

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

November 18, 2015 Meeting

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

Meeting Summary

Introductions

T. Bennett, Chair (Cambridge) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 7)

Chair's Report—*Tegin Teich Bennett, Chair*

T. Bennett explained that as the incoming officers for the upcoming year, she and Vice Chair M. Sanborn have met with past leadership and MPO Staff in reviewing the 3C document certification process and the Advisory Council's role. The Officers met with MassDOT staff to explore ways to work more closely together. T. Bennett will try to address issues that come to the Council while they are still current and part of the discussion at the MPO level. In the near future the Council will host a discussion on the fundamentals of the functioning of the MPO to help members understand how the MPO works.

The consideration of funding for the Green Line Extension was a topic at the last MPO meeting. T. Bennett asked D. Mohler, (MassDOT) to address the Advisory Council to better understand the funding proposals.

Green Line Extension Project - *David Mohler, Executive Director, Office of Transportation Planning, MassDOT*

D. Mohler presented an overview of the Green Line Extension project from Lechmere to Tufts and Union Square with seven new stations, a maintenance facility and twenty-four new light rail vehicles. The project cost was set at \$1.99B in the Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) of January, 2015. Half of the project will be funded by a federal New Starts program which is capped at \$1B. Components of the project costs are construction, right-of-way, vehicle acquisition, professional services, design and construction oversight, and contingency funds. The Commonwealth's portion of the project cost is to be paid through issuance of Special Obligation Transit Bonds.

The construction manager general contractor process (CMGC) was selected as the procurement vehicle for completing the work on the project. This was the first time this process was used in Massachusetts. Projected costs became significantly larger than planned costs

which led to a review of the project. Through value engineering and redesign, MassDOT is searching for ways to bring the costs down while other revenue options are being considered including contributions from local and specially impacted developers, and possible MPO funding. Currently, the project is paused pending a detailed project review.

The expectation is that the project budget will cost significantly more than FFGA , but less than current estimates, due to value engineering efforts now being studied. MassDOT is studying the funding gap between projected costs and funds available and considering several options available to keep the project viable as cancelling the project is not a desirable option. Recently, an LRTP amendment to reallocate GLX2 to GLX1 funding was proposed to the MPO. This amendment may be scheduled at a later MPO meeting.

On November 30, 2015, there will be a Joint Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) meeting to discuss a “look back” on the project to try to figure out how the funding estimates were off by so much. On December 9, the FMCB will address “the path forward”.

Questions and Comments:

D. Mohler explained the timing of asking the MPO for a reallocation of LRTP funds from Green Line Extension - Phase Two (GLX2) to the Green Line Extension - Phase One (GLX1) prior to the FMCB “path forward” discussion is to establish a combined commitment to the project from its stakeholders. He indicated a high likelihood of more funds needed even after the path forward has been discerned. (In response to a question from T. Bennett).

As a result of the immediacy of needing to address the GLX funding gap, D. Mohler said several staff at MassDOT are currently focusing on this issue. (In response to a question from D. Montgomery).

D. Mohler said that in the past, bridges along the GLX line were not built to preclude the possibility of extending the Green Line. He noted that bridge replacement is not a main cost influence on the overall GLX budget. (In response to a question from M. Wellons).

D. Mohler said that the construction of GLX1 would precede GLX2 which explains the logic of asking the MPO to reallocate funds from GLX2 to GLX1. The long-term commitment to the GLX2 project would likely be of greatest concern to the MPO. (In response to a comment from M. Sanborn)

D. Mohler explained that time delays that might result from significant re-design of the project would have an even more negative impact on increased costs. Significant changes in the design of the project would also have to be reviewed by the federal funding authority to guarantee that it meets original requirements of the FFGA. Forcing the project to meet the available funds or cutting back the number of stations may have an undesired effect on the project outcomes. (In response to a comment from M. Gowing).

Minutes - October 14, 2015

A motion to approve the minutes for the October 14 meeting was seconded. The minutes were approved.

Bicycle Network Gap: Feasibility Evaluations, Selection of Study Locations - *Katrina Crocker, Transportation Planner, CTPS*

K. Crocker briefly reviewed the 2014 Bicycle Network study which was precursor to the selection of study locations. The goal of the study is to create a cohesive bike network, to identify and evaluate gaps in the network; and to make recommendations for improvements.

