

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

March 19, 2015 Meeting

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

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 *MBTA Service Delivery Policy Customer Input* study
- approve the minutes of the meeting of February 5
- support the staff recommendation to adopt a revised Capacity Management/ Mobility objective for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to “*emphasize capacity management through low cost improvements; give priority to projects that focus on lower cost, O&M-type improvements such as intersection improvements and Complete Streets solutions*”

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

There were none.

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

There was none.

3. Committee Chairs’ Reports

Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT, reported that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee would meet today following the MPO meeting to discuss priority projects for the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2016 UPWP. The Committee will be presented with the staff recommendation for the UPWP and its budget in April.

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

M. Gowing reported that the Advisory Council held a Bus and Private Carriers Forum at its March meeting. He also reported that Council members were well represented at the

Legislative Luncheon for the Massachusetts Association of Regional Transit Authorities (MARTA). MARTA is concerned that funding for RTAs may be transferred to the MBTA as a result of the MBTA's problems this winter.

5. Executive Director's Report—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)

K. Quackenbush drew members' attention to a flyer announcing the MPO's Open House on March 25 at 4:00 PM. The MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) will be the focus of the discussion.

He also referred to the MPO's calendar of meetings for April. The MPO is scheduled to meet on April 2, 9, 16, and 30 to discuss the certification documents, the LRTP, UPWP, and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). An extra meeting may also be scheduled in May.

6. Work Program—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, CTPS

K. Quackenbush presented the work program for the *MBTA Service Delivery Policy Customer Input* study. This study will supplement an ongoing project in which the MPO staff is assisting the MBTA with analysis and updating of the MBTA's service delivery policy.

The objective of the study is to obtain customer input on the service-standard metrics and thresholds used by the MBTA for evaluating its services. The tasks include gathering and analyzing existing survey data and developing a Web-based customer survey. Feedback will also be gathered from as many as ten focus groups made up of members of advocacy groups, and from members of the MBTA's Policy Advisory Committee. The results will be presented to the MBTA's Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Advisory Committee.

Motion and Discussion

A motion to approve the work program for the *MBTA Service Delivery Policy Customer Input* study was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent).

Members then discussed the work program.

Christine Stickney, South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree), asked whether the focus groups would include representatives from all sections of the MPO region.

K. Quackenbush explained that the focus groups would not be designed based on geographic distribution, but that the membership will likely include representatives from across the region.

C. Stickney asked how staff would reach out to people who do not use the transit system (in order to determine why they do not use it). K. Quackenbush noted that the Web-based survey would be available to everyone. He was not aware of any specific plans to target this group, however.

D. Mohler inquired about the membership of the MBTA's Policy Advisory Committee. K. Quackenbush and Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning at CTPS, provided a representative list of the member entities which were recommended by former MBTA General Manager Beverly Scott. MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning is also providing input. If an organization is interested in joining the committee, a representative may contact K. Quackenbush or E. Moore.

Micha Gensler, MBTA Advisory Board, noted that the MBTA Advisory Board is not among the committee members listed in the work program. E. Moore stated that the Board will be a member of the Policy Advisory Committee or the Technical Advisory Committee, or both.

D. Mohler inquired about the make-up of the focus groups and whether there would be overlap between the two committees and focus groups. E. Moore explained that the focus group members would be identified from among the committee members' constituents as people who are knowledgeable enough about service standards to make informed contributions to the study.

Members then voted on the motion to approve the work program for *MBTA Service Delivery Policy Customer Input*. The motion carried.

7. MPO Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 5 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried. The North Shore Task Force (Aaron Clausen) abstained.

8. Long-Range Transportation Plan— Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, CTPS; Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services, MPO Staff; and Anne McGahan, MPO Staff

K. Quackenbush introduced the topics of discussion, which were the results of the scenario planning for the LRTP, and the draft chapters of the Needs Assessment.

