

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

June 26, 2014 Meeting

10:10 AM – 11:45 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Clinton Bench, Chair, representing Richard Davey, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- endorse the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- endorse Amendment Three to the FFYs 2014-17 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

State Senator William Brownsberger thanked the staff of the MPO, MassDOT, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for developing the Core Capacity Constraints study in the draft FFY 2015 UPWP. He urged members to consider it favorably when they vote on the UPWP today.

Lee Auspitz, Somerville resident, expressed support for the *Green Line Extension* project – both for the extension to Union Square and College Avenue, and the extension from College Avenue to Route 16. He suggested that MassDOT make an administrative modification to planning documents referencing the project to change the name of the proposed station at Boston Avenue and College Avenue in Medford from “Medford Hillside” to “Tufts University.” He noted that the MBTA already makes a practice of naming stations after non-profit organizations and that naming the new station after the university would avoid confusion. This action would also be in conformity with federal naming standards and existing federal records, he noted.

Cameron Bain, Stoneham resident and a longtime advocate of the *Tri-Community Bikeway* project, thanked the MPO and the staff of MassDOT and the MPO for their work to advance the bikeway project.

2. Chair's Report—*Clinton Bench, MassDOT*

C. Bench remarked on performance measures and noted that the MPO staff's work is leading the nation in this area.

He also remarked upon recent federal rulemaking under MAP-21, which requires MPOs to allow the participation of regional transit authorities (RTAs) in their planning. The Boston Region MPO already includes the MBTA as a member and involves the RTAs. Federal guidance is expected to be forthcoming in the next few months.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports

Sree Allam, Chair of the UPWP Committee, reported that the UPWP Committee met on June 19 to discuss public comments received regarding the draft FFY 2015 UPWP. The Committee voted to recommend that the MPO endorse the document.

Members addressed the UPWP in agenda item #6 of this meeting.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*David Montgomery, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

D. Montgomery raised a concern of the Advisory Council that large, expensive projects are consuming most of the MPO's resources, while there is less money devoted to smaller projects. This is a concern for public involvement because many who are involved with the Advisory Council are seeking to advance smaller scale projects.

The Advisory Council is also concerned because the MPO has been bearing the cost increases to projects. The Advisory Council is encouraging the MPO to find a way so that it is not solely responsible when projects increase greatly in cost or change in scope.

Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), expressed agreement with the Advisory Council's recommendation. He suggested that this topic could be addressed in a future MPO meeting.

Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, MPO staff, noted that staff listens carefully to members at meetings and takes direction from the discussions. She also noted that it is particularly helpful if members provide feedback on issues of interest as this helps staff better understand what the members value.

C. Bench reported that other MPOs in the state have raised similar concerns. He noted that MPOs should recognize that as projects go through the design process their costs will change. Cost estimates for projects at the 25% design stage are preliminary. MPOs have the prerogative to account for contingencies and cost increases when

programming funds. David Anderson, MassDOT, discussed meetings that the MassDOT Highway Division has had with the American Council of Engineering Companies to develop a formalized way of preparing project cost estimates at the preliminary stages of project design (pre-25% and 25% design submittals). MassDOT is planning to have a method to account for contingencies early in the design process, formalize a database for tracking projects, and formalize how inflation factors are applied. To the point made by C. Bench previously, D. Anderson noted that when MassDOT prepares its Statewide Bridge List, the agency leaves a cushion for cost increases and does not program up to the full amount of funds available.

Laura Wiener, At-Large Town of Arlington, asked if the MPO would be at risk of losing those target funds that it did not program, or if those funds could be carried over. C. Bench replied that if the MPO does not spend all of its target funds, those funds would be applied to statewide items.

D. Montgomery expressed support for having the MPO maintain a cushion of funding when programming, noting that in recent years, the MPO has not had the problem of being left with a surplus of unprogrammed funds.

5. Executive Director's Report—Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff

R. Mannion noted that staff will plan to have the topic discussed in agenda item #4 as a future meeting agenda item.

6. FFY 2015 Unified Planning Work Program Endorsement—Sree Allam, MassDOT, and Michelle Scott, MPO Staff

As noted in agenda item #3, the UPWP Committee met on June 19 and voted to recommend that the MPO endorse the draft FFY 2015 UPWP. The UPWP is a work program produced annually that documents the planning studies that the MPO and MAPC staff will conduct in the coming federal fiscal year using funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

M. Scott provided members with an update on the outreach conducted during the public review period for the draft document, summarized the public comments received and the responses that staff proposes to those comments, and noted updates that were made to the UPWP document.

