

## **Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting**

### **December 12, 2012 Meeting**

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

### **Meeting Summary**

#### **1. 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)

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

On November 15, the MPO approved a work program for the Review of Fare Structure, Tariffs, and Service for the upcoming year. On December 6, the MPO met at the Norwood Civic Center according to the MPO policy of holding one meeting per quarter at various cities and towns throughout the MPO region. At this meeting, the MPO approved the Safe Access to Transit by Pedestrians and Bicyclists study. The study examined four transit stations in depth with special attention to pedestrians and bicyclists. The stations studied were Braintree, Riverside, Oak Grove, and Morton.

#### **3. Approval of Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2012—*Steve Olanoff, Chair***

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The minutes of the November 14, 2012, meeting were unanimously approved.

#### **4. The Future of Transit and Development in Greater Boston - *Stephanie Pollack, Associate Director of Research, Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, Northeastern University***

##### **Study Background**

Stephanie Pollack briefly described current studies and reports available at the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy.

- “Staying on Track”
- “Green Transportation Community”
- “Future of Transit and Development”, covering the relationship between public transit and development
- “Hub and Spoke”, looking at whether there will there be enough room for growth

- “Transportation Finance Research Collaborative”, talking about the state of finances in the state

### **Thinking ahead - planning for the system we want**

Ms. Pollack discussed the “Hub and Spoke” report, released in June, 2012, and that focused on building a better understanding of the transportation system by posing several questions:

- Is ridership growing, and how does it relate to the real estate market?
- Can we pinpoint where congestion is?
- How fast is ridership growing?

She made the following remarks.

Transportation planners historically thought that ridership was a function of economic activity. The current stagnant economic experience does not bear that out. In light of a doubling of transit ridership, even in an economic downturn, we should ask what is fueling this level of increased activity and how many more people will be trying to use the system in the future when economic factors improve.

Changes in the real estate market patterns of development also impact higher transit ridership. Three key trends that contribute to higher transit ridership are:

1. New Square Footage. Developers are building more projects near transit (housing, commercial development, mixed-use development and institutional growth with universities and hospitals). These all add up to more density near transit, resulting in more riders.
2. Infill: the densification of existing buildings. There are more people per square foot in buildings. New buildings are being constructed with fewer square feet per employee standards. So even though we are using the same building as ten years ago, there are more employees using the space. This is a universal trend.
3. Mode shift. As a policy of the Commonwealth, the more employers encourage transit use by their employees, the greater the impact on the system.

Until recently, the average weekday rider (AWR) levels were about 1.2 M riders per day. Last year, this number was consistently at 1.3M AWR. Using the most conservative assumptions in modeling growth, the number by 2020 will swell to 1.4M AWR. With assumptions that include higher use patterns, the forecast would go even higher, to 1.7M AWR. There is likely to be an additional 100K to 200K new riders on the system in ten years.

In reviewing the existing load on the system, the Service Load Standards (SLS) adopted by the MBTA were used as acceptable standards for considering how crowded the service should be. From a planning perspective, a congestion rating system was developed to match projected growth against SLS.

Analysis forecasted that the Orange Line between Downtown Crossing Station and North Station would exceed SLS levels, but be below “crush capacity”. The Green Line would experience some serious capacity problems. South Station would experience crowding with the Commuter Rail.

Geographic clusters were reviewed as “hot-spots” where likely growth, using the three key trends (growth, infill and mode shift) is underway but the SLS are not currently being exceeded. This analysis identified five places which will likely need more capacity to support the level of development growth and mode shift in the future. The five areas are:

- Kendall Square Area
- Back Bay / Copley Area
- Longwood Medical Area
- Seaport
- Downtown Boston Core

These are important economic growth areas not just for Boston, but for the entire state. Economic development is dependent on the ability of the transit system to move an increasing number of people and if there is not enough capacity in the transit system to move these people, then there could be a negative impact on economic growth.

If anything can be done to address the projected shortfall of transit system capacity by 2020, we must begin planning now. Limited funds are now mostly allocated to system maintenance and expansion. Attention should be paid to the concept of adding capacity to places that are already served.

In response to questions, S. Pollack pointed out that increases in cost associated with driving will impact transit ridership choices. This will result in a need for more transit seats to meet the increased ridership demands.

MASCO bypasses congestion points by providing service from Dorchester to the Longwood Medical Area, bypassing downtown Boston. Analysis that has yet to be undertaken concerns the potential diverted development issues.

Regional density in Boston is about the same as Los Angeles. It seems denser because our transit is so congested. The bottom line is that we are not planning for even minimum growth factors. We must consider what system we need in 2020 to accomplish all the development goals we have, including lowering GHG emission goals, reducing congestion, and having an accessible system.

## **Get the land use side right**

Ms. Pollack discussed the “Future of Transit and Development” report. She reported that the Dukakis Center for Urban Policy studied transit oriented development (TOD) reviewing all transit and commuter rail stations and the MBTA 15 Key Bus Routes. The area covered was comprised of a half-mile buffer around these transit stations and links in order to look at travel characteristics of these areas.

Achieving congestion, pollution and travel option goals is linked to how people travel. Just because a home or a workplace is near a transit station does not make it a TOD.

