

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

October 10, 2012 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Meeting Summary

Introductions

Steve Olanoff, Chair (Westwood) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 7)

Chair's Report—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

The Moving Together Conference is scheduled for October 17 at the Boston Sheraton Hotel. Meetings sponsored by MassDOT will be held throughout the Commonwealth between September 27 and November 29. These meetings are designed to engage the public in a conversation about the transportation system residents want and what MassDOT needs to do to achieve that vision. (A flyer from MassDOT providing detailed information on the meetings, including locations, dates, and times, was available at the documents table.)

The MPO meeting of September 20 was held in Newton, as one of the quarterly meetings held outside of Boston. MPO members expressed concerns about the Advisory Council election process and tone of discussion. The MPO created a committee to review the election and make recommendations for improving the process. The committee's membership included Advisory Council members L. Wiener, R. Canale, and S. Olanoff. It met and made recommendations that will be discussed with the MPO at its October 18 meeting. There will be a report to the Advisory Council at the Advisory Council's November meeting.

Three work scopes were approved by the MPO including the Priority Corridors for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Needs Assessment for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013; Safety and Operations at Selected Intersections – FFY 2013; and the Completion of the Green Line Extension New Starts Analysis.

Amendment One to the FFY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program added in funding for the Red/Blue Connector. Two reports were presented: Safety and

Operations Analyses at Selected Intersections—FFY 2012; and the Charlie Card Trip Path Pilot Study.

At the October 4 MPO meeting, there was a climate change discussion panel which reported on the policies, guidance and resulting activities underway at the state and regional level (MAPC and MPO) to address the emission of greenhouse gases and climate change.

Two work scopes were approved by the MPO on October 4: the MBTA Service Standards and Service Delivery Policy Update and the SWAP Regional Transit Feasibility Study.

Approval of Meeting Minutes of September 12, 2012—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The minutes of the September 12, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved.

Household Survey: Applications and Impacts—*Sanjay Kaul, Manager of Travel Model Development, and Robert Sievert, MPO Staff*

S. Kaul opened the presentation on the recently completed Statewide Household Travel Survey by explaining how the survey pertains to the MPO's work, specifically in terms of providing information for the building of travel models. He emphasized that a major purpose of CTPS is to bring information to the MPO and client agencies that will help with their decision-making.

The model is applied to many of the studies that CTPS completes for the MPO and other clients. The model is used to replicate travel made by people in the region on a daily basis and to forecast future travel. There are three main sources of information that are used to keep the model up to date: information about the transportation network; land use data and socio-economic data from MAPC and the census; and data on travel behavior from household travel surveys.

A household travel survey is conducted by recruiting participants, providing them with travel diaries to record every trip made by each member of the household for a set period of time, and obtaining demographic and other relevant information about the household (having to do with car ownership, income, etc.).

The Boston Region MPO conducted its closest earlier survey in the early 1990s. As the data from that survey began to age, MPO staff began advocating for a new survey.

The objective of the newest survey, just recently completed, was to obtain travel data from 15,000 households in Massachusetts, to get a statistically reliable sample for each MPO in the state, and to obtain statistically reliable data on “sub-markets” that have less common travel patterns (such as households with no cars, for example). This survey involved the use of innovative methods, such as the use of GPS units to record a subset of participants’ travel.

S. Kaul discussed the three aforementioned components of the travel model: the transportation network; land-use and socio-economic data; and travel behavior. He noted that travel behavior is the foundation of the model. He then discussed the need for conducting a new household travel survey given that there have been many changes in the region since the last survey was conducted in the early 1990s.

These changes relate to demographic factors (for example, the population is aging and household size is getting smaller), cost changes (such as higher fuel costs, tolls, and transit fares), changes to income levels, changes of employment centers (with the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs and an increase in service jobs), and changes to the transportation system itself (such as the construction of the Central Artery/Tunnel, the addition of new transit services, and a new focus on transit oriented development).

He described the four-step modeling process for generating travel forecasts and noted that the survey data will update data used in each step. These data include trip length, mode choice, and trip paths. Using the results of the survey, staff intends, in the short term, to update the existing trip-based travel models, and, in the long term, to develop an activity-based model. Most large MPOs in the country are moving in the direction of developing activity-based models, which can supply more policy-oriented information.

The goal of this survey was to collect 15,000 samples throughout the state to obtain information on trip origins and destinations, trip purpose, mode use, and travel paths taken. Participants recorded this data in their travel diaries. A subset of participants was equipped with GPS devices to accurately record all trips. All participants recorded their travel during an agreed upon 24-hour period, which was a non-holiday, weekday. (A copy of the travel diary was provided to members.)

In early 2009, design of the survey began and a sampling plan was developed. Later that year, the survey was tested on 600 households and was refined. The full survey was conducted between June 2010 and December 2011.

The aim was to achieve maximum participation in the survey. To recruit participants, the team began by identifying households that have a mailing address and a residential phone number (a land line), and by using data from a vendor that identified households

with particular characteristics (such as low-income, young, zero-vehicle, Hispanic, and African-American households, for example). This was done to develop a representative sample of the population. The sampling plan involved allocating a proportional number of sample households based on MPO areas and population density.

Approximately 320,000 households were contacted and asked to participate in the survey. Approximately 25,000 agreed to complete the survey, and 15,033 actually did complete the survey. The survey information was retrieved via mail and telephone. Follow-up calls were conducted to verify information.

