

# Draft Memorandum for the Record

## Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

### October 15, 2015 Meeting

10:00 AM – 11:10 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

Steve Woelfel, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

### Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- approve the minutes of the MPO meeting of October 1
- approve the following work programs:
  - *Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways: FFY 2016*
  - *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment: FFY 2016*
  - *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections: FFY 2016*
  - *Access Advisory Committee Support: FFY 2016*
  - *Research Topics Generated by MPO Staff*
- approve the *FFY 2016 Certification Activities Work Plans*

### Meeting Agenda

#### 1. Public Comments

There were none.

#### 2. Chair's Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

S. Woelfel announced that MassDOT will be starting a series of “Capital Conversations” meetings on October 19. These meetings will gather public input for the development of the FY 2017-21 Capital Investment Plan (CIP). He encouraged MPO members to attend.

#### 3. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

#### **4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—Mike Gowing, Advisory Council Chair**

M. Gowing reported that Julia Prange Wallerce of MassCommute gave a presentation at the Advisory Council's meeting on October 14. She discussed how a relatively small contribution of MassDOT funds can be used to leverage corporate investment in transportation management associations (TMAs) in the Commonwealth.

Also, at that meeting, the Advisory Council members voted to amend the Council's bylaws defining voting membership status. The annual elections were also held. Tegin Bennett, a transportation planner for the City of Cambridge, was elected chair. Mark Sanborn, chair of the Massachusetts Bus Association, was elected vice chair. They begin their terms in November.

S. Woelfel thanked M. Gowing for his work on the Advisory Council over the past year.

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

K. Quackenbush reported that the MPO staff is accepting ideas for study locations for the *First-Mile-and-Last-Mile Transit Connection Studies*, a project in the Unified Planning Work Program. Through this project, the MPO staff will provide technical assistance to municipalities, TMAs, or transit service providers that are interested in bridging gaps in transit service. Private shuttle service optimization, pedestrian and bicycle safety and infrastructure improvements, and other transit and non-motorized first- and last-mile connections to transit may be examined. The call for study locations was announced in the MPO's newsletter, *TRANSREPORT*, and on the MPO's website. Interested parties may contact the study manager, Andy Reker, at [areker@ctps.org](mailto:areker@ctps.org) or 857-702-3689, by October 23. Questions may also be directed to K. Quackenbush.

K. Quackenbush then invited feedback regarding the possibility of equipping members with electronic tablets for use in meetings. He noted that some members have been requesting that staff provide tablets at the MPO board meetings with agendas and discussion materials pre-loaded. The MPO's federal partners would have to approve the expenditure of 3C planning funds to purchase the tablets; they have expressed support for the idea as long as the tablets are cost effective. The use of tablets may save on the costs of printing paper copies of meeting materials for members, but staff would still have to provide some paper copies at meetings for members of the public. One issue of concern is that the conference room where the MPO usually meets is not always Wi-Fi connected. K. Quackenbush noted that if the MPO does decide to purchase tablets, the funding would for them would be in the next budget cycle.

Several members expressed support for using tablets as they would save costs by reducing the use of paper and allow members to access information during MPO meetings. Eric Bourassa, MAPC, and Richard Canale, At-Large Town of Lexington, noted that it would be helpful for members to be able to pull up digital maps and reports when discussing transportation projects and studies. M. Gowing added that tablets would allow members to access the presentations that are given to the board.

Jim Gillooly, City of Boston, recommended that the devices should have enough storage capacity to house all of the MPO's certification documents for reference, and have the capability for a presenter to get all users on the same screen page during group discussions. He also said it would be useful for members to be able to take the device with them between meetings, or for the data housed on them to be available on the MPO's website as well.

Tom O'Rourke, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood), raised a question about the staff time required to upload information on the tablets. K. Quackenbush responded that the time requirements may be similar to the amount of time staff is already spending to prepare and copy paper materials.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), suggested that staff consider using a boardroom meeting platform such as Director Access, which has archiving, notetaking and other features.

