

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Summary of the September 15, 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 3:05 PM. Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

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

The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration held a certification review of the Boston Region MPO in July. Among the topics discussed were the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Long-Range Transportation Plan, freight planning, and public involvement. Schuyler Larrabee, Laura Wiener, and Steve Olanoff were present at the sessions.

The Boston Region MPO's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was discussed during the certification review. This document guides the functioning of the MPO. The MOU needs to be revised because of the transportation reform bill passed in 2009, which eliminated the Turnpike Authority and merged other agencies into the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. L. Wiener asked members to participate in an Advisory Council working group to come up with recommendations for the MOU. The working group will meet before the October Advisory Council meeting.

### **3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes of July 14, 2010 – *Laura Wiener, Chair***

John Businger, representing the National Corridors Initiative, said he was disappointed that the materials about GreenDOT, distributed by MassDOT at the July meeting, do not mention the North-South Rail Link or intercity passenger rail. The rail link would be the most green transportation project the state could construct. L. Wiener suggested that J. Businger should submit his comments on GreenDOT directly to MassDOT.

A motion to approve the draft minutes of July 14, 2010 was made by Louis Elisa (Seaport Advisory Council) and seconded by Marvin Miller (American Council of Engineering Companies). The minutes were unanimously approved.

### **4. A Vision of the Longfellow Bridge – *Bob Sloane, WalkBoston; and Steve Miller, Livable Streets Alliance***

Bob Sloane gave a presentation on a proposed design for the Longfellow Bridge supported by the Charles River Conservancy, the Livable Streets Alliance, the

Conservation Law Foundation, and the Institute for Human Centered Design, the Esplanade Association, WalkBoston, and MassBike.

The state has put together a task force that is considering several options for the bridge design. The original MassDOT plan, that was active in the spring, would increase the bike lane width slightly, increase the sidewalk width, and maintain two travel lanes in each direction. Three lanes would remain at the approach to Charles Circle.

The Bridge carries far more transit riders than users of any other mode, with an increasing use by bicyclists and pedestrians. Motor vehicle traffic on the bridge is declining slightly and is currently about 25,000 vehicles per day, possibly due to the completion of the Big Dig, which added eight lanes across the river on I-93.

Their proposal includes wider sidewalks than were proposed by MassDOT. A 10-foot sidewalk would allow two people walking east and two walking west to easily pass each other. Their proposal calls for 12-foot wide sidewalks. The bicycle community would like six-foot wide bicycle lanes. Lanes of this width would allow faster bicyclists to pass slower bicyclists, or ride side-by-side. There would also be a three-foot buffer. This space could be used by an ambulance during an emergency. This is important because the bridge is a connection to Massachusetts General Hospital.

The proposal calls attention to three areas of the bridge. In the mid-span, it calls for one travel lane and more space dedicated to bicyclists and pedestrians. It also proposes installing replicas of the original 1907 lights.

The other two areas are the access points on either end of the bridge, where it is narrower than the mid-span. The width on the Charles Circle side is 31 feet, which is eight feet less than the mid-span. There is also much discussion about how many lanes there should be at Charles Circle. The partners propose trying out a two-lane configuration coming into Charles Circle. The off ramps from Storrow Drive may be relocated slightly to the south. This would require taking down the pedestrian bridge and rebuilding it to current standards.

Steve Miller added that the original plan for the Longfellow Bridge was very courageous and visionary. The bridge was built in 1907 to accommodate the Red Line, even though it would not be built for several years. S. Miller would like MassDOT to be as visionary as the bridge's original designers were.

### **Member Questions**

In response to members' questions, B. Sloane or S. Miller made the following additional comments:

- The issue of bicyclists riding in the wrong direction has been discussed by the Task Force (S. Miller)
- The bike lanes may be painted another color or stanchions could be installed in order to keep vehicles out of the bicycle lane. (B. Sloane)
- Charles Circle is the cause of many ills with the bridge. (B. Sloane)

- One option under consideration is to allow bikes on the sidewalk. WalkBoston is not in favor of this option. (B. Sloane)
- Bicycle counts are being conducted now on the bridge. (S. Miller)
- The main obstacle to relocating the Storrow Drive off ramp to Charles Circle is the pedestrian bridge. (B. Sloane)
- There have been analyses of how far into Cambridge the queue would be if there were only one traffic lane in each direction. The queue will be longer, but it's not clear the wait time to get into Charles Circle will be longer. Traffic would not back up into Cambridge. There is controversy because the analyses assume traffic growth, which has not been the case recently. (S. Miller)
- The proposal will not add much to the cost of the project because what we are proposing is basically a reconfiguration of the existing space. (S. Miller)
- Testing different options for final configurations during construction was proposed. (S. Miller)
- Less than two percent of the vehicles crossing the bridge are trucks. (B. Sloane)

### **Member Comments**

- Making the bicycle lanes wide enough to accommodate emergency vehicles may encourage people to drive in the bicycle lanes. It may also encourage people to ride in the wrong direction. (J. Businger)
- It would be good to examine the bicycle and pedestrian volumes in the winter too. Also, the limits of the project must extend into Charles Circle and Memorial Drive. (M. Miller)
- The proposal would make the transportation system unfavorable to business by increasing travel time for automobiles. This reduces the number of sales calls workers can make. (Rick Arena, Association for Public Transportation)

### **5. Advisory Council Election – *Malek Al-Khatib, Nominating Committee Chair***

M. Al-Khatib reported the results of the Nominating Committee work (see the attached Committees Report) and the current status of nominations. Laura Wiener of Arlington was nominated for Chair by the Nominating Committee and accepted the nomination. Schuyler Larrabee of the Boston Society of Architects and Steve Olanoff were nominated and accepted their nominations for Vice Chair. M. Al-Khatib announced that each candidate would have an opportunity to make a statement and then the election would be held using secret ballots. Nominations can be made from the floor after the candidates make their statements.