Scenario Planning Results

A. McGahan provided an overview of the scenario planning exercise that was designed to shed light on a policy question about congestion reduction and capacity management. The MPO is considering whether to adopt an objective under its Capacity

Management goal to “*give priority in a congestion reduction program to major arterials and express highways throughout the region which serve transit and/or existing populations and places of employment.*” This would be among a number of policies shaping the MPO’s approach to making transportation investments.

Members were provided with a handbook that described the scenario planning exercise and the results. Four scenarios were tested:

- *2040 No Build*: Representing the transportation network with no improvements other than projects already under construction or advertised, and projects programmed in the first year of the TIP
- *Current LRTP*: Representing all projects programmed in the current LRTP, *Paths to a Sustainable Region*, and programming unallocated funds in the same proportion as in the past ten years
- *Operations and Management (O&M)*: Focusing on lower cost improvements such as intersection improvements and Complete Streets solutions
- *High-Capital Investment (High-Cap)*: Including a high percentage of high-cost capital improvements such as interchange and major bottleneck reconstruction projects

The same socio-economic data was used for each scenario. All were financially constrained to the amount available for the current LRTP, \$2 billion over 25 years assuming current dollars. All scenarios had a horizon year of 2040.

The handbook provided details on the percentage of funds allocated to various investment programs in each scenario. The investment programs are as follows:

- Intersection Improvements
- Complete Streets
- Bicycle Network and Pedestrian Connections
- Community Transportation and Parking
- Major Infrastructure

The handbook also included cost estimates for each project type and showed which of the MPO’s goals and objectives would be addressed through the various investment programs.

S. Peterson then provided a summary of the results of the scenario planning, referencing a chart in the handout. The chart illustrated how well each scenario aligns

with the MPO's goals based on various performance metrics. The metrics include the following:

- High-crash locations addressed
- Miles of improved substandard pavement
- Vehicle hours travelled (VHT)
- Vehicle miles travelled (VMT)
- Transit trips
- Non-motorized trips
- Kilograms of carbon dioxide reduced per day
- Number of projects in Title VI areas
- Number of projects providing access to targeted development areas

The O&M scenario outperformed the High-Cap and Current LRTP scenarios in terms of making the most improvements to high-crash locations and improving the highest number of miles of substandard pavement. The O&M approach was also more effective than the other scenarios in terms of the number of projects in Title VI areas and the number of projects providing access to targeted development areas. This is because the O&M scenario provided greater opportunities to distribute funding throughout the region, while the High-Cap approach would concentrate funding on fewer locations.

At a systems level, there were fewer discernable differences between the scenarios when considering mobility measures for VHT and VMT reduction, number of transit trips, number of non-motorized trips, and carbon dioxide reduction.

A. McGahan then discussed the staff recommendation based on the scenario results. Staff recommended that the MPO not adopt the objective in question. Rather staff advised that the MPO adopt the following objective under the Capacity Management/Mobility goal: *“Emphasize capacity management through low cost improvements; give priority to projects that focus on lower cost, O&M-type improvements such as intersection improvements and Complete Streets solutions.”* By adopting this objective, the MPO would be moving toward a programmatic approach to allocating funding in the LRTP.

Staff expects to present the financial information for the new LRTP to the MPO on April 2. Going forward, the MPO will consider what percentage of funds to allocate to each investment program, whether to flex highway funds to transit, and whether to leave any funding unallocated.

Discussion

John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, inquired about the projects included in the Major Infrastructure Program of the Current LRTP scenario. A. McGahan explained that it includes projects that are programmed in *Paths to a Sustainable Region* but have yet to be funded. The largest projects include the *Interstate 93 and 95 Interchange* in Reading and Woburn, and the *Route 1 Improvements* in Malden, Revere, and Saugus.

Jay Monty, At-Large City of Everett, inquired about the lack of transit projects, which could induce a mode shift, in the Major Infrastructure Program of the O&M and the High-Cap scenarios. A. McGahan explained that transit projects are only included in the Current LRTP scenario because the MPO voted to flex highway funds to pay for the *Green Line Extension* project. The other two scenarios test the ability of highway projects to address the objective in question.

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, remarked that the High-Cap scenario did not out-perform the others in terms of safety, even though the project types (major infrastructure projects) included are often advanced as safety projects.