In response to J. Gillooly's comments, Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning at CTPS, noted that all meeting materials are currently archived on the Meeting Calendar of the MPO's website. She reported that staff will be revising the website and would like to hear suggestions from members about how the information on the site could be reorganized to be more useful to members.

Tom Holder, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), suggested that the tablets could be interchangeable for members who serve on multiple committees.

Leah Sirmin, Federal Highway Administration, addressed the concern about potential restrictions in the use of tablets outside of the MPO meeting venue. She suggested that the MPO staff and their federal partners have further conversations.

E. Bourassa pointed out that the tablets could be used also at public meetings for interactive activities.

Laura Weiner, At-Large Town of Arlington, suggested that when making the decision about whether to acquire tablets staff consider the environmental costs of using paper as well as the financial cost.

In conclusion, S. Woelfel stated that there appears to be support for the idea and recommended that staff have further discussion with the federal agencies regarding restrictions on use of the tablets. Staff should then bring a recommendation to the Administration and Finance Committee when it considers the next CTPS budget.

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

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 1 was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the Advisory Council (M. Gowing). The motion carried. The Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent) abstained.

## **7. Work Programs—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, CTPS**

K. Quackenbush introduced five work programs and then members discussed and approved them.

The work programs for *Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways*, *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment*, and *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections* are programs that the MPO staff has conducted for several years. All three involve identifying areas in the region where there are safety and mobility problems, evaluating candidate locations, and working with municipalities, MassDOT, and others to study selected locations and make recommendations for improvement. When selecting locations for study, staff considers whether the study recommendations are likely to be implemented. Often the studies serve as a catalyst for further planning or project design. All the studies are all multi-modal in nature.

In the *Addressing, Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways* work program, candidate locations are arterial roadway segments identified through outreach efforts. Each year, staff selects one or two locations for study. To date, staff has made recommendations for segments on the following roadways: Route 3A in Cohasset and Scituate, Routes 127 and 127A in Cape Ann, Washington Street in Newton, and Summer Street and George Washington Boulevard in Hingham and Hull.

The *Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment* work program is similar to the latter, however, candidate locations are major arterial corridors identified through the Needs Assessment of the LRTP as having significant safety and mobility needs. Locations that have been studied to date include the following: Route 203 in Boston, Route 114 in

Danvers, Route 30 in Framingham and Natick, Route 2 in Concord, Route 140 in Franklin, and Route 1a in Lynn.

The *Safety and Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections* work program focuses on specific intersections in the region. This year's budget will allow for the study of up to three intersections. To date, 47 intersections in 37 communities in the region have been studied through this program.

The work program for *Access Advisory Committee Support* represents the continuation of ongoing work that the MPO staff does to support the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA (AACT). Since 1975, this committee has been advising the MBTA on issues regarding access to the transportation system for people with disabilities and seniors. Staff supports the AACT, its Board of Directors, and the state's Mobility Assistance Program.

The work program for *Research Projects on Topics Generated by MPO Staff* reserves funding for small-scale independent research projects that relate to the MPO's transportation-planning process.

A motion to approve the five work programs was made by the City of Boston (J. Gillooly), and seconded by the Advisory Council (M. Gowing). The motion carried.

## **8. FFY 2016 Certification Activities Work Plans—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, CTPS**

K. Quackenbush presented the FFY 2016 Certification Activities work plans, which include a description of the work staff will be conducting on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), as well as 3C Planning and MPO support activities, air quality support activities, Title VI reporting, and transportation equity and environmental justice activities. The document does not include the work for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP); that work plan will be presented at a later date. Members are able to weigh in on these work plans now or at any time during the year.

