

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the November 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*

The Chair announced the membership of the Advisory Council's committees. L. Wiener said the Membership Committee will probably meet before December 8.

3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes October 13, 2010 – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

A motion to approve the draft minutes of October 13, 2010 was made and seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Chris Anzuoni, representative of the Massachusetts Bus Association, asked if staff could expound upon a discussion from the previous meeting about the relationship between the Central Transportation Planning Staff, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and the Regional Transportation Advisory Council.

Pam Wolfe of the Boston Region MPO staff explained the relationships. The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the board that decides how to spend the federal capital and planning transportation funds coming into the MPO region, which includes 101 cities and towns in Eastern Massachusetts. Before the MPO was created, the federal government would send transportation funds directly to the states to be spent at the Transportation Secretary's discretion. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the federal government required each state to establish MPOs to bring more partners into the decision making process. When the Boston Region MPO was created, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) was also set up to be the technical support staff to the Boston Region MPO.

The Regional Transportation Advisory Council exists to bring together a diverse group of transportation advocates and organizations, municipalities, state agencies, and the general public to provide advice on transportation planning and programming to the Boston Region MPO. The Advisory Council is a voting member of the MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is also a regional planning organization and they are a voting member of the MPO. MAPC's boundaries coincide with those of Boston Region MPO, which is one reason there is some confusion about the entities. MAPC is responsible for land use planning in the region, while the MPO is responsible for transportation planning and programming.

4. Presentation on the Boston Region MPO's Pedestrian Transportation Plan –
Alison Felix and David Loutzenheiser, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

A. Felix, transportation planner for Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), provided an overview of the recently completed Pedestrian Transportation Plan. The Plan addresses the importance of walking, describes existing pedestrian infrastructure, and recommends policies and programs to promote walking. Walking is an essential component of our lives that has community and health benefits. All trips include walking at some point. However, walking can be difficult and hazardous. Only about half of the region's street network has sidewalks.

The Plan can serve as a resource for those who want to promote walking as a convenient, safe, and practical form of transportation. Each chapter contains best practices that Boston region communities already have successfully implemented. The document is interactive and has hundreds of hyperlinks in the electronic version that take the user to the source for more detailed information.

The Plan recommends several concepts to implement:

- Create complete streets that accommodate all users
- Close gaps in the pedestrian network
- Improve the pedestrian environment to encourage walking
- Prioritize facilities for walking to transit, schools, and to civic, and commercial sites

The Plan includes chapters on these topics: walking in the Boston region; current regional practices; community initiatives; laws, codes and legislation; funding; and action items.

D. Loutzenheiser described the following action items included in the Plan:

- Municipal sidewalk inventory: Municipalities should study their sidewalk inventory and map the locations of their pedestrian infrastructure.
- Capital projects and repaving: Each road project or development proposal should be viewed as an opportunity to improve walking conditions.
- Greenways: Greenways can knit together a community and provide a safe and comfortable place to walk.
- Building and land use: The design of buildings can encourage walking.
- Traffic analysis: Concurrent traffic signals encourage walking. They allow pedestrians to cross at the same time as automobiles. Push buttons should not be necessary for the walk signal to come on. Pedestrians should also be given at least a three second head start on the automobiles so that automobiles are not encouraged to make the turn before the pedestrians begin to cross.

- Intersections and crossings: Pedestrian crossings should be as short as possible. Trucks should be able to use the opposite travel lane if it is necessary to navigate an intersection with a curb extension and a sharp curb radius. Continental pavement markings are recommended.
- Buffer: A buffer protects pedestrians and provides a place to put snow.
- Snow removal: About half of the municipalities in the Boston region do not have a policy that requires the removal of snow from sidewalks. This is an equity issue because roads are plowed, but sidewalks often are not.

Member Questions

In response to members' questions, A. Felix and D. Loutzenheiser made the following additional comments:

- Snow should not be piled at pedestrian curb cuts. This problem is not specifically addressed, but the Plan does call for snow removal on sidewalks.
- Municipalities can use Chapter 90 funds to build sidewalks and can require developers to provide them. Chapter 8 of the Plan contains funding information.
- The Plan does not address storm water management.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has specific guidelines that designers must adhere to. Compliance with the standards is discussed in Chapter 7.
- The MassDOT Project Development and Design Guide requires bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.
- Side paths are an option for communities that are concerned that sidewalks will change their character. They are separated from the street and meander around elements of the environment.

Member Comments

- Snow is often piled at pedestrian curb cuts making it difficult for disabled residents to cross streets. (Marilyn McNab, resident of Boston)
- Municipalities which receive federal Community Development Block Grant funds can use them to improve sidewalks in low income neighborhoods. (Kristina Johnson, Quincy)

5. Briefing on Truck Restrictions in the Boston Region – Anne Lynch, Executive Director, Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association

A. Lynch gave an overview of the Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association. It is the only organization representing commercial trucking in the state. Massachusetts is not a big trucking state due to the cost of real estate, and zoning that makes it difficult to site terminal and distribution facilities. Many interstate carriers, large state or regional carriers, and companies such as Federal Express and UPS are members.

A. Lynch provided an overview of why trucks are critical to the economy. Trucks move 96% of goods in Massachusetts. Trucks take goods the “last mile”, even if they enter the state on another mode. They move the goods that are essential for life.

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) prohibits any municipality from creating a truck route and prohibiting reasonable access to trucks. Only the federal government can approve truck route and time exclusions. Municipalities must make a petition to the governor's designee (MassDOT) in order to establish a truck route or time exclusion. The restriction is then subject to final approval by the federal government.

