

# Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting

## February 19, 2015 Meeting

10:10 AM to 12:15 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

## Materials

Materials for this meeting included:

- A copy of the meeting agenda
- A memorandum describing MPO staff's process for developing the UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects, along with copies of written public comments
- A preliminary draft of the FFY 2016 UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects
- A summary table listing the projects in the draft FFY 2016 UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects
- A document describing proposed MAPC activities for the FFY 2016 UPWP

## Meeting Agenda

### 1. Introductions

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, Unified Planning Work Program Committee (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) called the meeting to order at approximately 10:10 AM. UPWP Committee members and MPO staff introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 12.) Michelle Scott, MPO staff, reviewed the meeting materials.

### 2. Draft FFY 2016 UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects

#### *UPWP Universe Development Process*

M. Scott explained that the UPWP Universe development process began in September 2014, when MPO staff conducted their annual fall outreach with the MAPC subregions. This outreach was focused on the Long-Range Transportation Plan, and so discussions with the subregions covered a wide range of topics. MPO staff also held two TIP-and-UPWP development sessions and met with the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Summaries of discussions from these meetings and written comments on the

UPWP were given to MPO staff members, who use this information to develop new projects or update plans for ongoing UPWP work. Topics are addressed through new discrete UPWP studies if they are within the MPO's purview, relevant to the MPO, are feasible for the MPO to address, and are best addressed through a stand-alone study.

M. Scott reviewed the content of the written public comments on the UPWP. These include suggestions for corridor study locations in Hingham, Saugus, and Littleton, which are also being considered as possible locations for corridor studies taking place during FFY 2015. Several Inner Core municipalities, including Winthrop and Quincy, expressed interest in a study of coordinated ferry service for municipalities around Boston Harbor. A Cambridge-area group called the Fresh Pond Residents Alliance has expressed interest in a study of mobility issues in the Fresh Pond and North Cambridge area. The North Shore Community College has requested assistance supporting connections between their Danvers and Beverly campuses and to other areas. M. Scott noted that if a suggested study topic is not feasible for the MPO to work on, MPO will forward these comments to other relevant transportation agencies.

#### *UPWP Universe Structure*

M. Scott reviewed the structure of the UPWP Universe. Each proposed project includes a description—which details the project's purpose, methodology, anticipated deliverables, and estimated costs—along with supporting comments, where applicable. Introductory material and an index are included in the front of the Universe document.

Each project entry also lists information about the LRTP vision areas that the project addresses and the functions the project may serve, which include supporting the planning work of the MPO, addressing needs raised by the region's municipalities and others, and advancing the region's knowledge about transportation topics. The project entries also provide information on the extent to which proposed projects consider various UPWP focus areas. These focus areas highlight how projects are addressing federal and state guidance and key statewide and regional initiatives. This information is provided to help the MPO ensure that it is picking a balanced program of UPWP projects. This LRTP vision, project function, and UPWP focus area information from the universe packet is summarized on a companion sheet.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) asked whether it would be possible to stress the key topic or function of each project in the UPWP Universe, building on the LRTP vision, project function, and UPWP focus area information already provided. M. Scott said that the proposed projects are categorized into seven thematic sections in the UPWP Universe document (Roadway Network

Performance; Active Transportation; Safety and Security; Transportation Equity and Accessibility; Land Use, Environment, and Economy; Transit; and Other Technical Support).

#### *UPWP Universe Structure*

M. Scott provided a summary of each of the projects in the UPWP Universe, and other MPO staff provided comments. UPWP Committee members and MPO staff discussed a number of projects in detail:

#### **A-1: Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways:**

**FFY 2016:** Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) asked if MPO staff tracks the status of the implementation of completed subregional priority roadway study recommendations. He suggested that if the studies are not being implemented, perhaps the MPO does not want to continue to fund them. Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director, explained that MPO staff periodically updates a log of the implementation status of recommendations from corridor and intersection studies. He added that when MPO staff present on the results of these studies, they are usually able to say what next steps municipalities are taking with some of the study recommendations. M. Scott noted that MPO staff continues to get requests for subregional corridor studies.