Transit oriented development should be linked to transit use. Transit oriented development depends upon the following:

### ***Transit***

- The kind of transit available and its operating characteristics
- The number of places the transit rider connects to
- Measures of transit access quality: (Transit Shed-measure; Transit Connectivity Measure)

### ***Orientation***

- Oriented to whom? Only about a half-dozen groups account for an overwhelming proportion of all transit use: renters, people who do not own a car, recent immigrants, students, low-income people, people of color, and disabled people. These groups account for ninety percent of all transit users in 50 of the largest cities in the U.S.
- Are likely transit users living or working in the area? If not, it won't carry a lot of people.
- Most people access transit by walking, so the neighborhood near the transit station is the primary place from which the transit station draws its riders.

### ***Density***

- Common questions are: How dense is the area; how many houses per acre; what is the block size; what is the walk scope? On the Dukakis Center website, you can select any of the stations or any of the key bus routes and transit stations to find these ratings.

Ms. Pollack summarized some findings of the study:

- The study area captures three percent of the land area of the entire metropolitan area.
- In that three percent, 30% of all households and 22% of all the population are located.
- The residential density is nine times greater than the residential density in the rest of the region.
- Workers near transit are twice as likely to use public transportation; three times more likely to walk, bike, and use public transportation than the rest of the metropolitan area.
- There are two times as many households with no cars.

She concluded that targeting the building of TODs to this 3% transit-shed will help to achieve the goals of less GHG, less congestion, and lower air pollution.

In response to questions, S. Pollack stated that the part of a suburb that contains the transit station needs to fit TOD development considerations.

- A transit station is a regional asset built with public investment and the nearby land use should leverage that asset. With that mindset intact, the specifics of each TOD will depend on the place.
- A proxy for parking availability is the presence of zero vehicle households. These households have significantly less VMT than households with vehicles. For every one transit trip made in a well-designed TOD, six are made on foot. A high “walk score” is a good predictor of less driving and higher transit use.

Ms. Pollack discussed the “Staying on Track” report. It identifies measurable variables for the transportation network. It must be:

- well-maintained
- sustainably funded
- affordable
- safe

- convenient
- environmentally sustainable.

It must also have good access to jobs, homes, goods and services, and provide real transportation options.

Transportation investment should meet equity objectives, improve service where needed, as well as provide equitable access.

Ms. Pollack concluded her discussion by stating that the future of many institutions depends on the future of the transit system. Now is the time to ask what the world will look like in 20 years. We cannot limit our thinking to what we can afford, but should also think about asking what do we want.

Transit is something that we don't all use; but we all need.

## **New Business:**

Mary Ellen Sullivan introduced Michelle Scott to the group after Chair Olanoff commended Mary Ellen for her service to the Advisory Council and the MPO. Michelle is taking on the UPWP Manager position upon Mary Ellen's retirement.

M. Scott distributed the schedule for development of the FFY 2014 UPWP. The UPWP includes descriptions and budgets for on-going work and discrete studies funded by the MPO. It also includes information on studies funded by partner agencies.

Sean Pfalzer reviewed the FFYs 2014 – 17 TIP development schedule. Staff has already conducted several meetings with local sub-regional groups. Staff will add newly identified projects to the universe of proposed projects, evaluate them, and consider them for inclusion in the TIP. The MPO is scheduled to circulate a document for public review in May. After the public review period, the MPO will consider comments and endorse the final TIP at the end of June.

## **Committee Meeting:**

The Membership Committee will meet on Wednesday, December 19 at 2:00 PM in the MPO Conference Room, Room 2150. Schuyler Larrabee and Louis Elisa were appointed to the Committee. Any Advisory Council member can ask to become a member of the committee, and the committee meeting is open for all to attend.

### **9. Old Business—*Steve Olanoff, Chair***

There was none.

### **10. Member Announcements—*Steve Olanoff, Chair***

There was none.

### **11. Adjourn**

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

### **Attendance**

Calli Cenizal	MassDOT*
Steven Rawding	MassDOT – Aeronautics Division*
John Read	BRA*
Amanda Richard	Joint Legislative Transportation Committee
Leon Papadopoulos	MassRIDES
Louis Elisa	Seaport Advisory Council
Bob McGaw	Belmont
Tom Kadzis	Boston*
Jeffrey Rosenblum	Cambridge
William Friel	Canton
Walter Bonin	Marlborough
David Montgomery	Needham
Kristina Johnson	Quincy
Frank DeMasi	Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Chair	Westwood
Many Ann Murray	AACT
Tom Daley	Am. Council of Engineering Companies
Barry M Steinberg	Assoc. for Public Transportation
Schuyler Larrabee	Boston Society of Architects
Jenna Bernabe	Eastern Mass. Freight Rail Coalition
Chris Anzuoni	Mass. Bus Association
David Ernst	MassBike
David Kucharsky	MassCommute
Tom Yardley	MASCO
John Seward	MoveMassachusetts
Monica Tibbits, Vice Chair	Route 128 Business Council

John McQueen  
(\*Non-voting)

WalkBoston

**Guests**

Ed Lowney

Resident

Ralph Edwards

Dept. of Developmental Services

**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

Daniel Amstutz

David Fargen

Anne McGahan

Elizabeth Moore

Sean Pfalzer

Michelle Scott

Mary Ellen Sullivan

Pam Wolfe