



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

October 11, 2017, Meeting

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

DRAFT 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

T. Bennett reported on the MPO Away meeting held in Bedford. Town official showcased some of the recent transportation-related activities as they hosted the meeting. CTPS made an annual report on program activities. T. Bennett highlighted several activities including the project recommendation tracking database in conjunction with UPWP projects; modeling activity is moving toward an activity-based model.

CTPS is developing project selection criteria for the selection of projects in connection with the new Community Transit Program which will like the "First Mile/Last Mile" projects for supporting transit ridership solutions. CTPS is also working on how to assess equity impacts by focusing on the entire bus and transit network service impacts rather than service impacts that are derived from local measures.

CTPS also presented updates on the 3-C process which will include a change in the expected completion time of the 3-C documents. Staff continues to improve the presentation of TIP-related information. The LRTP process will be ongoing for the next two years. The next several months will see discussion on demographics and development projections, and the scenario planning process. In addition, staff reviewed plans for the 3-C public participation process for the upcoming year.

Minutes - September 13, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 13 meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

Election Committee, Mike Gowing, Committee Chair

Election of Officers is to be held today. Committee Chair M. Gowing explained that nominations for Chair and Vice Chair were made at the September meeting. The term of office is November 1, 2017, through October 31, 2018. Background information on both candidates was made available prior to the meeting.

T. Bennett (Chair, Cambridge) was re-elected Chair. AnaCristina Fragoso (Boston Society of Civil Engineers) was elected Vice Chair.

M. Gowing explained that he will be leaving the Advisory Council and that the Acton Council will be naming his replacement. The members acknowledged his many years of active service on the Advisory Council.

Creating Transportation Solutions in a Diverse Region - Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager, CTPS

B. Harvey gave a brief overview of the Boston Region MPO's growing and diverse population. She explained that her role as Transportation Equity Program Manager is to understand and plan for the transportation needs of the many different population groups.

Transportation equity refers to demographic equity. The foundation for the program lies under the purview of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Environmental Justice Executive Order of 1992, and other federal laws protecting against age, disability, and gender discrimination.

The MPO seeks to ensure that the benefits from MPO transportation investments are distributed fairly and that the burdens (e.g., air quality) associated with transportation projects and programs don't fall on certain groups of people more than others.

The Transportation Equity program will focus this year on the evaluation of the TIP and LRTP. The evaluation will focus on the impacts of the transportation projects in these documents to minority and low-income populations in concurrence with federal guidance. The analysis is called disparate impact analysis and the accompanying policy determines whether the impacts are distributed fairly among these populations. Over the next year, the Advisory Council will participate in the review of these evaluations.

The analysis of programs and projects is viewed in relation to threshold values that

measure the percent of population that is racial or ethnic minorities and the percent that has low household incomes. The region-wide standard is used to identify areas that are higher than the region-wide median. The minority population in the Boston MPO region is 27.8 percent and low-income households make up about a third of the households in the region. People of color in the MPO Region have lower household incomes which impact their transportation choices. Policy considerations that are sensitive to these statistics will help in identifying projects meeting the needs of all riders, wherever possible.

Nationally, households in the lower third of the income range spend 15 percent of their income on transportation compared to 8 percent of households in the upper third. Nearly 10 percent of the region's older adults live in poverty, while about a quarter of the region's working-age persons with a disability live in poverty.

Along the spectrum of commuting, commuters of color on average have a 12 percent longer transit commute than white commuters. Low-income families are less likely to own a vehicle and rely more on public transit. People of color also have lower car-ownership rates, increasing their reliance on public transit, bicycling, and walking. These statistics help to inform planners on where transit services might be best located so as to maximize access to jobs, health care, and community services.

In communities with a large share of minority or low-income persons experience 1.7 times more pedestrian and bicyclist crashes than non-minority/low-income communities.

In discussing the metric relating to health and transportation, B. Harvey cited statistics on how transportation can affect people's health. Transportation improvements need to consider the communities and the factors that affect people's day to day health impacts and outcomes. Currently, changes in air quality are one of the ways in which transportation can affect communities. Air quality can affect asthma rates, among other effects.

B. Harvey explained the evaluation metrics being used in conjunction with the LRTP. The measures constitute disparate impact analysis. The TIP analysis relies on graphics overlays which quickly point out the targeted demographic statistic the communities within the MPO.

Performance-Based Planning will be the major organizing principles of the new LRTP. A new host of metrics is being refined to ensure that equity is a part of the process. The recently released performance dashboard is on the MPO's website and identifies a large number of indicators such as travel volume, vehicle speed, and pavement condition.

Establishing a disparate impact analysis and policy for the TIP would evaluate the effects of the TIP on neighborhoods where projects are built as well as the effects on users of improved roadways and transit facilities. The equity program of the MPO will continue to

measure impacts on communities relying on current and new measures with which to determine the overall impacts of the MPO's transportation investments on low-income and minority populations.

B. Harvey explained that there are many different aspects of transportation equity, however; the focus of today's presentation was to introduce the Advisory Council to the topics that will be most prominent at the Boston Region MPO over the next fiscal year.