A gap is a lack of connectivity between existing facilities or between a bicycle facility and a regional transit station such as commuter rail, an MBTA station, or a key bus route. The analysis asks if the new connection would provide connection for all trip types such as commuter trips, work trips, and recreation trips; would it serve future bike-pedestrian trips—and are future projected trips higher than average? The analysis also needs to be consistent with previous plans.

The analysis produced 234 gaps which were sorted into long (>1.5 mi.), medium (.5-1.5mi.) and short gaps (<.5 mi.). The gaps were scored based on the existing evaluation criteria within the three groups which resulted in high, medium and low priority gaps. Eleven of the 36 total high priority gaps were selected for study.

Potential projects were considered in light of MPO goals: Healthy transportation; safety and impact on air quality based on transit; and bike and pedestrian activity. The analysis addressed in terms of compatibility with other plans in the region and the contribution to livability. Administrative concerns included whether the previously identified gap was still in need of review and whether it fell in the realm agency expertise.

Out of the top 11 high priority gaps, three are long gaps, six are medium length gaps and two are short gaps. The next step at the 11 locations will be to collect data, recommend improvements, and produce a Memorandum for the MPO. Some mitigating activities include possible route location widening, right-of-way acquisition, improved on-road facilities, design services and providing cost estimates.

Questions and Comments:

K. Crocker explained that consideration of Complete Streets will be incorporated to the overall design and project recommendations. (In response to a question from T. Bennett).

K. Crocker stated that the analysis identified gaps between bicycle facilities and key regional transit connections and commuter rail stops. The analysis reviewed connectivity to a municipal center, central business district, and recreational projects.

Citing a previous study reviewed by the Advisory Council, B. McGaw noted that regarding trip type, the MPO give priority to work-based activity. In response to this question K. Crocker indicated that the trip type activities covered most possible activities including work-based activities.

K. Crocker indicated that interest areas were used instead of desire-lines in analyzing and organizing the best place to locate facilities in places the demand might be. She explained the gap analysis incorporated quantitative analysis by employing GIS methods to focus on measurable analysis points like employment density and landmark locations. (In response to a question from D. Ernst).

K. Crocker explained that previous plans including the LRTP Needs Assessment, the Regional Bicycle Plan by MAPC and others were consulted in the process of the study. (In response to a question from D. Ernst).

M. Abbott, CTPS, stated that analytical studies conducted by CTPS take into consideration previous plans as recommendations are formulated; this occurs not only with bike projects, but also with intersection and corridor projects. A primary goal of the MPO is to see that studies are implemented. All projects undertaken through the UPWP follow an organized and analytical approach to the project selection process.

Innovative Design Guidelines for Low-stress Bicycle Networks - Nick Jackson, Regional Director, Toole Design Group

N. Jackson presented the newly released Separated Bike Lane Planning & Design Guide now available on MassDOT's website ([click here](#)). The context of the guidelines are a new in concept and look at all standards, from the U.S. Federal government to innovative applications in the Netherlands. In accordance with Engineering Directive E-15-002, "This guide shall be used by project planners and designers as a resource for considering, evaluating and designing separated bike lanes as part of a complete streets approach for providing safe and comfortable accommodations for all roadway users".

The guide draws upon experience and lessons learned from North American cities that have successfully increased bicycling while reducing crash rates through the implementation of separated bike lanes and other bicycle facilities.

N. Jackson defined a separated lane facility used in the manual as having a horizontal and vertical separation from vehicles. MassDOT is building these facilities for purposes of achieving mode-shift goals. More attractive facilities for more users will help reduce GHG. N. Jackson stated that many potential bike riders are very concerned about safety and proximity to busy traffic and find bicycling a less attractive alternative. Several graphics depict some potential riders' assessment of the safety of riding on shared roadways.

The design guide focuses on bicycle safety, comfort and connectivity. It helps to deal with the issue of where separated bike lanes ought to go. The guide also helps to clarify where separated bicycle lanes are appropriate and feasible.

The general design type includes sidewalk, a sidewalk buffer, sidewalk lane, a street buffer and a street. N. Jackson gave detail dimensions of various design types. The design guide presents graphics and details for intersections and lanes giving special attention to issues like

passing, drainage, accessibility and landscaping. Separated bike lanes can be integrated with transit for less air quality impacts and for greater quality of life benefits.

