

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

November 5, 2015 Meeting

10:05 AM – 12:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

David Mohler, 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 15
- approve the work program for *Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay*

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

There were none.

2. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT*

D. Mohler announced that members of the Commonwealth's MPO Reform Commission will be attending the MPO's next meeting on November 19.

He also raised the issue of possibly amending the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to address funding for the Green Line Extension project. This last summer, the public learned that the cost of the Green Line Extension from Lechmere Station in Cambridge to College Avenue, Medford (Phase 1) increased significantly from the \$1.992 billion estimate that was the basis of a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA), between the Commonwealth and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The new cost for the Green Line Extension project is estimated at between \$2.7 billion and \$3 billion. MassDOT is working now to assess the actual costs and identifying ways to reduce costs. MassDOT would like to have a discussion with the MPO members about the possibility of reallocating funds that the MPO has programmed for the future extension of the Green Line from College Avenue to Route 16 in Medford (Phase 2) to Phase 1 of the project. This action would require an amendment to the TIP and LRTP.

Discussion

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council, stated that the project for the reconstruction of the interchange of Interstates 93 and 95 in Canton is other project that the Commonwealth must find funding for in 2016 if the project is to go forward as scheduled. Funding for a portion of the project – the ramp construction on Interstate 95 and improvements on the Canton Street and Dedham Street corridor – is programmed in the TIP.

Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), asked about the Commonwealth's expected level of commitment to Phase 2 of the Green Line Extension project. D. Mohler explained that given that the costs of Phase 1 have increased significantly, the Commonwealth may not have funds to support the future extension (which is currently to be funded with federal funds over which the MPO has discretion). Part of the upcoming discussion with the MPO may focus on whether or not funding for Phase 2 should be programmed in the LRTP.

In response to a question from Jay Monty, At-Large City of Everett, D. Mohler reported that MassDOT staff will be presenting the findings and recommendations from their analysis of Phase 1 to the MassDOT Board of Directors and the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board on December 9. He stated that the project cannot be built without additional funding, despite the value engineering work now underway to reduce costs.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), inquired about what information about the Commonwealth's proposal will be made available to the MPO members prior to the discussion about a proposed amendment. D. Mohler replied that the MPO will likely be presented with an amendment that proposes to reprogram all of the funds for Phase 2 to Phase 1.

T. Bent then asked if the proposal would include a commitment to fund Phase 2 in the future. D. Mohler replied that the MPO members can discuss the MPO's commitment to Phase 2 and whether the Commonwealth can contribute some funding. As currently Phase 1 is paused and Phase 2 is not in design, the funds that the MPO has programmed for Phase 2 will not be able to be spent in the timeframe in which they are currently programmed. If the MPO chooses not to apply the funds for Phase 2 to Phase 1, the MPO will have to discuss whether to program the Phase 2 funds to other projects, such as highway projects.

Ken Miller, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), asked about the Commonwealth's commitment under the FFGA between the Commonwealth and the FTA. D. Mohler

explained that the FTA committed to fund up to \$996 million in New Starts funds and the Commonwealth committed to fund the remaining 50 percent of the project cost, then estimated at \$1.992 billion. MassDOT is exploring various options for addressing the gaps in funding for this project. In addition to conversations with the MPO, the agency is exploring the possibility of leveraging contributions from developers and municipal resources.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), inquired about the impact that reprogramming funds for Phase 2 to Phase 1 would have on other programmed projects, and whether those Phase 2 funds would have to move into another time band to accommodate the Phase 1 construction schedule. (Currently Phase 2 funding is included in the FFY 2016-20 and FFY 2021-25 time bands of the LRTP.) D. Mohler replied that the funds would stay programmed in the same time bands.

John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, asked about the amount of Phase 2 funding that would be redirected to Phase 1 under the Commonwealth's proposal. D. Mohler replied that there is \$190 million (federal and state match) currently programmed in the LRTP.

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), stated that the State Implementation Plan (SIP) requires that the Green Line Extension be built to Medford Hillside. He said that the current planned terminus of Phase 1 at College Avenue, Medford does not meet that requirement; however the terminus of Phase 2 at Route 16 does meet the requirement. D. Mohler countered that MassDOT considers College Avenue to be at Medford Hillside and that the Department of Environmental Protection (which oversees the SIP) has concurred that the College Avenue terminus meets the requirements of the SIP.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Tegin Bennett, Advisory Council Chair*

Tegin Bennett introduced herself as the new Chair of the Advisory Council. She is a transportation/urban planner who works for the City of Cambridge. She has been involved with the Advisory Council for over a year.

