

Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting

November 5, 2015 Meeting

9:00 AM to 9:45 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Bryan Pounds, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the September 3, 2015 UPWP Committee meeting minutes

Materials

Materials for this meeting included:

- An agenda
- Draft minutes from the September 3, 2015 UPWP Committee meeting
- The FFY 2015 fourth quarter spending report and schedule/staff assignment table
- A schedule for UPWP Committee meetings and activities during FFY 2016

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Bryan Pounds, Chair, Unified Planning Work Program Committee (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 AM. UPWP Committee members and MPO staff introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 7.)

2. Action Item: Approval of UPWP Committee Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the September 3, 2015 UPWP Committee meeting minutes was made by Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and seconded by Tom Kadzis, City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department). The motion carried.

3. FFY 2015 UPWP Fourth Quarter Status Reports

Schedule/Staff Assignment Table

Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director, explained that the schedule/staff assignment table describes the current standing of all active projects as of this point in time, as well as how staff plans to spend time on projects in the coming quarter. Projects noted with a single-plus mark (+) are those that were not approved as of when the schedule/staff assignment table was produced, but are expected to be worked on in the coming quarter (e.g. the *Shared-Use Mobility Services: Study of Their Impacts on the Region's Transportation System* project). Projects that have recently been completed are listed in the upper right-hand corner of the report. Both this table and the spending report are produced quarterly, and the next set of reports will be made available in early January 2016. B. Pounds noted that members should be able to see progress on new projects in next quarter's schedule, particularly the *Shared-Use Mobility Services: Study of Their Impacts on the Region's Transportation System* project.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) said that he did not see a copy of the status reports on the MPO website in advance of the meeting. K. Quackenbush explained that these reports are distributed via email.

E. Bourassa asked whether the MPO received an extension for its FTA Section 5303 contract. B. Pounds said that the contract was not extended; rather, the CTPS FTA Section 5303 contract starts in December. K. Quackenbush explained that MPO staff have advocated for the CTPS FHWA PL and FTA Section 5303 contracts to be on different schedules, which allows the MPO to manage cash flow better. In past years these contracts were on the same schedule, but for the last two years they have been on separate schedules. B. Pounds noted that the Montachusett MPO is the other MPO in the state that has these contracts on offset schedules.

S. Olanoff asked whether the *Identifying Opportunities for Alleviating Bus Delay* work program would be discussed at the November 5 MPO meeting, and which, if any, UPWP lists the study. K. Quackenbush confirmed that that it would be discussed at the November 5 MPO meeting, and that the study is included in the FFY 2016 UPWP. This project is reflected on the schedule/staff assignment table, as staff will be working on it in the coming quarter. K. Quackenbush explained that project budgets are not listed on the Schedule and Staff assignment table until the project's work program has been approved by the MPO.

S. Olanoff asked whether MPO staff is expecting the Sumner Tunnel to be closed, as there is an anticipated project related to this topic on the schedule/staff assignment table. K. Quackenbush explained that, yes, MassDOT is planning to do work on the Sumner tunnel similar to work that was done on the Callahan Tunnel. Another anticipated project, the *North of Boston Study*, was asked about as well. K. Quackenbush said that a working group was formed to address transportation issues, including any related to Sullivan Square, in the vicinity of the Wynn Casino development, and that CTPS would provide support to this working group through this contract. MAPC will also provide technical assistance to this working group.

Spending Report

Robin Mannion, MPO Deputy Executive Director, explained that the schedule/staff assignment table is a prospective report, while the spending report is a retrospective report. The spending report describes spending on projects over the course of FFY 2015. The final page of the report includes a summary of spending for all projects over the federal fiscal year. CTPS spent 98 percent of its 3C funds, as programmed in the UPWP. She explained that CTPS has outstanding programming authority because of staff vacancies, and because MPO staff were catching up on projects from previous years. She said that overall, staff is doing a good job keeping pace on projects programmed in the FFY 2015 UPWP.

CTPS spent 114 percent of the funds associated with non-MPO projects described in the UPWP. R. Mannion explained that this is because CTPS started work on several new projects that were not anticipated when the FFY 2015 UPWP was developed.

B. Pounds asked whether FFY 2015 was an anomaly, and if there are practices that CTPS would change for the coming year. R. Mannion explained that each fiscal year can be challenging, because the UPWP is developed in the spring and early summer, but work on projects included in the UPWP doesn't begin until the fall. MPO staff often finds that actual project progress may not line up with the status staff expected when the UPWP was developed. R. Mannion cited the *Green Line Extension: Completion of New Starts Analysis* project as an example; staff had not overrun this budget, but the spending report shows that MPO staff projected that there would be less spending on that project in FFY 2015 than there actually had been. These circumstances can happen because of project delays, which can occur for a variety of reasons, such as time for document review, the reallocation of staff resources, or the availability of project funds. These issues predominately affect agency projects as opposed to MPO projects. She added that MPO staff works to ensure that contracts or project budgets are not overspent.

K. Quackenbush said that agency-funded work introduces unpredictability, which can make the management of CTPS's overall work flow tricky. When the schedule of an agency-funded project is accelerated or decelerated, the impact is almost always upon other agency-funded work, but occasionally MPO-funded work will be delayed, or staff resources may be diverted from MPO-funded work. MPO staff's challenge is to ensure that the impact on MPO-funded work is a short-term one, as MPO-funded work takes precedence over agency-funded work.

