

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

January 22, 2015 Meeting

10:10 AM – 11:15 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

David Mohler, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- approve the work program for the *Kendall Square Mobility Task Force* study
- approve the minutes of the meetings of November 6 and 20, and December 18, 2014
- approve the *Washington Street Subregional Priority Roadway Study in Newton*
- approve the Town of Hudson Transit Technical Assistance Study

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

There were none.

2. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports

Sreelatha Allam, Chair of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee, reported that the Committee met this morning to discuss the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2015 status report for the first quarter, staff assignments for calendar year 2015, and the study area for the Core Capacity Constraints Study.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Mike Gowing, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

M. Gowing reported that at the last Advisory Council meeting, Ryan Hicks, MPO staff, gave a presentation on the MPO's Congestion Management Process and MPO's new highway congestion dashboards. He noted that the MPO staff has purchased travel speed data from INRIX and will be starting to collect their own travel speed data. Also at

that meeting, Michelle Scott, MPO staff, discussed the UPWP and the development of the FFY 2016 UPWP.

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

K. Quackenbush reported that the UPWP Committee discussed the study area for the *Core Capacity Constraints Study* this morning. The Committee is comfortable with the study area proposed by staff, which would include the area within the Fare 1A commuter rail zone, but asked that staff keep proposed developments in Quincy in mind when conducting the study and consider funding similar studies in subsequent years.

He also reported that the federal recertification process for the MPO has concluded. A public meeting was held in January. The MPO staff provided additional information on Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and UPWP funding as requested by the federal partners.

Michael Chong, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), added that the recertification review process went very well. The federal agencies determined that the MPO has a robust public participation process. The agencies expect to issue a draft report by the end of February.

Then Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, presented the schedule for Certification Activities for this federal fiscal year. She highlighted two new ongoing items for performance-based planning and Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) scenario planning. She also highlighted important upcoming dates: on April 2 members are scheduled to discuss the staff recommendations for the TIP and UPWP; on May 7 members would vote to release the TIP, UPWP, and LRTP for public review; and on June 25 members would vote to approve all three of these certification documents.

Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), asked if FHWA would provide financial figures for use in the development of the LRTP financial plan by the March dates indicated on the schedule. M. Chong replied that FHWA has already provided those figures to MassDOT and is awaiting feedback. He noted, however, that the highway revenue figures are still speculative as Congress has not yet passed a highway funding bill.

D. Mohler added that FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have both provided financial guidance to MassDOT and that the agencies are still in discussion about finances. The current FHWA guidance indicates that MassDOT should assume level funding and increase project costs by four percent each year for inflation. The FTA

guidance indicates that MassDOT should assume reasonable revenue growth; however, the agency gave no guidance concerning inflation. MassDOT expects to provide more information about this issue at an upcoming meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) meeting in February.

6. Work Program for Kendall Square Mobility Task Force—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff

K. Quackenbush introduced the work program for the *Kendall Square Mobility Task Force*. Through this work program staff will provide traffic modeling and other analytic support to a MassDOT project team that is conducting a transportation study of the Kendall Square area of Cambridge. Kendall Square has been greatly transformed by high technology and biotechnology development in recent decades, and proposed new development there poses issues for future transportation and connectivity.

The modeling work for this study will be consistent with that which will be done for the LRTP. Staff will be working with MAPC staff and others to ensure that the correct future development projections are represented in the model. Staff will project conditions to the year 2040 in a No-Build scenario and up to three other scenarios. The products of the study will include forecasts for the highway and transit systems, as well as, environmental justice and air quality analyses.

The study idea was generated based on a request from the City of Cambridge.

Discussion

Wig Zamore, Mystic View Task Force and Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, suggested that representatives from communities that abut Cambridge be involved with this study. He noted that Somerville receives a large amount of traffic from Boston and Cambridge employment areas.

Joe Onorato, MassDOT Highway District 4, asked how the Grounding McGrath Highway project would be taken into account in the study. K. Quackenbush replied that staff would consult with its client on the best assumptions to use for representing that project.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), encouraged staff to consider bicycle issues when conducting the study. He noted that Beacon Street in Somerville is a bicycle route that feeds into Kendall Square.

A motion to approve the Kendall Square study was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

7. MPO Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 6 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (M. Gowing). The motion carried. The North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly) (Aaron Clausen) abstained.

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 20 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy). The motion carried.

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 18 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (Tom Kadzis). The motion carried. The Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford) (Richard Reed) abstained.

8. Washington Street Subregional Priority Roadway Study in Newton—Chen-Yuan Wang, MPO Staff

C. Wang presented the results of the *Washington Street Subregional Priority Roadway Study in Newton*, which was included in the FFY 2014 UPWP. This study is part of an ongoing program to address subregional transportation needs. The objective of this program is to identify safety and mobility problems on roadway corridors and develop multimodal solutions.

For this year's study, a two-mile section of Washington Street in Newton was selected after staff reviewed 30 candidate locations. This corridor is under the jurisdiction of the City of Newton. The study area has a dense network of roadways and bicycle routes. Transit services operating on the corridor include four MBTA bus routes, and there are two commuter rail stations nearby. Currently, the corridor operates as a four-lane roadway with parking lanes and sidewalks on both sides. Bicyclists use the route but there are no dedicated bicycle lanes.

