

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

## **July 30, 2015 Meeting**

9:10 AM to 9:50 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

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

## **Decisions**

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- To approve the April 16 and April 30 UPWP Committee meeting minutes
- To recommend that the MPO endorse the final FFY 2016 UPWP

## **Materials**

Materials for this meeting included:

- An agenda
- Draft minutes from the April 16 UPWP Committee meeting
- Draft minutes from the April 30 UPWP Committee meeting
- A table detailing written comments on the draft FFY 2016 UPWP, and proposed MPO responses
- A packet containing original written comments on the draft FFY 2016 UPWP
- A packet of FFY 2016 UPWP sections that have been updated since the draft document was released for public review
- An updated FFY 2016 UPWP CTPS budget

## **Meeting Agenda**

### **1. Introductions**

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, Unified Planning Work Program Committee (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) called the meeting to order at approximately 9:10 AM. UPWP Committee members, other MPO members, MPO staff, and other attendees introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 8.)

## **2. Action Item: Approval of UPWP Committee Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the April 16, 2015, UPWP Committee meeting minutes and the April 30, 2015 UPWP Committee meeting minutes was made by Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) and seconded by David Koses, At-Large Cities (City of Newton). The motion carried.

## **3. Review of the Draft Summary of Written Comments Received on the Draft FFY 2016 UPWP, with MPO Responses**

Michelle Scott, MPO staff, explained that after the MPO approved the release of the draft FFY 2016 UPWP for public review and comment on June 11, the document was posted to the MPO website on June 25, for a public comment period that lasted until July 24. During that period, the MPO held two public meetings—in Everett and Boston—to invite feedback on the TIP, LRTP, and UPWP. People generally were supportive of the content of the FFY 2016 UPWP, and were particularly interested in the transit studies, including the First-Mile-and-Last-Mile Transit Connections Studies and Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay projects.

M. Scott reviewed the table of summarized written comments on the FFY 2016 UPWP, which includes proposed MPO responses. Copies of the original written comments were also made available. Topics described in the comments include:

- Suggestions for enhancing bicycle connections near the Southern New England Trunkline Trail and for creating a new busway for MBTA route #32. MPO staff plan to consider these suggestions as part of bicycle and pedestrian planning activities and will forward these comments to MassDOT.
- A suggestion for a study of the operational feasibility of combining MBTA's CT2 and CT3 bus routes and potential bus service changes on those routes serving the Longwood Medical and Academic Area. MPO staff will forward this suggestion to MBTA Service Planning and will consider it as part of MPO transit planning.
- Suggestions for a new shared use trail in the Somerville and Medford area. MPO staff plan to consider these suggestions as part of bicycle and pedestrian planning activities and will forward these comments to MassDOT.
- Feedback from the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. The Advisory Council supports the mix of studies in the UPWP. Members request that the MPO consider noise pollution in its studies, and that the MPO document the results of past MPO projects to ensure UPWP studies are having a meaningful impact.

M. Scott said she had talked with MPO staff's technical services director, Scott Peterson, about ways to consider noise pollution in MPO activities, and MPO staff will be looking at opportunities to do this going forward. She also noted that in past years, MPO staff has collected information on whether and how recommendations from MPO-funded studies have been implemented or otherwise shaped planning processes in the MPO region. MPO staff is interested in looking into implementation on a more ongoing basis and providing information more regularly to the MPO.

Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director, said that it is important to track what becomes of MPO studies. Periodic reviews of study recommendation implementation can be labor intensive because many project managers participate, and data collection can require following up with people who were involved in the study or making site visits. He stressed the importance of finding a way to streamline this process, so that MPO staff can monitor implementation of study findings and recommendations on an ongoing basis, and be capable of reporting back to the MPO on some regular basis.