**A-2: Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment: FFY 2016:** Laura Wiener, At-Large Towns (Town of Arlington) asked how this study differs from proposed project A-1. M. Scott explained that subregional corridor studies is intended to be particularly responsive to needs raised by the region's municipalities, while studies conducted through this project focus on corridor locations identified in the Long-Range Transportation Plan Needs Assessment. She added that MPO staff considers public feedback when recommending locations for a particular federal fiscal year. K. Quackenbush added that both projects take safety and other data into account when selecting which locations to study from a list of possible candidates. The study products from A-1 and A-2 are relatively similar. Tom O'Rourke, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) asked whether MPO staff tracks the implementation results of these projects as well. K. Quackenbush says that all corridor and intersection studies are tracked.

#### **A-4: Low Cost Improvements to Express Highway Bottleneck Locations: FFY**

**2016:** M. Scott noted that past studies of this type have a successful track record for implementation. T. Bent asked how much it typically costs to study a location. M. Scott explain that the costs for this proposed project are commensurate with the amounts allocated in the past. K. Quackenbush explained that this amount of funding could fund

one or two studies, but the costs can vary depending on the location being studied and the amount of available data for those locations.

S. Olanoff noted that he was aware that recommendations of past study at I-90 and Route 128 in Weston had been implemented, but wasn't aware of other past study locations being implemented. Robin Mannion said that improvements to an interchange location in Burlington were being implemented during federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015.

**A-6: Analyzing the Impacts of All-Electronic Tolling (AET):** M. Scott explained that Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, proposed this study, and was interested in seeing how various indicators and transportation revenues might change in response to expanded all-electronic-tolling. L. Wiener asked whether it would be premature to do this study in FFY 2016 if the implementation of AET was not going to be complete before the end of 2017. The completion of the infrastructure installation might yield some evidence that could be incorporated into this study.

S. Olanoff asked if this type of study should be done for the whole state, as opposed to just the MPO region. L. Wiener asked whether there are plans or schedules for implementing AET on other roads in the region, such as I-93. Scott Peterson, MPO staff, noted that there are efforts to implement AET on facilities that already have tolls. In other cases, there are public/private partnerships, such as one for Route 3, that could finance roadway improvements by using AET to collect tolls. Other roadways, like I-93, are not yet being tolled. Currently, FHWA does not allow tolling on interstates, but if there was a change in this policy, there could be impacts on congestion and transportation revenues. T. Bent noted that AET still has some operations issues. S. Olanoff noted that this kind of policy is something the MPO should be supporting. If a study like this could speed up the planned implementation of AET and its expansion, then that would be a good thing. L. Wiener agreed, but noted that the new state administration might not support expanded tolling.

**A-7: Planning for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles:** S. Peterson noted that representatives of federal agencies have expressed interest in how MPO transportation plans could include this technology. He noted that there are some outstanding safety issues with these technologies, but said that the MPO has an opportunity to start planning ahead for them. This could include investigating whether to provide preferential lane treatments for these vehicles in certain areas.

**B-2: Pedestrian Level of Service Metric Development:** T. O'Rourke asked whether this project would create a tool that municipalities could use, or if this project would

involve specific evaluations of roadways. M. Scott explained that this project would establish a methodology for doing future evaluations. A future goal, which this project would support, would be to create a pedestrian level-of-service application on the MPO website. S. Olanoff asked if staff was already using information like this in its analysis. S. Peterson explained that the MPO staff's Traffic Analysis and Design group uses some information available from the Transportation Research Board's Highway Capacity Manual, but has not incorporated this information in its analysis extensively.

**B-3: Municipal Pedestrian Network Studies:** L. Wiener asked if this project would provide pedestrian network analysis that would support the whole region, or if it would provide technical assistance to a few communities. M. Scott that it would focus on providing support to a few communities.

**C-2: Improvements to MPO All-Signals Database:** Pam Wolfe, MPO staff, explained that this would be a second phase of the Roadway Network Inventory for Emergency Needs: A Pilot Study (presented to the MPO on January 8, 2015) and that it would try to address some of the obstacles identified in the pilot study. The goal would be to produce a resource for TIP evaluations and hazards planning, and one that could be used by municipalities. For example, this information could be used to support evacuation planning for environmental justice (EJ) areas. P. Wolfe acknowledged that MPO staff will continue to face some of the obstacles encountered in the pilot study, and that staff would move forward with this work incrementally. Many routes in the pilot area are MassDOT routes, which could make it easier to gather data needed for the study. MPO staff would also work with MassDOT on establishing standardized nomenclature for different signal types.

