



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

March 13, 2019, Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM–4:55 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

AnaCristina Fragoso, Vice Chair, representing the Boston Society of Civil Engineers

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Vice Chair AnaCristina Fragoso called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 8.)

2. Vice Chair's Report—*A. Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers*

A. Fragoso stated that the MPO voted to approve the Future of the Curb study. Sandy Johnston stated that there are two studies programmed in the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2019 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that will be completed in succession. The first study, Transportation Access to Central Business Districts (CBD), will survey businesses and their patrons about how they arrive and other questions. The second study, the Future of the Curb, is a follow up to the CBD study and will involve a literature review and development of recommendations about future curb usage.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting ([posted](#)) was made and seconded. Barry Steinberg noted several typos. The minutes were approved as emended.

4. Rail Vision Update—*Scott Hamwey, Manager of Transit Planning, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)*

S. Hamwey stated that despite the geographical size of the Commuter Rail (CR) network, it only carries approximately 10 percent of Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) customers. The goals of Rail Vision are to serve more people, support economic growth in the MBTA service area, provide a more equitable CR system, and help the MBTA meet its regional environmental goals.

Over the past year, different strategies have been evaluated for each CR line. Currently, there are seven proposed alternatives, which were developed in conjunction with the Rail Vision Advisory Committee. The Rail Vision Advisory Committee consists of 22 members, including elected officials, transportation organizations, business organizations, and

advocacy groups. The members review information and provide advice to MassDOT and the MBTA at key milestones. By the end of 2019, there will be a recommended vision for CR over the next 20 years.

S. Hamwey provided background to understand better the proposed alternatives and their development. He noted that Rail Vision was not constrained to existing financial resources when developing these alternatives. This allowed them to explore a variety of strategies, such as several electrification schemes, provision of service using a variety of different train types, and different frequency arrangements.

Keolis annually surveys CR riders, most recently in February 2018. As such, no new passenger surveys were conducted for Rail Vision. A survey for non-riders, which asked what factors prevent them from taking CR, has been completed by 2,500 people.

Rail Vision uses three CR station designations: key stations, inner core stations, and outer stations. In the alternatives, certain station types are targeted while keeping the others constant. Key stations were identified as stations that would benefit from increased service. These include stations located in older, dense suburban communities with residents willing to use CR if it operated differently. Key stations also include those well located relative to the regional highway system. These stations have potential for reverse commuting, as well as for vehicle users to transfer to CR. Inner core stations are located in and near Boston. These are generally dense areas where improved service could reduce pressure on bus and subway lines. Outer stations are located outside of the Inner Core.

The existing system has three types of platforms. High-level platforms have a level boarding surface relative to trains, providing the highest level of accessibility. Many stations, including older stations, have mini-high platforms, which provide a level boarding on a portion of the platform. Low-level platforms, seen at some legacy stations, require the use of stairs or a ramp to board trains. Although the addition of high-level platforms is an important accessibility goal, it would also provide an operational benefit by improving the speed of boarding and alighting. The addition of high-level platforms has been prioritized at the targeted stations in each Rail Vision alternative.

A number of major capital projects that affect the CR network are under consideration or have been advanced by MassDOT and the MBTA. The North-South Rail Link would increase capacity while connecting the two sides of the CR network. Because it would drastically transform the system, the North-South Rail Link is only included in Alternative 6; including it in additional alternatives would hinder opportunities to learn about optimizing the system without the North-South Rail Link. He added that MassDOT recently concluded an extensive study of the rail link.

South Station Expansion, while not providing the north side capacity benefits of the North-South Rail Link, would allow for increased service on the south side of the network. South Coast Rail is included in all of the proposed alternatives. Other projects include CR service to Foxborough and the Grand Junction connection from the Worcester Line to Cambridge.

S. Hamwey gave an overview of the seven alternatives proposed by Rail Vision. Details of the alternatives can be found on the [Rail Vision website](#). The Rail Vision team will spend the next several months evaluating each alternative. Evaluations will include developing ridership estimates using the Central Transportation Planning Staff Travel Demand Model, model operations and costs using Rail Traffic Controller modeling tools, and land-use and demographic effects using the Regional Dynamic Model.

Discussion

A. Fragozo noted that some alternatives include both diesel and electric trains, and asked if there were plans to phase in a fully electrified system. S. Hamwey stated that it is unlikely that a single alternative will be chosen. Instead, a two-stage vision with an idealized end-state will likely be chosen, with lessons learned using diesel vehicles applied to later stages of phasing in electrification.

John McQueen asked if the Grand Junction connection would make West Station a key station. S. Hamwey stated that Grand Junction is proposed for shuttle service into Cambridge, with a cross-platform transfer at West Station. In the alternatives that include Grand Junction, West Station is considered a key station. He added that what is currently defined as a key station may change during evaluations.

