

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting Summary

February 15, 2018 Meeting

12:00 PM–2:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

Bryan Pounds, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2019 Draft Universe of Proposed Studies
2. FFY 2019 Disposition of Study Concepts Table

Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

Bryan Pounds (MassDOT/UPWP Committee Chair) called the meeting to order and circulated the sign-in sheet. Sarah Lee from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) introduced herself as sitting in for Eric Bourassa.

2. Overview of UPWP Budgeting—*Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director*

Karl Quackenbush (CTPS Executive Director) gave an overview of the Central Transportation Planning Staff's (CTPS) ongoing programs and the process of developing the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) budget. B. Pounds noted how most of the items don't change much from year to year but some do—such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, where work is more intense in some years than in others.

B. Pounds and K. Quackenbush discussed how the 3C PL (Federal Highway Administration) and Section 5303 (Federal Transit Administration (FTA)) funds [combined these two sources form the MPO's planning budget] are announced in the spring of each year and shape individual program budget estimates. B. Pounds explained that PL funds are determined by formula and allocated early in the calendar year; 5303 funds come from FTA by apportionment, often not until the summer months, which requires MassDOT to project available funding earlier, in the spring.

Tegin Teich (Regional Transportation Advisory Council/City of Cambridge) asked if the budget for Regional Model Enhancement, the largest single line item, is abnormally large this year. K. Quackenbush explained that while this program's work emphasis may change in any given year—for example, this year staff is working on developing an activity-based model—the overall budget stays about the same from year to year. T. Teich added that the model is expensive for other entities (that is, municipalities) to use, and asked if there is any possibility of making it cheaper for other users to access. There was some discussion about different tools that CTPS makes available and how useful they have been to different entities at different times.

Brad Rawson (City of Somerville/Inner Core Committee) mentioned an accessibility analysis that his city had run. B. Pounds explained the general process of reviewing studies for members of the public who were in the room. There was some ongoing discussion. K. Quackenbush explained that the MPO sees study concepts, in the form of work scopes, for almost all of the materials that are presented in the fall; but that work scopes are not presented for some ongoing programs that do not change much.

David Koses (At-Large City/City of Newton) asked about the staff-training item within one of the computer budget lines, and wondered if it applied to staff as a whole. Robin Mannion (CTPS Deputy Executive Director) and K. Quackenbush replied that that line item is just for computer training.

K. Quackenbush remarked that members have a revised copy of the First Quarter FFY 2018 Progress Reports, which originally was handed out at the committee's previous meeting. There was minor discussion about this table.

B. Rawson asked how ongoing dialogues around private developer contributions to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and other capital projects are playing into the "Transportation Mitigation of Major Developments" item in the FFY 2018 UPWP. K. Quackenbush replied that they do not, at the moment, but might become part of that effort at some point. There was some discussion about those types of projects.

3. Presentation of the FFY 2019 Universe of Potential Studies and Discussion—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager*

Sandy Johnston (UPWP Manager) explained the process of developing the FFY 2019 Universe of Proposed Studies, which was generated from extensive public outreach, as well as review of the previous (FFY 2018) Universe. There are fewer study concepts in this year's Universe—thanks in part to culling out old study concepts, and in part because many of the concepts that had come up were covered by work executed at CTPS or another agency. The purpose of the discussion at this meeting is to answer

any questions about the studies listed in the Universe. Final decisions about which studies to fund in FFY 2019 will be made later, with the help of a member survey (sent out after the meeting). S. Johnston explained the organization and color-coding of the spreadsheet.

T. Teich asked about a study concept that had come up at Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC) about economic development and health benefits of bike infrastructure. B. Pounds replied that that work is happening at MassDOT; and there was some discussion of that.

