

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of March 10, 2010 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA.

1. **Introductions** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

Laura Wiener, Chair and representative of Arlington, called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

2. **Chair's Report** – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

L. Wiener announced that the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation was invited to the April meeting. The Statewide Freight and Rail Plan will be discussed at either the April or May meeting.

3. **Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Forum** – *Nicole Freedman, Boston; Cara Seiderman, Cambridge; Shane Jordan, MassBike; Wendy Landman, WalkBoston; David Loutzenheiser, MAPC; Cathy Buckley, Boston Region MPO staff.*

Introductions and Short Presentations – Panelists were each allocated five minutes to discuss their ongoing and upcoming work. Their comments are summarized below:

- **Shane Jordan, MassBike:** MassBike works to make bicycling better through infrastructure, education, legislation, and events. Last year they worked on the following: advocacy for the Bicyclist Safety Bill, which was passed after eight years of advocacy; a bikability study of five neighborhoods in Boston; and a new website and calendar to track public meetings. Currently MassBike is developing a toolkit for advocates and planning for the 2010 Bay State Bike Week from May 17 to 21 (www.baystatebikeweek.org). MassBike is engaged in three major campaigns this year: advocacy for a vulnerable road users law, which will make it easier to enforce laws when bicyclists and pedestrians are struck; a safety campaign called Same Roads Same Rules (www.sameroadssamerules.org); and advocating for the removal of peak hour restrictions on the Blue Line.
- **Wendy Landman, WalkBoston:** WalkBoston is a statewide organization that works to make walking easier and more attractive. Their work falls into two categories: promoting an environment supportive of everyday walking, and programs to encourage more walking. They work with trails and greenways advocates, but their focus is on everyday walking to work, transit, school, and more. Elements of the environment that support walking are an integrated pedestrian network, smooth walking surfaces, snow removal, signal timing, and speed limits. Currently WalkBoston is advocating for lower speed limits in communities, and monitoring the Accelerated Bridge Program and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act projects to ensure they are providing

accommodations for pedestrians. Programs WalkBoston is currently working on include Safe Routes to Schools; a partnership to promote walking in Brockton, Stoneham, Newton, and Watertown with funding from Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, MassDOT, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health; and training teenagers to be advocates for better walking conditions in their municipalities. Funding from the Boston Region MPO has enabled WalkBoston to create walking maps for Malden, Watertown, Braintree, Walpole, Salem, and Harvard University.

- ***Cara Seiderman, Cambridge:*** Bicycling and walking are a priority for Cambridge, and supporting these modes addresses the city's goals of cleaner air, mitigating climate change, and providing people with transportation choices. The city's philosophy is that every street is a bike route and must be accessible and inviting to people who are walking. Every road project is an opportunity to create a complete street with facilities that promote walking and bicycling. The city measures bicycle traffic at 17 intersections, and has found that bicycle traffic more than doubled between 2002 and 2008. Twenty three percent of work trips in Cambridge are on foot (the highest walk mode share in the United States) and six percent are by bike. Recently the city implemented a social marketing program called City Smart with funding from the Boston Region MPO. Through City Smart they talk to residents and encourage them to use modes other than driving.
- ***Nicole Freedman, Boston:*** Recent criticism of Boston's bicycling environment prompted the mayor to set the goal of making Boston a world-class city for bicycling. During the last two years the city added 15 miles of bicycle lanes, 500 bicycle racks, created the city's first bicycling map (funded by the Boston Region MPO), and hosted the city's first professional bicycle race in 20 years. During this period bicycling trips increased more than 40 percent in the city. Currently the city is working with MassDOT, MAPC, Brookline, Cambridge, and Somerville to bring a bicycle-sharing program to the region. Fifty cities have bicycle-sharing programs, but none have been established in the United States. The program would make up to 1,000 bikes at 85 stations available free for the first 30 minutes.
- ***David Loutzenheiser, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC):*** MAPC works to bring individual communities together and provides them with technical assistance. MAPC managed the former MPO-funded bicycle-parking program (now part of the MPO's CMAQ program). This program funded 6,000 bicycle parking spaces in more than 70 communities. MAPC is currently working on an MPO-funded regional pedestrian plan, which will identify gaps in the network to close. They also administer the transportation enhancements program and are working with several communities on a bicycle-sharing program.
- ***Cathy Buckley, Central Transportation Planning Staff:*** The MPO staff began conducting bicycle counts in the region in the 1970s and started systematically counting trail users throughout the state in 2007. Counts rely heavily on volunteers from groups such as MassBike and WalkBoston. The staff provides MPO-funded Walkable Communities Workshops around the region and is currently seeking communities to participate in the spring. A new Community Technical Assistance Program funded by the MPO is another avenue through which staff assists communities with bicycle and pedestrian issues. In the future,

the staff is hoping to conduct a bicycle network evaluation that would identify missing links, and a project to get more people to walk and bike to transit stations.