Many issues and concerns were raised about the corridor in a community meeting. The foremost is concern about the multiple lane traffic operations that allow for high vehicle speed, which presents a danger to all users of the roadway. Pedestrians must cross four lanes of traffic to reach their destinations.

To address these concerns, staff conducted a series of safety and operational analyses. They found that 70% of the roadway in the study area would be suitable for a road diet

application because the traffic counts were fewer than 20,000 per day. A road diet reduces the number of motor vehicle travel lanes in order to achieve systematic improvements.

Staff proposed a design for the roadway that would remove one vehicle travel lane and incorporate two eleven-foot travel lanes, a center lane, and six foot bicycle lanes on each side, while maintaining the parking lane. The new center lane could be used to separate traffic, as a refuge for pedestrians, or as a turning lane for vehicles accessing developments adjacent to the roadway. On the portion of the roadway that is unsuitable for a road diet, four travel lanes would be maintained. However, dedicated bicycle lanes could continue on both sides by removing some of the on-street parking, mainly on the south side.

The study recommends a series of short and long-term improvements. The long-term improvements include the road diet and intersection redesign. Together, these improvements provide a vision for the corridor's long-term development and are expected to yield a number of benefits, including slowing traffic, improving access to adjacent developments, accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians, and improving safety, access, and mobility for all users.

Discussion

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, thanked staff for their excellent work on this study, from the beginning with the community listening session through to the end of the project when the study was presented to the elected officials. He commended them for listening to feedback and producing a document with great graphics and concepts. He noted that the City of Newton has begun to implement some of the low-cost recommendations from the study. He expressed support for the road diet concept, while noting that it may take a while to implement it as it represents a major change on a main corridor. He noted that the city hopes to implement pieces of the study recommendations as opportunities arise.

E. Bourassa inquired about the response to the study from the Newton City Council and elected officials. D. Koses explained that the study was presented to a joint committee and that the document was appreciated as something that city officials can look to going forward. He cited the city's interest in Complete Streets, improving bicycle access, and making safer pedestrian access to bus stops. He also discussed potential challenges and trade-offs that may come when trying to balance the needs of different users (for example, concerning potential decisions to remove parking that is used by express bus commuters to create a bicycle lane). He described the study report as a blueprint that will require more discussion.

A motion to approve the Washington Street Subregional Priority Roadway Study in Newton was made by the At-Large City of Newton (D. Koses), and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa).

Members further discussed the study.

Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), asked whether there is any data or studies to show whether a two-way left-turn center lane either reduces or causes more accidents. Mark Abbott, Manager of Traffic Analysis and Design at CTPS, discussed the general theory of employing a center turn lane when reducing travel lanes in a road diet so as to provide a refuge for left-turning vehicles and preventing those turning vehicles from blocking through traffic. It is believed that this configuration results in fewer rear end collisions and that it eliminates “courtesy crashes” (when a left-turning vehicle is crossing two travel lanes and the vehicle in one travel lane yields while the other does not). Marie Rose, MassDOT Highway Division, added that data about this issue is available on the FHWA website (search on the term EDC-3).

C. Wang noted that in the design proposed by staff, the center lane is intended to provide access to adjacent developments; it would be used as a turning lane only and its use as a travel lane would be prohibited.

M. Gowing stated that the left-turn center lane could block traffic if the number of turning vehicles exceeds the number that the turn lane will hold. He asked whether the traffic analysis took into account the amount of turning traffic. C. Wang replied yes, and explained how staff used Synchro for traffic simulation.

M. Rose asked if the study recommendations would be a TIP project in the future, or if the City of Newton would advance the project. D. Koses replied that it would have to be a TIP project (due to the cost).

T. Bent asked if the proposed dedicated bicycle lanes would be a cycle track or on-road lanes. C. Wang replied that they would be on-road lanes as there is not enough right-of-way available for a cycle track.

T. Bent inquired about the cost estimate for the project. C. Wang replied that it would be between \$12 million and \$15 million.

The members then voted on the motion to approve the *Washington Street Subregional Priority Roadway Study in Newton*. The motion carried.

9. Regional Transit Service Planning Technical Support for Hudson— *Tom Humphrey, MPO Staff*

K. Quackenbush introduced the *Town of Hudson Transit Technical Assistance Study*, a modestly funded study under the Regional Transit Service Technical Assistance line item in the UPWP. T. Humphrey then presented the results of the study, which CTPS undertook at the request of MAPC.

T. Humphrey began by providing background on the study. The study idea stemmed from a project conducted in 2011 by MAPC which screened municipalities in the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) subregion for potential demand for new transit service. Four types of commuting demand were considered: the traditional commute to Boston; reverse commute from Boston; local work trips from town to town within the subregion; and local non-work trips.

