

Draft Memorandum for the Record

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

May 6, 2021, Meeting

12:00 PM–1:50 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform, recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7CKzkZ1Nos>

Benjamin Muller, Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, Acting Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

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 April 8, 2021, UPWP Committee meeting
- Support the Staff-Recommended List of Studies for the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 UPWP

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Draft Meeting Summary of the April 8, 2021, UPWP Committee meeting
2. FFY 2022 UPWP Universe of Proposed Studies
3. Results of the UPWP Committee Study Concept Ranking Survey
4. Staff-Recommended List of Studies for the FFY 2022 UPWP
5. Written Public Comments Received as of April 29, 2021

Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

Ben Muller (MassDOT) greeted attendees, read the accessibility statement, and called the roll of the committee.

2. Public Comments

Chris Dempsey (Transportation for Massachusetts) spoke in support of the concept to study congestion pricing, as recommended by MPO staff. He explained that congestion has costs in many realms, especially for low-income communities, and pledged the

support of the Transportation for Massachusetts coalition should the MPO select this study concept. Len Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) and C. Dempsey discussed data sources and other existing analyses of congestion pricing. David Koses (City of Newton) wondered if there are other studies going on about this topic, and if it might be better to wait and see how the recovery from the pandemic goes.

Mark Smith (Executive Director, Mary May Binney Wakefield Arboretum) spoke on behalf of a coalition of groups, including the Urban Outdoors Association, Friends of the Blue Hills, Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition, and Brookwood Community farm, in addition to his own organization. He supported the study concept titled *Addressing Equity and Access in the Blue Hills*.

3. Meeting Summary of April 8, 2021—Approval of this summary

A motion to approve the summary was made by Daniel Amstutz (Town of Arlington) and seconded by Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC]). The motion carried unanimously.

4. Final FFY 2022 UPWP Development Schedule— Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager

Sandy Johnston (Central Transportation Planning Staff [CTPS] UPWP Manager) shared final dates and information about the remainder of the development process for the FFY 2022 UPWP. He shared the link to the UPWP Development Page, <https://www.bostonmpo.org/upwp-dev>.

5. Flexible Scoping of UPWP Studies—Tegin Teich, CTPS Executive Director

Tegin Teich (CTPS Executive Director) presented on a process improvement that MPO staff are implementing. She recapped the process by which the study concepts selected become studies. That process involves additional scoping work, which is typically funded through CTPS administrative funds. In some cases, studies may involve an especially large amount of time invested in stakeholder engagement or outreach so that staff can appropriately define the scope of analysis. In these cases, staff propose to use no more than 10 percent of a study budget (taken from planning funds designated by the MPO for this study) to carry out those engagement activities. Staff would transparently report use of these funds to the UPWP Committee.

B. Muller expressed support for giving staff greater flexibility in using UPWP funds and in the scoping process. He asked whether these extra costs had been baked into the projected budgets for FFY 2021 studies, and staff responded that they are still trying to

get a handle on it. L. Diggins, Tom Kadzis (City of Boston), D. Amstutz, and Steve Olanoff (Town of Westwood/TRIC subregion alternate) asked some clarifying questions, and there was further discussion.

6. Flexible Scoping of UPWP Studies—Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager

S. Johnston recapped the process of developing UPWP study concepts—from outreach to polling of the committee, staff analysis, and prioritization of study concepts. Staff take several factors into account: how the committee ranks study concepts in their polling; internal planning priorities; staff resources, bandwidth, and distribution of work; and making sure the studies are not redundant with work conducted by partner agencies.

E. Bourassa discussed his thoughts on aspects of several study concepts, including L-2, *Travel Demand Management Follow-Up*, T-1, *Opportunities for Bus Rapid Transit in the Boston Region*, T-10, *Innovative Transit Financing*, and R-1, *CTPS Resilience Program*. S. Johnston clarified several points, including that staff are recommending creation of a CTPS Resilience Program as a permanent item, rather than as a discrete study. Tom O'Rourke (Town of Norwood/Neponset River Regional Chamber) asked about staff proposals for several studies that do not necessarily correspond to how they rank in the poll of the committee.