D. Mohler then raised the issue of whether the “number of high crash locations” was the most appropriate measure for determining how well the safety goal is met. He expressed concern that because the metric measured the number of locations rather than the number of crashes, the scenario results may be skewed. K. Quackenbush noted that if another safety metric was chosen, the selection process would likely have produced the same ordering of results, however, staff will verify this information based on the crash data for the locations selected in each scenario.

D. Mohler asked staff to determine how many of the high-crash locations in the O&M scenario are included in the Intersection Improvements Program and the Complete Streets Program.

He also asked whether the cost estimate of \$6 million per mile for Complete Streets projects holds true for high-crash locations with intersections. A. McGahan and S. Pfalzer explained that the \$6 million figure is an average based on past spending on Complete Streets projects, and that some projects may cost more.

D. Koses suggested that the severity of crashes should be a safety metric. A. McGahan noted that staff does consider severity in the evaluation of individual projects. The Equivalent Property Damage Only (EPDO) measure is one of the evaluation criteria.

She noted that the scenario planning exercise is intended to provide a general idea of which type of investment programs will help the MPO to reach its goals.

D. Koses inquired about the reason why the High-Cap scenario resulted in a reduction in transit trips. S. Peterson explained that there was a net reduction in transit trips in this scenario because there were fewer Park & Ride spaces than in the O&M scenario and because the highway projects in the scenario would produce travel-time improvements on the highway that would induce some people to shift modes from transit to highway.

D. Mohler inquired about a discrepancy between the figures in a chart and graph in the handbook that indicates the number of miles of substandard pavement improved and miles of Complete Streets projects. S. Pfalzer explained that the figures differ because one (for substandard pavement) is based on lane miles (actual miles) and the other (Complete Streets) is based on center miles. The Complete Streets projects are all addressing two lane roads, so the center line measure was used.

M. Gowing and Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), asked if the ratio of traffic volume to crashes was used to select the high-crash locations for the scenarios. S. Peterson replied no, but that data is available to reassess the locations selected. The MassDOT District Offices produce this data.

R. Reed asked if staff selected locations with a high number of crashes and high traffic volumes, or if locations were considered that had fewer, but more severe crashes.

A. McGahan then described the location selection process for the Intersection Program, which prioritized safety, environmental justice, and Title VI, and targeted development areas. She noted that the highest-crash locations were included in each of the scenarios. The O&M scenario included more intersection locations. Bottleneck locations included in the Major Infrastructure Program were selected based on volume-to-capacity ratios, travel speed, and high-crash locations. The *Interstate 93 and 95 Interchange* project in Reading and Woburn (the highest crash location in the state), the *Route 1 Improvements* in Malden, Revere, and Saugus, and the *Braintree Split* were all included in the High-Cap scenario. K. Quackenbush then further discussed the various safety metrics staff uses to evaluate projects and noted that any of these metrics likely would have produced the same outcome in the scenario planning exercise.

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation, inquired about how staff conducted the calculation for carbon dioxide reduction and whether the scenarios took into account induced demand (i.e. an initial reduction in highway congestion may induce people to drive who would otherwise have used another mode). S. Peterson explained that staff

used MOVES software for the carbon dioxide calculation and that the result was a function of VMT, vehicle speeds, and vehicle types. Mode shift was captured in the analysis. R. Mares suggested that the carbon dioxide reduction figures may be understated because of induced demand.

R. Mares cautioned that consideration should have been given to whether projects in Title VI areas would be beneficial or detrimental to those communities. D. Mohler noted that most of the projects in Title VI areas for the High-Cap scenario are Complete Streets projects. A. McGahan added that staff does consider the benefits and burdens to Title VI areas during the evaluation of each individual project.

Arthur Strang, Cambridge resident, asked if future transit bottlenecks were considered in the analysis. S. Peterson replied that transit capacity issues were accounted for in the LRTP Needs Assessment, however, this scenario planning exercise focused on the roadway system.