MAPC found little opportunity for new transit service in the MAGIC municipalities, except for the Town of Hudson. Hudson has no east-west limited-access highways and currently no fixed-route transit, though it did have commuter rail service in the past. MAPC identified three census tracts on the west side of town where demand for transit could be highest. These tracts are no more than two and a half miles from the Hudson Downtown Business District.

T. Humphrey then discussed the data reviewed for the study. Staff reviewed U.S. census American Community Survey data to determine the origins and destinations for work trips that begin or end in Hudson. Of Hudson residents' work trip destinations, 23% are within Hudson; 14% are to Marlborough; and 6% are to Framingham. No other municipality accounts for more than 5% of the work trips. Only about 2.5% of Hudson residents travel to Boston or Cambridge for work. For work trips that end in Hudson, 28% originate in Hudson; 11% originate in Marlborough; 8% originate in Worcester; and 1% represent reverse commutes from Boston or Cambridge.

The study also considered the population of Hudson (19,060 in 2010) and population density relative to municipalities in the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) and MBTA districts. (Hudson is a member of MWRTA, but not MBTA). Most towns that fall into these two districts and have a similar population density to Hudson already have fixed-route transit.

Data on transit-dependent populations were also considered. These populations include people with low incomes, people who are unable to drive because of age or because they do not have access to a vehicle. The three census tracts on the west side of town have a slightly higher percentage of low income residents than the MWRTA and MBTA

areas. Two tracts have a slightly higher percentage of zero-vehicle households than the MWRTA average (but not higher than the MBTA average), and slightly higher percentage of residents over age 70 than the MWRTA and MBTA average. The percentage of residents age five to 14 was slightly higher than the MBTA average and lower than the MWRA average. The minority population was lower than the MWRTA and MBTA average.

Then T. Humphrey discussed potential transit routes in Hudson. The most straightforward would start at the Hudson Commons and go down Route 62 to Route 85 to connect with MWRTA bus system in Marlborough. A loop through the downtown business district would serve more of the town's population. A side diversion could provide service to the Intel complex, though this would lengthen the trip for passengers going elsewhere and increase running time and operating costs. This study did not calculate schedules or operating costs.

The next step following this study would be for the Town of Hudson to review the study and determine if they would like to go forward with transit planning.

Discussion

In response to a question from E. Bourassa, T. Humphrey confirmed that the study recommendations focus on meeting demand for intratown service and for connecting to the MWRTA services. They do not focus on making work connections to Boston; the previous MAPC study found that there are so few people making that work trip that a new transit service would not succeed. There was a bus route in the past that was discontinued due to poor ridership.

M. Gowing noted that Hudson recently joined the MWRTA. He asked whether this study was done before or after the town joined. T. Humphrey replied that the study was done after the town joined.

A motion to approve the Town of Hudson Transit Technical Assistance Study was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham) (Dennis Giombetti). The motion carried.

10. State Implementation Plan Update

S. Allam provided an update on the *Green Line Extension* project, which is one of the projects in the State Implementation Plan.

An event was held on January 5 to celebrate the Full-Funding Grant Agreement, which approved \$996 million in federal funds for the project. The remaining cost of the project will be funded by MassDOT and the MBTA, as noted in Capital Investment Plan.

The construction of a new retaining wall and new commuter rail track at Harvard Street in Medford has been completed.

A draft memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the MBTA and Tufts University is under review. The MOA pertains to the station design at College Avenue in Medford; stormwater improvements; the use of Tufts' property to stage construction work; and Tufts' proposal for air rights over the station and a plaza over tracks on south side of station.

On January 20, the MBTA presented a project update on Lechmere Station to the Cambridge Planning Board. A meeting of the GLEX working group is scheduled for January 27.

Discussion

W. Zamore expressed appreciation for the celebration on January 5. He then noted that MassDOT has not reported about the timing of one of the items for mitigation of the project delays, the delivery of the new low-emission vehicles for THE RIDE. D. Mohler noted that the vehicles have already arrived and stated that he would confirm that new vehicles (that are part of the mitigation package) are in service.

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation, asked if the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has approved the mitigation measures. D. Mohler explained that MassDOT was required to institute mitigation measures by January 1 and DEP's review would not have been completed by then. DEP's decision is expected in March.

11. Members Items

E. Bourassa announced MAPC's Winter Council Meeting, which will be held on February 25 at the Omni-Parker House in Boston from 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM. The meeting will include an interactive presentation on the LRTP.

12. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Advisory Council (M. Gowing) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

At-Large City (City of Everett)	Tony Sousa
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)	Patrick Hoey
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Michael Chong
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
	Sreelatha Allam
	David Anderson
	Marie Rose
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Janice Ramsay
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)	Aaron Clausen
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Mike Gowing
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Melissa Santucci
	Rozzi
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Jay Monty	City of Everett
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood)
Joe Onorato	MassDOT Highway District 4
Wig Zamore	Mystic View Task Force / Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Tom Humphrey
Maureen Kelly
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director
Anne McGahan
Elizabeth Moore
Scott Peterson
Sean Pfalzer
Natalie Raffol
Michelle Scott
Alicia Wilson
Chen-Yuan Wang
Pam Wolfe
