

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



## Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

### September 11, 2013 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

## 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 6)

### **Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority – Dr. Beverly Scott, CEO and Executive Manager, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority**

Advisory Council Chair S. Olanoff introduced MBTA CEO and Executive Manager, Dr. Beverly Scott, noting that she is also the Director of the MassDOT Rail and Transit Administration which is involved in managing the 15 state regional transit authorities, as well as managing the Commonwealth's Freight and Rail Program.

Dr. Scott provided a brief overview of her work experience and mentioned several of the transportation agencies she has been involved with throughout her career. Based on her experience in all the different transit agencies, she observed that nearly 70 percent of a transit agency's budget will include labor and fringe benefits. The operating budget is the key component of system renovation, modernization, and expansion.

There is a chronic under-investment in American infrastructure, including water, power and transportation. Although this tendency for under-investment exists in Massachusetts, there is a robust support for transit here. In considering the work that must be done to meet transit needs; she said that we must commit to an ongoing journey of infrastructure investment. No amount of management skill will make up for not tending to the need for ongoing replacement, renovation and expansion of the system.

Dr. Scott explained that the most important aspect for expanding infrastructure is best framed in terms of what that infrastructure "does", not necessarily what it is. What is the service provided by the infrastructure? What is the effect and the benefits for our society

and its functioning that merits the sustained investment? It's not simply about the cost of something; it's about what that piece of infrastructure does for us.

It is hard to talk about transportation reform without addressing labor costs. The culture is what must be changed; this touches on issues like labor availability and chronic absenteeism. Trying to cover scheduled trips when workers do not show up for work over-burdens the operating cost budget by using premium time charges and overtime.

Dr. Scott said that the next level of reform will be with inventory management, health care, pensions and bargaining. She said that she is exploring a just-in-time approach to inventory management that would provide for the allocation of resources in the most efficient way possible. Eliminating obsolete and unused items will streamline the operation.

Project management will focus on scope, schedule and ledger, not to be punitive, but to understand how a project is working. This will make it clear to all who is actually in charge and will help to motivate effective program and project management.

Overall workforce development is a critical piece of keeping the system running. The technical assistance teams work wonders in keeping the 100 year old MBTA system going. There are many highly skilled workers who fully understand and perform their jobs with great precision. It is difficult to replace them given the basic schooling and training programs available for preparing replacement personnel for the existing experts. Apprenticeship programs might alleviate the problems of worker attrition.

Any new strategic plan that lacks a focus on the real people in the system simply does not adequately assess future system needs. "Priming-the-pump" in this context means advocating for taking up careers in the transportation industry among young people. Gateway programs and high school programs are already being integrated into the Washington, DC, school district. It could be well-received here.

The focus on basics with emphasis on the people side of the business, excellent delivery of service, and excellent accountability are key to improving the MBTA system. Dr. Scott said a major investment in bus services is required to the extent that a "Bus Marshall Plan" should be implemented, noting that statewide, many people have no transit at all. Bus system investments should not detract from rail, but should rather enhance all modes. There is currently too much overcrowding in all modes, especially bus; this must be addressed in prioritizing future capital projects.

Convenience, reliability and safety are elements that must be addressed as a complete package; this includes street lighting and walking as part of the overall transportation design. The Way Forward will help to make many of these things possible. People have

to advocate for the projects that are not funded. New busses, vehicles for the Orange Line and Red Line are all the things that will be updated in the short term; but there is still much to do. These are foundational improvements, but in the meantime, transportation infrastructure must continue to be fixed.

Funding from the New Starts federal funding program is being sought to pay for the Green Line Extension project. This is underway and would deliver a very beneficial rail transit service for the transit system.

### **Questions and Answers:**

Dr. Scott continued with responses to questions and comments from members:

- S. Olanoff asked a question about the closing of Government Center Station and the time it will take to complete the project. Dr. Scott said that large construction projects such as the planned renovation of the Government Center Station do upset the travel patterns of many people, yet if the full brunt of the pain is dealt with all at once and in half the time, not only will the disruption be less over the long run, but the cost of the project will be significantly cut as well. There are penalties built into the contract for delay of completion.
- In response to a question from W. Bonin regarding the differences between Massport and the MBTA, Dr. Scott replied that the funding structure for the MBTA is fundamentally different from that of Massport, but also, it is a difference in how the two organizations are viewed. This perception reflects national perspective in what is the premiere system of first choice and that which is a system of last resort.

In comparing U.S. perceptions with European and South American commitment to funding, they have funded systems of public transportation of “first choice” where we had devolved into funding transit systems of “last resort”. It is an attitudinal issue in the U.S. which is a result of definitive public policy.

Operator perception is also a concern which may account for the difference in public attitude. The vehicle operators must maintain an image of the importance and excellence of the service that they provide.