A new truck route for non-hazardous materials must meet three criteria:

- It must be wholly within the community requesting the route.
- It may lie partially in an adjacent community, but only if the new route utilizes a state highway.
- It may lie partially in an adjacent community, but the adjacent community must give written approval of the route.

Three items automatically make a proposed truck route or time exclusion eligible for consideration:

- A current route reduces the utilization of a facility, such as a hospital, to the point of creating an unsafe condition.
- A road has deteriorated to the point it is unsafe for trucks. The exclusion cannot be indefinite; it may only be used while the road is fixed.
- A route is in a fully residential area, making it eligible for a nighttime exclusion.

The petition for a route or time exclusion requires data to be submitted to MassDOT. The following items must be provided:

- 24-hour traffic counts (or 12-hour counts for a time exclusion) in 30-minute intervals. They must include number of commercial vehicles with a carrying capacity of 2.5 tons, and all other vehicles.
- A map showing the current route in red and the proposed route in green
- Data on the physical condition of the routes
- Data on the abutting building types
- Data on zoning along the proposed route.
- Diversion distance of the proposed route compared to the existing route
- Traffic controls along the existing and proposed route
- Hours of the exclusion
- A written statement from the municipality about the need for the exclusion

The process for applying for a non-radioactive hazardous materials truck route is more rigorous. Many things considered hazardous materials are common. Hazardous materials include water or milk in a tanker truck, or even a single bottle of white-out. Routes for hazardous materials also require federal approval. The requirements for establishing a hazardous materials truck route include:

- Demonstration that the route enhances public safety. This requires the following information:
 - Population density along the route
 - Type of highways on the route
 - Types and quantities of cargo to be carried over the route

- Emergency response capabilities of the municipalities seeking a route
- Results of consultation with affected persons or groups on the route
- Exposure to other risk factors in the hazardous materials to be carried over the route
- Terrain conditions, such as steep grades
- Continuity of hazardous materials routes between communities
- Alternative routes
- Effects of the route on commerce
- Delays in transportation due to the route
- Climatic conditions for the route
- Accident history along the route
- Public participation: The public needs to have an opportunity to comment.
- Consultation with other municipalities affected by the route: They must agree to accept the exported risk.
- Through routing: A hazardous materials trucking route cannot dead end.
- Cannot result in a round trip deviation of more than 25 miles
- Agreement of other states the route will enter
- Reasonable access to points of loading and unloading
- Compliance with federal regulations must be enforced by the state.

A. Lynch also noted that truck exclusions cannot be established by state legislation.

Member Questions

In response to members' questions, A. Lynch made the following additional comments:

- Tandem trailers are only allowed in Massachusetts on the Turnpike.
- There is a labor shortage in the trucking industry. This is forcing carriers to use double trailers or triple trailers where they are allowed.
- The Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association's biggest concern regarding projects is that the width of the street be maintained to accommodate trucks.

6. FFYs 2011-14 Transportation Improvement Program, Draft Amendment 1 – *Hayes Morrison, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

H. Morrison described the proposed amendment to the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2011 element of the FFYs 2011-14 TIP. The 30-day public comment period on the proposed amendment ends Tuesday, November 23 at 5:00 PM.

The proposed amendment includes adjustments to bridge funding, an earmark, and a pair of new bridge projects. The earmark will provide federal funds for the design of the Adams Green project near Quincy Center. The project would implement context sensitive design solutions for the area that is the burial site for two former U.S. presidents.

The new bridge projects include a bridge over the Sudbury River on Pelham Island Road, and the replacement of seven superstructures on Interstate 93 in Medford. The state will use prefabricated structures to replace one bridge per weekend next summer. The Interstate 93 project will be funded through the Accelerated Bridge Program.

Finally, the proposed amendment includes adjustments to the cash flows for three advance construction bridge projects. These are bridges that are being constructed over multiple years. The total cost of the projects has not changed.

7. Committee Reports

There were none.

8. Announcements

There were none.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.

Attachments:

1. Attendance List for November 10, 2010
2. Handout: "Federal Law Governing Routing of Household Goods (Non-HazMat) and Non-Radioactive Hazardous Materials (NRHM)"

ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for November 10, 2010

Cities and Towns

Lauren Rosenzweig Morton, Acton
Laura Wiener, Arlington
Tom Kadzis, Boston
Todd Kirrane, Brookline
Jeff Rosenblum, Cambridge
Kristina Johnson, Quincy
Walter Bonin, Marlborough
Dom D'Eramo, Millis
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Agencies

Tad Read, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Steven Rawding, MassDOT – Aeronautics Division
Jennifer Solomon, MassRIDES
Alison Felix, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
David Loutzenheiser, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
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
Richard Flynn & Jenna Venturini, Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition
Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects
Chris Anzuoni, Massachusetts Bus Association
Anne Lynch, Massachusetts Motor Transportation Association
David Ernst, MassBike
Tom Yardley, MASCO
Jon Seward, MoveMassachusetts
Tom O'Rourke, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association
John McQueen, WalkBoston

Guests and Visitors

Jo Hart, Worcester resident
Doug Low, Massachusetts Railroad Association
Ed Lowney, Malden resident
Marilyn McNab, Boston resident
Jamie Simchik

MPO Staff

Walter Bennett, Mike Callahan, Hayes Morrison, and Pam Wolfe