David Montgomery stated that bus and rail should not be seen as competing services, but rather complementary services. In urban areas, some services proposed to be provided by rail could be provided by bus. S. Hamwey agreed, noting that Rail Vision's remit is to focus on CR and not plan for other services. During some off-peak periods, five-minute frequencies of buses could likely serve the needs of rail users.

Lenard Diggins asked if the recommendations made by the Commission on the Future of Transportation affected Rail Vision's work. S. Hamwey stated that the environmental concerns addressed by the Committee were of particular importance to Rail Vision. Although CR ridership is a small percentage of total MBTA ridership, new CR trips tend to replace long vehicle trips that contribute to congestion and emissions. As such, Rail Vision has proposed increased service in suburban areas and has considered electrification.

B. Steinberg asked for further details about key stations. S. Hamwey stated that in the Regional Rail alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3), key stations would have high-level boarding and 15 minute headways. As part of its analysis, Rail Vision is developing a simulation model. This model may indicate that the desired headways may only be attainable with

significant capital improvements; if the model indicates that slightly larger headways are attainable without these improvements, Rail Vision may choose the larger headways. Some older communities that have been identified as key stations are generally welcoming to new housing developments, though the market may not support this. Key stations have fertile markets for transit in terms of density and demographics, most of which are served by regional transit authorities that offer first-mile/last-mile connections, and would be receptive to new developments in response to increased service.

Scott Zadakis asked if the alternatives considered freight traffic. S. Hamwey stated that all alternatives include freight traffic. Using single-track sections of the Franklin line as an example, he stated that Rail Vision would identify the constraints imposed by freight traffic and estimate the costs and benefits of investing in double tracks.

Franny Osman expressed concern that the focus on increased frequency inside Route 128 would not improve traffic on Route 2 and Route 3. S. Hamwey stated that Rail Vision's work requires trade-offs. Many advocates from both inside and outside of Route 128 state that service is too infrequent. Providing increased service in both regions would have large associated costs, and focusing some alternatives inside Route 128 allows for comparison of costs and benefits.

A. Frago asked if expanding peak hours has been considered. S. Hamwey stated that while peak hours will not change, increased service at key stations would provide more frequency than current peak hours.

5. Unified Planning Work Program Universe of Potential Studies—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff*

S. Johnston stated that the UPWP Committee annually selects a set of one-time discrete studies for the upcoming FFY. The MPO staff conducts these studies, which cover a variety of topics. After creating a large list of concepts based on outreach and staff input, the UPWP Committee and MPO staff collaborate to turn the list into a [Universe of Proposed Studies](#). The final list of discrete studies will consist of projects that MPO staff and the UPWP Committee agree to prioritize based on the amount of funding available. There has been approximately \$715,000 available in recent years, which can fund eight to 10 studies.

He noted that the Universe of Proposed Studies for FFY 2020 includes categories for transportation equity and resiliency, which were not included in previous years. In addition, some studies have been classified as recurring, as they occur either annually or biannually. The UPWP Committee has decided to include these in the FFY 2020. Currently, UPWP Committee members are submitting surveys that rank each member's preferred studies. As a voting member of the UPWP Committee, represented by T. Teich, the Advisory Council will need to submit its survey by March 15, 2019.

Discussion

L. Diggins expressed his support for TIP Before-and-After Studies, stating that all projects should be analyzed after their completion to see if their projected impacts were accurate. C. Porter asked if completing the study within FFY 2020 is feasible. S. Johnston stated that the studied project would be a previously evaluated and constructed project. Projects that are currently programmed in the TIP will not be considered. He added that this has the potential to become a recurring study.

A. Fragoso asked if water taxis and ferries were considered for inclusion as areas of study. S. Johnston stated that water taxis and ferries are included in the Transit category. Because a comprehensive ferry study conducted by MPO staff will soon be released, studies related to ferries were deemed redundant to include in the Universe of Projects.

A. Fragoso asked if the Congestion Pricing Sensitivity Analysis would include transit. S. Johnston stated that congestion pricing is typically framed as a pricing scheme for single-occupancy vehicles with significant benefits for transit. This study would have a targeted focus on cars and decongestion benefits, with the addition of transit benefits. MassDOT is preparing to study congestion in the region. The UPWP Committee has expressed that studying congestion pricing prior to the completion of the MassDOT study would be premature.

C. Porter asked if the Essex Transportation Resiliency Study could be used as a case study for the larger scope of work to be conducted under the Exploring Resiliency in MPO-funded Corridor and Intersection studies. S. Johnston stated that this is under consideration. In prior years, studies for specific communities are generally not funded; studies tend to be regionally focused. This study is included at the request of the Town of Essex.