Outreach meetings were held in Boston, Reading, and Randolph. Both the UPWP and draft FFYs 2015-18 TIP were discussed. During conversations at these meetings, there

was some interest expressed in the Bicycle Network Gaps: Feasibility Evaluations study. Staff also briefed the Advisory Council on studies.

Staff distributed a matrix summarizing the written comments received as of June 20 with proposed MPO responses to them. The original comment letters were also made available to members.

Commenters – including state legislators, neighborhood organizations, and residents – expressed support for the Core Capacity Constraints study, which would examine current and future constraints on the transportation system in the urban core. Support was also expressed for the Fairmount Line Station Access Analysis study, which will examine bicycle and pedestrian access to stations on the Fairmount commuter rail line. This study would complement work that is being done by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and other entities to support access to the Fairmount line.

Members of the public also suggested several project concepts, including a study of alternatives for addressing components of the transportation system in the vicinity of the Southeast Expressway, and a study of alternatives for the Red Line and Green Lines. A commenter also suggested analyzing portions of the bicycle and pedestrian network, including locations near the Route 99 bridge over the Mystic River, connections to the Northern Strand Community Trail, connections in Cambridge and Watertown, and connections across Boston Harbor. In response to these comments, staff proposed responses to inform the commenter that the study ideas will be considered during the development of the FFY 2016 UPWP and/or forwarded to appropriate agencies.

The Advisory Council also submitted a comment letter (which was distributed to members) that expressed support for the studies included in the draft UPWP, particularly for the Freight Planning Support: FFY 2015 program. The Advisory Council also supports additional funding being applied to future freight planning activities in future years.

A letter was also received from Allston residents who urged that specific priorities and guidelines be used in the Massachusetts Turnpike Allston Interchange Traffic Study. Staff forwarded this letter to the MassDOT project team that is leading the study.

The 495/MetroWest Partnership indicated support for several studies and requested that the MPO reconsider the Hudson/Marlborough Suburban Mobility Study. Staff's proposed response to this request will indicate that the MPO is planning to address some of the issues raised through the Regional Transit Service Planning Technical Support: FFY 2014 program.

Several updates were made to the UPWP document since the draft was released for public review. These include the addition of project schedules and staff assignment tables to the UPWP document, the addition of projects (to be conducted by other entities) to Appendix A, and clarifications to the document text and descriptions of projects, including some requested by FHWA.

A motion to endorse the FFY 2015 UPWP as presented was made by the At-Large Town of Arlington (L. Wiener), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

7. FFYs 2014-17 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Three—Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff

S. Pfalzer gave an update on the public comments received during the public review period for the draft Amendment Three to the FFYs 2014-17 TIP. The MPO received one comment letter from a Medford resident who expressed support for continued funding for the *Green Line Extension* project – both for the extension to Union Square and College Avenue, and the extension from College Avenue to Route 16. The resident requested that the Commonwealth fulfill its commitment to build the extension to Route 16. The letter was distributed to members.

S. Pfalzer also provided a recap of the changes that the amendment would make to the TIP. They include updates to cost estimates for highway projects; modifications to the funding programs for the MBTA, MetroWest RTA (MWRTA), and Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA); and the programming of Section 5310 community transit awards. (TIP tables were provided showing the details, which are also summarized below.)

Highway Program

Proposed changes to the target funding for the Highway Program include cost changes to the following projects:

- *Beverly – Reconstruction and Signal Improvements on Rantoul Street (Route 1A):* \$4.1 million cost increase
- *Hanover – Reconstruction of Washington Street (Route 53):* \$823,045 cost increase
- *Reading – Reconstruction of West Street:* \$158,367 cost decrease
- *Needham and Wellesley – Add-a-Lane Contract V:* increase of \$1.7 million in cash flows

Other proposed changes include moving the *Salem – Reconstruction on Canal Street* project from the FFY 2014 element to the FFY 2015 element.

Also, staff is proposing to change the funding source for the *Arlington – Bikeway Connection at Intersection of Route 3 and Route 60, Massachusetts Avenue, Pleasant Street, and Mystic Street* project so that it is largely funded through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). With the MPO's approval, the \$1.6 million *Bikeway* project would be paid for with \$1,010,000 in HSIP funds and the balance by Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ) funds.

Transit Program

During the public review period, staff was informed of two discretionary grants awarded to the MBTA that would be used to replace engines on ferry vessels. The FFY 2013 award amount is \$139,133 and the FFY 2014 amount is \$137,958. Both grants require a 20% state match. With the MPO's approval, staff would incorporate those grants into Amendment Three.

