



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

May 13, 2015 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

Draft Meeting Summary

Introductions

Mike Gowing, Chair (Acton) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 8)

Chair's Report—*Mike Gowing, Chair*

M. Gowing stated that there have been more MPO meetings during this time of the year as a result of the work on the certification documents (TIP/UPWP/LRTP). The TIP was changed to mirror the time periods of the LRTP. The scenario planning focus has changed toward funding LRTP on smaller scale projects such as complete streets, intersection programs, bicycle/pedestrian programs, community transportation and clean air. This swing in program emphasis from large projects to smaller projects resulted in the inclusion many more projects into the TIP.

The Advisory Council's LRTP Committee will prepare a comment letter representing the views of the membership to the MPO after it is approved by the RTAC members.

Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes for the November 2014 through April 2015 meetings was seconded. The minutes were approved with corrections noted.

Transportation Improvement Program Update – *Sean Pfalzer, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

The Federal Fiscal Year 2016-20 TIP was changed so that it would more closely track with the LRTP time bands. This change allowed for more projects to be added to the list of proposed projects to be considered in the TIP. The MPO voted on a list that is expected to be included in the TIP when it is voted on in the June.

The projects were selected based on how they rated in terms of the MPO's visions and goals, project readiness, geographic equity, projects programmed in past LRTPs and now available in the TIP.

The staff recommendation of TIP projects along with several other projects were accepted by the MPO. The projects that were added to the staff recommendation included the reconstruction of Highland Avenue and Needham Street in Needham and Charles River Bridge from Webster Street to Route 9 (FFY 2018); traffic signal improvements at 10 locations in Boston (FFY 2016); bridge replacement and New Boston Street over the MBTA in Woburn (FFY 2020); initial funding for the reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue from City Square to Sullivan Square (FFY 2020); and reconstruction of Route 126 in Ashland (FFY 2020). The MPO moved the project to reconstruct Route 1A in Walpole from the Norwood Town Line to Route 27 from FFY 2018 to FFY 2020.

S. Pfalzer presented a chart showing nearly three-fourths of the money programmed in the FFY2016-20 for major infrastructure projects (\$328 M), a third of this infrastructure funding is for the Green Line Extension Project from College Avenue to Route 16 in Somerville and Medford – a programmed amount of \$158 M over the five years of the TIP. Twenty-four percent of the funding is to support complete streets and other arterial modernization projects – primarily, adding sidewalks, bikeways and signalization improvements. Intersection improvements projects account for two percent of the TIP funding – these improvement projects are in addition to other funded projects and usually focus on either independent locations or specific corridors.

S. Pfalzer presented a table summarizing the evaluation of the TIP highway projects and indicating the importance of the evaluation criteria as a primary factor in the selection of projects.

The MPO is planning to vote on the TIP and the LRTP at the June 11 meeting. The public review process will begin on June 22 through July 21, with an expected MPO endorsement of the final TIP on July 30.

DISCUSSION

In response to a member's question, S. Pfalzer explained that cost-effectiveness is not strictly considered in the project programming decision as there is a range of costs in any given year. There is a balance of large and small projects; with one or two larger projects, there is a residual from which only less costly projects can be considered. He stated that the evaluation criteria are being updated later this year and likely will consider cost-effectiveness as a category for evaluation in the future. (C. Porter)

S. Pfalzer responded to a member's question on overlapping funding categories within the TIP by stating that a programming goal is to have some flexibility from year to year in attaining the different investment targets while striving to reach five-year target amounts in order to be consistent with what has been programmed in the LRTP. Regarding overlapping programming categories, the challenge is to capture candidate projects into the five investment programs and projects. He added that tracking data into

the funding categories helps explain MPO programs in public outreach activities. (D. Montgomery)

In response to a member's question, S. Pfalzer explained that the MPO staff has conducted a before-and-after study of the impacts of several projects undertaken over the past five years to determine if projected benefits were attained. Impacts on safety and congestion were measured for project effectiveness. (L. Elisa)

M. Gowing stated that two projects were taken off the final time-band of the LRTP by MassDOT. The projects were large infrastructure items including: Route 3/ I-93 Interchange in Braintree and the Concord Rotary. S. Pfalzer indicated that the State will not be funding the Canton Interchange (I-95/Route 128/I-93) and new ramp construction on the Dedham Street Corridor Interchange near I-95 which will affect the number and timing of projects on the TIP.