T. O'Rourke said he had difficulty envisioning how this study could be useful to municipalities. P. Wolfe explained that it would provide information about signal characteristics and where upgrades are needed, which could help prioritize signals for upgrades. For example, signals in EJ areas could be prioritized for improvement to support mobility in those areas.

S. Allam asked whether the signal information would be available to municipalities. P. Wolfe explained that this would depend on whether the municipality was willing to make the signal information public. Some municipalities are hesitant to do this, and in those cases, people would be directed to that municipality to get more information. S. Allam said that she perceived this study as one that would build a knowledge base, which could be used when needed.

**D-1: Systemwide Title VI/ Environmental Justice Assessment for TIP Projects:**

K. Quackenbush explained that this study would fill a gap in the MPO's staff existing Title VI and EJ analysis practices. MPO staff looks at the potential EJ impacts of individual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects, and also examines the EJ impacts of packages of investments being considered for the Long-Range Transportation Plan. MPO staff has only begun to explore how to do this type of analysis for whole sets of TIP projects. He said that Alicia Wilson, an MPO staff member, has been examining the EJ impacts of the collection of transit projects in the TIP in order to meet federal requirements. The federal agencies have been satisfied with the MPO's work in this area, but they may also require similar analyses of TIP highway projects in the near future. MPO staff recognizes that they could improve upon methodologies used to assess the EJ impacts of TIP transit investments. They could also begin to do path-breaking work by developing methods for analyzing the EJ impacts of roadway projects, because existing methods are not well developed.

**D-2: Community and Human Services Transportation Support:** S. Olanoff asked if this should be considered a project for the Transit category. M. Scott acknowledged that this project has some similarities to the Transit projects, but it is distinct because it is supporting services that area already up and running. This project was also included in the Transportation Equity and Accessibility category last year.

**E-1: MBTA Park-and-Ride Lot Sensitivity Analysis:** S. Olanoff suggested that the proposed project name be changed to "MBTA Parking Lot Price Sensitivity Analysis," because MassDOT controls some park-and-ride facilities. MPO staff agreed to make the change.

T. Bent asked whether this issue has been studied before. M. Scott explained that this issue was raised in a Congestion Management Process Committee meeting, but that she did not know whether the MBTA has studied this issue before. K. Quackenbush and S. Peterson explained that MPO staff has done isolated analyses of certain parking lots, where price elasticities were assumed. S. Peterson added that this study would be a systemwide analysis that would investigate how to optimize pricing at each lot the MBTA manages so as to fill up the lots.

S. Olanoff asked whether parking lot prices were considered in MBTA fare increase analyses. K. Quackenbush explained that elasticity assumptions are embedded in some of the tools that CTPS uses to analyze the revenue and ridership impacts of fare changes, but that this study would hone in on the elasticities of the parking lots. Through this study, MPO staff would be able to check and calibrate some of the

elasticity assumptions that have been used in those fare increase analyses. Elizabeth Moore, MPO staff, said that the MBTA has had a policy of having consistent pricing across all MBTA parking lots, which are incorporated into the inputs for the analyses. This study would look at parking lots on an individual basis. Robin Mannion, MPO staff, added that the study would look at privately-owned lots that are adjacent to MBTA facilities.

S. Olanoff said that there have been complaints from municipalities that the “one-price-fits-all” pricing model for the MBTA lots doesn’t work. T. Bent noted that nearby private lots may continue to undercut MBTA parking prices, whatever they happen to be. He said he wondered if people are choosing whether to use MBTA lots depending on how long they want to park, or if this choice is based on the prices at the different lots. He noted that he believes the price competition has a stronger influence.

**E-2: Analyzing the Impacts of Travel to Medical Facilities, and E-3 Analyzing the Transportation Impacts of Travel at Universities:** L. Wiener asked if the goal of these two studies would be to study the travel patterns related to universities and medical centers first, and then incorporate the information into the regional travel demand model. M. Scott confirmed that this would be the purpose of these studies.

**E-4: Methodologies and Tools for Understanding Transportation and Population, Housing, and Economic Displacement:** M. Scott explained that this study would look at the relationship between transportation and gentrification and displacement and at ways that the MPO can incorporate these considerations into its planning. She added that other MPOs around the country are looking at this issue.