Mark Sanborn, the new Vice Chair of the Advisory Council, is the Director of Government Relations and Corporate Development for Concord Coach Lines, and chair of the Massachusetts Bus Association.

The Chair and Vice Chair plan to continue working towards the goals of the previous leadership to ensure that the Advisory Council is as effective and relevant as possible, and to provide feedback to the MPO's 3C planning process. T. Bennett invited members to share their thoughts about the Council and noted that she would welcome a discussion at the next meeting.

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

K. Quackenbush announced that CTPS has hired Lourenço Dantas as Manager of the Certification Activities Group. L. Dantas was trained as a civil engineer, and he has worked for an MPO in Texas and CTPS in the past. Currently, he serves on the MPO board as a representative of the Massachusetts Port Authority. He will begin his new position on November 16.

Members welcomed L. Dantas to his new position, and L. Dantas expressed his interest in coming to work with the MPO in this new capacity.

6. MPO Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 15 was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the At-Large Town of Lexington (Richard Canale). The motion carried. The MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan), and the Massachusetts Port Authority (L. Dantas) abstained.

7. Work Program—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, CTPS

K. Quackenbush introduced the work program for *Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay*, which is a companion to another work program that the MPO approved in August, the *Prioritization of Dedicated Bus Lanes* study. The latter is a MassDOT-funded study that aims to identify roadway segments around the region where the installation of bus lanes could maximize travel-time savings for bus riders. This new work program would be an MPO-funded study that would examine causes of delays on the MBTA bus network and identify ways to improve travel times. The study, in contrast to the ongoing one, will concentrate on causes of delay – such as excessive dwell times for buses at bus stops – that the MBTA would have the ability to address.

Staff will use automatic passenger counter (APC) data to assess bus dwell times in relation to passenger boardings and alightings, fare payment methods, bus seating

configuration, and onboard passenger loads to identify factors that may be contributing to longer dwell times. Staff will also conduct field observations and review scheduling practices that affect bus terminal departure times. In addition, staff will use data from the *Prioritization of Dedicated Bus Lanes* study to identify three locations where there are significant delays and then identify infrastructure improvements, such as queue jumps or transit signal priority, to reduce delays.

The final product will be a report with recommendations for improving operations and infrastructure to reduce bus delays.

Discussion

T. Bennett asked whether this study would address all MBTA bus routes.

K. Quackenbush confirmed that staff would begin with all the routes. He noted that the APC equipment is not fully deployed on the system, but that the equipment is moved around the system so that over time passenger boarding and alighting data is captured for all routes. Staff expects to use data collected over a one-year period.

L. Dantas observed that the first task of the work program would address issues that are global in nature and that the recommendations could relate to the MBTA's service delivery policy. Whereas the second and third tasks address specific routes or locations and the recommendations could result in changes in the field or pilot demonstrations.

K. Quackenbush concurred that the first task would result in global recommendations, some of which might relate to the service delivery policy. And he stated that the second task involves the data collection in the field at specific locations to gather information on factors that perhaps have a bearing on dwell times experienced universally throughout the system. The third task focuses on specific locations. Recommendations for improvements to infrastructure at those locations would have to be addressed by agencies or municipalities that own that infrastructure.

Jim Gillooly, City of Boston, asked if the use of the APC data allows for determining the boarding/alighting times per passenger at each specific bus stop. K. Quackenbush replied that the data is not that fine grained. The data can be used to determine the boardings/alightings by each door on a bus, the total number of passengers that boarded/alighted at each stop, and the period of time that the doors remained open. He added that through the second task of the work program staff will observe the factors that add to the boarding times (for example, when boardings are slowed by passengers adding value to their smart cards).

A motion to approve the work program for *Identifying Opportunities to Alleviate Bus Delay* was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan), and seconded by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

8. Work Plan for Long-Range Transportation Plan, FFY 2016—Anne McGahan, MPO Staff

A. McGahan presented the work plan for the *Long-Range Transportation Plan, Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016*. This work plan includes that tasks that the MPO staff will conduct during FFY 2016 as well as ongoing tasks in preparation of the next Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that the MPO will adopt in 2019. The work plan includes seven tasks, which are summarized below.

