



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

June 12, 2019, Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM–4:30 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

Tegin Teich, Chair, representing the City of Cambridge

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

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

2. Chair's Report—*T. Teich, Chair*

T. Teich announced that Kate White will be the new Public Outreach Coordinator at Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS).

T. Teich reported that at the May 30, 2019, Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting, MPO members discussed the federal certification review process for the MPO. She encouraged the Advisory Council to read the certification review documents. The Certification Review report is available on the [MPO website](#). T. Teich stated that certification was conditionally approved, and there were two corrective actions, both of which are technical in nature. It is expected that the corrective actions will be easily fixed and the MPO will receive its full certification.

T. Teich announced that the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) document was approved following its public comment period.

T. Teich shared the findings of anonymous interviews with MPO members, which were intended to better understand how the MPO operates. In one case, an interviewee suggested that more thought be given to the organizational structure of the MPO. T. Teich stated that there was a 2011 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the MPO referencing an operations plan that does not currently exist. In general, interview participants felt that the MPO structure was difficult to understand and could be modified to better respond to members' questions and concerns. Furthermore, the results revealed the need for more information and transparency. T. Teich encouraged Advisory Council members to attend these conversations when they are open to the public and reiterated the need to engage with more MPO members. She stated that K. White will help with engagement.

Lenard Diggins stated that there is more work to be done at the MPO regarding outreach, lack of transparency, anonymity, and MPO structure. T. Teich suggested that he reach out to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Authority. She added that it would be beneficial to receive a summary of the MPO's recommendations and assist MPO staff in tracking its progress. David Montgomery commented that long-standing questions regarding the Advisory Council's relationship with the MPO have remained unresolved. He stated that in the charter language, the Advisory Council is an independent body that advises the MPO. Furthermore, he stated that there is an opportunity for the Advisory Council to demonstrate its authority as an independent body that can freely comment on MPO matters.

T. Teich stated the MPO discussed the monetary threshold for projects to be classified as "Major Infrastructure" in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The current threshold is \$20 million. Additional conversations concerned requirements and specifications for projects in the outer time band (2035–40) of the LRTP, including modeling for air quality impacts. Many MPO members, including T. Teich, agreed that funding in the 2035–40 time band should be left unallocated, although the vote was not unanimous. However, all MPO members agreed to not include illustrative projects in the LRTP.

T. Teich stated that there was an informal discussion about whether state projects, which the MPO does not have control over, should be included in the LRTP. No decisions were made. She stated that the Advisory Council will further discuss the LRTP when Anne McGahan, LRTP Manager, attends the next Advisory Council meeting.

L. Diggins expressed his approval of including state projects in the LRTP. The inclusion of state projects would clarify the overall process, especially during the TIP and LRTP project evaluation and comment periods.

L. Diggins asked if modeling includes disparate impact and disproportionate burden impacts. T. Teich said she believes it does, as equity analyses and assessments for such impacts are required for LRTP project funding.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

T. Teich asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2019, and March 13, 2019, meetings. A motion was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

4. FFY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Presentation of the Public Review Draft of the FFY 2020 UPWP—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager*

S. Johnston explained the UPWP process and distributed accompanying informative material with project descriptions, including the 11 new studies/small programs being funded this year and budget tables. This information is available on the [MPO website](#). He stated that the UPWP may get approved at the June 27, 2019, MPO meeting; however, the meeting may be cancelled, thus pushing the UPWP vote to the July 11, 2019, MPO meeting. S. Johnston announced that there will be a UPWP committee meeting on July 11, 2019, immediately

before the MPO meeting, to make minor changes to the appendices. S. Johnston encouraged Advisory Council members to review the new studies and funding decisions.

5. Advisory Council Comment Letter on the FFY 2020 UPWP—*T. Teich, Chair*

T. Teich described the UPWP voting process and the UPWP committee's role. T. Teich stated that the UPWP committee members answered all of the Advisory Council's questions and have a supportive letter.

Discussion

L. Diggins asked S. Johnston if the UPWP line item, "MPO Staff-generated Research and Technical Assistance," is a recurring expense. S. Johnston stated that staff-generated research is a recurring discrete study.

A motion to approve the Advisory Council's comment letter on the FFY 2020 UPWP as written was made by John McQueen and seconded by Schuyler Larrabee. The draft comment letter is available on the [MPO website](#).

D. Montgomery suggested amending the language of the comment letter to state that the Advisory Council is charged with providing public input to the MPO, rather than being charged by the MPO to provide public input. He noted that this language is consistent with the MPO's charter document, which states that the Advisory Council is an independent body. He added that over the last 15 years, there has been ongoing discussion about the Advisory Council's authority and independence. He acknowledged that the language used in the draft comment letter had been used in the past, but stated that the proposed change better reflects the Advisory Council's independence.

T. Teich supported changing the language for the draft FFY 2020 UPWP comment letter and future comment letters from the Advisory Council, stating that the proposed amendment maintains the letter's intention and clarifies the Advisory Council's role and purpose.

The comment letter, as amended, was approved.

