

MPO Meeting Minutes

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

January 7, 2021, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:18 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

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 19, 2020
- Approve the minutes of the meeting of December 3, 2020
- Approve the minutes of the meeting of December 17, 2020
- Approve Amendment Two to the Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2021–25 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Approve the Providence Urbanized Area (UZA) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Approve the Worcester UZA MOU

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on pages 7–9.

2. Chair’s Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Executive Director’s Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)*

T. Teich introduced two newly hired members of the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), Deputy Executive Director Gina Perille and Julie Dombroski, a member of the Traffic Analysis and Design group.

T. Teich noted that MPO staff are working to update the language of the MPO’s Transportation Equity goal in advance of the adoption of a new Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) in 2023. Betsy Harvey and Kate White, MPO staff, are also working to form an Equity Task Force to engage stakeholders in the MPO’s equity work.

T. Teich stated that MPO staff would hold the winter Inner Core Committee (ICC) Transportation meeting on January 13, 2021. This will be a virtual session in addition to the regularly scheduled ICC subregional meeting. She also encouraged new and existing board members to attend the virtual MPO 101 orientation session held directly following this board meeting.

T. Teich mentioned that she had been quoted in the Wall Street Journal regarding the future of commutes post-pandemic. Her quote highlighted the importance of investing in alternative modes to driving.

T. Teich stated that there would be an Administration and Finance Committee meeting at 9:00 AM on January 21, 2021, in advance of the next MPO meeting.

T. Teich provided an update on the CTPS Strategic Planning process, noting that the next step is to develop objectives and actions.

4. Public Comments

Janie Dretler (Sudbury Select Board) stated that the Town of Sudbury recently voted to acquire CSX (a supplier of rail-based freight transportation) right-of-way in order to extend the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail from north of Route 20 through South Sudbury to the Framingham line. The Town has also contracted with a consultant to produce 75 percent design plans for this section of the trail.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

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

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council would next meet on January 13, 2021. Kate Fichter, MassDOT, was scheduled to speak about the Shared Streets program.

7. Action Items: Approval of November 19, 2020, December 3, 2020, and December 17, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes—*Barbara Rutman, MPO Staff*

1. [November 19, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes](#)
2. [December 3, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes](#)
3. [December 17, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes](#)

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 19, 2020, was made by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Advisory Board (Brian Kane)

and seconded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa). The motion carried.

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 3, 2020, was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy). The South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland) (Jennifer Constable) abstained. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 17, 2020, was made by the Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (T. Cassidy) and seconded by the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham) (Thatcher Kezer III). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: FFYs 2021–25 TIP Amendment Two—*Matt Genova, MPO Staff*

1. [FFYs 2021–25 TIP Amendment Two](#)

M. Genova stated that Amendment Two includes the reallocation of transit capital funds to cover operating expenses as part of the MBTA's *Forging Ahead* initiative. These changes are in response to the disruption in system ridership caused by COVID-19 and the resulting drop in fare revenue. He noted that Amendment Two was released for a 21-day public review period on December 7, 2020. The comment period closed on December 28, 2020, and no public comments were submitted during that time.

Discussion

Samantha Silverberg (MBTA) stated that the most recent federal COVID-19 Relief Bill includes relief for transit agencies, and the MBTA is awaiting Federal Transit Administration guidance on the precise amounts the agency will receive. The MBTA plans to discuss the strategy for these funds with the Fiscal & Management Control Board on Monday, January 11, 2021. S. Silverberg requested that the MPO approve this amendment to allow the MBTA maximum flexibility to maintain and restore service by using federal formula funds for preventative maintenance. Any further changes would be presented and discussed during the annual MassDOT MBTA Capital Investment Plan and TIP development processes later in the spring.

E. Bourassa asked S. Silverberg to clarify that the MBTA is seeking maximum flexibility, but is still developing the exact plans for service changes. S. Silverberg agreed.

Vote

A motion to endorse Amendment Two to the FFYs 2021–25 TIP was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: Providence UZA MOU—Jonathan Church, MPO Staff

1. [Providence UZA MOU](#)

J. Church stated that federal statutes require MPOs to formalize coordination when multiple MPOs exist in a single UZA, as defined by the United States Census. MPOs and public transportation operators are strongly encouraged to coordinate to ensure consistent development of LRTPs, TIPs, and any transportation investments that extend across boundaries. The Boston Region MPO updated its MOU following federal recertification in 2018. The signatories of that MOU are MPOs that abut the Boston Region MPO area, including some in Rhode Island and New Hampshire. This MOU is being advanced because part of the Providence UZA is in the Boston Region MPO area. The Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning asks the MPO to endorse the MOU.