Dennis Crowley (Town of Medway/SWAP) explained that he had missed the previous couple of meetings, and asked why so few of the studies had been identified as being associated with particular cities or towns. K. Quackenbush explained the process of identifying probable study candidates. T. Teich explained that in RTAC there is often pushback against studies that are only of benefit to one community, and support for those that have more regional benefits. S. Johnston explained that in staff's view, the feeling around the UPWP Committee table was largely that regional studies are more beneficial. In addition, staff have been making an effort to shift municipal interest studies into the MPO's technical assistance programs, which are targeted at municipal stakeholders. B. Pounds asked if there are any studies that were submitted by a municipality and not carried over into the Universe; S. Johnston pointed to a table that displays disposition of study concepts, as heard in outreach. K. Quackenbush noted that he had just then looked over the table and not seen many such concepts. S. Johnston promised to send the table around.

B. Rawson asked if the Committee had ever ranked studies or examined concepts based on which recommendations carried over into implementation. S. Johnston explained that the UPWP Study Recommendations Tracking Database is under development. It is challenging for staff to get updates on the implementation status of these recommendations from municipalities (the implementing entities). Mark Abbott (Manager Traffic Analysis and Design Group) explained that municipalities who approach staff directly about a project, instead of being offered a free study, are more likely to follow through.

S. Johnston presented each study concept from the FFY 2019 Universe of Proposed Studies in order. Committee members asked minor clarifying questions about the studies as they were presented. S. Johnston presented each topical section of studies, with members asking questions at the end. Below are the discussions by topic area.

Active Transportation

There was no discussion of this section.

Land Use, Environment, and Economy

T. Teich mentioned MassRides as a possibility for helping with the Guaranteed Ride Home aspect of Study L-1, Reverse Commute Areas Analysis. She also mentioned that Cambridge considers carrying out something like L-2, Transportation Access Studies of Commercial Business Districts, in almost every project that they undertake, and wondered how it might be relevant at the regional level. Annette Demchur (CTPS Director of Policy and Planning) explained that there is a possibility of using more research to explain past experience to stakeholders in new project areas, and that the study connects to the work CTPS has been doing around bus lanes. B. Rawson observed that collecting quality data has, in Somerville's experience, been difficult, especially in areas with populations that may not speak English as a first language. D. Koses mentioned that question is very relevant to Newton, which has ongoing projects in several of its villages. B. Pounds offered a personal anecdote about how, on an outing with friends, the availability of parking influenced mode choice. S. Lee (MAPC) offered her agency's data from previous parking studies to help with this concept. T. Teich observed that there is a connection between this concept and M-7, The Future of the Curb.

Roadway and Multimodal Mobility

The Committee discussed how M-3 and M-4 are recurring studies that are funded every year. M-2 is also recurring, but funded every other year. M. Abbott explained the calendar for corridor selection, as discussed in the previous meeting. B. Pounds asked if the Committee wanted to include these studies in the rankings or just assume that they would be funded.

Dennis Crowley (Town of Medway/SWAP) asked when the vote would be on the final list of studies. S. Johnston explained that the final vote would be on March 15 or April 5, but that there would be an opportunity to rank the studies after this meeting.

D. Crowley asked if the studies have a cost estimate. S. Johnston explained that budget numbers are not available yet.

B. Pounds expressed that he'd like to see the recurring studies in the ongoing projects section of the UPWP. T. Teich asked if that would have any overall financial effect on the UPWP budget; K. Quackenbush answered that 'it's all one pot of money.' The Committee resolved to leave the recurring studies out of the ranking exercise, but to retain them as proposed discrete studies.

D. Crowley asked for a brief overview of previous successes of M-2, Express Highway Bottlenecks, and staff said they would respond.

Scott Peterson (CTPS Director of Technical Services) verbally expanded on the written description of study M-8, Updates to Express Highway Volume Charts. This would be an update to work that CTPS has done in the past, but which has not been updated in several years. K. Quackenbush explained that for years there was someone on staff who produced this data and accompanying maps. There was some discussion about this study. S. Peterson explained that it's not just data analysis—also visualization. There is an opportunity for using more modern visualization techniques. B. Rawson noted that the M-8 topic is “urgent”—it is relevant to many ongoing discussions in the region. The Committee requested additional information about this study concept.