Moderated Discussion and Question/Answer Session – Panelists engaged in a moderated discussion and answered questions from members of the audience. A point on which all of the panelists agreed is that bicycling and walking are components of a plan to address myriad social problems in the United States, including obesity, climate change, energy security, congestion, and air pollution. The panelists offered recommendations on how to address these issues by increasing the share of trips made by bicycling and walking in the Boston region. The recommendations and ideas discussed during this portion of the program are organized into three categories: policies, programs, and research, and are listed below:

Policies

- The MPO should adopt and enforce a complete-streets policy. This would require all roadway improvements (with the exception of limited-access highways) to include accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The MPO and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation should balance funding among modes to support a transportation system that provides its users with choices. The MPO should flex federal highway funds to transit maintenance and expansion projects, and allocate funds annually to transportation enhancement projects. The recent “Bicycling and Walking in the United States: 2010 Benchmarking Report,” produced by the Alliance for Bicycling and Walking, reported that approximately 11 percent of trips in Massachusetts are made by walking or bicycling, yet less than one percent of federal transportation funds are spent on these modes.
- The MBTA should repeal peak-hour restrictions for bicycles on the Blue Line, a critical transportation link for bicycle commuters traveling from north of Boston into downtown Boston.
- The Massachusetts Department of Transportation should purchase the right-of-way for regional trail projects, rather than requiring municipalities to do so. This is the practice for highway projects; bicycle and pedestrian projects should be treated the same way.
- The Registry of Motor Vehicles should be a national leader in strengthening its driver education requirements to improve drivers’ awareness of the needs and vulnerabilities of other road users.
- Municipalities should prioritize removal of snow and ice from sidewalks and trails. Snow and ice are not tolerated on roadways, and its removal from sidewalks and trails is critical for people who rely on walking, bicycling, or transit to meet their mobility needs.
- Agencies and municipalities should encourage the legislature to lower the prevailing speed limit in Massachusetts’s communities to 25 miles per hour in areas of heavy pedestrian usage. Studies have shown that pedestrians hit by a vehicle moving 20 miles per hour have a 5 percent fatality rate, while pedestrians hit by a vehicle moving 30 miles per hour have a 45 percent fatality rate—nine times higher.

- The state legislature should also be encouraged to increase the state's gasoline tax to fund improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian system. Very high bicycle and pedestrian mode shares have been achieved in some European countries, including Germany, whose climate is similar to that of Eastern Massachusetts. This has been made possible not only because of programs for encouraging these modes, but also because of the price of gasoline. An 11-gallon purchase of gasoline here is about \$32; in the Netherlands, it is about \$83, and it is about \$70 in Great Britain. Since 1990, Great Britain has reduced its carbon output by 20 percent, while during the same time period, carbon output increased by 17 percent in the United States.

Programs

- The MPO should consider helping to fund the bike-sharing program that has been proposed in Boston, Cambridge, Somerville, and Brookline.
- The MPO should continue to fund bike-parking infrastructure throughout the region.

Research

- Agencies should collect more data on the use of sidewalks, streets, and trails by bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Agencies should hire data collectors, rather than using volunteers, to collect information on the use of sidewalks, streets, and trails by bicyclist and pedestrians, and should use the latest technology to collect the data, as is the practice for monitoring motorized traffic.
- The Boston Region MPO should include studies in the FFY 2011 Unified Planning Work Program that investigate how the current bike trails in the region could be connected to create a cohesive network, and how to improve access to transit for bicyclists and pedestrians.

4. Approval of the Meeting Minutes of January 13, 2010 – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

The minutes were unanimously approved.

5. Discussion of the Proposed Amendment to the MPO's Public Participation Program – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

Mike Callahan of the MPO staff briefed members on the content of the proposed amendment to the MPO's Public Participation Program. The amendment would allow, in extraordinary circumstances, for the MPO to truncate the public comment period by 15 days for an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program or Long-Range Transportation Plan. The proposed amendment would allow the MPO to waive the public comment period in the event of an emergency.

Members made the following suggestions for the Advisory Council's comment letter on the proposed amendment:

- The MPO should clearly define “extraordinary circumstances” and “emergency.” (Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge)
- All materials relevant to a proposed amendment should be available to the public during the entire public comment period. (John McQueen, WalkBoston)
- It is unclear what constitutes an administrative modification. (Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association)
- The reasons for adopting an abbreviated public comment period should be described in the public notice announcing the proposed amendment. (Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination)
- Does the Massachusetts Department of Transportation consider the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act an extraordinary circumstance? (J. Rosenblum)

6. Committee Reports

Plan – L. Wiener announced that the Plan Committee will meet before the April 14 meeting at 2:00 PM. The Freight Committee meeting will begin at 12:30 PM.

Freight – Frank DeMasi of Wellsley spoke about the decision by CSX to move its operations from Beacon Park Yards to Worcester. Meetings on the Statewide Freight and Rail Study begin on March 23. The Freight Committee would like to host a freight panel similar to the bicycle and pedestrian panel.

7. Member Announcements – There were none.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 PM.

Attachments:

Attendance List for March 10, 2010

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Cities and Towns

Lauren Rosenzweig, Acton
Laura Wiener, Arlington
Tom Kadzis, Boston
Todd Kirrane, Brookline
Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge
Cara Seiderman, Cambridge
Walter Bonin, Marlborough
Dom D'Eramo, Millis
Kurt Mullen, Needham
David Koses, Newton
Kristina Johnson, Quincy
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Agencies

Josh Lehman, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
Steven Rawding, MassDOT – Aeronautics Division
Jennifer Solomon, MassRIDES
Alison Felix, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Jim Gallagher, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
David Loutzenheiser, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination
Ed Anthes-Washburn, Seaport Advisory Council
Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee

Citizen Groups

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies
Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers
Bill Scully, Boston Society of Civil Engineers
Jenna Venturini, Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition
Chris Porter, MassBike
David Ernst, MassBike
Shane Jordan, MassBike
Jon Seward, MoveMassachusetts
Sue McQuaid, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce
Chris Anzuoni, New England Bus Transportation Association
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association
John McQueen, WalkBoston
Wendy Landman, MassBike

Guests and Visitors

John Bliss, Newton

John Hersey, Planners Collaborative
Romin Koebel, Fenway Community Development Corporation
Ed Lowney, resident of Malden
Marilyn MacNab, resident of Boston
Ralph Walter
Dick Williamson

MPO Staff

Walter Bennett
Cathy Buckley
Mike Callahan
Hayes Morrison
Sean Pfalzer