

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Memorandum for the Record**

### **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

#### **December 5, 2019 Meeting**

10:00 AM–11:57 AM, State Transportation Building, Transportation Board Room, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

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

#### **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of November 7, 2019
- Approve the draft federal fiscal years (FFY) 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment One
- Approve the work program for Operating a Successful Community Shuttle

#### **Meeting Agenda**

##### **1. Introductions**

See attendance on pages 11 and 12.

##### **2. Public Comments**

Sarah Stanton (Town Manager, Town of Bedford, Commuter Rail Communities Coalition) read the following prepared statement:

“Good morning, members of the MPO and staff. I am Sarah Stanton, Bedford Town Manager. I am speaking today on behalf of the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition, which I co-chair with Lynn Mayor Tom McGee. Our coalition of Mayors and Town and City Managers and Administrators from throughout the MBTA service area provides coordinated advocacy for better rail service in the near and long term. We are staffed by MAPC, Transportation for Massachusetts, and TransitMatters. It is common for local leaders to advocate for a single project, station, or corridor. Our coalition considers the needs of the rail system as a whole.

Later in your agenda, you have an update on the Rail Vision project from Alexandra Markiewicz of MassDOT, so I thought it would be timely to offer a few remarks on commuter rail, which is usually a little out of scope for the MPO, but as we know,

transportation is interconnected, and we all need a highly functioning transportation system that provides good choices to people throughout the region.

On behalf of the Coalition, a hearty thanks to Alexandra and her team, and to the Rail Vision Advisory Committee, for an outstanding process. In October, the Coalition approved a statement that supported the most ambitious long-range scenario for Rail Vision, providing high-quality, high-frequency, electrified service throughout the region. That was provided to the MBTA Fiscal and Management Control Board, who subsequently and unanimously directed MBTA staff to develop an action plan towards many of the goals articulated in Rail Vision. And in November, the Coalition, along with other municipal leaders endorsed new state revenue to help fund the investments we need to make in rail, in public transit, in roads, bridges and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and operations.

Of course, the MPO is charged with many things, but legislation to fund transportation is not typically among them. But as leaders, we can't separate the goals of better transportation from the means by which we achieve it. So as you consider the Rail Vision update—and for that matter, the TIP and everything else on your agenda—please know that there are many of in the public sector working to ensure that we have the resources in future years to better serve the region and the state as a whole. We are delivering this message to our peers across the region, to legislators, to the media, and to other stakeholders. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these remarks.”

Ben Cares (Planner, City of Chelsea) advocated for the MPO to allocate capital funding from its new Community Connections grant program to an ongoing effort by the municipalities of Arlington, Watertown, Newton, and Chelsea to implement a bike share system. B. Cares stated that this is a regional effort to link the existing Blue Bikes program in Boston, Somerville, and Cambridge with an additional four communities in order to fill first- and last-mile gaps in the network.

### **3. Chair's Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT***

There was none.

### **4. Committee Chairs' Reports**

There were none.

### **5. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council***

There was none.

## **6. Executive Director's Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff***

T. Teich reminded the board to participate in the TIP criteria revisions member survey. T. Teich added that in addition to presentations on this topic at board meetings, staff will hold several focused workshops for members. The first workshop will be prior to the MPO meeting on December 19, 2019. T. Teich reminded members to submit official designee letters to staff and to share recently posted Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) job opportunities with their networks. These opportunities include a new Associate Director of Modeling and Analysis and the Manager of Certification Activities.

## **7. Approval of November 7, 2019, MPO Meeting Minutes—*Róisín Foley, MPO Staff***

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 7, 2019, was made by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (Glenn Trindade) and seconded by Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa). The motion carried.

## **8. TIP Amendment One, Final Approval—*Matt Genova, MPO Staff*** *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. [FFYs 20–24 TIP Amendment One: Full Tables](#)
2. [FFYs 20–24 TIP Amendment One: Simplified Tables](#)

The 21-day public review period for Amendment One was held between November 8 and November 29, 2019. MPO staff received no written public comments during the public review period. The MPO heard one oral public comment in support of the amendment by Mayor Michael P. Cahill of Beverly at the meeting on November 7, 2019. Amendment One documents a cost increase of \$14,737,322 for statewide bridge project [#604952](#) (Lynn, Saugus - Bridge Replacement on Route 107 over the Saugus River) in FFYs 2020–24. Amendment One also details a \$1,372,934 cost increase for one MPO-funded project in FFY 2020 ([#608347](#) - Beverly - Intersection Improvements at Three Locations). This cost increase is being funded with statewide safety funds remaining from the removal of project [#608205](#) (Reading to Lynnfield - Guide and Traffic Sign Replacement on I-95), which was instead funded in FFY 2019.

