



## Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

June 11, 2014 Meeting

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

### Draft Meeting Summary

#### Introductions

David Montgomery, Chair (Needham) called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 5)

#### Chair's Report—*David Montgomery, Chair*

The drafts of both the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) are now out for public comment.

The Advisory Council continues to work with MPO staff to receive input on the latest draft Public Participation Plan. This document, updated every four years, outlines the many ways how the MPO interacts with the public.

#### Implementing the Way Forward: Priorities for Addressing the Future of Transportation in the Commonwealth – *David Mohler, Deputy Secretary of Policy, MassDOT*

MassDOT Deputy Director David Mohler gave a brief introduction of MassDOT's Way Forward program followed by a question and answer discussion with Advisory Council members about MassDOT's Capital Investment Plan (CIP), a five year rolling document including the capital budget for MassDOT agencies and a statement of priorities with heavy emphasis on state approved-repair projects. Priority projects not included in the CIP are those that are not expected to be financed within the next five years.

#### Discussion:

In response to a member's question, D. Mohler stated that the MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) reflects funding commitments, whereas the CIP encapsulates actual cash flows. If a project is completed within one fiscal year, both the TIP and the CIP will be the same. If it takes multiple fiscal years to complete, the amounts in the two documents will be different. If a project is included in the TIP, it will

at least be in the CIP beginning in the same year. The TIP is the controlling document for the allocation of federal funds.

In response to a question concerning the accuracy of project cost estimates, D Mohler replied that on conceptual projects, people expect a cost associated with a project and MassDOT presents costs within the standard guidelines being used in current practice by MassDOT and federal partner agencies.

When asked about the status of double-tracking and bridge repairs for freight and rail improvements, D. Mohler responded that one of the major projects in the area is the repair and replacement of the Merrimack River Bridge. More lines, including the Haverhill Line in particular, are becoming double-tracked which will also improve freight and passenger travel.

A member asked if MassDOT has a contingency plan in case of a shortfall in the Highway Trust Fund. D. Mohler explained what highway trust fund insolvency means and how the federal government generally reimburses the Commonwealth for projects. More long term issues relate to the fact that the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (often referred to as MAP-21) expires September 30. However, the President has released a new bill called the Generating Renewal, Opportunity, and Work with Accelerated Mobility, Efficiency, and Rebuilding of Infrastructure and Communities throughout America (or GROW AMERICA) Act. This bill includes an increase in funding over the next four years of approximately \$150 billion. Between the time of MAP-21's expiration and the new bill, Congress will pass stop-gap funding bills. The next CIP will assume level funding plus inflation, and there will be communications requesting the federal government maintain funding at a certain level to prevent project cuts.

A member asked about the impact of a change in administration on Executive Order 530 to improve mass mobility throughout the state. D. Mohler explained that work does not stop due to a change in administration but that if priorities change, then work focuses can shift.

In response to a question about project funding through the bond bill process, D. Mohler explained that if a project is included in the TIP, it will be funded through the federal funding programs and will not be in a bond bill. A bond bill earmark reserves funds but does not require that they be spent. Comparing the bond bill with the CIP will show project prioritization over time. D. Mohler encouraged individuals to advocate for their project by having a legislator write, or by attending public meetings and becoming involved in the process.

A member asked if the next State Freight Rail plan will focus more on interstate freight. D. Mohler explained that as the next rail plan is developed, MassDOT will discuss the

focus of the plan with the Advisory Council. He said the plan continues to have a primarily intrastate focus, but will expand some of the interstate focus and include more discussion between states.

A member asked about the current status of the South Coast Rail project. D. Mohler replied that the MassDOT Board will seek a Construction Manager/Project Manager, which is the entity responsible for taking the South Coast Rail to 30% design and for staying on as construction manager throughout the whole project. This is a ten-year, \$200 million project. MassDOT has completed the environmental process and is now undertaking some related early action projects including four bridges consisting of road-over-rail and rail-over-road designs and several grade crossing improvements.

D. Mohler responded to a question concerning the status of the GreenDOT program, indicating that the program is moving forward and will do so more quickly now that an assistant secretary plus staff is in place.

