

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

September 18, 2014 Meeting

10:10 AM – 12:05 PM, 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:

- approve Amendment Four of the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2014-17 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), as amended at today's meeting
- approve the work program for the *MBTA Neighborhood Maps*

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

Lee Auspitz, Somerville resident, discussed a concern that he has been raising before the MPO concerning the geographical references used to describe the terminus of the *Green Line Extension* project. He contends that referring to Medford Hillside as the project's terminus is inconsistent with federal geospatial/mapping standards, set in the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Circular A-16.

He has requested that corrections be made to MPO, MBTA, and MassDOT documents that reference the Medford Hillside location. These documents include the TIP and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). He reported that the project team for the *Green Line Extension* project has made a change to one of its maps to remove a Medford Hillside label. He also reported that he has submitted a request under the Freedom of Information Act to determine if a document has been produced regarding the issue of compliance with OMB regulations. He provided written testimony as well.

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

C. Bench reported on several items.

The recipients of federal TIGER (Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery) grants were announced last week. Massachusetts was awarded a \$20 million grant to modernize Ruggles Station.

Massachusetts has received \$74 million in redistribution funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The funds will be spent on capital projects.

The annual hearings on the State Implementation Plan (SIP) will be held on October 2 from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM, and on October 6 from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM.

MassDOT is making a couple of changes to the STIP before FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) sign off on the document. The *Reconstruction of Melnea Cass Boulevard* project in Boston is being moved from the FFY 2015 element to the FFY 2016 element because MassDOT has not yet received the 25% design plans for the project. Also, there are new cash flows for the *Green Line Extension* project. As a result of these changes, the MPO's TIP will need to be amended this fall.

The St. Joseph's Society of the North End will be recognizing John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, with a Community Service Award at the St. Joseph's Feast on October 3.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports

Lourenço Dantas, Massachusetts Port Authority (MassPort), reported that the MPO's Congestion Management Committee met this morning. The Committee discussed the FFY 2015 activities for the Congestion Management Program. A work program outlining those activities will be presented to the MPO in November. The Committee also discussed two project proposals for the FFY 2016 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

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

D. Montgomery reported that the Advisory Council held a Community Transportation Forum at its meeting on September 10. There was an interactive discussion between attendees and panelists representing the MassDOT Rail and Transit Division, Human Services Transportation Office, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, 128 Business Council, and CrossTown Connect about locally based solutions to mobility problems. The conversation also touched on new ridesharing systems, such as Uber; enthusiasm was expressed for those systems and the technology that makes them possible.

The Advisory Council's next meeting on October 8 will feature updates from MPO staff on the visions, goals, and objectives of the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and its draft Public Participation Plan.

The Advisory Council will also hold its annual election of officers. Mike Gowing, Town of Acton, is running for Chair and D. Montgomery is running for Vice Chair. The new terms begin in November.

5. Executive Director's Report—*Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

K. Quackenbush introduced Natalie Raffol who has been hired in the Certification Activities Group. She will be the lead staff person of public engagement activities and will be supporting work on the TIP.

6. Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Four—*Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff*

On August 21, the MPO voted to release Draft Amendment Four of the FFYs 2014-17 TIP for a 15-day public review and comment period. The shortened review period was approved because of the upcoming deadline for advertising projects to receive FFY 2014 funding.

The amendment would remove the *South Bay Harbor Trail* project in Boston, address several highway project cost increases, and make adjustments to the funding for transit projects for the Cape Ann Transportation Authority and the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority.

S. Pfalzer gave an overview of the public comments received, as well as changes and updates to the amendment since the public review period opened.

There was one public comment pertaining to the amendment. The commenter expressed support for the inclusion of funding for the *South Bay Harbor Trail* project. There were two other comments addressing TIP projects that are not affected by the amendment. One, from a Brookline resident, expressed opposition to funding the *Carlton Street Footbridge* project in Brookline because, he said, there is already access to the Emerald Necklace, the bridge cannot be restored historically because of ADA requirements, and studies indicate that few people would use the bridge. The other comment was from Hull residents who requested funding through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for the Restoration of the Clock Tower Building in Hull; this comment pertains more to the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Staff has proposed additional changes to incorporate into the amendment today. These changes include the programming of federal redistribution funds for a \$2.16 million project to repair bridges in Haverhill and Peabody, and a \$1.6 million project to improve the intersection of Route 62 and Glen Road in Wilmington.