Patrick Hoey, City of Boston, inquired about where bus rapid transit (BRT) (with dedicated bus lanes and stations) would fall within the program categories. S. Peterson and A. McGahan replied that BRT could be included in the Major Infrastructure Program or in Flex to Transit.

In response to some of the comments, K. Quackenbush emphasized that the outcome of the exercise is not meant to be a recommendation for project programming, rather it is to show the tendencies of particular types of investments to affect a particular goal.

The next steps in the process will include discussion about how to allocate funding across the various program categories, whether highway funding should be flexed to transit, and whether any funding should be left unallocated. At the meeting of April 2, staff expects to present the finances and the Universe of Projects for the LRTP.

A. McGahan discussed the financial issues that the MPO will be addressing. She noted that the first timeband of the new LRTP would already be over-programmed based on projects in the current LRTP. There is an expectation that there will be a reduction in funds available for programming in this LRTP.

D. Mohler asked whether, based on the results of the scenario planning, staff believes that the Current LRTP is over-programmed with major infrastructure investments at the expense of operations and management projects. K. Quackenbush agreed with that

assessment and noted that staff believes that investing to a higher degree in operations and management projects will tend to achieve results closer to the MPO's goals.

Motion

A motion to support the staff recommendation to adopt the revised Capacity Management/Mobility objective – which reads “*Emphasize capacity management through low cost improvements; give priority to projects that focus on lower cost, O&M-type improvements such as intersection improvements and Complete Streets solutions.*” – was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the Advisory Council (M. Gowing). The motion passed.

During a discussion of the motion, Tom O'Rourke, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce), expressed that the MPO should not, with this vote, be excluding all major infrastructure projects when discussions about funding distribution take place.

Needs Assessment Chapters One and Four, and Appendix A

At the meeting of March 5, staff distributed the draft Chapters One, Four, and Appendix A of the LRTP Needs Assessment. Staff is now incorporating updates and addressing members' comments on the text.

Discussion

J. Romano suggested including text to address the need for educating bicyclist and pedestrians about following the rules of the road.

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

S. Allam gave an update on the *Green Line Extension* (GLX) project, which is included in the State Implementation Plan.

Due to the severe weather in February, construction activities on the project have been delayed and will resume when the weather permits.

Updates regarding real estate include the anticipated acquisition of two properties in Somerville that will be necessary for the Community Path project. The project team is working on an interim licensing agreement with the property owners to allow construction to commence. Also, the Ball Square relocation estimates have been approved by the Federal Transit Administration and initial offers are being made to the property owners.

The Tufts/MBTA College Avenue Station Redesign Commitment letter was signed in January. This letter outlines the obligations of both Tufts University and the MBTA

regarding the redesign and funding for changes to the project design for the College Avenue Station. A memorandum of agreement (MOA) is also under development. The MOA relates to Tufts' proposal for an air rights building over portions of the College Avenue Station and for a plaza over the rail tracks on the south side of the College Avenue Bridge.

Recent public outreach meetings included a meeting of the GLX Working Group in February. The project team provided an update on design and construction and community concerns were discussed. Another meeting was held on March 6 with the Brickbottom Artists Building board to address residents' concerns. The MBTA plans to hold meetings with the communities of the Cities of Cambridge, Medford, and Somerville this spring to discuss construction activities and impacts to roadways and rail service in the corridor.

10.Members Items

D. Mohler reported that a meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) will be held on March 24 at 10:30 AM in Sutton. The agenda includes discussion of finances for the TIP and UPWP.

11.Adjourn

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

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Lara Mérida
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Patrick Hoey
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
	Sreelatha Allam
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Janice Ramsay
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
MBTA Advisory Board	Micha Gensler
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Richard Reed
North Shore Task Force	Aaron Clausen
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Mike Gowing
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Christine Stickney
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT Highway District 3
Shawn Finn	IBEW Local 103
Joseph Manning	IBEW Local 103
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council
Joe Onorato	MassDOT Highway District 4
Arthur Strang	Cambridge resident
Wig Zamore	Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership / Mystic View Task Force

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

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