The guide deals with intersection design and it attempts to minimize the exposure to conflicts, reducing speed at conflict points, and adding adequate sight-distance to intersections. In the U.S., mixing zones are used to separate traffic throughout the intersection.

The design guide includes chapters on planning, general design considerations, intersection design, signals, and maintenance.

Questions and Comments

N. Jackson stated that the guide is determined to be used according to MassDOT Engineering Directives. The wording is straightforward indicating that the guideline “shall be used” by planners and designers as a resource in evaluating and designing separated bike lanes. (In response to a question from T. Bennett).

N. Jackson explained that community standards and policing of shared space is a local issue which may help to explain why some shared-lane roadways are dangerous for bicyclists to use. He mentioned that drivers and bicyclists both prefer the separated lanes as they enhance the feeling of protection, safety and expectations of what the other operators will do. (In response to a question from M. Murray).

M. Gowing commented that right-on-red capability is an issue that complicates separated lanes as it makes the movements through the intersection less predictable. N. Jackson suggested that dedicated bike signals can help in situations like that.

O. MacDonald asked if lower volume side streets are a preferable alternative to arterial streets. N. Jackson expressed concern that side streets do not provide the flow and access characteristics available on arterial streets and would diminish the attractiveness and efficiency of the bicycle trip.

N. Jackson expressed that guidelines are in play for the maintenance of roads for all public users and they should be shoveled and overseen as all roads are. (In response to a question from S. Larrabee).

Old Business, New Business and Member Announcements

M. Sanborn explained that an attendance audit will be undertaken over the next month to monitor voting status conformity with the recently updated bylaws. In the near future, voting and non-voting members will be asked to help identify how the organization can be improved in terms of time use, topic selection, and overall utility. The main goal over the next year will be to achieve relevancy and efficient use of members' time and energy. M. Sanborn will seek feedback on how to keep meetings as helpful as possible and he will keep the group informed of his findings.

T. Bennett explained that members who are having difficulties attending meetings will be able to work with the officers to find a way to try to improve their attendance. The Membership Committee will continue to work on this effort.

T. Bennett announced that the former TIP, UPWP, and LRTP Committees have been combined into one committee called the 3C Certification Documents Committee, which will be chaired by C. Porter. The updated committee list is online and members are encouraged to participate in their areas of interest.

T. Bennett described how the discussion of the Green Line Extension funding originated and asked members for their consideration of the topic in light of today's discussion with D. Mohler.

B. Steinberg commented that the value-engineering being undertaken now should trim off some costs as they stand today.

D. Montgomery explained that when the MPO's GLX discussions occurred some years ago, most of the current Advisory Council membership were not present. The size of the project has consumed much of the share of funding for what would otherwise go to smaller scale projects broadly distributed throughout the MPO.

T. Bennett added that the Advisory Council's recent comment letter on the TIP, UPWP and LRTP expressed an interest in more diversified, smaller projects throughout the region.

M. Gowing suggested that the "gap analysis" being conducted by the FMCB should be weighed as there is no guarantee that the funding gap can be filled with the MPO funds.

It was determined that a committee meeting be held prior to the next MPO meeting. The meeting will be scheduled to further discuss the GLX funding concern. Members will be notified of the time and place.

J. Businger explained that a North South Station Rail Link working group was being formed.

Adjournment

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
Westwood
Weymouth

Citizen Groups

AACT
American Council of Engineering Companies
APA - Massachusetts Chapter
American Planning Association
Association for Public Transportation
Boston Society of Architects
Boston Society of Civil Engineers
MassBike
Massachusetts Bus Association
National Corridors Initiative
Riverside Neighborhood Association

Agencies (Non-Voting)

MassDOT

Agencies (Voting)

MassRides

Municipalities (Non-Voting)

Norwood

Guests

Arthur Strang
Ed Lowney

Staff

David Fargen
Maureen Kelly
Laurenço Dantas

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Robert McGaw
Todd M. Kirrane
Tegin Bennett
David Montgomery; Rhain
Holland
Trevor Laubenstein
Owen MacDonald

Mary Ann Murray
Fred Moseley
Josh Weiland
John (Tad) Read
Barry M Steinberg
Schuyler Larrabee
Topher Smith
David Ernst
Mark Sanborn
John Businger
Marilyn Wellons

David Mohler

Gary St. Fleur

Steve Olanoff

Cambridge Resident
Malden Resident

Mark Abbott
Katrina Crocker