Also, the City of Malden has requested that the \$600,000 Safe Routes to School project for improvements to the intersection of Pleasant Street, Elm Street, and Highland Avenue in Malden be withdrawn because of community opposition. Residents are concerned about the impact of closing Elm Street to traffic flow.

A motion to approve Amendment Four of the FFYs 2014-17 TIP – incorporating the bridge repair project in Haverhill and Peabody and the intersection project in Wilmington, and removing the Safe Routes to School project in Malden – was made by MAPC (Eric Bourassa), and seconded by the MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano).

Discussion

E. Bourassa asked for more detail about the intersection project in Wilmington. David Anderson, MassDOT, stated that the project would improve the intersection's geometry and add new signals. Prior to the availability of redistribution funds, this project was a candidate for non-federal aid funding.

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, asked for more information about how the redistribution funds are being spent. C. Bench explained that the remaining funds could be used for projects in other regions, projects that are not geographically specific, or for debt repayments. D. Anderson added that approximately \$50 million is already accounted for in the STIP, in anticipation of the redistribution; the remaining amount is available throughout the state.

Members then voted on the motion to approve Amendment Four of the FFYs 2014-17 TIP – incorporating the bridge repair project in Haverhill and Peabody and the intersection project in Wilmington, and removing the Safe Routes to School project in Malden. The motion carried.

7. Work Program for MBTA Neighborhood Maps—*Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

K. Quackenbush introduced the work program for the *MBTA Neighborhood Maps*.

In 2007, the MPO's cartographer, Ken Dumas, was engaged by the MBTA to produce neighborhood maps for many MBTA transit stations. Again, in 2010, he was asked to update the maps and produce new ones. The MBTA is now asking him to produce eleven more maps for the MBTA's newer stations on the Orange, Green, and Silver lines. The maps will depict transit lines, roadways, landmarks, and buildings within a quarter-mile radius of the transit station. This project will be funded through an MBTA contract.

Members were provided with a map of the neighborhood around Harvard Station as an example of the work products.

A motion to approve the work program for the *MBTA Neighborhood Maps* was made by the MBTA (Ron Morgan), and seconded by the MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano).

Discussion

C. Bench raised the idea of making the maps available online. They are normally displayed on transit station walls.

James Errickson, At-Large City of Everett, suggested including the MPO's logo on the map.

D. Koses asked if bus routing around the new Green Line stations has been determined, as those bus lines would have to be depicted on the new maps.

K. Quackenbush noted that the maps will be in draft form when they are provided to the MBTA. As the details become available, that information can be added. The intent is to have the base maps in their essence ready to roll out when the stations open.

Members voted on the motion to approve the work program for the *MBTA Neighborhood Maps*. The motion carried.

C. Bench noted that the completed maps can be made available to municipalities.

8. Meeting Minutes—*Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff*

The approval of the minutes of the meeting of September 4 was deferred until the next meeting.

9. Long-Range Transportation Plan Update—*Anne McGahan, MPO Staff, and Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

Over the past two months, the MPO has discussed the central vision, goals, and objectives for the LRTP, and released them for public review and comment. The MPO also received a presentation from MAPC on the demographic data that will be used for the LRTP. Today staff and members discussed the next phase of the LRTP development, which includes production of the Needs Assessment and the use of a new modeling tool for scenario planning.

The proposed name for the new LRTP is *Charting Progress to 2040*.

Preview of the Needs Assessment

A. McGahan gave a PowerPoint presentation on the progress made so far on the Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment for the currently active LRTP is print document; the new Needs Assessment will be an interactive web-based application and will be updated on a continuous basis as part of an ongoing process, not just related to the LRTP. This format will support the MPO's programs to make data and information available to the public. Information will be in an accessible format.

She gave a preview of the application, which will include information for the six radial corridors in the region and the Central Area and Boston Business District. The maps in the Needs Assessment will show existing roadway and transit facilities and routes, as well as socio-economic data (and future projections), environmental data, origin and destination data, and more. The data will also be available in tabular form.

The application can be used to provide information to MPO members for use in selecting projects and programs for the LRTP, to track information for the MPO's performance-based planning and programming processes, and to allow the public to manipulate the data for their own planning purposes.