Of the 15,033 participating households, 613 were equipped with GPS devices. The participating households represent 37,000 people (19,200 of which are workers) and 26,500 vehicles. Fifty-one percent of the households were in the Boston Region. In this region, the mode distribution was as follows: 18.5% walk trips; 1.2% bicycle; 7.4% transit; and 72.9% auto.

R. Sievert described survey results including general characteristics of the sample population; the mode distribution of responders; and their trip making characteristics. The next steps are to clean the survey data, make the data available to the public (while protecting the privacy of participants), develop new trip-based models in the short term, and develop activity-based models in the long term.

Following the presentation, S. Kaul responded to questions:

- The survey conveys the specific behavior of households in the Commonwealth; people who live out-of-state were not tracked.
- Weekend travel was not tracked as the models do not consider weekend travel.
- The data will be useful in updating the current set of models as well as future activity-based models which are the future trend in transportation modeling.
- The MPO initiated the study; it cost less than 3 million dollars.
- The MPO relies on estimates of travel which are the result of travel modeling. This requires using updated data. The survey is a tool to build and update the models.
- The survey does take into account bike trips in multi-modal trips that are linked. In addition, the length and trip characteristic of each trip is captured.
- Timeline for data availability will be determined by MassDOT, once data is cleaned and made secure from exposing personal data of any respondents.
- A trip is defined as having an origin, a destination, and a purpose, regardless of the number of its segments.

Special Committee Presentation—*Steve Olanoff, Chair—Discussion of Comment Letter to MPO on FRA High Speed Rail Project*

The Special Committee presented a cover letter and a comment letter addressed to the MPO presenting proposed Advisory Council comments on the scoping of an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) by the FRA (Federal Railroad Administration) regarding the Northeast Corridor High Speed Rail Project.

Advisory Council members requested that the letter be organized in a way that makes the primary points more prominent. Staff was asked to revise the draft letter to respond to this and other comments from the members.

Discussion of the letter included remarks on the status of High Speed Rail and the importance of South Station Expansion and track and station improvements along the Northeast Corridor. The draft comments called for the inclusion of the North-South Rail Link in the mix of study alternatives, and asked that if the link cannot be constructed in the near future, that there should be an evaluation of the benefit providing that the South Station Expansion design not preclude a future possible link.

There was an expressed concern that the High Speed Rail trains may have a big impact on local passenger rail traffic. Several members felt that the impact the project would have on the existing local passenger service should be addressed.

Chair Olanoff encouraged members to send their own individual comment letters or letters from the entity they represent to the FRA. The letter drafted by the Advisory Council Special Committee and modified by comments from this meeting will be presented to the MPO on October 18. The members unanimously approved a motion to forward the letter to the MPO with comments on the FRA study.

New Business—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

1. R. Arena expressed concern about the way the Advisory Council election process and related discussion was depicted in the minutes of the September 20, 2012 MPO meeting. He found the description in those minutes to be unrepresentative of the discussion at the Advisory Council meeting. He said they did not reflect what actually occurred at the last Advisory Council meeting. He reported that he met with the MPO member who made the remarks and that he has agreed to correct the record in the MPO minutes. R. Arena said that the member recently reviewed the tape of the Advisory Council election discussion and agreed that, while the discussion at the Advisory Council meeting was harsh, it was not, as he described it, a personal attack.

R. Arena said that one reason for the problems in the last meeting is that Massachusetts is not building new projects. He expressed concern over lack of major projects being funneled through to the MPO; he feels there is a bureaucracy here that is not looking to the needs of future generations.

2. F. Osman stated that the Community Innovation Challenge Grants are due November 30. These grants are seeking creative ways to improve services through regional cooperation and sharing of services.

Member Announcements—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

October 13 is meeting of Boston Street Railway Association at the Grand Lodge of Mason's Building, 186 Tremont Street, Boston. There will be a slide show "Journey from Boston to New Bedford –100 Years Back".

US High Speed Rail Conference in Los Angeles, CA, December 3–5.

Also, the Advisory Council's Program Committee is planning to meet at 1:30 PM after MPO meeting on October 18.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:35 PM. The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

MassDOT	Ned Cod
	Steven Rawding
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
MAGIC	Franny Osman
MassRides	Kristin Slaton
Joint Legislative Committee on Transportation	Amanda Richard
Office of Elder Affairs	Emmett Schmarsow
Arlington	Laura Wiener
Boston	Tom Kadzis
Needham	David Montgomery
Quincy	Kristina Johnson
Wellesley	Frank DeMasi
American Council of Engineering Companies	Tom Daley
Association for Public Transportation	Barry Steinberg & Richard Arena
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	Clay Schofield
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail	Jenna Bernabe
Massachusetts Bus Association	Chris Anzuoni
MassBike	Chris Porter
MassCommute	David Kucharsky
National Corridors Initiative	John Businger
Riverside Neighborhood Association	Marilyn Wellons
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Guests

Rachel Fichtenbaum, Human Services in Transportation (EOHHS)

Theodora Fisher, Human Services in Transportation (EOHHS)

Tufts University Students (4)

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Pam Wolfe, CTPS

David Fargen, CTPS

Sanjay Kaul, CTPS

Robert Sievert, CTPS