### ***Vote***

A motion to approve the FFYs 2020–24 TIP Amendment One was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (Daniel Amstutz). The motion carried.

## **9. Operating a Successful Community Shuttle—*Andrew Clark, MPO Staff***

Stakeholders in the Boston region have expressed a desire to better understand how to operate shuttle and other nontraditional transit programs successfully. There is demand for both first- and last-mile and workforce transportation solutions, but there are relatively few examples of programs that have proven successful at both meeting that demand and maintaining fiscal sustainability. MPO staff will review existing successful, sustainable, and well-regarded shuttle programs in the MPO region and elsewhere to understand their development, operations, and financing, and the factors behind their success. Based on the findings of this review, MPO staff will produce a guidebook for developing, operating, and maintaining a successful shuttle program in the MPO region.

### ***Discussion***

E. Bourassa suggested that the guidebook note the importance of defining the purpose of shuttle programs because it is challenging to address varied needs such as commuter trips, off-peak hour trips, or transportation for seniors with one service. E. Bourassa also suggested that staff include information on subsidies.

David Koses (At-Large City) (City of Newton) added that it would be helpful to look at failed shuttle programs as well.

Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) asked whether organizational structure, such as the creation of a Transportation Management Association (TMA), will be included. A. Clark replied that it would.

Brandon Wilcox (Federal Highway Administration) suggested that staff look at ways to coordinate with MassDOT's Rail and Transit division and its workforce transit efforts. A. Clark agreed that there may be an opportunity to collaborate.

L. Diggins asked whether staff have a plan for disseminating the final guidebook to the public and municipalities. A. Clark replied that the guidebook will be posted to the MPO website and made available at outreach events, and staff are considering other ways of publicizing the guidebook.

Austin Cyganiewicz (Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination) (Town of Acton) asked whether staff has an outreach plan for identifying programs to review. A. Clark replied that he has already reached out to some organizations, like CrossTown Connect TMA, and will likely start broad and then will narrow the number of programs to review.

Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee) (City of Somerville) noted that shuttle programs in the Inner Core are more likely to operate across municipal boundaries, and suggested that a more regional approach might be necessary in this area.

T. Teich acknowledged member questions about outreach and communications around staff technical work and stated that this is something staff are working to improve moving forward.

D. Amstutz suggested that staff collaborate with Councils on Aging, many of which operate shuttles.

Jim Fitzgerald (City of Boston) (Boston Planning and Development Agency) stated that staff should be clear about the limitations of subsidies if they include this information in the guidebook.

Jillian Linnell (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority [MBTA]) suggested that staff collaborate with Regional Coordinating Councils.

#### **Vote**

A motion to approve the work program for Operating a Successful Community Shuttle was made by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (G. Trindade) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

#### **10. Boston MPO Public Outreach Activities—*Kate White, MPO Staff***

K. White reviewed MPO staff's recent public outreach activities. Staff's goal for public outreach is to help people understand and participate in the MPO processes and raise awareness about MPO activities. Staff does this via a varied number of outreach events and efforts throughout the year, including the development of certification documents and their attendant public review periods. Rather than thinking about outreach efforts separately for each project, program, or plan, staff work to build a robust and inclusive public engagement program that allows individuals to provide input on the issues that are important to them. Staff can then review feedback and determine how it applies to the agency's internal program structure.

Staff has separated outreach into in-person and online engagement. In-person engagement includes attending community events such as farmer's markets, one-on-one stakeholder meetings, street tours, civic engagement meetings, and networking nights. These efforts focus on going to the public rather than expecting the public to come to the MPO. Staff's goal is to meet with two to four stakeholder groups per month to build and strengthen relationships with "mobilizer" organizations that can amplify

MPO work. In addition to meeting with stakeholders, staff attend MAPC subregional meetings to stay current on subregional issues and priorities.

Online engagement includes updating the MPO's website, meeting calendar, and blog; sending MailChimp emails; updating the MPO's Twitter account; and using partner organization channels such as MAPC's monthly newsletter. Staff has begun to live tweet MPO meetings and created a new blog template to streamline the process of reporting on latest study findings. All surveys are translated into the six most spoken languages in the region and include standardized demographic questions to help staff better evaluate online outreach.

Staff views all outreach activities through an equity lens and reaches out to Environmental Justice organizations using an Equity Population Prioritization Index devised by Transportation Equity Program Manager Betsy Harvey. K. White stated that effective community engagement enhances mutual trust. Building on consistent engagement ensures better MPO decisions that more effectively respond to the needs and priorities of the region's residents, engages the broader diversity of the region, and helps set realistic understanding and expectations about how public input will be used in the regional planning process.

Staff evaluates outreach efforts in multiple ways, including a comment tracker, events tracker, and stakeholder database. Staff evaluates online engagement using digital analytics.

