

# Draft Memorandum for the Record

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

### November 19, 2020 Meeting

9:00 AM–9:55 AM, Zoom videoconferencing platform

Eric Bourassa, Chair, representing the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

### Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the Meeting Summary of the September 17, 2020, meeting

### Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Meeting Summary of the September 17, 2020, meeting
2. Handout: Concepts for Further Development of the "Access to Commercial Business Districts, Phase 2," Study

### Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

#### 1. Introductions

Matt Archer (Central Transportation Planning Staff [CTPS]) read the accessibility statement and attendees introduced themselves.

#### 2. Public Comments

There were none.

#### 3. Meeting Summary of September 17, 2020—*Approval of this summary*

A motion to approve the meeting summary was made by Tom O'Rourke (Neponset River Regional Chamber/Three Rivers Interlocal Council) and seconded by Tom Bent (City of Somerville/Inner Core Committee). The motion passed unanimously.

#### **4. Discussion of Scope for the Federal Fiscal Year 2021 UPWP Study Access to Commercial Business Districts, Phase 2—Paul Christner, CTPS Manager of Transit Analysis and Planning**

Sandy Johnston (UPWP Manager) introduced the discussion, reminding that the Federal Fiscal Year 2021 UPWP contains a study titled “Access to Commercial Business Districts, Phase 2,” a follow-up to a study that was included in the UPWP a couple of years ago. He noted that the challenges arising from the COVID-19 emergency situation are affecting how that study can be carried out, and that staff seek guidance from the Committee on how to proceed, within the scope of the task as laid out in the UPWP.

Paul Christner and Blake Acton (CTPS Transit Planner) led a discussion of how to frame the study appropriately given the realities of the emergency situation. They presented two possible alternatives in a handout titled “Concepts for Further Development of the Access to Commercial Business Districts, Phase 2, Study,” one focusing on developing scenarios for recovery from the pandemic and resources for municipalities to guide the recovery, and the other on analyzing access to commercial business districts (CBDs) for essential workers.

In discussing the first concept, Len Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) suggested developing a set of objective metrics, such as revenue or taxes, to determine the progress of recovery, as self-reporting may not be reliable. T. Bent suggested working with Chambers of Commerce and Main Streets organizations for input, and E. Bourassa supported that suggestion. T. O’Rourke also supported that suggestion. In addition, he recommended the idea of further supporting outdoor dining by reconfiguring traffic flow, explaining that in the communities he is aware of there has been little pushback to changes along those lines. B. Acton led a discussion on transportation strategies for recovery from the pandemic, and what the committee might want to prioritize. L. Diggins suggested thinking about how to make CBDs continue to be transit friendly, especially if people are reluctant to return to transit after the pandemic. Daniel Amstutz (Town of Arlington/At-Large Town) discussed how people might begin to travel more locally if they are working from home more, and how future strategies could accommodate that. David Koses (City of Newton/At-Large City) said that cities will come back, they always have throughout history. Outdoor dining is a positive change that people seem to really like, but he wonders how much transit really will come back. Land use decisions are heavily dependent on transit, but Newton’s experience has been that bus service has been cut back bit by bit over the years, and never comes back. There could be more focus on biking and walking, but also potentially more on parking, which is not what the MPO members generally want to prioritize. E. Bourassa said that

grappling with parking needs and demands is indeed a core tension. L. Diggins wondered if autonomous and miniature vehicles, possibly shared, could be beneficial in the future. T. Bent observed that peak hour traffic appears to be returning, and shared his fear that the proposed MBTA service cuts will hurt the neediest people the most, and that they would be permanent rather than temporary.

P. Christner asked the committee members if they were aware of any metrics that municipalities are using to gauge economic recovery. L. Diggins mentioned that Arlington's long-range transportation planning is taking decreased revenue into account. Jenn Emiko Kaplan (Economic Development Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC]) explained that while she had not heard of any particular metrics, some businesses are planning to go into "hibernation" over the winter, while others are planning to stay open. D. Koses noted that Newton has suspended parking meter payment in many of their village areas, but is seeing some pressure to bring payment enforcement back.

P. Christner led a discussion on the second scope idea, about analyzing access to CBDs for essential workers. This idea would examine where essential workers work in CBDs, how they get to work, and how emergency disruptions might affect them (and how to mitigate that). E. Bourassa asked exactly what kind of guidance staff are looking for, and P. Christner responded that while the first scope concept is probably stronger, they do want input from the committee, and to see which elements of both concepts should be incorporated. L. Diggins said he thinks this scope idea is critically important, and even if staff pursue the first concept, they should incorporate elements of the second. Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) said that while this concept is critically important, much of it will likely be handled on an ad-hoc rather than a planned basis in future emergencies, and many plans are already being drawn by the governor's office. He also noted that the City of Boston has already been doing a lot of work related to Complete Streets and Active Streets during the pandemic.

P. Christner asked the committee which scope concept they would prefer. T. Bent responded that he prefers the first, and agrees with T. Kadzis that much of the planning that would be part of the second scope is happening elsewhere. T. O'Rourke supported them, but suggested looking into something like the second concept in a future UPWP. T. Kadzis suggested incorporating an assessment of what municipalities are doing now, such as the program implemented by the BlueBikes consortium to provide free rides to health care workers.

**5. Update on Fall 2020 UPWP Outreach Plan—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager***

S. Johnston explained that he is conducting the usual round of fall outreach, and if members have anyone in particular that they would like him to speak to, or ideas for studies of their own that they would like to share, they can be in touch with him.

**6. Members Items**

There were none.

**7. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 2021.

**8. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by T. Bent and seconded by T. O'Rourke. Without objection, the meeting adjourned.

## Attendance

---

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
Three Rivers Interlocal Council alternate (Town of Westwood)	Steve Olanoff

---

<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Jenn Emiko Kaplan	MAPC
Sharon Ron	MAPC
Susan Price	Town of Sharon
Ashley Stockwell	Blue Hills Community Health Alliance (CHNA 20)

---

### **MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

---

Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
Paul Christner, Manager of Transit Analysis and Planning  
Jonathan Church, Manager of MPO Activities  
Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager  
Blake Acton, Transportation Planner, Transit Analysis and Planning Group  
Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Coordinator  
Róisín Foley, Administrative and Communications Assistant  
Matt Archer, Transportation Planner

---

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) operates its programs, services, and activities in compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related statutes and regulations. Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency), be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal assistance. Related federal nondiscrimination laws administered by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, or both, prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, and disability. The Boston Region MPO considers these protected populations in its Title VI Programs, consistent with federal interpretation and administration. In addition, the Boston Region MPO provides meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities to individuals with limited English proficiency, in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation policy and guidance on federal Executive Order 13166.

The Boston Region MPO also complies with the Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law, M.G.L. c 272 sections 92a, 98, 98a, which prohibits making any distinction, discrimination, or restriction in admission to, or treatment in a place of public accommodation based on race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or ancestry. Likewise, the Boston Region MPO complies with the Governor's Executive Order 526, section 4, which requires that all programs, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), or background.

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

Title VI Specialist  
Boston Region MPO  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116  
[civilrights@ctps.org](mailto:civilrights@ctps.org)  
857.702.3700 (voice)