As these work plans are presented to the MPO each year, K. Quackenbush gave an overview of the items that are new or different this year. He noted that staff will be revisiting the project evaluation criteria for the TIP. There are no substantive changes to the UPWP, but CTPS will be recruiting a new manager for this task. The 3C planning and MPO support work includes activities resulting from recommendations from last year's federal recertification review process. Also, it includes support work for the

Advisory Council, which this year will emphasize the recruitment of new members and enhancing diversity on the Council.

The description of the MPO's public participation activities has been rewritten to consolidate the description of all outreach techniques and technologies in one place. It also notes that CTPS will be seeking to hire a public participation specialist who will work on behalf of all groups in CTPS in a comprehensive public outreach strategy.

In the air quality work description, there are references to the support work on climate change initiatives including research on black carbon as a source of emissions, and consideration of whether energy consumption could be used as an alternative for reporting greenhouse gas emissions.

The Title VI work description references actions that will be taken as a result of recommendations from the federal certification process and from a work plan for MPOs developed by MassDOT's Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR). This year, staff will be responding to the portion of ODCR's work plan that addresses how the MPO staff conducts its demographic analyses and language access plan.

The transportation equity and environmental justice work will include expanding analyses of demographic populations from minority and limited-English proficiency populations to include other protected populations, such as the elderly and people with disabilities.

### ***Discussion***

Christine Stickney, South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree), asked when staff last updated the TIP project evaluation criteria. Sean Pfalzer, MPO staff, replied 2012.

S. Woelfel noted that the state's Project Selection Advisory Council has developed a group of project selection criteria that MassDOT will be using in the development of its CIP.

## **9. Bicycle Network Gap: Feasibility Evaluations, Selection of Study Locations—*Katrina Crocker, MPO Staff***

K. Crocker gave a presentation on the MPO staff's work to address gaps in the region's bicycle network. She gave an overview of the completed 2014 Bicycle Network Evaluation study, which provides the background for the current project, the 2015 Bicycle Network Gaps Feasibility Analysis. Then she discussed the process for selecting study locations and proposed several locations for this year's study.

The purpose of the 2014 study was to create a more cohesive regional bicycle network by identifying and evaluating gaps in the system and recommending priorities for improving connectivity. For this study, a “gap” was considered to be lack of physical connection between bicycle facilities or between a bicycle facility and a regional transit station (i.e. commuter rail and MBTA stations, and key bus route stations). The base network of bicycle facilities included existing and planned shared-use paths, unimproved paths, on-road bicycle lanes, and protected bicycle lanes (known as cycle tracks).

The evaluation criteria for the gaps considered whether a new connection would provide access for all trip types (i.e. commuter, recreation, utilitarian), serve future bicycle and pedestrian trips in Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs) that have a higher than average number of bicycle trips, promote safety by allowing bicyclists to avoid high-crash locations, and are consistent with previous plans.

As a result of the analysis, 234 gaps were identified and ranked as short (less than a half mile in length), medium (between a half mile and 1.5 miles), and long (over a 1.5 miles). Thirty-six of the gaps were identified as high-priority. The majority of gaps are in the Inner Core subregion.

The top ten of the 36 priorities were identified for further study in the 2015 Bicycle Network Gaps Feasibility Analysis. (The top ten originally included the Community Path in Somerville, which is already in design.) The purpose of this new study is to enhance bicyclists’ safety and network connectivity by evaluating the feasibility of potential improvements to identified high-priority gaps and recommend projects to close the gaps.

When selecting locations for study, staff considered scores obtained by applying the evaluation criteria in the 2014 study, whether studies are already underway at the identified locations, whether steps have been identified to address the gaps in the future, and whether the challenges of addressing the gaps matches CTPS’s expertise.

Based on the results of the evaluation, staff is proposing three locations – a short, medium, and long gap – for study. The long gap is the Massachusetts Central Rail Trail in Waltham. Right-of-way and land-use issues are the major concerns in addressing this gap. The medium gap is the Sudbury Aqueduct Trail in Framingham. There is a gap between the trail end and the Framingham commuter rail station. The short gap is in Central Square in Cambridge from the Western Avenue cycle track across Massachusetts Avenue.