### ***Discussion***

L. Diggins commended staff for attending street art events, noting that connecting art and transportation can be an effective way to engage the public. L. Diggins suggested that staff explore creating a YouTube channel and collaborating with local public access television stations.

Sheila Page (At-Large Town) (Town of Lexington) asked K. White to elaborate on the design of the comment tracker. K. White clarified that the comment tracker is searchable by the topic, plan, project, theme, or process the comment relates to, as well as by the municipality or subregion it refers to and the event at which it was heard.

D. Amstutz expressed support for staff's work and asked whether staff approaches outreach events with a goal of hearing feedback on a specific project or plan. K. White stated that staff generally approaches events by thinking about what the audience at that event is interested in regardless of how it fits into the MPO process.

J. Monty noted that staff is good at soliciting input, but that the MPO in general sometimes fails to make the connections for the public regarding successes and products, such as specific construction projects in communities, and asked whether staff are thinking of ways to better promote MPO work. K. White agreed that staff are working on ways to better promote the MPO's funding and planning work as a way of making connections for the public.

T. Bent suggested that MPO staff explore outreach to business groups and chambers of commerce. K. White replied that staff has attended events held by the Alliance for Business Leadership and the Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce, but is open to exploring this more.

## **11. Future of the Curb—Andrew Clark, MPO Staff** ***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

### 1. [The Future of the Curb](#)

Increasing and changing demands on the curb for bus lanes, walking and biking infrastructure, commercial vehicles, and ride-hailing and shared micromobility services present challenges for managing the capacity of the transportation network and improving mobility for all of its users. “The Future of the Curb” memo consolidates helpful resources and provides examples of cities addressing curbside congestion by reconfiguring curbs in innovative ways. The range of solutions in the memo address curb space policy, passenger pickup and drop-off activity, commercial vehicle loading activity, improving safety and access for all transportation modes, and on-street parking management. They include adopting curb space policies that prioritize mobility and access for people over the movement of vehicles, formal curbside management strategies, designated passenger pickup and drop-off space for ride-hailing and loading zones for commercial vehicles, geofencing to consolidate pickup and drop-off locations within particularly congested areas, bus lanes and transit priority, and demand-based parking pricing. Staff recommend that municipalities actively manage curb lanes and respond to changing demands by defining their goals for a segment of curb lane and then determining how to measure its success according to those goals. Cities such as Seattle, Portland, Oregon, San Francisco, and Washington, DC, have tested different strategies, and their experiences can be a resource. Pilot projects can be delivered faster and cheaper than permanent solutions. This memo and MPO staff can offer technical support to municipalities in the region.

### ***Discussion***

D. Amstutz asked whether staff has information on the enforcement of changes to curbside usage. A. Clark replied that the memo does not discuss enforcement.

Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) (Boston Transportation Department) noted that one of the issues cities and towns face is the lack of a digitized record of all the curb facilities that a municipality actually owns and the lack of data sharing by ride-hailing companies. A. Clark responded that footnote 5 in the memo refers to a paper that deals extensively with these issues.

L. Diggins asked whether there are any follow-up projects planned. A. Clark replied that staff are formulating ideas for further study.

B. Wilcox asked whether the literature review includes information on engaging the business community in curb management efforts or revenue loss from removing parking. A. Clark responded that San Francisco's policy was developed with input from businesses. A. Clark stated that revenue loss from removing parking meters was not discussed significantly in the literature, which may be because the benefits from solving other issues outweigh these losses, and in the case of dynamic pricing revenue may actually increase.

T. Bent asked whether dynamic pricing programs have exceptions for employees who may not have other options to access their jobs. A. Clark replied that he did not know of specific instances of this but that most programs included street parking and city-owned garages, but not privately owned garages, so employees could conceivably still find cheaper parking.

## **12. Update on MBTA's Rail Vision—*Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT***

MassDOT and the MBTA undertook the Rail Vision to better understand how to leverage the MBTA's extensive commuter rail network to best meet the transportation and economic growth needs of the region. The objectives of the project were to match service with the growing and changing needs of the region, enhance economic vitality, improve the passenger experience, provide an equitable and balanced suite of investments, help the Commonwealth achieve its climate change resiliency targets, and maximize return on investment.

The process consisted of developing ideas, evaluating concepts, and creating a vision for the commuter rail network. Six systemwide alternatives were evaluated, ranging from more frequent service with no major upgrades or expansions to a fully electrified system with high-level platforms and 15-minute headways all day in both directions. Stakeholder engagement for Rail Vision included peer reviews, an advisory committee, public meetings and open houses throughout 2019, legislative briefings, and a non-rider survey. To predict increases in demand, each of the six alternatives was modeled using the CTPS regional travel demand model with 2040 as the horizon year. These

projections were compared to a 2040 No-Build Scenario. The no-build scenario assumed the current fare structure, did not constrain boardings to available seats, did not constrain to current parking supply, and assumed existing MBTA services and expansions from financially constrained plans. Commuter rail demand was shown to increase in all alternatives, from 13 percent in alternative 1 to 150 percent in alternative 6. Ridership increases are partially driven by unconstrained parking for Alternatives 2–6. Riders accessing commuter rail by car increases in all alternatives, demonstrating a need for additional parking to support the projected ridership.