Discussion

T. Bennett addressed the difference between equity and equality in achieving a remedial effect on communities that might need more attention to get to a more even level. She questioned whether the policy will be one of not doing damage as opposed to doing more for communities where pervasive problems, such as childhood asthma related to air quality, have remained. B. Harvey stated that the MPO, with the support of the Advisory Council, would have to determine the policy based on what the MPO values and available resources. B. Harvey explained that the disparate impact analysis and policy for the TIP and the LRTP will require MPO approval.

J. Businger discussed the importance of using the term "transit" expansively so that people are aware that all forms of transit including commuter rail are being addressed.

J. McQueen asked if transportation equity is hard-wired into the policy and planning aspects of the MPO. T. Bennett explained that the service planning process looks at the entire system to evaluate services and impacts. AFC2.0 planning has undertaken the income-related analysis.

In response to a question from M. Gowing B. Harvey indicated that data on minority and English speaking proficiency are not mutually exclusive categories; the data comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) data.

Regarding environmental justice, M. Gowing noted that there are differences in transportation service needs in high-income minority populations compared to low-income minority populations. B. Harvey stated that there is an intersection between minority and low-income communities and high need for transportation services which is not exclusive. Transportation needs should address more than just a journey to work as it encompasses where people must go to conduct their lives.

D. Montgomery asked about the differences in LRTP and TIP evaluation criteria and whether the analysis for factors other than air quality are left for review until the disparate analysis of TIP measures are performed. He asked if factors beyond air quality analysis should be addressed earlier on in the planning process. B. Harvey stated that

environmental review models congestion, vehicle miles traveled and air quality for the LRTP. On the TIP, all disparate impact analysis on the LRTP, TIP, and all the metrics that are reviewed are at the aggregate level and not at the individual project level. Individual project proponents must address the local project impacts. There may be metrics that apply to the TIP or the LRTP independently. The evaluation of the LRTP and TIP are conducted after the plans have been completed. These analyses can help identify areas that may require additional resources to rectify ongoing problems.

B. McGaw encouraged a continued commitment to improving transportation equity in the face of changes and commended the effort that is taken to achieve the positive environmental changes.

A. Fragoso asked about the impact of changes in federal regulations on the LRTP and TIP.

B. Harvey indicated that regulation changes will affect the projects in the five-year schedule of the TIP. She noted that the MPO has made a commitment to funding equity and that readjustment of projects in the TIP as a result of possible funding changes at the federal level would be up to the MPO. M. Gowing noted that the TIP Evaluation Scorecard is weighted and so it could be indexed differently to balance funding level changes if needed. T. Bennett stated that any dramatic changes in project funding or project costs usually triggers a robust discussion at the MPO level about the tradeoffs which helps to define the criteria that will be most impactful. Even though the TIP assigns funding for five years into the future, the guaranteed funding is only valid for the TIP's first year.

L. Diggins asked about the specific years of program funding in the TIP and whether the later years in the TIP might be more reliable. L. Dantas indicated that federal transit dollars are more flexible in funding over the long term, however, with the introduction of transit asset performance measures there will be more specificity in the programming the years two and three of the FTA funds. In an upcoming presentation to the MPO staff will discuss the transit asset measures along with the MBTA.

L. Diggins was interested in the background of selecting the universe of projects for the LRTP and stressed that all towns should be given the opportunity to participate. L. Dantas said that the transit side of the next LRTP will be highly informed by the Focus40 effort conducted by the MBTA. Programming of the LRTP will take place in the fall of next year. Once the LRTP webpage is launched, the information for local information and involvement will be readily available.

D. Montgomery noted that being on the LRTP universe of projects is just the first step towards seeing a project become a reality. Project proponents need to continue to advocate for their project once it is on the universe list.

L. Dantas stated that built into the LRTP schedule is the idea of scenario planning. Here you can take a universe of projects, perhaps focused on a certain policy, and then model that scenario to be able to look at different alternatives so that different visions of the future can be reviewed and considered. The updating of demographic information will add a better understanding of the region as the modeling and planning cycle gets started.

J. McQueen asked about the relationship between ethnicity, income, and mode choice. B. Harvey stated that there was likely a high correlation between income and expanded transportation options.

Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

T. Bennett mentioned that Regional Transit Agency representation on the MPO will be discussed at an upcoming MPO meeting.

T. Bennett announced that Cambridge discussed funding solutions for transit improvements including a general transit mitigation fund from MIT related to its re-zoning petition for the Volpe site in Kendall Square.

R. McGaw recommended that the Advisory Council write a letter to the Mayor of Boston to suggest that the City think about the impact on the local transportation infrastructure before inviting 50,000 shift workers to Suffolk Downs. T. Bennett suggested putting together a letter of this nature only after ascertaining the consensus of the group. R. McGaw said that he would share ideas for the letter.

Adjournment

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

Attendance

Municipalities - Voting

Acton
Belmont
Cambridge
Millis

Needham

Citizen Advocacy Groups

Boston Society of Architects
Boston Society of Civil Engineers
CrosstownConnect
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee
(ROC)
National Corridors Initiative
WalkBoston

Guests

Malden Resident
Boston Resident

Staff

Lorenço Dantas
Betsy Harvey

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Robert McGaw
Tegin Bennett
Ed Chisholm
Rhain Hoyland; David
Montgomery

Schuyler Larrabee
AnaCristina Fragoso
Scott Zadakis

Lenard Diggins
John Businger
John McQueen

Ed Lowney
Dee Whilleby

David Fargen
Matt Archer