While this application will hold most of the data for the Needs Assessment, there are several other tools that are either in development or are already in the MPO's application library that will be used as part of the Needs Assessment. They include the Congestion Management Application (under development), which contains information on network congestion and reliability on two dashboards – the express highway dashboard and the arterials dashboard. It contains information about the travel time index, average speeds, speed index, and congested travel times. Also, there is the Livability Indicators Application, which provides information at the municipal level for socio-economic data, vehicle miles travelled, pedestrian and bicycle information, and crash data. And, there is the All-Hazards Planning Application, which provides information at the municipal and project level on flood, hurricane surge, sea-level rise, and earthquake hazards.

As the next steps on the Needs Assessment, staff will finish updating the data for the applications and the chapters for the Needs Assessment. The chapter topics will include an introduction explaining the methodology used to develop the Needs Assessment, existing and future land uses in the region, travel patterns, and an identification and prioritization of needs. Links to the applications will be provided in the chapters.

Staff expects to complete the Needs Assessment in October. Scenario planning for the LRTP will begin in November.

Discussion

C. Bench asked if this is the point in the process when members of the public should contact the MPO staff about concerns they have about specific problem locations. A. McGahan replied, yes, and noted that staff would like to hear about local needs that have not been captured in the Needs Assessment. Staff will be determining if these needs should be prioritized at the regional level. In the LRTP chapters, the needs will be organized by topic area and by mode.

C. Bench raised the idea of using other visualization techniques. He suggested the idea of displaying the Needs Assessment data on GoogleMaps, so that members of the public would have the opportunity to highlight or draw their ideas. K. Quackenbush stated that staff wishes to elicit public feedback by providing an application on the MPO's website where they can react to the information in the Needs Assessment or identify problems not already included in the Needs Assessment.

Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, asked if the application would have a search function to allow people to search for specific locations. Staff will check into that question.

L. Dantas suggested that the MPO explore the idea of showcasing MPO data products through a website with its own domain name and with a distinct branding effort, to make it easier for the public and practitioners to find transportation information. As an example, he noted that information for Logan Airport could be accessed through MassPort's website, however, MassPort maintains the Fly Logan website for easier access. This idea was raised at the Congestion Management Committee meeting this morning.

J. Romano commented about how members of the public would know to look on the MPO's website for the Needs Assessment. C. Bench discussed ways that the MPO could inform members of the public through its public participation activities. He suggested other creative approaches, such as messaging on variable-message signs or through transportation management associations, or by conducting surveys.

E. Bourassa asked if staff will be providing summary information on corridors, high-crash locations, or congested areas. A. McGahan noted that the various data can be viewed on the maps in the online application.

J. Errickson further discussed the idea of highlighting the MPO's data. He raised the idea of working to get media coverage to draw attention to the MPO's data, studies, and services. He also suggested that a portion of each project's budget be reserved for outreach.

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, suggested that the Needs Assessment be made available in hard copy format for people who do not have access to the web or who are not computer literate. A. McGahan noted that the chapters of the Needs Assessment could be made available in hard copy.

T. Kadzis also suggested that the Needs Assessment should be searchable by facility or address.

R. Reed inquired about the source and age of the data used in the Needs Assessment. A. McGahan replied that the socio-economic data is based on census data from 2010. Information on origin and destination flows is derived from the MPO's travel demand model. The census data is the underlying data source in the model and is the foundation for projections for the 2040 No-Build scenario. Chapter One will describe the data sources used for the Needs Assessment.

Cube Land Application in LRTP Scenario Planning

S. Peterson then discussed a new modeling tool, Cube Land, which will be used in the scenario planning portion of the LRTP development to examine the interaction between transportation investments and land use. By linking Cube Land to the MPO's travel demand model, it will be possible to determine how potential land use changes (resulting from transportation investments or development) could influence the distribution of population and employment in the region under various LRTP planning scenarios.

Data inputs to Cube Land include land use regulations (such as zoning), housing types, and real estate prices. Cube Land provides estimates of households, population, and employment by location at the transportation analysis zone (TAZ) level. Those results would feed into the travel demand model, which can estimate household trip making and the types of trips (by mode) that employment centers would attract, and thereby produce estimates of roadway and transit usage, bicycle and pedestrian activity, vehicle miles traveled, and air quality impacts.