The next steps are to obtain the MPO's approval to proceed with the study of these three locations, conduct data collection, make recommendations for addressing the gaps, and then produce a memorandum of the findings.

***Discussion***

Laura Wiener, At-Large Town of Arlington, inquired about another potential gap near the DCR Greenway in the Route 16 area of Arlington. K. Crocker stated that the existing trails could be upgraded to make a better transportation facility. She noted that the Town of Arlington is interested in making a connection along Summer Street to close the gap between the Minuteman Bikeway and the Mystic Valley Parkway. (Note: On-road improvements along Broadway are also of potential interest.)

Jay Monty, At-Large City of Everett, asked how the list of gaps was developed and whether staff conducted outreach to municipalities to identify locations. K. Crocker explained that staff conducted a GIS analysis to identify the gaps between major transit centers and existing and planned bicycle facilities. Mark Abbott, Manager of the Traffic Analysis Group, added that the 2014 study included data gathered from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). J. Monty then mentioned a gap that the City of Everett is interested in addressing.

S. Woelfel asked if the next steps involve identifying what agency or entity would be responsible for paying for recommended improvements. K. Crocker stated that entities that have jurisdiction in the specific study locations will be included as part of staff's outreach during the study.

S. Woelfel noted that MassDOT will be updating its Pedestrian and Bicycle Plans and seeking public input as part of the upcoming "Capital Conversations" meetings.

M. Gowing suggested that staff could consider an overlay of Complete Streets projects onto the existing base map that staff is using for this project to determine if any Complete Streets projects would dovetail with identified gaps. Those gaps might then be reprioritized to take advantage of available project funding.

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation, asked where cycle tracks currently exist in the region. K. Crocker replied that one exists near Central Square in Cambridge on Western Avenue. Cycle tracks are planned for other locations as well. E. Bourassa added that cycle tracks are planned for Commonwealth Avenue in Boston and as part of the Connect Historic Boston project. (Note: Another existing cycle track is located on Vassar Street in Cambridge.)



## **10. State Implementation Plan Update—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT***

S. Woelfel reported that MassDOT is working with DEP to schedule the annual public hearing on the State Implementation Plan. Members will be informed when the date is set.

## **11. Members Items**

E. Bourassa reported that this year's MPO elections will be uncontested. All four candidates are running unopposed. The City of Woburn is running for the North Suburban Planning Council seat. The Town of Norwood is running for the South West Advisory Planning Committee seat. The Town of Arlington is running for the At-Large Town seat. And the City of Newton is running for the At-Large City seat. Ballots have been sent out to all municipal chief elected officers in the region. The election will be held on October 29 at the MAPC Fall Council meeting at UMass – Boston.

E. Bourassa noted that MAPC has received feedback that indicates that municipalities in the region feel that the MPO process is more transparent and provided better municipal representation since the MPO expanded its membership.

M. Gowing announced that on October 5, the Town of Acton started its first fixed-route bus service. The route changes based on the time of day.

S. Woelfel encouraged members to sign up soon for the Moving Together Conference as there are only 60 spots left.

## **12. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the Advisory Council (M. Gowing), and seconded by the City of Boston (J. Gillooly). The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
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 Transportation Department)	Jim Gillooly
	Patrick Hoey
Federal Highway Administration	Leah Sirmin
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel
	David Anderson
Massachusetts Highway Division	John Romano
MBTA	Micha Gensler
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Richard Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Denise Deschamps
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Mike Gowing
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/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Tegin Bennett	City of Cambridge / Regional Transportation Advisory Council
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)
Constance Raphael	MassDOT District 4

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director

Mark Abbott

Maureen Kelly

Anne McGahan

Elizabeth Moore

Scott Peterson

Sean Pfalzer

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