- A suggestion for increased collaboration between MBTA commuter rail and Boston area cultural institutions. The commenter suggests that cultural institutions provide funding to MBTA commuter rail, and that the MBTA sell tickets for cultural excursions. MPO staff will forward these comments to the MBTA.
- A suggestion for studies regarding feasible transportation alternatives in the vicinity of the Interstate 93 and 95 interchange north of Boston. This suggestion was submitted as part of comments requesting that the MPO fund some portion of the Interstate 93 and 95 interchange as part of the LRTP. MPO will consider opportunities to do these studies as part of future UPWPs or as part of ongoing technical assistance programs, and will invite more detailed information on specific potential study topics.
- Support for the following projects: Research Topics Generated by MPO Staff; First-Mile and Last-Mile Transit Connections Studies; Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay; Pedestrian Level-of-Service Metric Development; and FFY 2015 Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways. Comments included suggestions for different factors that could be considered as part of these projects. MPO staff considers suggestions like these when developing project work scopes.

- A suggestion to explore opportunities to adjust pricing for MBTA parking lots with high utilization rates in order to help distribute vehicles to adjacent parking facilities with available capacity. M. Scott reminded the Committee that MPO staff will explore opportunities to study this issue as part of the next UPWP development cycle.

D. Koses said that he continues to deal with the issue in the City of Newton. It is very labor-intensive and time consuming for City staff to create parking plans for different neighborhoods. A parking plan will be needed in West Newton because of the pricing of the MBTA parking lot in that area. He said that this topic should receive high priority in the FFY 2017 UPWP development cycle, or a project related to this topic should be incorporated into the UPWP earlier if an opportunity arises.

- Support for the work of the MPO and the conduct of its meetings, along with a request that the MPO include black carbon from diesel in climate pollutant inventories and that it use disaggregated transportation analysis zone (TAZ) data to investigate disparities in neighborhood transportation facilities and exposures. MPO staff will consider opportunities to incorporate these factors into its planning activities.
- Feedback from the MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (OTP). Comments included appreciation for the graphics in the UPWP and the use of a wide range of focus areas in the project selection process. OTP expressed support for the inclusion of the Pedestrian Level-of-Service Metric Development project in the UPWP, and said this could potentially be a benchmark planning practice for the Commonwealth.

MassDOT OTP made several requests pertaining to the MPO's Bicycle/Pedestrian Support Activities program.

- Ensure that the activities help communities consider creating bicycle projects that can be advanced through MassDOT's Project Development Process
- Emphasize the priority of projects on the Bay State Greenway
- Consider a sub-task to support the identification of critical sidewalk gaps in the region and help communities access Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds to improve the network
- Consider the need to assess the degree of bicycle and pedestrian law enforcement and education when studying locations or issues

MPO staff has updated the description of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Support activities program to respond to these suggestions.

MassDOT OTP noted that the Summer Street/Rockland Street/George Washington Boulevard corridor under study as part of the FFY 2015 Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways project does not have a significant safety need based on crash data, but there are needs for a Complete Streets approach, improved access to Nantasket Beach, and other bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

MassDOT OTP also asked that some minor items in the draft FFY 2016 UPWP be corrected or clarified, and these have been addressed at the final UPWP.

- Suggestions for improving capacity on the Green Line's central tunnel and other portions of Green Line routes. MPO staff will forward these suggestions to MassDOT and the MBTA for consideration as part of Program for Mass Transportation (PMT) development.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) asked whether MassDOT typically provides a comment letter on the UPWP, as he does not recall seeing them in the past. M. Scott explained that the UPWP Committee usually meets a week prior to document endorsement (but after the close of the public comment period) to discuss public comments. MassDOT typically submits their letter after that meeting, around the date the MPO is scheduled to endorse the document. Because the UPWP Committee is meeting on the same day that the FFY 2016 is scheduled to be endorsed, it is possible to discuss the letter at the Committee level this year. S. Olanoff said he appreciated that MassDOT has submitted a letter.

S. Olanoff asked how responses are submitted to the people who sent in comments. M. Scott explained that staff sends preliminary "thank-you" messages when comments first come in. MPO staff then summarizes comments and proposes MPO responses in a table, and once these are approved, they send commenters a copy of the table and a cover letter.