Other proposed changes to the transit program include the programming of more than \$5 million worth of projects funded by Section 5310 transit grants and \$1.5 million worth of projects funded through the Mobility Assistance Program. Much of the funding will go towards the purchase of vehicles for Councils on Aging in communities across the region. The funding will also be used to support the 128 Business Council's Alewife shuttle service, replace vehicles in the MWRTA's fleet, and purchase new buses for CATA.

At the request of members, a clarification was made to the TIP tables to indicate that the 128 West Transportation Council is associated with the 128 Business Council. The grant award received by that entity will support the Alewife shuttle service.

Discussion

C. Bench confirmed that the new changes that staff is proposing (which were not included in the version of the Amendment released for public review) are to clarify the grant to the 128 Business Council's Alewife shuttle service and to program the ferry boat discretionary grants.

A motion to endorse Amendment Three to the FFYs 2014-17 TIP as presented was made by the Advisory Board (P. Regan), and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa).

Members continued to discuss the amendment.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), asked staff to discuss the impact that moving the *Salem – Reconstruction on Canal Street* project from the FFY 2014 element of the TIP to the FFY 2015 element would have on the FFY 2015 element. S. Pfalzer explained that, as a result, three projects would move out of this TIP from the FFY 2015 element to the FFY 2016 element: *Marlborough – Reconstruction of Route 85*; *Brookline – Intersection and Signal Improvements at Route 9 and Village Square (Gateway East)*; and *Weymouth – Reconstruction and Widening on Route 18*.

R. Reed asked for confirmation that the funding for those three projects would be incorporated into the future TIP covering FFYs 2016 through 2019. S. Pfalzer confirmed that that would be the case.

Members then voted to endorse Amendment Three to the FFYs 2014-17 TIP as presented. The motion carried.

8. Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

The meeting minutes were not taken up.

9. FFYs 2015-18 Transportation Improvement Program Update—Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff

S. Pfalzer provided an update on the public comments received to date on the FFYs 2015-18 TIP. The MPO will be accepting public comments on this document until the close of the public review period on July 8. A matrix summarizing the comments and copies of the letters and emails received were made available to members.

The MPO has received 22 written comments thus far. Oral comments were also heard at public meetings held in Boston, Reading, and Randolph. The comments expressed the following:

- support for the *Stoneham, Winchester, and Woburn – Tri-Community Bikeway* project, including from the Boards of Selectmen in Stoneham and Winchester, the Town of Stoneham Bikeway/Greenway Committee, and residents of Stoneham and Winchester
- support for the *Green Line Extension* project – both for the extension to Union Square and College Avenue, and the extension from College Avenue to Route 16 – from the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) and a Medford resident
- comment from a supporter of the *Green Line Extension* project that the legal commitment is to build the Green line to Medford Hillside, meaning to Route 16

- opposition to the *Green Line Extension* from College Avenue to Route 16 from Medford residents who are concerned about increased traffic congestion, the commercialization of Medford, and gentrification
- support for the *Marlborough – Reconstruction of Route 85* project from the Mayor of Marlborough
- request for funding a project to reconstruct Farm Street in Framingham
- support for the *Brookline – Intersection and Signal Improvements at Route 9 and Village Square (Gateway East)* project from state legislators and Children's Hospital
- support for the *Assabet River Rail Trail* project from the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Maynard
- opposition to the *Brookline – Pedestrian Bridge Rehabilitation over MBTA off Carlton Street* project
- request for projects to build bicycle path connections from Fresh Pond Parkway to the Charles River, and from Paul Revere Park to the Northern Strand Community Trail
- request from the CLF that the MPO make available greenhouse gas impacts of all projects that the MPO is considering
- request from the CLF that the cost of the *Red Line – Blue Line Connector* project be adjusted for inflation
- concern from the Advisory Council about the balance in programming large- and small-scale projects
- request from the Advisory Council to increase funding for freight planning

Staff will provide members with any new comments that are submitted during the remainder of the public review period. The MPO is scheduled to vote on the TIP on July 10.

Discussion

D. Anderson informed members that MassDOT Highway Division is working with the City of Boston and FHWA on planning for the *Boston – Bridge Replacement, Massachusetts Avenue (Route 2A) over Commonwealth Avenue* project. This will be a three year project starting in FFY 2015. MassDOT is planning to use accelerated construction techniques that will require utility relocation work to be done in advance of reconstructing the Massachusetts Avenue Bridge. It will be necessary to adjust the programming of funds for the project to reflect the costs of the utility work in FFY 2015 and construction in FFYs 2016 and 2017. The overall cost of the project is not expected to change.