For the scenario planning, staff will be using demographic control totals provided by the state, which were developed with input from MAPC and the University of Massachusetts's Donahue Institute. These control totals represent a vision of how the state's demographics are going to change over the next 25 years. The control totals are a fixed number for the 164 community area that the MPO's travel demand model covers. They were presented to the MPO in August when Tim Reardon, MAPC, presented the socio-economic data that will be used for the LRTP. By 2040, population in the region is expected to grow by 17.7% and employment by 7.7%.

Using the *Green Line Extension* project as an example, S. Peterson discussed the measures that can be used to determine if a transportation project could provide new access to areas or provide opportunities for people to access various types of jobs. The MPO has nine accessibility measures.

These measures will be used in the scenario planning to test the impact of transportation and land use policies in terms of their effect on population and employment shifts or relocation. Staff will be able to measure these reallocations around the region at the TAZ level. The preferred transportation network selected for the LRTP will be based on the optimum demographic distribution.

Staff is currently testing the Cube Land model and will be developing scenarios over the next couple of months. The goal is to test three or four scenarios and develop a preferred scenario by January 2015.

Discussion

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), raised the idea that this modeling tool could be useful to municipalities interested in conducting their own scenario planning.

E. Bourassa discussed MAPC's work with the Town of Framingham to make zoning changes and noted that micro-simulation modeling could help the town understand how future transportation investments could improve transit accessibility. Both he and S. Peterson noted, however, that Cube Land produces results that are more useful at the regional level; the model may not show large demographic or employment shifts at the local level.

10. Briefing on FFYs 2015-18 State Transportation Improvement Program Status—*Sreelatha Allam Staff*

This topic was largely addressed during the Chair's Report. S. Allam added that MassDOT is responding to comments received from FHWA, FTA, and members of the public during the public review and comment period for the STIP. MassDOT will be submitting the final version of the STIP to FHWA and FTA next week for approval.

11. State Implementation Plan Update—*Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT Staff*

S. Allam provided an update on the projects in the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

First she reported on progress on the *Fairmount Line Improvement* project. The MBTA held a community meeting about the Blue Hill Avenue Station portion of the project on September 15. The design of the center island concept is advancing with the understanding that there will be continued coordination with the community, which has

some concerns about the design. The 90% design plans are expected to be prepared this December, and the 100% design plans are expected in March 2015. Construction is scheduled to begin in September 2015 and the station is expected to open in June 2017.

Then she discussed the activities underway for the *Green Line Extension* project. The MBTA submitted the financial plans for the project to FTA in August; FTA is expected to finish its review in September or October. The MBTA will be submitting the Full-Funding Grant Application in late fall or early winter.

Construction is underway on Phase 1 of the project. An outbound commuter rail structure at Harvard Street Bridge in Medford is anticipated to be completed this month. Work is underway on the Medford Street Bridge in Somerville in advance of widening the structure; the next road closures will be on October 4 and 5. The building at 21 Water Street in Cambridge was demolished in August.

A notice to proceed was received in September by the contractor that will supply 24 new light rail vehicles. The vehicles will be delivered in 2017 and 2018.

Several documents are being finalized including a license agreement with NSTAR for accessing property, and memorandum of agreements for the Union Square Station development. The MBTA has met with the City of Somerville to discuss Union Square Station plans. A pre-construction meeting was held this month. The next Green Line Extension working group meeting is scheduled for October 2.

Discussion

C. Bench stated that MassDOT is glad to continue providing SIP reports each month. Noting that construction activities on the *Green Line Extension* project will be increasing, he asked members to consider if they want to continue receiving reports in this format or if they would prefer less frequent, but more detailed reports.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council, remarked on a recent cost increase for the *Green Line Extension* project. C. Bench offered to bring back more information at a future meeting. He asked R. Morgan to make inquiries with the MBTA's Design and Construction Department about this issue.

12. Members Items

J. Romano reported that the new Registry of Motor Vehicles office opened at Haymarket Center at 136 Blackstone Street, Boston. The ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held on September 23.

L. Dantas announced the completion of an extension of the East Boston Greenway, from Neptune Road to Logan Airport.

13. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). 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)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Hayes Morrison
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Clinton Bench
	David Anderson
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Ron Morgan
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
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 Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	David Montgomery
	Tom O'Rourke
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Lee Auspitz	Somerville resident
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT District 3
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Maureen Kelly

Robin Mannion

Anne McGahan

Elizabeth Moore

Scott Peterson

Sean Pfalzer

Natalie Raffol

Michelle Scott

Pam Wolfe