The Committee briefly discussed the relationship of Study M-6, Framingham Truck Traffic and Complete Streets Study, to the MPO's ongoing Freight Program.

M. Abbott expressed that M-9, Sweetser Circle Reconstruction, likely would need a more comprehensive study than CTPS would be able to handle.

Transit

S. Johnston introduced the Allston Transit Study, T-1, a concept that was introduced last year, noting that the Committee had decided not to fund it based on not having enough information about the future of the Allston project. B. Pounds noted that he couldn't say whether his agency supported the project, but that Committee members are free to comment and vote on it. T. Teich noted that she had disagreed with the Committee's conclusion last year and feels that the study is crucially important. S. Johnston explained that while the Allston study is the only purely transit-related study in the Universe this year, several others have transit-related elements. D. Crowley asked why the UPWP should fund the Allston study, as it seems to be an MBTA project. T. Teich expressed that it involves many communities and non-transit aspects.

Other

The Committee agreed not to include O-1, Staff-Generated Research, in the ranking survey, nor to fund it.

4. Members Items

There were none.

5. Public Comments

The Chair opened the floor to public comment, while instructing S. Johnston to build public comment into the agenda in the future. The first comment was from Carl Seglem,

a Boston resident. He congratulated the Committee on considering these important issues, but expressed his disappointment that the process of study selection had reached this point without him hearing about it. He offered comments on several studies and expressed enthusiasm for work around dedicated bus lanes and new travel metrics.

The second comment was from Ari Ofsevit, a Cambridge resident who has been involved in the Allston turnpike project. He asked for a list of the studies that had been considered, but which were not included in the Universe, and S. Johnston provided one. He expressed support for M-5, referencing a CTPS study from several years ago that looked at high-occupancy vehicle lanes on area freeways using a metric of vehicular delay, not people carried per hour. He also expressed support for M-8 and M-9 and for dedicated bus lanes in general, noting that the MPO should support Everett in its expenditure of political capital on dedicated bus lanes. Finally, with regard to T-1, he noted that it is disconcerting to hear MassDOT engage in a “chicken-and-egg” dialogue vis-à-vis not studying the area because its future is uncertain. He urged MassDOT or the MPO to look at the various available transit options for the Allston development and get a high-level picture of what the future could be.

The third comment was from Patrick Greenwell, representing the advocacy group TransitMatters. He expressed support for study M-5. He also commented that MassDOT’s draft environmental impact report for the Allston project was insufficient, particularly with regard to the ridership projections for West Station; based on stronger-than-expected ridership numbers at Boston Landing, he believes that the modeling numbers for West Station likely are low. He also requested a copy of the table that presents disposition of study concepts.

The final comment was from Glenn Cannon of the Cape Cod Commission, who expressed enthusiasm about the amount of public interest seen at this meeting. He asked about budgeting for FFY 2019 and B. Pounds explained that the budget would be developed later.

6. Next Meeting

B. Pounds asked about next steps. S. Johnston explained he’d need a few days to modify the survey based on feedback received at this meeting. The next UPWP Committee meeting is March 15, and the survey would be due the week before. There was some discussion of how the survey would be formatted. The committee decided to provide breakdowns of rankings by member, while giving members the option to remain anonymous.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by a member and seconded by another member. The motion carried unanimously.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Brad Rawson
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Bryan Pounds
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Sarah Lee
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Tegin Teich
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Carl Seglem	Boston Resident
Glenn Trindade	Town of Medway
Ari Ofsevit	Cambridge resident
Patrick Greenwell	TransitMatters
Glenn Cannon	Cape Cod Commission

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Mark Abbott
Robin Mannion
Lourenço Dantas
Sandy Johnston
Scott Peterson
Jen Rowe
Annette Demchur
