- programming of an increase in Mobility Assistance Program match funding for a MWRTA project to purchase buses

***Discussion***

David Anderson, MassDOT Highway Division, expressed concern that a vote on September 18 would be cutting close to the last possible day to advertise projects in FFY 2014, September 20. He stated that he will be raising the issue at meeting with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) later today. C. Bench added that MassDOT will be clarifying with FHWA what needs to be done to prepare for advance approval prior to the MPO's vote. Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, MPO staff, discussed the MPO's options for holding an abbreviated public review period, in light of these time constraints.

Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), raised the issue of project cost increases and the concern that the TIP reporting does not make apparent the original cost of projects, only the increases from one amendment to another. He asked if staff could report on the original project costs.

D. Anderson discussed the reason for some of the cost increases reflected in this amendment, which were a result of cost items that were not accounted for in the original cost estimates.

Hayes Morrison, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), discussed how projects are generally at 25% design (just beyond conceptual design) when they enter the TIP process. They are not contracts at that time and estimates invariably change as projects become more defined over time and with more developed design. She expressed that it would be doing a disservice to municipalities to hold them accountable for items that were missed in early design stages.

C. Bench spoke about steps MassDOT is taking to address the controllable aspects of project cost increases. It is, for example, addressing utility and right-of-way issues before construction begins, and paying for utility relocation.

To address D. Crowley's concern, P. Wolfe stated that the TIP Manager could report the original cost of projects in the TIP tables or in the oral presentation on an amendment. C. Bench asked staff to think about the best approach for presenting the information.

Regarding the cost increase to the Beverly project, M. Scott noted that the project cost estimate was \$15.7 million at the beginning of FFY 2014. After the submission of the 75% design plans, the estimate rose to \$19.9 million in Amendment Three to the FFYs 2014-17 TIP.

### ***Motion***

A motion to release Draft Amendment Four of the FFYs 2014-17 TIP for a 15-day public review and comment period was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (John Romano), and seconded by the North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy). The motion carried.

## **7. Long-Range Transportation Plan: Vision, Goals, and Objectives— *Anne McGahan, MPO Staff***

Staff distributed a redlined version of a memorandum about the central vision, goals, and objectives for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which was presented at the MPO's meeting on August 7. The changes in the document reflect comments made by the members at that meeting and thereafter. A. McGahan summarized the changes, which include suggestions for a shorter vision statement, and additional or revised goals and objectives. Members then made additional revisions and suggestions.

### ***Discussion***

Eric Halvorsen, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), suggested incorporating the idea of “healthy” transportation in the vision statement. The statement was then revised to read,

“The Boston Region MPO envisions a future transportation system that is safe, provides equitable access, excellent mobility, and varied transportation options – in support of a sustainable, *healthy*, highly livable, and economically sound region.”

C. Bench and J. Romano had suggestions about the wording of an objective for “minimizing the environmental and community impacts of the transportation system.” As the objective is addressing a concern about light and noise pollution, those factors could be performance measures.

P. Regan stressed the need to keep the System Preservation goals and objectives undiluted and keep the focus on maintaining the existing system. He suggested that the objectives that focus on improving accessibility for all and environmental impacts may belong under other categories.

H. Morrison agreed with P. Regan's statements. She also suggested revising the objective to “improve the condition of sidewalks for all users” to “improve the *pedestrian experience* for all users.”

D. Montgomery suggested revising an objective to read, “minimize the *negative* environmental impacts of the transportation system.”

Richard Canale, At-Large Town of Lexington, suggested that references about “improving” conditions in the System Preservation category be revised to reference the meeting of specific standards. A. McGahan explained that performance measures contain that level of detail and she gave examples.

D. Anderson noted that accessibility is an important goal and suggested that the objectives addressing accessibility might be included under the Transportation Options/Healthy Modes category.

D. Montgomery noted that the request to include the objective to “improve the condition of sidewalks for all users” came from a person who was speaking about the needs of wheelchair users. He expressed concern about changing the wording of that objective. H. Morrison noted that wheelchair users are considered to be pedestrians.

C. Bench asked staff to take opportunities to highlight the MPO’s commitment to accessibility where possible in the document.

C. Bench suggested changes to the System Preservation objectives regarding bridges. For the objective to “reduce the number of bridges that do not meet standards,” he suggested specifying which standards are being referenced. A. McGahan explained that the standards are for structurally deficient bridges and the bridge health index, both of which are MassDOT performance measures.

Eileen Gunn, MassDOT, stated that MassDOT is embarking on a climate change adaptation vulnerability assessment of MassDOT’s assets and will be creating a Climate Adaptation Plan. She suggested adding objectives about the resiliency of assets and climate adaptation under the System Preservation category.