T. Bent noted that gentrification and displacement is occurring in areas around the Green Line Extension and asked if the purpose of this study would be to predict these effects. M. Scott confirmed that this would be the purpose of the study, and that this study would aim to bring more information to decision making that may have gentrification impacts.

S. Peterson said that MPO staff would use the MPO’s new land use model, and that MAPC has expressed an interest in using this model to measure changes in income levels and the types of housing in areas that are being affected. T. Bent asked if the MPO would use the Green Line Extension in Somerville as a case-study for this type of project, since gentrification issues are happening now. He noted that there would be a benefit to capture impacts in real time. S. Peterson said the Green Line Extension would be a good candidate case-study for this proposed project, because it will generate

noticeable changes in some of these indicators. MPO staff would use the Green Line Extension as basis for identifying data sets that they would look to when trying to measure gentrification in the future.

**E-8: Energy and Electric Vehicle Use in the MPO Region:** S. Peterson said that energy is an important dimension of the transportation system, and that this study would help the MPO get a stronger grasp on energy-related issues, such as how energy use is changing over time. Electric vehicle use is increasing, and it would be interesting to know more information about its market share. M. Scott added that the MPO staff may wish to consider energy as part of its performance-based planning activities.

T. Bent asked if this proposed study would look at the distribution of charging stations, vehicle compatibility with those charging stations, and how the stations might be funded. S. Peterson said this study could address some of these issues.

S. Allam asks how staff envisions using the information that would be produced by the study. S. Peterson added that this information could shed light on the costs and considerations for creating new charging stations. T. Bent noted that there are also logistical factors to consider when installing charging stations in high-density residential areas compared to lower-density areas, or in cities and towns compared to areas off of highways. These might be things that are important to consider when planning ahead for these stations.

S. Olanoff raised the question of whether the proposed studies in the Land Use, Environment, and Economy category are being studied by other entities, or whether they are appropriate for the MPO to study. M. Scott noted that it would be valuable to have MAPC's input on some of these issues to determine whether these proposed studies would overlap with work that MAPC is already doing. She noted that, for example, MAPC has done some work related to changes in housing prices along the Green Line Extension, which relates to project E-4: Methodologies and Tools for Understanding Transportation and Population, Housing, and Economic Displacement. That said, MAPC might request that the MPO get involved to shed more light on the transportation aspects of these interdisciplinary issues. S. Olanoff noted that it is important to look at studies being done by private foundations and other organizations as well. T. Bent agreed, saying that for study E-8, MPO staff could find that the auto industry has done research on this topic. S. Peterson said that a literature review would be a part of this study.

**E-9: Regional Air Quality Profiles:** S. Peterson said that the profiles produced through this study could be useful tools for prioritizing locations for health impact assessments.

S. Olanoff asked whether these scans could be used by the regional travel demand model in order to support air quality analyses of different scenarios. M. Scott said that these scans would probably not be tied in with the travel demand model, but they would be used in the MPO's systemwide planning. S. Olanoff asked why these scans would not be used as part of the travel demand model if that model is used to do air quality analysis. K. Quackenbush explained that the air quality model is independent of the travel demand model, though both are used in air quality analysis. These air quality scans would be independent tools that would add another dimension to what MPO staff learns from these models. S. Peterson added that these would supply more specific information for certain roadways.

**E-11: Alewife Transportation Community Study:** M. Scott mentioned that MPO staff is continuing to work with the Fresh Pond Residents Alliance on this proposed project, and more information will likely be available at the next UPWP Committee meeting. L. Wiener noted that there have been a number of studies in the area, although they may not have been specific to bicycle, pedestrian, and bus travel. K. Quackenbush said that CTPS has done a number of studies in the Alewife area. L. Wiener said these past studies could serve as data sources.

**F-6: Coordinated Ferry Service for Inner Core Communities:** M. Scott noted that CTPS provides technical assistance for the Massachusetts Ferry Compact, and that MPO staff is continuing to work with the interested Inner Core Committee municipalities on this proposal while trying to ensure that this study would not duplicate work being done through the Ferry Compact. More information will likely be available at the next UPWP Committee meeting. S. Allam noted that Winthrop has recently received earmark funding for a new ferry vessel. S. Olanoff noted that ferry service in Quincy has been suspended due to issues with the dock, and that they might be interested in restoration of ferry service. S. Allam also mentioned that Medford has received funding for a feasibility study of water taxi service on the Mystic River.