6. TIP Interactive Project Database—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager*

M. Genova stated that the [interactive TIP database](#) is a resource that CTPS created to make the TIP process more accessible and transparent. TIP documents are 400+ pages and content-heavy, making it difficult for people to navigate. The new database will allow users to quickly find information on projects. Ideally, it will become a long-running platform to better navigate TIP projects every year, to look at projects over time, and to demonstrate how spending, funding decisions, and criteria have changed over time. The database was designed as a public engagement tool, allowing more people to learn about the TIP. A new version of the database will be released after new scoring criteria are developed for the TIP.

M. Genova gave an overview of the information available within the database and the database's functions.

Discussion

T. Teich asked whether the database presented is the first front-facing version, and commented on general functionality and appearance. M. Genova confirmed the database is the first version. T. Teich suggested translating it to a more general audience and making it more visually appealing by following webpage design standards, such as shorter blocks of text and more links. She noted that the landing page for the database has a large amount of text that may discourage users from continuing further in the application. M. Genova agreed with the comments and stated that feedback generated during discussions will be incorporated into the next version of the database.

T. Teich stated a need for further instructions and explanation of various features in the next version, including connecting the database with TIP documents. She added that MPO members and others expressed a desire to view a timeline of TIP project funding. She commended the transparency that the database provides.

L. Diggins agreed with T. Teich's comments regarding accessibility and physical appearance. He added that the database, considering its recent development, is commendable. S. Larrabee expressed positive feedback on its functionality, praising the categorization and detailed information provided for projects.

J. McQueen requested the ability to view multiple projects within a region or town and expanded sorting capabilities. M. Genova stated that users can export data into Excel and use the sorting tool for region, cost, and other variables. J. McQueen suggested adding layers, such as environmental justice regions, to the larger TIP project map.

S. Larrabee requested the ability to view TIP projects within a specific radius. M. Genova stated that this was discussed during TIP development and may be reconsidered in future versions. The current version allows users to view projects within a specific subregion.

D. Montgomery stated that the Advisory Council members' comments generally apply to the MPO website as well, which is also dense with information, unintuitive, and difficult to navigate.

J. McQueen asked M. Genova about a specific bicycle infrastructure project's end product, and the tool's overall end products. M. Genova stated that the database contains Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)-funded projects, which have less information than others.

S. Larrabee asked if the database design process incorporated elements from previous databases. M. Genova stated that the database is modeled after databases used by MPOs in Nashville and Indianapolis.

M. Genova continued to describe each feature, including scoring details, stating that the content matches the internal TIP sheets and national TIP documentation. In the future, he wants to add a scoring summary page.

T. Teich suggested providing more links to clarifying documents, such as definitions of acronyms and terms. Scott Zadakis suggested clarifying certain elements of the *Project Description* page and standardizing the presentation of data points.

D. Montgomery expressed interest in adding links to design documents for the projects, adding that many links may oversaturate some users and benefit others. M. Genova stated that, in the TIP database development discussions, there were suggestions to include links to relevant CTPS studies and to other supporting materials. This idea will be revisited when developing the next version of the database.

M. Genova encouraged the Advisory Council to continue to provide feedback, as the tool is an ongoing, evolving resource.

7. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

- L. Diggins requested a copy of the document that fully explains the evaluation criteria used to evaluate TIP projects, stating it would provide a better understanding of the scoring process. M. Genova stated that the document is internal, but would look into the possibility of releasing it publicly. D. Montgomery stated that if MPO staff is unable to provide the full document, a summarized version of the criteria and project selection process would suffice. T. Teich noted that a six-page version of the criteria had been distributed during prior meetings. This document is available on the [MPO website](#).
- T. Teich announced that the City of Cambridge is holding a public meeting on its bus priority project. The .75 mile dedicated bus lane on Cambridge Street has been successful, saving passengers 36,000 hours of travel time.
- J. McQueen reported that a meeting regarding the proposed MPO transit committee mainly focused on employer and institutional shuttles; its providers were well-represented at the meeting. S. Zadakis added that while the meeting was open to the public, those invited to participate in the discussion did not include private entities or transit advocates. He stated that the meeting attendees wanted the group to be used as a forum for collaboration, rather than purely for representation at the MPO. T. Teich stated that she looks forward to hearing the MPO staff's feedback about the meeting.
- Matt Archer, on behalf of Franny Osmond, announced that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council is launching a taxi and driving lane subsidy program for seniors,

people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income persons within the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination subregion.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by T. Teich and seconded by S. Larrabee. The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Cambridge	Tegin Teich
Needham	David Montgomery; Rhain Hoyland
Weymouth	Owen MacDonald

Citizen Advocacy Groups	Attendees
Association for Public Transportation	Barry M. Steinberg
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
CrosstownConnect	Scott Zadakis
MassBike	David Ernst
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Dee Whittlesey	
Ed Lowney	
Andrew McFarland	Office of Councilor Michelle Wu

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff
Kate White
Sandy Johnston
Matt Genova
Matt Archer

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A complaint form and additional information can be obtained by contacting the MPO or at http://www.bostonmpo.org/mpo_non_discrimination. To request this information in a different language or in an accessible format, please contact

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