- R. McGaw asked if the changes that have been incorporated during her tenure at the MBTA will be long lasting in order to prevent backsliding; Dr. Scott stated that it is important to be strategic in deciding what to do first in order to establish lasting institutional change. Employee availability and workforce development are key issues that will positively change while she is here at the MBTA. There must be an insertion of new and fresh ideas.

- F. DeMasi stated that although there are stark differences in the organizational structures of Massport and the MBTA (the airport is not funded through taxes, and the actual transportation is provided by the private sector) there is an attraction to invest in public-private projects. Dr. Scott said that she felt there is a very deep connection between the public and both of these institutions.
- Dr. Scott responded with thanks to a commendation from L. Elisa on the issue of access to the MBTA being vastly improved, especially having snow removal throughout Roxbury and Dorchester immediately after storms. Also, the presence of benches and kiosks throughout the MBTA region are now available where they were not before.
- In response to an observation by L. Elisa, Dr. Scott said that the possibility of establishing a high school program, for promoting transit oriented and program development along the lines of the training program in Washington, at Cordoza High School is worth pursuing.

#### **Chair's Report—*Steve Olanoff, Chair***

The certification documents and the amendments presented to the MPO over the last two months have all been approved.

#### **Approval of Meeting Minutes of July 10, 2013 - *Steve Olanoff, Chair***

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes to the July 10, 2013, meeting. The July 10, 2013, meeting minutes were approved.

#### **Election Committee—*Laura Wiener, Chair:***

The Nominating Committee met twice over the summer and developed a slate of two nominees for the two positions of Chair and Vice Chair for the upcoming election of officers. The Committee nominated David Montgomery, Needham, for Chair and Mike Gowing, Acton, for Vice Chair.

The floor was opened for additional nominations. There were no further nominations. A motion to close nominations was made and seconded. The motion to close nominations was passed unanimously. A motion to accept the nominations of the Election Committee was made and seconded. The motion to accept the nomination of David Montgomery and Mike Gowing for Advisory Council Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, was passed unanimously. Nominations for the October 9, 2013, election were closed.

Candidates will submit a brief statement to the members which will be distributed prior the election.

## **Committee Reports:**

There were none.

## **Old Business:**

There has not yet been a response to the Advisory Council's comment letter on the UPWP and TIP submitted in June.

## **New Business and Member Announcements:**

J. Businger commented on the recent addition of route number signage on roadways in the Boston region. He expressed concern over signs that he views as confusing or incorrect.

F. DeMasi announced that a hearing on service with the MetroWest Regional Transportation Authority will be held tomorrow, September 12, 2013, at 8:30 AM, at the Wellesley Town Hall. This is a JARC funded project.

S. Olanoff announced that the MPO election will be held on October 30 at the MAPC Fall Council meeting in Boston. The Advisory Council election will be held at the next Advisory Council meeting on October 9, 2013. He also announced that the Moving Together Conference sponsored by MassDOT will be held on October 23. The conference deals with promoting pedestrian, bicycle, and transit modes of travel for a healthy transportation system. Advisory Council members were encouraged to attend.

## **Adjourn:**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:52 PM. The motion passed, unanimously.

## **Attendance**

### **Agencies (\* MPO & other non-voting)**

MBTA\*

### **Agencies (Voting)**

MassRIDES

Seaport Advisory Council

EOHHS HST

### **Municipalities (Voting) \*MPO Member**

Acton

Arlington\*

Belmont

Boston\*

Cambridge

Marlborough

Needham

Quincy

Wellesley

Westwood

### **Citizen Groups**

AACT

American Council of Engineering Companies

Association for Public Transportation

Boston Society of Architects

Massachusetts Bus Association

MassBike

MASCO

MoveMassachusetts

National Corridors Initiative

Riverside Neighborhood Association

Route 128 Business Council

WalkBoston

### **Guests**

Ed Lowney

### **CTPS Staff**

Pam Wolfe, Manager, Certification Activities

Elizabeth Moore, Director, Policy & Planning

### **Attendee**

Dr. Beverly Scott; Francisco  
Gutierrez; Charles Plank

Catherine Paquette

Louis Elisa

Theodora Fisher

Mike Gowing

Laura Wiener

Robert McGaw

Tom Cadzis

Cleo Stoughton

Walter Bonin

David Montgomery

Kristina Johnson

Frank DeMasi

Steve Olanoff

Mary Ann Murray

Tom Daley

Barry M. Steinberg

Schuyler Larrabee

Chris Anzuoni

Chris Porter

Tom Yardley

Jon Seward

John Businger

Marilyn Wellons

Monica Tibbits-Nutt

John McQueen

Michelle Scott

Ryan Hicks

David Fargen