10. Roundabouts—*Andrew Paul, MassDOT Highway Design Section*

A. Paul gave a presentation about roundabouts, a roadway design that is gaining popularity for its benefits in terms of safety and efficient traffic operations. There are currently 147 circular intersections in Massachusetts, of which 113 are rotaries and 34 are roundabouts. A. Paul gave examples of both rotaries and roundabouts in the state, and explained the difference between the two types of facilities.

The largest rotary in the state is at Copeland Circle in Revere. New roundabouts are being built, some in the context of transit oriented development, such as the state's newest roundabout at the Assembly Square development in Somerville.

Roundabouts differ from rotaries in that the roundabout design encourages vehicles to travel at lower speeds. Traffic speed is dictated by the diameter of the circle and by the design that deflects vehicles earlier to slow their speeds as they enter the roundabout. Also, roundabouts are single lane facilities while rotaries have multiple lanes.

Roundabouts are safer because entering vehicles are travelling at a similar speed to vehicles already in the roundabout and vehicles do not change lanes within the roundabout. They are also safer for pedestrians because there is only one lane of traffic to cross, limited points of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, and lower vehicle speeds.

The safety benefits of roundabouts have been borne out by research conducted by FHWA, in partnership with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which found that these facilities can reduce crashes by 48%, reduce crash severity by 78%, and reduce fatalities by almost 90%. Other studies have yielded similar safety results.

MassDOT has been retrofitting rotaries with new design principles used for roundabouts. Often low-cost options are used such as signing, pavement striping, and repaving. Wonderland Circle in Revere is an example of a rotary where the pavement was restriped to formalize how vehicles should navigate within the rotary.

Municipalities in the state have been approaching MassDOT to request roundabouts. MassDOT has 24 projects in design and is working on five retrofit projects.

Discussion

E. Bourassa asked whether the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is involved with rotary retrofits considering these types of facilities exist on DCR-operated parkways. A. Paul was not aware of DCR's activity in that regard.

Richard Canale, At-Large Town of Lexington, asked A. Paul to discuss the design challenges of multi-lane rotaries. A. Paul noted that design challenges include making these facilities more bicycle and pedestrian friendly. He pointed to opportunities to learn from roundabout designs used in Europe, such as the German “turbo” roundabout , which reduces vehicle speed. He discussed the need to address safety for pedestrians at locations where vehicles exit the rotary and are picking up speed. Sensitivity analyses can be done to determine whether lanes could be reduced, and to understand future usage of a rotary, and determine if expansion would be required.

Ron Morgan, MBTA, asked if MassDOT has plans to retrofit the rotary at the Bourne Bridge at Cape Cod. A. Paul replied that a repaving project is planned for the rotary in the next couple of years.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), remarked that it is a common perception that rotaries are dangerous and that they can be chaotic when motorists do not follow traffic rules. A. Paul discussed how MassDOT’s retrofit program is used to organize that traffic chaos by formalizing lanes, channeling traffic into appropriate lanes, and using design to communicate to drivers how they should be operating in the rotary.

R. Reed asked how roundabout design can take into account traffic volumes that vary at different times of the day. A. Paul discussed how designers use thresholds for volumes of traffic entering and circulating in an intersection. If the sum of those two figures is less than 1,100 for peak travel hours, only a single lane roundabout would be required. More analysis would be required for locations with peak volumes between 1,100 and 1,500 to determine whether multiple lanes would be required. Volumes above 1,500 would require a multilane facility.

Patrick Hoey, City of Boston, noted that the rotary at Old Colony Avenue and Columbia Road in Boston could be a possible location for a retrofit. People who live in the neighborhood near that rotary have expressed concerns about safety for pedestrians. A. Paul suggested possible ways to improve pedestrian safety there, including restriping, signing, or adding bollards to better define vehicle and pedestrian pathways.

C. Bench re-emphasized the safety benefits of roundabouts and A. Paul reiterated that roundabouts have been shown to reduce traffic fatalities by 90%.

11. Members Items

There were none.

12. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

At-Large City (City of Everett)	James Errickson
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Lara Mérida
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Patrick Hoey
Federal Highway Administration	Michael Chong
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Clinton Bench
	David Anderson
	Marie Rose
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Ron Morgan
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Richard Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Denise Deschamps
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	David Montgomery
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Christine Stickney
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Sree Allam	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Lee Auspitz	Somerville resident
Cameron Bain	Stoneham resident
Andrew Bettinelli	Office of State Senator William Brownsberger
William Brownsberger	State Senator
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director
Catherine Dubreck
Maureen Kelly
Anne McGahan
Elizabeth Moore
Scott Peterson
Sean Pfalzer
Michelle Scott
Pam Wolfe