In response to a question about cooperation among the various Regional Transit Agencies, D. Mohler informed the Council that each RTA is involved in service planning analyses to determine whether their services best address the needs of the current customer base. A statewide initiative to address paratransit issues is also in effect. A Rail and Transit Office at MassDOT is involved fully in the issue. RTAs have limited budgets which often limits the activities they can undertake.

A member inquired about revenue sources, specifically the status on expanding tolling areas, or the expansion to a Vehicle Miles Travelled tax (VMT). D. Mohler explained that GROW AMERICA includes an expansion of tolling authority for the states. In the transportation finance legislation, the states are required to conduct a tolling study on two issues: the tolling of interstates and imposing border tolls. VMT tolling is currently being studied for certain operational concerns including border state residency issues.

D. Montgomery expressed a desire that the Advisory Council continue to work collaboratively with the MPO and MassDOT in the planning processes. D. Mohler explained that as planning scopes or initiatives become timelier, the Advisory Council can schedule presentations by MassDOT staff through the MPO Liaison, Ms. Sreelatha Allam. David Mohler can be reached directly via email at [david.mohler@state.ma.us](mailto:david.mohler@state.ma.us) and by phone at (857)-368-8865.

### **Committee Reports and Upcoming Activities**

A Freight Committee meeting preceded the Advisory Council at 1 PM. Members discussed how to provide input on the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). A discussion on the UPWP's allocation of money to freight studies also took place.

The TIP/UPWP Committee reviewed the comments that will be drafted and sent to the MPO regarding the plans. Ideas on the comment letter to the MPO on the UPWP/TIP were discussed.

### **Members' Views and Take-Away Points for MPO**

A member suggested that the Advisory Council's letter to the MPO include a statement urging considering the effects of scope changes during the process. Some of the changes result from public input and are often out of the control of the project proponents. The letter should clarify the guidelines for project cost increases.

The draft letter needs to convey the message that medium sized projects should be funded, as well, and not just small projects. Members agree on a need for a public process or some type of forum in determining the reprioritizing of projects on the TIP that result from shortfalls.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2014 - *David Montgomery, Chair***

Approval of the February 12, 2014 meeting minutes were deferred to the next meeting, pending the presence of a quorum required under the Advisory Council bylaws.

**Old Business:** none.

### **New Business and Member Announcements:**

F. Osman from MAPC's MAGIC subregion announced that the town of Westford has voted to join a new transportation management association consisting of both private and public entities.

M. Gowing from Acton informed the Advisory Council of Regional Coordinated Councils (RCCs) forming around the state that will bring local communities' ideas back to the state to integrate into overall transportation plans. Interested parties are advised to contact the Mobility Manager at MassDOT for more information.

### **Adjourn:**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:40 PM. The motion passed, unanimously.

## ATTENDANCE

### **Agencies (MPO & other non-voting)**

MassDOT  
MassDOT - Aeronautics Division  
MAGIC  
TRIC  
BRA

### **Agencies (Voting)**

MassRides

### **Municipalities (Voting)**

Acton  
Cambridge  
Millis

Needham  
Weymouth

### **Municipalities (MPO Member Non-Voting)**

Boston

### **Citizen Groups (Voting)**

AACT  
American Council of Engineering Companies  
Association for Public Transportation  
Boston Society of Architects  
Massachusetts Bus Association  
MoveMassachusetts  
National Corridors Initiative  
WalkBoston

### **Guests**

Abbey Swain  
Ed Lowney

### **Staff**

Pam Wolfe  
David Fargen  
Jane Gillis  
Maureen Kelly

### **Attendee**

David Mohler  
Steve Rawding  
Franny Osman  
Steve Olanoff  
John "Tad" Read

Catherine Paquette

Mike Gowing  
Cleo Stoughton  
Dom D'Eramo  
David Montgomery; Rhain  
Hoyland  
Owen MacDonald

Tom Kadzis

Mary Ann Murray  
Thomas Daley  
Barry Steinberg  
Schuyler Larrabee  
Mark Sanborn  
Jon Seward  
John Businger  
John McQueen

US EPA  
Malden Resident

Sean Pfalzer  
Matt Archer  
Katherine Dubreck