S. Olanoff said that he felt the responses were canned and impersonal. He said that, for example, MPO staff could have proposed a more detailed response to the comment suggesting that the MPO explore MBTA parking lot pricing, indicating that the Committee discussed the topic at length, deliberated study proposals, and will continue to explore the issue next year. He acknowledged that MPO staff has limited time to craft

proposed MPO responses, but said that it would be good for people to receive more personalized responses because they spent time sending in comments.

K. Quackenbush said that the range of the types of answers that the MPO can give is limited. He said that M. Scott dealt thoughtfully with these comments. On the subject of the MBTA parking lot pricing, he had cautioned M. Scott against going into too much detail, because while there is interest in the topic, area transportation agencies have indicated that there are limits to the degree to which they can respond to this issue. He reminded the committee that MPO staff will be developing a new study proposal on this topic for the next UPWP cycle. He added that MPO staff's proposed responses on these and other comments were accurate, though they may not be highly personalized. There are, in fact, some topics and issues that cannot be dealt with as part of the MPO's UPWP process, and so MPO staff has indicated that they will forward the comments on to other transportation agencies. In other cases, MPO staff has indicated that they will consider topics and issues as part of future UPWPs, and that is accurate.

S. Olanoff said that the MPO is more likely to pursue some study suggestions than others because of feasibility or other issues, and that this difference in probability is not reflected when commenters receive similar kinds of responses. He said that this may give some people the sense that their suggestion will get traction, when that is not actually likely. S. Allam said that while she appreciates S. Olanoff's point, she felt that it is important to keep the responses general at this point in time, as the MPO or other transportation agencies may not yet know how they want to deal with different topics. Staff will consider various project ideas when developing the next UPWP Universe and UPWP.

#### **4. Updates to the Draft FFY 2016 UPWP**

M. Scott reviewed a packet that included sections of FFY 2016 UPWP that have been updated.

- Chapter 2 – The tables have been updated to reflect a budget adjustment approved by the UPWP Committee, and to show notes identifying projects included in Proposed FFY 2015 UPWP Amendment One.
- Chapter 5 – The budget for the Long-Range Transportation Plan program was reduced by \$23,000; these funds were transferred to the Household-Survey-Based Travel Profiles and Trends: Selected Policy Topics project in Chapter 7. MPO staff does not expect this reduction to affect Long-Range Transportation Plan work that will be conducted during FFY 2016.

- Chapter 6 –The description for the Bicycle/Pedestrian Support Activities program was updated to respond to MassDOT OTP’s comments. The McGrath Boulevard Area Traffic Analysis: Modeling Support project was removed from the UPWP, because this CTPS project is expected to be complete before the start of FFY 2016.
- Chapter 7 – The Household-Survey-Based Travel Profiles and Trends: Selected Policy Topics project budget was increased by \$23,000. These funds were transferred from the Long-Range Transportation Plan program in Chapter 5. This chapter also now shows one MBTA Youth Pass Program Evaluation and Title VI Fare Equity Analysis project (previously the Program Evaluation and the Title VI Fare Equity Analysis were two separate projects).
- Chapter 8 – Tables 8-8, 8-9, and 8-10, which show the schedules and participating groups for FFY 2016 CTPS projects, were added.
- Appendix D – An MPO Glossary of Acronyms was added.

## **5. Action Item: Recommendation to the MPO on Endorsement of the final FFY 2016 UPWP**

A motion to recommend that the MPO endorse the FFY 2016 UPWP as presented was made by Tom O’Rourke (Three Rivers Interlocal Council/NVCC) and seconded by T. Bent. The motion carried.

## **6. Member Items**

There were none.

## **7. Next Meeting**

No future meeting date was discussed.

## **8. 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 Cities (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Cities (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Sreelatha Allam
Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

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### **Other MPO Members and Alternates Affiliation**

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Richard Canale	At-Large Towns (Town of Lexington)
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### **Other MPO Members and Alternates Affiliation**

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Michelle Ciccolo	Town of Lexington
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood NVCC)

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### **MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director  
Mark Abbott  
Elizabeth Moore  
Michelle Scott

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