Public dialog revealed a preference for Alternative 6 as a long-term vision to support Commonwealth climate and housing goals, a phased approach to enable short-term improvements, system electrification to reduce emissions, lower fares, a focus on equity, improved first- and last-mile connections and/or increased parking, and continued discussion of terminal needs (for example, South Station Expansion, North South Rail Link).

In December, the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) directed the MBTA to “transform the current commuter rail line into a significantly more productive, equitable, and decarbonized enterprise.” The FMCB did not choose a specific alternative to endorse, but adopted the five following resolutions that address many aspects of Alternative 6:

1. Endorsement of electrification, higher frequency service, and accessibility improvements
2. Identification of priority lines and elements of Phase 1 of the transformation effort
3. Establishment of a Commuter Rail Transformation Office, with the single mission of advancing the Rail Vision
4. Consideration of new contract mechanisms and new labor practices, and a formal request of the Legislature to enact the reform proposals in Governor Baker’s transportation bond bill
5. Establishment of a Bus Transformation Office, with similar responsibilities as the Commuter Rail Transformation Office

Capital needs that will need to be considered to pursue Phase 1 of the transformation effort range from station improvements, signals and systems upgrades, and additional fleet, to maintenance and layover areas, full and/or partial electrification, and terminal expansions.

MassDOT plans to continue stakeholder engagement and return to the FMCB with an update in the winter of 2020.

### ***Discussion***

J. Monty asked about the estimated ridership increases in relation to the actual carrying capacity of the fleet. A. Markiewicz stated that the estimated fleet needs were rightsized to the estimated ridership during the peak period demand going in either direction.

D. Amstutz asked whether the capital cost estimates included additional parking. A. Markiewicz replied that the capital cost does not account for additional parking or first- and last-mile connections.

L. Diggins asked how the MPO could be involved in this process going forward given the limited capital funding it has discretion over. S. Woelfel stated that the MPO's current role as stewards of federal funding is to provide guidance on the kinds of investments it wants to make in future long-range transportation plans. L. Diggins expressed the Regional Transportation Advisory Council's support for Rail Vision but expressed disappointment that it does not innovate beyond the traditional hub and spoke model of commuter rail.

B. Wilcox asked about the rationale for changing the fare structure in Alternatives 5 and 6. A. Markiewicz replied that this reflects the type of service these alternatives provide, which is more akin to urban rail and rapid transit. A. Markiewicz added that there is a separate process to reevaluate the commuter rail fare structure underway at the MBTA.

S. Page seconded L. Diggins' comments on the hub-and-spoke model. S. Page asked about whether decreasing trip times was considered. A. Markiewicz replied that trip times were considered, but frequency was the more radical change to the system. Electrification decreases trip times because of faster vehicles.

T. Bent noted that the electrical grid is taxed and asked whether utility companies have been involved in these discussions and whether any distribution costs were factored in. A. Markiewicz replied that the capital costs included the cost of catenary, but not additional costs to the grid.

T. Teich noted that the MPO is involved in several efforts relevant to this conversation, particularly related to first- and last-mile connections.

### **13. Members Items**

There were none.

### **14. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham) (T. Kezer III) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Sheila Page
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Brandon Wilcox
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
	Marie Rose
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Jillian Linnell
Massachusetts Port Authority	Laura Gilmore
MBTA Advisory Board	
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Thatcher Kezer III
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Austin Cyganiewicz
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Denise Deschamps
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Jennifer Constable
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Glenn Trindade
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Andrea Bailey	Uber
Ben Cares	City of Chelsea
Joe Collins	Town of Norwood
Alison Felix	MAPC
Josh Ostroff	T4MA
Sarah Stanton	Commuter Rail Communities Coalition
Alyssa Sandoval	Town of Bedford
Richard Lee	Town of Wellesley
Steve Olanoff	TRIC Alternate
Scott Zadakis	CrossTown Connect
Abby Swaine	US EPA
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Carrie Lavalley	MassDOT Highway District 6
Rich Benevento	WorldTech Engineering
Jon Seward	RTAC
Travis Pollack	MAPC

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
Andrew Clark  
Róisín Foley  
Hiral Gandhi  
Anne McGahan  
Scott Peterson  
Michelle Scott  
Katie Stetner  
Kate White

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