Advisory Council members discussed the Universe and indicated which studies it would like selected on the UPWP study selection survey. Members were given the option to submit their individual ranking of studies to the Advisory Council coordinator, to be compiled by C. Porter. (The final ranking submitted to S. Johnston can be found [here](#).)

6. 3C Documents Committee Update and Discussion—Chris Porter, Chair, 3C Documents Committee

C. Porter gave an overview of the February 28, 2019, 3C Documents Committee meeting, which focused on the [First-Tier List of Projects](#) for the FFYs 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Project (TIP).

Projects that were evaluated or reevaluated for the FFYs 2020–24 TIP are under consideration for programming in the 2024 TIP element, as prior years are fully programmed. However, if funding becomes available, these projects may be programmed in earlier years. The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) calls for a decrease in Major Infrastructure

investments and an increase in Complete Streets, Intersection Improvements, and Bicycle and Pedestrian investments.

As the First-Tier List did not greatly differ from the Universe of Projects, the Committee suggested renaming the list.

The Committee noted the high dollar amount in the Major Infrastructure category. Most projects in the other categories could be programmed, along with one or two Major Infrastructure projects. However, the Committee also noted that some Major Infrastructure projects are essentially large-scale Complete Streets projects. These projects scored higher than other Major Infrastructure projects due to their multimodal nature. The Committee suggested that MPO staff consider these high scores during programming discussions. If lower-scoring projects are selected instead of higher-scoring projects, MPO staff should provide an explanation.

During development of the FFYs 2019–23 TIP, the Advisory Council commented on the geographic equity of funding over time. The Committee suggested that MPO staff continue these efforts and consider using Environmental Justice communities in its metrics.

The Committee discussed several projects that received negative scores on some evaluation criteria. The Committee suggested that these scores should be more highly weighted during programming discussions, as these projects would have an adverse effect on a goal area. Alternately, mitigation efforts should be made by project proponents.

The Committee suggested that having the estimated timespan for project construction would be helpful, particularly for Major Infrastructure projects. This would show the annual influence on TIP funding.

Discussion

Referring to the [Distribution of Regional Target Funding handout](#), F. Osman asked why no funds were listed in the Major Infrastructure, Transit project type for FFY 2024. Matt Genova explained that the MPO staff flexed Major Infrastructure funding to transit in the past, but no projects in 2024 are eligible to receive this type of funding.

F. Osman asked if too much funding is being allocated toward vehicle-focused projects, and if too little funding is being allocated toward projects that encourage mode shift. She added that funded projects should be those that best address climate change. A. Frago stated that TIP evaluation criteria will be revised following the endorsement of the upcoming LRTP in July. The new criteria may result in lower scores for vehicle-focused projects. She added that either she or T. Teich will raise F. Osman's comment at the next MPO meeting.

L. Diggins noted that some evaluation categories, such as Safety and System Preservation, allow for a greater number of points than other categories. He suggested increasing the

maximum score in the Transportation Equity category, which currently allows for a maximum score of 12. Over time, this may result in equal scoring across project types. J. McQueen supported this, stating that it could reduce the current emphasis on roadway aspects of projects. M. Genova stated that the Advisory Council will be kept abreast of revisions to the scoring criteria and will be asked to provide feedback.

A. Fragoso asked if MPO staff analyze the potential impacts to the region for geographically close projects. M. Genova stated that this is studied, in part because of the geographic layout of the region. As the Inner Core is dense compared to other subregions, projects in the Inner Core will have some degree of geographic proximity. In addition, because the Inner Core has the highest percentages of population, employment, and roadway miles, more projects are programmed in the subregion.

7. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

None were announced.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by L. Diggins and seconded by the D. Montgomery. The motion carried.

Attendees

| Member Municipalities | Representatives and Alternates |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Acton | Franny Osman |
| Millis | Ed Chisholm |
| Needham | David Montgomery; Rhain Hoyland |
| Watertown | Laura Wiener |

| Citizen Advocacy Groups | Attendees |
|---|---------------------|
| American Council of Engineering Companies | Fred Moseley |
| Association for Public Transportation | Barry M Steinberg |
| Boston Society of Architects | Schuyler Larrabee |
| Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES) | AnaCristina Fragoso |
| CrosstownConnect | Scott Zadakis |
| MassBike | Chris Porter |
| MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC) | Lenard Diggins |
| Move Mass | Jon Seward |
| WalkBoston | John McQueen |

| Other Attendees | Affiliation |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Sarah Lee | MAPC |
| Ed Lowney | |

| MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff |
|--|
| Sandy Johnston |
| Matt Genova |
| Matt Archer |