C. Bench made a suggestion for a text change to the goal for Congestion Reduction, so that it reads, “Congestion and delays will be reduced for all modes *consistent with* the MPO’s commitment to reduce single-occupant vehicle travel and promote transit, biking, and walking.” He also suggested that an objective in that category be reworded to reference the intention to “achieve a substantive mode shift.”

A. McGahan reported that Eric Bourassa, MAPC, suggested incorporating obesity rates as a performance measure under the Transportation Options/Healthy Modes category. The data source for this measure could be health data from the Department of Public Health or the Centers for Disease Control. Staff has not yet incorporated that measure pending discussion by the MPO. Existing objectives that address public health include expanding the bicycle and pedestrians networks. P. Regan noted that those

infrastructure improvements would be measurable, but that obesity rates may be more of an implied benefit.

Tom O'Rourke, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC), made a suggestion to be consistent in the references to the MPO under the Transportation Options/Healthy Modes category.

In response to a question, A. McGahan discussed the objective to "increase the region's land area, with more than 5,000 people per square mile served by transit." She noted that this objective reflects goals to increase population density around transit facilities and to support transit-oriented development.

T. O'Rourke raised questions about two objectives focused on "increasing the percentage of population and employment within one-quarter mile of transit stations" and "within one-half mile of shared-use paths or on-road bicycle facilities." He questioned whether those objectives are within the MPO's purview. A. McGahan replied that staff would be working with MAPC, which prepares employment and housing projections, to track that objective. Staff could measure if density increases at locations where transportation facilities are provided.

D. Anderson suggested revising a Transportation Options/Healthy Modes objective to read, "expand and close gaps in the bicycle and *accessible* sidewalk networks in the region." He remarked on MassDOT's work to construct accessible curb ramps on existing sidewalks.

James Errickson, At-Large City of Everett, asked if the Transportation Options/Healthy Modes objective to "increase the region's land area, with more than 5,000 people per square mile served by transit" could be construed to mean expanding the transit system to densely-settled areas that are currently not served by transit. A. McGahan replied yes, and she noted that in the last Needs Assessment, staff mapped areas that are densely settled and not served by transit. J. Errickson asked that the objective be modified to make that clear.

T. O'Rourke raised a concern about an Economic Vitality objective to "minimize net loss from the 25-34 year old population in the region." He expressed concern that there are factors beyond the MPO's control involved in that objective, such as the availability of affordable housing and jobs. A. McGahan noted that land use issues play a factor here. She noted that the MPO could track that data, and that some of the objectives will be tracked for information only.

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, suggested that in those cases references could be made to “tracking changes” rather than setting objectives. C. Bench added that some of the objectives set a target for the MPO to achieve, and others, which are not fully in the MPO’s power to achieve, will be tracked. A. McGahan added that these differences are made clear in the framework.

Christine Stickney, South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree), suggested revising an objective for Freight Movement to read, “*maintain* and improve the efficiency of the freight network.”

C. Stickney asked if water transportation is included under goals for Congestion Reduction. C. Bench confirmed that MassDOT considers passenger ferries among the modes of transit.

Lara Mérida, Boston Redevelopment Authority, suggested rewording a Transportation Equity objective to read, “maintain comparable access to jobs, affordable housing, and *other services* for environmental justice populations compared with non-EJ populations.”

J. Errickson suggested adding a Freight Movement objective to “improve/upgrade the existing conditions on the freight network.” He also noted that much of the freight movement in the region originates at ports which are at risk for sea level rise and climate change. He suggested adding an objective about addressing those impacts on the freight network.

Staff will incorporate the recommended changes and send a revised version of the goals and objectives back to members prior to the release for public review and comment in September.

## **8. Public Participation Plan—*Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff***

Members were presented with the Draft Public Participation Plan. They last discussed this plan at their meeting on June 19. P. Wolfe gave an overview of the changes that were made to the document since then and staff’s plans for outreach when the document is released for public review and comment.

Since June, staff incorporated comments provided by the MPO members, including suggestions regarding outreach to cable access news, inviting representatives of transportation agencies to MPO-sponsored public meetings, and maintaining written narratives in addition to graphics. The document layout was revised with improved graphics. P. Wolfe commended the work of Jane Gillis and Michelle Scott, MPO staff, who worked on the document.



Staff is seeking the MPO's approval to release the document for a 45-day public review and comment period that would start on August 25 and end on October 8. The MPO could then take a vote on the plan at their meeting on October 16.