S. Olanoff asked for a description of the *Data Request for BLNMC Corridor Alternatives Analysis* project. R. Mannion explained that BLNMC refers to the Boston-Lawrence, Nashua-Manchester-Concord corridor. URS, a consulting firm, requested data from CTPS to support a study of this corridor. Because the data request was expected to be fairly large, CTPS set up a contract with URS. CTPS spent \$163 on this project in FFY 2016, and this project is considered complete.

B. Pounds asked which projects are running significantly over into the next federal fiscal year. R. Mannion explained that the agency-funded *Modeling Support for MassDOT Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for I-93/I-95 Interchange Improvements* project has been on hiatus. She said that there are a few MPO-funded projects that are not yet 100 percent complete, such as the *Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways* project. K. Quackenbush explained that MPO anticipated that this project might carry over, and so some funds were set aside in the FFY 2016 UPWP to complete it. He added that a different project—*Low Cost Improvements for Freeway Bottleneck Locations*—is expected to carry over into FFY 2016. This project was not included in the FFY 2016 UPWP; in this case, the CTPS group working on the project had a traffic engineer resign, and work on projects slowed down. MPO staff is in the process of recruiting for a new traffic engineer. B. Pounds said that MPOs will always be facing the challenge of predicting how projects will progress when developing UPWPs, and that he understands the challenges that arise when employees resign.

T. Kadzis asked whether the MPO voted to approve every project listed on the spending report. K. Quackenbush explained that most of the projects are voted on by the MPO. There are a few projects that are part of larger contracts discussed in the UPWP; when the MPO approves the UPWP, they are approving those contracts and any projects associated with them (which aren't always listed by name). B. Pounds said that even if projects associated with these larger contracts aren't listed by name in the UPWP, the work programs are brought before the MPO for a vote. K. Quackenbush said this is usually the case, but occasionally there is a project that needs to be completed very

quickly. In these cases, CTPS will prepare an informal work plan for MassDOT, but not bring it to the MPO for a vote, because the project would already be covered by the MPO's approval of the UPWP. T. Kadzis asked if MPO staff would prepare a work plan for *Diversity Posters*, for example. K. Quackenbush said that MPO staff would not, as it is a small line item included in the contract CTPS has with MassDOT to perform State Planning and Research Program (SPR)-funded work. He added that he is proud and glad that staff provides this support to Partners in Transportation for their diversity events.

S. Olanoff asked for more information on the *Cape Cod Canal Study*. K. Quackenbush explained that this project is part of the statewide work that CTPS does as part of its contract with MassDOT. In some cases, like this one, the statewide work CTPS does may include projects for areas outside the MPO region.

4. UPWP Development Schedule

Elizabeth Moore, MPO staff, explained that this schedule outlines MPO staff's estimate of when different UPWP Committee meetings would occur to support the creation of the next UPWP. The dates of some meetings are likely to change.

E. Moore verbally listed the dates of the subregional meetings when MPO staff will be conducting outreach. At the next UPWP Committee meeting, MPO staff will discuss the feedback staff collected at these subregional meetings, so that UPWP Committee members can discuss it before MPO staff begins to develop UPWP proposals. This meeting was included in response to a request from UPWP Committee members. E. Bourassa said that in past years, UPWP Committee members have mostly reacted to studies that have been proposed, and this could be an opportunity for members to be more proactive. He encouraged Committee members to bring their own ideas for UPWP studies to this upcoming meeting.

T. Kadzis said that if the MPO is planning to do more outreach in communities that have not benefited from UPWP studies in the past, per the recommendations from the MPO's recent federal certification review, it may be better for the MPO to not do as much outreach with other customers. The reason for this would be so that the MPO would not create expectations for funding studies, which it would not be able to meet. He added that the communities that have not submitted ideas may not be doing so for particular reasons.

E. Moore said that it is important for the MPO to reach out to everyone and that MPO staff may try to do special outreach to communities that haven't submitted UPWP ideas.

B. Pounds noted that there are some ideas from last year that weren't funded. E. Moore confirmed that the MPO does have unfunded study ideas in its project universe that it carries over from year to year. She said that the idea solicitation process should be the same as it has been, with an extra focus on reaching out to communities that haven't been involved, but added that the project selection process should be where the MPO takes a closer look at geographic equity.

E. Moore said that there had been a request to have more UPWP Committee meetings in the afternoon. E. Bourassa and David Koses, At-Large Cities (City of Newton) encouraged staff to move at least some meetings to the afternoon. Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) said that would work for him.

E. Moore mentioned that MPO staff is currently interviewing candidates to fill the UPWP Manager position. In the meantime, UPWP tasks are being covered by existing staff. She added that at the MPO meeting, K. Quackenbush will announce that a new Certification Activities Group manager has been hired. The outcome of the hiring process may influence the timing of individual meetings.

E. Moore asked whether the Committee wished to move the general timing of the meetings, or if she should get more feedback from Committee members not in attendance. B. Pounds said that the Committee should schedule their next meeting for the afternoon, and determine whether to have future meetings in the morning on an as-needed basis.

5. Member Items

There were none.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on December 17, following the MPO meeting.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by E. Bourassa and seconded by T. Kadzis. The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large Cities (City of Newton)	David Koses
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Bryan Pounds
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Steve Olanoff

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director
Elizabeth Moore