Task 1: Update the Needs Assessment

The current LRTP, *Charting Progress to 2040*, includes a web-based Needs Assessment. In Task 1, staff will update the Needs Assessment tool on an on-going basis with new information as it becomes available. This information will be used to develop and analyze future land use and transportation options and scenarios; review performance measures; set performance targets; and evaluate progress toward meeting the MPO's goals and objectives. This task also includes working with MAPC to develop the demographic projections for the next LRTP.

Task 2: Develop Performance Measures

As part of *Charting Progress to 2040*, staff identified an initial set of performance measures to use in the MPO's scenario planning process. Also, staff developed a set of performance measures as part of the MPO's Congestion Management Process (CMP). Task 2 will build on that work, by formalizing and expanding the MPO's performance-based planning practice in the context of the LRTP and TIP.

Staff will review the current performance measures and add new ones based on staff's analysis, guidance from the FHWA and FTA, new MassDOT measures, and emerging sources. Staff will also gather data on the measures and establish reporting mechanisms for use in developing future LRTPs and TIPs.

Task 3: Incorporate performance-based planning into the MPO decision-making process

Task 3 will involve ongoing consultation with the MPO toward the goal of creating policy on the MPO performance-based planning practices. This work will be coordinated with the MPO's ongoing CMP. Staff will conduct the following tasks: integrate performance measures into the LRTP, TIP, and UPWP criteria to be used for selecting projects and studies; compare current conditions to baseline conditions either established in the

Needs Assessment or through other historical data; develop targets and strategies to guide MPO investments using baseline and updated data, national and state goals, and the MPO vision and goals; and track the data and develop tools and formats for reporting. Staff will prepare a memorandum in the summer of 2016 documenting the performance-based planning work that has been accomplished.

Task 4: Develop and Analyze Future Scenarios

In the winter and spring of 2016, staff will continue scenario planning using the model-based planning tools and off-model processes to generate forecasts and information about regional conditions and future needs. Staff will identify one or more issues to explore by comparing various scenarios to better understand the impacts of different investment strategies on MPO goals.

Task 5: Prepare the Groundwork for the Next LRTP

In preparation for the next LRTP, staff will conduct research and plan for issues that may arise, coordinate with interested parties, review MPO priorities, and generate information through ongoing performance-based planning and scenario planning to help guide investment strategies. Staff will work with MAPC to explore effective ways to gather information, understand the region's needs, and analyze transportation and land-use options.

Task 6: Adopt LRTP Amendments, If Required

Task 6 will address amendments to regionally significant projects programmed in the TIP or changes to the programming of projects in the State Implementation Plan.

Task 7: Respond to Requests for Information

Task 7 will address requests associated with the LRTP from MPO members, transportation and planning agencies' staffs, and members of the public.

Discussion

J. Gillooly asked whether some of the tasks in this work plan would be funded in future years' budgets. A. McGahan replied yes and noted that staff will be updating the members next year.

Members gave their approval to allow staff to proceed with the work plan.

9. Proposed Framework for Updating TIP Evaluation Criteria—Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff

S. Pfalzer presented the proposed framework for updating the project evaluation criteria for the TIP process.

The criteria currently in use was established in 2010 and revised in 2012. These criteria were designed to allow the MPO to select projects that advance the MPO's goals and objectives, and to make the TIP project selection process transparent to the public. The MPO staff uses the criteria to evaluate proposed projects, create a First Tier List of projects, and make a recommendation for TIP funding to the MPO. The MPO members use the criteria to inform their decision-making when programming the TIP. The criteria have helped to solidify the data-driven approach to investment decisions.

Since the last update, there have been several noteworthy events that will factor into the update of the criteria. They include the following: the announcement of MassDOT's Healthy Transportation Policy Directive; federal rulemaking concerning performance-based planning requirements; federal recommendations from the MPO's certification review; recommendations from the Commonwealth's Project Selection Advisory Council; and the MPO's adoption of a new LRTP, *Charting Progress to 2040*.

The new LRTP set new goals and objectives for the MPO, so it will be essential for the TIP criteria to reflect those new goals and objectives. The LRTP also created several investment programs: Intersection Improvements, Complete Streets, Bicycle Network and Pedestrian Connections, Major Infrastructure, and Community Transportation Parking. The new criteria will inform the MPO's decision-making when prioritizing projects to include in these investment programs.