**F-7: Review of Transit Service Impacts in Olympic Host Cities:** L. Wiener asked whether MPO staff proposed this idea, and M. Scott confirmed that they did. S. Olanoff and T. O'Rourke raised the question of whether this is something the MPO should be funding, or if it is something another entity should fund. T. Bent asked if MassDOT has provided any comments on this topic. S. Allam replied that they have not done so yet.

T. Bent said that the timing of this study could be problematic, given that people might be concerned that the existing transit system is not in a state of good repair, and therefore resistant to transit expansion projects. He reiterated that he was curious to hear MassDOT's feedback.

**G-1: MPO-Staff Generated Research Projects:** M. Scott said that Dennis Crowley, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), who was not in attendance at the meeting, was interested in seeing this project in the UPWP Universe. T. O'Rourke said that he thought that it had been funded in the FFY 2015 UPWP given the level of Committee support for it, and was glad to see the proposal in the UPWP Universe again.

#### *Other Items*

S. Allam asked if MPO staff would include more projects in this list if some projects, such as F-7: Review of Transit Service Impacts in Olympic Host Cities, were removed. M. Scott explained that the UPWP Universe is a menu from which the UPWP Committee and the MPO will choose a subset of projects for next year's UPWP. K. Quackenbush and R. Mannion said that the Universe contains way more project work than could be funded given the amount of funding MPO staff expects to have available for new studies next year. T. Bent asked how much it would cost to do all of the projects in the UPWP Universe. M. Scott and K. Quackenbush said that the costs of the proposed projects still need to be refined. K. Quackenbush said that about \$600,000 was available for new studies in the FFY 2015 UPWP, and this amount funded nine new projects. (Note: In FFY 2015, approximately \$627,000 was available for new studies.)

### **3. Anticipated FFY 2016 MAPC Projects**

M. Scott explained that MAPC plans to continue many of the projects that they began as part of the FFY 2015 UPWP, using their metropolitan planning funding for FFY 2016. She referred the Committee to the email documenting the list of proposed MAPC activities, and said that Eric Bourassa could provide some more detail on these activities at the next UPWP Committee meeting. She added that one area that would be new for MAPC would be work on first-mile/last-mile connections studies, but that she did not have any details on what MAPC might be planning to do on this topic.

### **4. FFY 2016 UPWP Development Process: Upcoming Steps**

M. Scott explained that in the last few years, MPO staff sent UPWP Committee members a survey of their top five and bottom five priority projects, and that she plans to do that again this year. She wanted to make sure that Committee members who weren't in attendance were able to get information before responding to the survey. P.

Wolfe suggested making the audio recording available to Committee members. S. Allam suggested circulating the minutes as another option. M. Scott said that she could check in with the other UPWP Committee members after the next MPO meeting on March 5, and perhaps send out the survey after that. MPO staff expects to present the staff recommendation for new discrete studies for the FFY 2016 UPWP at a UPWP Committee meeting on March 19.

T. Bent asked when FFY 2016 UPWP funding allocation estimates might be available. M. Scott said that MPO staff is in the process of developing the overall UPWP budget. They will assume funding level with the allocations the MPO received for FFY 2015 until FFY 2016 UPWP information becomes available, and will develop the staff recommendation for new projects accordingly.

R. Mannion asked S. Allam if she knew anything about when FFY 2016 UPWP funding information might be available. S. Allam said that she wasn't sure, although she anticipated that an announcement on this topic would be made at the next Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) meeting, which is expected to take place in March.

## **5. Member Items**

There were none.

## **6. Next Meeting**

M. Scott explained that at the next meeting, MPO staff will present the staff's recommendation for the FFY 2016 UPWP budget and new projects. This meeting will take place on March 19. L. Wiener asked whether the next UPWP Committee meeting would be before or after the MPO meeting. M. Scott said this will depend on the length of the MPO meeting that day, and added that meetings to discuss staff recommendations for the UPWP tend to run longer than UPWP Committee meetings focused on the quarterly status reports.

## **7. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by T. Bent and seconded by T. O'Rourke. The motion carried.

## Attendance

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<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Sreelatha Allam
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

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### **Other Attendees Affiliation**

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Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)
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### **MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director  
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director  
Elizabeth Moore  
Scott Peterson  
Michelle Scott  
Pam Wolfe

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