Unified Planning Work Program Update – Michelle Scott, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff

M. Scott gave an update on the UPWP functions. She pointed out that the MPO receives two types of dollars from the federal government – funding for capital projects (programmed in the TIP) and for carrying out transportation planning activities. The MPO receives between \$5-6 million a year for transportation planning activities. The funds keep the MPO running and ensures that the public will be involved in the decision making process. The MPO chooses which planning activities will be conducted with the federal dollars it receives and documents them in its UPWP.

UPWP-funded activities include roadway, transit, and bike/pedestrian studies; data collection and analysis; research into transportation issues; and processes to support MPO decision-making and public involvement.

Since last January, MPO staff met with the MAPC subregions and held workshops to gather feedback on transportation needs and UPWP study ideas. Using this information and staff-identified candidate projects, MPO staff compiled a FFY 2016 UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects located on the MPO website - www.ctps.org/Drupal/upwp or [\(click here\)](#).

Since February, the MPO UPWP Committee has met to consider the projects in this Universe and identify a preferred set of projects that they recommend the MPO include in the FFY 2016 UPWP. The UPWP committee is a group of MPO members that advises the overall MPO on UPWP matters. This recommendation is informed in-part by the UPWP budget development process, which is underway.

Based on the funding requirements for the operations of the MPO and the ongoing community technical assistance programs, funds are available for new planning studies; on average, \$500,000 to \$600,000 is available for these new studies.

Some of the new discrete studies include corridor and intersection studies and studies addressing safety, mobility, and access on subregional priority roadways which have all been done in the past, and have significant community support.

Transit studies being presented to the MPO will look at opportunities to enhance first-and-last mile connections to transit services, and opportunities to reduce delays for bus passengers.

Projects with region-wide benefits, if approved by the MPO, will investigate ways to get a region-specific measure for pedestrian safety and comfort on roadways; new methods for measuring the environmental justice impacts of TIP projects; the relationships between MBTA parking lot pricing and lot use; and other key transportation issues raised by MPO staff.

The nine new studies presented to the UPWP Committee cost approximately \$570,000. The MPO will be reviewing and discussing this recommendation in the coming weeks, and this recommendation will be updated as the UPWP budget is finalized. Additional study ideas are forwarded to the Committee and/or to the full MPO when they come in. If it is not possible to address the idea as part of this year's UPWP, MPO staff looks at these recommendations first thing the following development cycle, which will begin a few months after the FFY 2016 UPWP is endorsed. The MPO staff looks at a variety of ways to address the topic – whether it is a new study, something addressed through a technical assistance program or through the MPO's ongoing planning work.

The next steps for public and Advisory Council involvement in the UPWP include:

May 21 – June 11: MPO discussion of proposed UPWP studies and budget.

June 11: MPO is scheduled to vote to release a draft UPWP for public review.

June 22 – July 21: Public review and comment period for the UPWP; same as the LRTP and TIP. MPO will be holding workshops during this time.

July 30: MPO is scheduled to endorse the final UPWP, after considering public comments and making any needed changes.

DISCUSSION

M. Scott indicated that planning studies are tracked by incorporating them into the TIP process in response to a member's question. When study recommendations are presented, staff is aware of community intentions. (C. Porter)

Regarding a question on noise pollution, M. Scott stated that staff will incorporate noise impacts in technical corridor study works and environmental justice studies. (M. Wellons)

A member observed that many studies are not specifically focused on a TIP project but are contributors to the knowledge base which can be useful to many communities, even if they are not applying for funding. M. Scott explained that the TIP and the performance based planning practice will increase the link between the studies and actual program and project planning. The time between conceptualization of a project and its actual funding can be lengthy, in which case, communities may seek other sources of funding based on the study that was undertaken. (D. Montgomery)

One member expressed concern over the depth of reviewing projects in terms of impacts on communities, particularly in terms of health related issues. (L. Elisa) M. Scott explained that public involvement in the process is addressed as comments are received.