The Project Selection Advisory Council (PSAC) was established by the state transportation finance bill of 2013 and charged to develop uniform project selection criteria to be used in the development of MassDOT's Capital Investment Plan (CIP). The PSAC released a report in July 2015 with a recommended scoring system (made up of six different scoring systems). When developing the system, PSAC considered goals for cost effectiveness, economic impact, environmental and health effects, mobility, policy support, safety, social equity, and system preservation. Weights were applied to the various goals. PSAC's Implementation Committee is now carrying forward the recommendations and will develop project evaluation criteria for the CIP.

S. Pfalzer noted that the MPO's goals align well with PSAC's goals with the exception that two PSAC goals – cost effectiveness and policy support – are not included in the MPO's goals. The MPO's investment programs also align well with the PSAC's scoring systems.

Staff is recommending that the MPO shift its scoring framework to use the framework of four scoring systems defined by the PSAC. This would involve using PSAC's goal weights as the baseline for the discussion of updating the MPO's criteria. Consideration

of cost-effectiveness of projects could also be incorporated if the MPO is supportive of the idea. As a next step, staff would use the PSAC framework as guidance for updating the MPO's project evaluation criteria.

MPO members were asked to provide input in regards to whether there is support for using multiple scoring systems and goal weights, and considering cost-effectiveness and policy support in project evaluations.

Discussion

P. Regan asked whether the MPO is obliged to adopt the PSAC criteria considering that the MPO has a fully developed set of good criteria already. D. Mohler explained that the Secretary of Transportation is interested in having a common evaluation system in use across the Commonwealth, but that MPOs are not required to accept the PSAC system. He noted, however, that MassDOT will use the PSAC criteria to evaluate projects that MPOs are considering for funding, and that MassDOT has the ability to withhold the 20% state match on federally funded projects that do not score well under the PSAC criteria.

P. Regan asked if there are any conflicts between the federal recommendations from the MPO's last certification review and the PSAC recommendations. S. Pfalzer noted that MassDOT is currently developing the specific criteria under the PSAC framework.

J. Gillooly pointed out an area where PSAC's goals veer from the MPO's goals. Referencing a slide from the presentation, he noted that PSAC does not consider social equity in modernization projects, which, he said, is a major deficiency in that evaluation system.

J. Gillooly then inquired about how the project selection process would play out if the MPO continued to use its own evaluation system while MassDOT used the PSAC system. D. Mohler replied that all MPOs in the Commonwealth are doing a good job of evaluating projects and that it is unlikely that MPOs and MassDOT would have major disagreements. He explained that MassDOT will use the PSAC system to evaluate all projects in the CIP, including MPO supported projects that receive state funding. In the unlikely event that there is a disagreement because an MPO supports a project that MassDOT does not support, the two bodies would have to discuss the issue. If they cannot come to an agreement, the issue would have to go before the federal agencies. MassDOT cannot overrule MPO decisions on the TIP, but if MassDOT does not provide a 20% match to federally funded projects, the TIP would not be fiscally constrained.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), noted that at this time it is difficult to envision the consequences of adopting a

new evaluation system. He suggested that the MPO use both their current system and the PSAC system to see what the outcomes would be. K. Quackenbush expressed support for this idea noting that it would be important to do a sensitivity analysis prior to adopting a new system.

E. Bourassa expressed agreement. He suggested that the MPO use PSAC's weighted scoring system to evaluate a past TIP cycle to determine if the outcomes are consistent or different. He noted that regardless of whether the MPO adopts the PSAC system, the MPO will have to change its own weighting system based on the policy decisions adopted in the new LRTP.

E. Bourassa inquired about PSAC's definition of cost-effectiveness. S. Pfalzer replied that it refers to the project having benefits that maximize the return on public investments.

Referencing a slide from the presentation, S. Olanoff questioned why PSAC did not give value for the goals of social equity and economic impact under the category of transit modernization. He remarked on the severe negative impact felt by residents and the economy during last winter's snow storms as a result of failure to modernize the MBTA system. D. Mohler explained that the PSAC discussed social equity and ultimately determined that modernization projects are akin to state-of-good-repair projects that must be addressed wherever they are on the system.

Ken Miller, FHWA, expressed support for using both the PSAC's and the MPO's systems for the TIP project evaluations to compare the results. He noted that the MPO's system is working well while the PSAC system has not yet been applied.