Vote

A motion to endorse the Providence UZA MOU was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane). The motion carried.

10. Action Item: Worcester UZA MOU—Jonathan Church, MPO Staff

1. [Worcester Urbanized Area MOU](#)

The Worcester UZA abuts the western part of the Boston Region MPO area and the MPO is named as a signatory on that MOU. This vote is similar to that taken regarding the Providence UZA MOU.

Vote

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

11. Staff-Generated Research: Using United States Census Data as a Proxy for Transit Rider Survey Data—Emily Domanico, MPO Staff

1. [Using United States Census Data as a Proxy for Transit Rider Survey Data](#)

E. Domanico stated transit rider demographic data are important for analyzing transit system use and are especially helpful in service equity analyses. This staff-generated research project looked at whether gaps in passenger survey data could be compensated for with United States Census demographic data to predict ridership trends. The data were split into two categories, transit riders and nontransit riders. MPO staff looked for demographic trends in known rider demographics to predict ridership in

a new service area. The study found that there were not sufficient data to predict likely transit riders in a new, unstudied service area. The major finding of the study is that while the MBTA passenger ridership survey is representative of riders, it is an imbalanced dataset of overall MBTA service area residents. E. Domanico stated that a possible path forward is to conduct a future demographic survey of both transit riders and nontransit riders for a defined service area designed to quantify that relationship to census demographic data.

Discussion

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town) (Town of Arlington) asked for clarification on the definition of riders versus nontransit riders. E. Domanico agreed that the distinction is a little synthetic. For the study, staff looked to the MBTA ridership, specifically the most recent MBTA service used during a specific timeframe. E. Domanico added that it is important to know that there is no direct information on nontransit riders.

S. Silverberg asked if MPO staff coordinated with the MBTA's Office of Performance Management & Innovation (OPMI) survey team and if so, what the response was to the analysis. E. Domanico responded that the project team had not contacted OPMI but agreed that would be a good next step. S. Silverberg suggested using this work as a point of collaboration between CTPS, the MBTA, and MassDOT.

David Koses (At-Large City) (City of Newton) asked how it might be possible to account for people who use transit by choice, as long as it remains convenient for them, and at what point ridership breaks down when convenience is reduced. E. Domanico agreed that demographics may play a role, but do not replace route planning or service reliability as predictors of ridership.

12. Members Items

Ken Miller (Federal Highway Administration [FHWA]) stated that the federal COVID-19 relief measure passed at the end of the year amounted to \$1.4 trillion in total, with \$10 billion allocated to state Departments of Transportation through FHWA. FHWA has 30 days to allocate the funding. The funding will be available for four years and can be used for capital projects, maintenance, operations, and other projects not normally eligible for federal capital funding.

L. Diggins asked that MPO staff provide more information on how the collaboration laid out in the MOUs approved earlier takes place.

13. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the ICC (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

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 Brookline)	Todd Kirrane
	Heather Hamilton
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Ken Miller
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Samantha Silverberg
	Jillian Linnell
Massachusetts Port Authority	
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Thatcher Kezer III
	Erika Oliver-Jerram
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Jennifer Constable
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Peter Pelletier
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
	Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Rich Benevento	WorldTech Engineering
Joe Blankenship	City of Boston
Andreae Downs	City of Newton
Janie Dretler	Sudbury
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Kristen Guichard	Town of Acton
Michelle Ho	MassDOT
Erika Oliver Jerram	MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)
Kristina Johnson	Town of Hudson
Ali Kleyman	City of Somerville
Ben Muller	MassDOT
Bryan Pounds	MassDOT
C. Senior	MassDOT
Jeanette Rebecchi	Town of Bedford
Constance Raphael	MassDOT
Angela Servello	MBTA
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Amber Vaillancourt	MassDOT
Eric Waaramaa	MBTA

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Steven Andrews

Matt Archer

Jonathan Church

Paul Christner

Emily Domanico

Annette Demchur

Róisín Foley

Hiral Gandhi

Matt Genova

Betsy Harvey

Sandy Johnston

Anne McGahan

Roger Roy

Barbara Rutman

Michelle Scott

Kate White

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