R. Arena said there is only a recommendation from the Nominating Committee. That is not the same as a nomination.

M. Al-Khatib said the candidates were already nominated and accepted their nomination. They are nominees.

J. Businger, Dick Flynn of the Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition, Louis Elisa of the Seaport Advisory Council, and Jeff Rosenblum of Cambridge suggested that

nominations from the floor should come before any statements by the candidates. Members agreed and M. Al-Khatib invited nominations from the floor.

R. Arena nominated Steve Olanoff for Chair. S. Olanoff accepted the nomination.

R. Arena made a motion to hold the Chair and Vice Chair elections separately. Chan Rogers seconded the motion and it was approved.

M. Miller said he thought that the Nominating Committee should have brought the recommendation to the members in August. A step was missed in the process.

### **Election of the Chair**

Each candidate was given two minutes to make a statement.

L. Wiener said she has been a professional planner for 25 years. She stands for alternative transportation because getting more people to use modes other than cars is the only solution to the congestion problem facing the region. It would also help the transportation system to move more freight by rail. Steve Olanoff has a lot of experience, but voting for L. Wiener will help build the capacity of the Advisory Council. L. Wiener said one more year would allow her to use the knowledge she gained last year.

S. Olanoff said the Boston Region MPO's new Memorandum of Understanding is an important opportunity. Last year the election was about experience against attracting new people to leadership positions. That is a valid argument and the same choice is before the Advisory Council this year. S. Olanoff said he would make sure the Advisory Council's viewpoints were known to the MPO members and he will push for the Advisory Council's priorities.

M. Al-Khatib confirmed that a quorum of members was present.

L. Wiener was elected Chair with 15 votes. S. Olanoff received 13 votes.

### **Election of the Vice Chair**

M. Al-Khatib asked for any nominations from the floor. There were none. Each candidate was given two minutes to make a statement.

S. Larrabee described his master planning experience in the public and private sector, which gives him knowledge about transportation planning. He said he respects Steve Olanoff's experience, but it takes time to learn how the MPO process works. He said it will be valuable to the Advisory Council to have more people with knowledge about how the process works. He said that he would expect that members would talk to him if they have ideas they want discussed or comments about his or the Chair's performance. He would bring a collaborative approach to the work of the Advisory Council.

S. Olanoff said he speaks up and will help the Advisory Council stay a step ahead of MassDOT. They do not always keep the MPO members informed about what is going on. It's important to know what's coming up, to know where the Advisory Council stands, and then assert the Advisory Council's position.

M. Al-Khatib confirmed that a quorum of members was present.

S. Olanoff was elected Vice Chair with 15 votes. S. Larrabee received 12 votes.

## **6. Member Announcements**

M. Miller announced that the Boston Society of Civil Engineers will host a forum about upgrading the Massachusetts Rail System at Anthony's Pier 4 restaurant.

R. Arena announced that the Association for Public Transportation joined the U.S. High Speed Rail Association. They are meeting in New York City in November to discuss high speed rail. He encouraged people to attend the meeting.

L. Wiener announced that the Moving Together conference will be held on October 13. Staff will circulate the notice to members.

## **7. Committee Reports**

R. Flynn on behalf of the Freight Committee announced that MassDOT would hold a public hearing on its draft Rail Plan on September 16 in Worcester.

## **8. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM.

### **Attachments:**

Attendance List for September 15, 2010

**ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for September 15, 2010**

***Cities and Towns***

Laura Wiener, Arlington  
Tom Kadzis, Boston  
Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge  
William Friel, Canton  
Gail Wagner, Lexington  
Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
Tony Centore, Medfield  
Dom D'Eramo, Millis  
Kurt Mullen, Needham  
John Gillon, Quincy  
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

***Agencies***

Tad Read, Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board  
Steven Rawding, MassDOT – Aeronautics Division  
Donna Smallwood, MassRIDES  
Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC)  
Louis Elisa & Ed Anthes-Washburn, Seaport Advisory Council  
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP)

***Citizen Groups***

John Kane, Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA  
Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies  
Richard Arena, Association for Public Transportation  
Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects  
Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers  
Richard Flynn, Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition  
Chris Anzuoni, Massachusetts Bus Association  
David Ernst, MassBike  
Jon Seward, MoveMassachusetts  
John Businger, National Corridors Initiative  
Tom O'Rourke, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association  
Monica Tibbits, Route 128 Business Council  
John McQueen, WalkBoston

***Guests and Visitors***

Ann Carpenter, NEARS  
Jo Hart, Worcester resident  
Ed Lowney, Malden resident  
Marilyn MacNab, Boston resident

Jamie Simchik

***MPO Staff***

Walter Bennett

Cathy Buckley

Mike Callahan

Hayes Morrison

Sean Pfalzer

Pam Wolfe