For public outreach, staff is planning on seeking more input from the Advisory Council. Public notices about the public review and comment period would be sent out through the MPO's email list and newsletter, and noticed in a news flash and press release. Staff is planning four public workshops in communities that have high minority and low-income populations, and a high percentage of people with limited English proficiency. Additionally, the Public Participation Plan will be a topic of discussion at a forum about the LRTP in late September.

The next steps are to develop additional graphics to complete the set of handouts at public outreach events. These graphics will describe the MPO's amendment process and how to submit a comment. Staff will also be preparing updates for the public involvement webpage on the MPO website.

### ***Motion***

A motion to release the Draft Public Participation Plan for a 45-day public review and comment period was made by MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano), and seconded by the Advisory Council (D. Montgomery).

### ***Discussion***

C. Bench complimented staff for the graphics in the document. He asked how graphical information would be made available to people with visual impairments. P. Wolfe confirmed that the HTML version of the document includes narrative descriptions of the graphics in "Alt-text."

C. Bench suggested that the text regarding Title VI protections should be made more prominent in the document.

### ***Amended Motion***

A motion to amend the Draft Public Participation Plan to place the Title VI language more prominently in the document was accepted by the motion makers.

### ***Further Discussion***

L. Auspitz suggested adding a page to the document to define acronyms.

C. Bench asked for a correction to a map (on page 20).

L. Dantas suggested that more emphasis be given to the LRTP in Chapter 4.

### ***Vote***

Members voted on the motion to release the Draft Public Participation Plan, as amended, for a 45-day public review and comment period. The motion carried.

### **9. Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff**

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 7 was made by the South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) (C. Stickney), and seconded by the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) (T. O'Rourke). The motion carried. The following members abstained: MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano), MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan), and MAPC (E. Halvorsen).

### **10. MBTA Service Delivery Studies**

The presentation of the MBTA Service Delivery Studies was deferred until the meeting of September 4.

T. Kadzis suggested that staff allocate more time on the September 4<sup>th</sup> agenda for this discussion because of the potential implications these studies may have on MBTA service.

C. Bench said that the request would be taken under consideration at the next agenda setting meeting. He also noted that the two studies to be presented will be informing a broader package of initiatives at the MBTA, the Program for Mass Transportation and MBTA Futures. The two studies will not, in themselves, result in the implementation of any service changes.

### **11. State Implementation Plan Update—Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT Staff**

S. Allam gave an update on the State Implementation Plan (SIP) and the *Green Line Extension* project, one of the projects included in the (SIP).

MassDOT released its annual SIP Status Report in July. It has been released for public review and comment and is posted on MassDOT's website. The document describing interim offset measures to mitigate for the delays in the *Green Line Extension* project is also available.

Regarding the *Green Line Extension* project, in early July, the MBTA received a Letter of No Prejudice from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which allows certain construction work to begin on the project. In August, the MBTA submitted an updated financial plan to FTA. FTA is expected to review that plan prior to the submission of the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) by the MBTA. The bulk of the construction work on Phase 4 of the project is anticipated to begin later in 2015 after the approval of the FFGA.

The MassDOT Board of Directors approved a \$118 million contract for the supply of light-rail vehicles. A Notice to Proceed is anticipated by the end of August.

The MBTA is coordinating with the City of Somerville for the acquisition of several real estate parcels. The MBTA project team is also coordinating with Tufts University, which has a master plan concept that would affect the design of the College Avenue Station. The two parties are working to see if schedules can be aligned without affecting the overall cost and schedule for the *Green Line Extension* project.

## **12. Members Items**

J. Romano reported that MassDOT Highway District 6 successfully completed a heavy lift bridge project in Mattapan last weekend. The project was completed within schedule, in nine days. The traffic management plan for the project worked well.

He also reported that the MassDOT Highway Division is starting a project to replace the median barrier and substructure on Interstate 90 between Commonwealth Avenue and the Prudential Tunnel. There will be one lane open in each direction.

## **13. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan) and seconded by the South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) (C. Stickney). The motion carried.

## Attendance

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### Members

### Representatives and Alternates

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At-Large City (City of Everett)	James Errickson
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Lara Mérida
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Hayes Morrison
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Clinton Bench
	David Anderson
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Victor Rivas
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Halvorsen
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Roy Sorenson
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)	Dennis Crowley
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Lynn Ahlgren	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Sreelatha Allam	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Lee Auspitz	Somerville resident
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT District 3
Eileen Gunn	MassDOT
Timothy Horan	MBTA
Melissa Kalicin	MassDOT
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)
Joe Onorato	MassDOT District 4
Dustin Rhue	MassDOT

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Maureen Kelly  
Anne McGahan  
Elizabeth Moore  
Scott Peterson  
Michelle Scott  
Pam Wolfe

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