K. Miller then spoke to the issue raised earlier about potential disagreements between MassDOT and MPO concerning project funding. He noted that an implementing agency cannot be compelled to build a project, so in the event that the MPO programmed a project in the TIP that MassDOT will not fund, no action would occur on that project. He did add, however, that the state would not be operating in the spirit of the MPO process if it denied the 20% match to an MPO-supported project. D. Mohler also noted that, as a sovereign state, neither the federal agencies nor the MPO can force the Commonwealth to spend state funds on any project. In the unlikely event that the Commonwealth denied the 20% match to a project, the project could still go forward if the match were provided by another entity, such as a municipality.

Referencing a slide from the presentation, R. Reed raised questions about the values in the PSAC weighting system, where all the scores are divisible by five. D. Mohler

explained that a more detailed numbers system would be too granular and provide a false sense of certainty in the results.

T. Bennett asked why cost-effectiveness is not already considered in the MPO's evaluation system. In response, K. Miller discussed different ways to consider cost-effectiveness, such as comparing overall project evaluation scores to parameters of construction costs. He noted that there does not have to be a specific criterion for cost-effectiveness. D. Mohler added that cost-effectiveness is often construed as favoring projects that serve a large number of people, such as state-sponsored or urban projects. This can be of concern to proponents of projects in smaller towns that serve fewer people. He also raised the issue of project cost increases, i.e. a project may be considered cost-effective when it enters the TIP process, but due to rising costs it may no longer be cost-effective when the time comes to implement the project.

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, offered comments about the PSAC weighting system. He noted that the cost-effectiveness measure could be double counted with policy support. He also pointed out that that Complete Streets projects can change the characteristics of roadways significantly so that it is questionable whether they should be considered under the system preservation category.

R. Canale asked about the continuing evaluation of the PSAC criteria and how differences will be worked out with the MPO. D. Mohler explained that MassDOT will use the criteria during the CIP development process. Learning from the first process, MassDOT will adjust measures going forward. PSAC has voted itself into continual existence and will be informed by a stakeholder advisory group going forward.

Tina Cassidy, North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn), suggested that it would be beneficial for the MPO to wait to decide whether to adopt the PSAC criteria until it is put into use and there is an understandable scoring system.

L. Dantas remarked on the effort that went into developing the MPO's criteria and scoring system. He suggested letting the PSAC and MPO scoring systems evolve in co-existence, while maintaining the integrity of how the MPO prioritizes projects and making improvements as needed.

R. Mares offered insights about the PSAC process. He noted that the MPO's established evaluation criteria influenced the development of the PSAC criteria and that it would be awkward for the MPO to supplant their criteria with PSAC's criteria. He also said it would be premature to do so because the PSAC criteria is being implemented for the first time, while the MPO criteria has been in use for a long time. Further, the PSAC goals are still flawed and need to be improved. He also stated that MassDOT's

evaluation process and how the agency applies its votes on the MPO board must be transparent.

D. Mohler recommended that staff hold off on adopting the PSAC system as there is not consensus among the members. More discussion on this topic will be required. He advised staff to proceed with reviewing the current TIP criteria for consistency with the MPO goals.

Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning at CTPS, reminded members that staff will need to coordinate with the state and federal partners in the development of specific performance measures. K. Miller added that following the federal agencies' final rulemaking on performance measures, states and MPOs will be required to develop specific performance targets. The state and MPOs are not precluded from developing more targets than are required by the federal agencies.

D. Mohler asked when staff expects to present the plan for addressing recommendations from the MPO's federal certification review. K. Quackenbush indicated that this topic will be raised at an MPO meeting in December.

10. Members Items

R. Reed inquired about MassDOT's Complete Streets Program. D. Mohler stated that the Secretary announced the launch of the program yesterday. An update can be provided to members at a future meeting.

11. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jim Gillooly Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Ken Miller
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
Massachusetts Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
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	Tegin Bennett
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Christine Stickney
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Bryan Pounds	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Constance Raphael	MassDOT District 4
Tim Snyder	Office of State Senator Patricia Jehlen
Ellen Spring	Office of State Representative Denise Garlick

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director

David Fargen

Maureen Kelly

Anne McGahan

Elizabeth Moore

Scott Peterson

Sean Pfalzer

Alicia Wilson