Regarding funding emphasis toward community level programs, a member questioned whether enough emphasis is being placed on planning studies that address these concerns. M. Scott stated that corridor and intersection studies, transit support studies and studies supporting community transportation do feed into the new orientation. As the LRTP is finalized and new criteria being developed for TIP, the link between the planning studies and the program areas will be more closely made. (P. Nelson)

M. Scott pointed out that there is coordination between CTPS and MAPC regarding technical assistance to communities in response to a member's question. (M. Gowing)

Long Range Transportation Plan Committee Report – Chris Porter, Chair

The LRTP Committee met prior to today's Advisory Council meeting to review the latest developments related to the LRTP which were presented by MPO staff member Anne McGahan, LRTP Manager. A table of MPO-approved recommendation of projects and programs to be modeled in the draft LRTP was used to identify the projects being considered in the LRTP in the various time bands through 2040. The goal of shifting funding away from major infrastructure projects and toward programs such as complete streets, bicycle and pedestrian, intersection improvements, and community transportation, is supported by the MPO's target of spending less than fifty percent for each time band in 2021 and beyond for major infrastructure. The remaining funds would go to smaller projects.

The Committee agreed to draft a letter to the MPO expressing support for funding opportunities for smaller projects through programmatic categories. The letter will be

drafted and circulated for approval of the full Advisory Council at the June 10 meeting and distributed to the MPO at its June 11 meeting.

The points brought out in the committee discussion included recommendations that the LRTP support local needs; provide flexibility to achieve the goals and objectives of the MPO; brings planning to the human scale; supports mode shift; gives hope to communities that their projects might be more likely funded when not competing with the large-scale major infrastructure projects; makes the MPO more relevant in terms of decision-making.

The Committee expressed a concern that the evaluation criteria be updated to be consistent with the goals and objectives and performance based planning approach. Members also felt that there be a more regional planning approach rather than having three different silos that are not coordinated. Currently along with the MPO planning, the State has funding directed to projects and the MBTA has its own capital plan.

DISCUSSION

M. Gowing explained that a memo will be drafted prior to the next meeting. Individually, members can relay concerns to C. Porter for consideration in crafting a letter to be reviewed and approved by the Advisory Council.

L. Elisa expressed an interest in more support for local transportation, particularly in the inner city. M. Gowing also pointed out the need for local transportation in some of the outer suburbs.

R. McGaw moved that the Advisory Council support skewing the funding to small projects and a letter be sent to the MPO on the June 11 meeting. Draft of the letter will be adopted by the Chair in consultation with the LRTP Committee Chair. The motion was seconded. The motion passed.

M. Gowing encouraged members who have specific ideas for adding to the letter to contact him or D. Fargen for consideration in the comment letter preparation.

Old Business, New Business and Member Announcements

M. Gowing announced that Pam Wolfe is retiring as on June 5. P. Wolfe expressed her gratitude and appreciation for the many contributions made by the Advisory Council. The Council thanked and applauded her many years of service to the group.

B. Steinberg remarked that the latest *Rollsign* issue (Boston Street Railway Association) has a chronology of Boston weather and transit impacts along with many other points. See him for more details.

C. Porter reminded the group that it is Bike-to-Work Week.

M. Gowing announced the June 3 MPO Away meeting will be held at Acton Town Hall.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

ATTENDANCE

Municipalities (Voting)

Acton
Belmont
Brookline
Cambridge
Needham
Quincy
Weymouth

Citizen Groups (Voting)

AACT
APA - Massachusetts Chapter
Association for Public Transportation
Boston Society of Architects
Boston Society of Civil Engineers
Massachusetts Bus Association
MassBike
MASCO
MoveMassachusetts
National Corridors Initiative
Riverside Neighborhood Association
WalkBoston

Agencies (Voting)

Executive Office of Elder Affairs
MassRides
Seaport Advisory Council

Municipalities (Non-Voting)

Boston

Guests

Ed Lowney
Susan Ringler

Staff

Pam Wolfe
Matt Archer
David Fargen

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Robert McGaw
Todd M. Kirrane
Tegin Bennett
David Montgomery
Susan C. Karim
Owen MacDonald

Mary Ann Murray
Tad Read
Barry M. Steinberg
Schuyler Larrabee
Topher Smith
Mark Sanborn
Chris Porter
Paul Nelson
Jon Seward
John Businger
Marilyn Wellons
John McQueen

Emmett Schmarsow
Gary St. Fleur
Louis Elisa

Attendee

Tom Kadzis

Malden Resident
350 MA

Sean Pfalzer
Michelle Scott