An extensive discussion then opened about study concept M-5, *Congestion Pricing*, which was included in the staff-recommended list of studies. B. Muller expressed that the proposed budget might not be sufficient for adding value; that the study might turn into a rehashing of known themes; and that the money could be better used elsewhere. T. Kadzis discussed political aspects of the conversation about studying congestion pricing, which has been ongoing for several years, and asked staff for some clarification about how this study would add value. T. Teich clarified that this would be an empirical study rooted in the feedback of various MPO stakeholders, not just another literature review. L. Diggins discussed various aspects of budgeting and priority for the studies, and expressed support for the staff-recommended list.

D. Amstutz stated that it would be helpful for staff to further explain their reasoning behind the inclusion or exclusion of various study concepts on the staff-recommended list. He supported the congestion pricing study, saying that it had been delayed or rejected a number of times already, provided that it focuses on the realities of the Boston region and not another literature review. He also asked about study concept T-4, *Bus Electrification* and whether CTPS can mix federal and state funds to support studies. B. Muller explained that the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) /MassDOT bus modernization team has already extensively analyzed this question and does not feel the MPO could add value with a general study, but that

MBTA, MassDOT, and MPO staff would work together to potentially find smaller aspects to work on. T. Kadzis and D. Amstutz noted that there seems to be a disconnect between the level of support provided to the electrification study by outside groups and the consideration it was given internally by the relevant agencies. B. Muller explained that MassDOT provides a local match to federal planning funds, but all involved generally find it easier to keep federal- and state-funded projects administered separately.

S. Olanoff asked for more detail on why the *Innovative Transit Financing* and freight studies were not included in the staff recommendation, and S. Johnston explained. S. Olanoff also supported the congestion pricing study—on the premise that it should examine the Boston region rather than another literature review. D. Koses expressed general support for the staff recommendation, but wondered whether the COVID-19 pandemic would have a permanent effect on congestion and travel patterns. Tom Bent (City of Somerville) expressed support for the staff recommendation and several studies within it, and said it would be interesting to watch if congestion returns and changes travel patterns. T. Kadzis said that if capacity exists, motorists will use it. L. Diggins asked if there were any studies that could be considered strong candidates aside from those on the staff-recommended list; S. Johnston responded that there are a couple of “honorable mentions” that would have been next on the list. Overall, this year’s Universe of Proposed Studies was more competitive than last year’s, with 26 concepts as opposed to 15.

B. Muller reiterated his opposition to the congestion pricing study, and the feeling that there are better ways to spend the money. D. Koses and S. Johnston discussed some aspects of budgeting for the studies. T. Kadzis clarified that he does not support the bus electrification study, but believes it is important and an issue of increasing federal emphasis (and hopefully future federal funding). He also further discussed political aspects of various studies. E. Bourassa noted that MPO staff try to balance various expertise and factors in identifying studies to recommend. He said that he and MAPC are strong supporters of studying congestion pricing, knowing that congestion will come back at some point; it is important to allow staff to educate themselves on this topic, and behavior change is very difficult and has to start somewhere. On bus electrification, he noted that the MBTA seems to have a need for help with logistics more than research.

Matthew Petersen (TransitMatters) spoke about the congestion pricing study. He expressed some of the reasoning behind the proposal: there are other transit services operating in the Boston region that could benefit from electrification, and the MBTA is focusing on a single technology for its electrification efforts and is not really looking at the whole range of electrification technologies that are available. He said that this study

proposal could give regional transit authorities and other transit operators the tools to make informed decisions. Maile Panerio-Langer spoke on behalf of Friends of the Blue Hills in support of the Blue Hills transit study (T-2). She explained how important the study is to generating access to green space, and how important it is to equity for marginalized communities.

D. Amstutz noted that ridership on the MBTA has not bounced back from the pandemic. As vaccines become available, perhaps more people will ride, but some may stay away, and will likely turn to cars. Congestion will be back at some point and planners need another tool in their toolbox to deal with it. S. Olanoff told everyone to listen to traffic reports; traffic is rapidly growing right back to the way it was before.

S. Johnston recommended that the committee take an up-or-down vote on the staff-recommended list of studies. E. Bourassa made a recommendation to approve the staff-recommended list. The motion passed with all members present voting for, except MassDOT, who voted against.

7. Members Items

L. Diggins expressed appreciation for the long service of T. Kadzis, who had announced his retirement at the prior MPO meeting. S. Olanoff and T. Kadzis discussed how long they had worked together on transportation-related issues, and their mutual appreciation. T. O'Rourke and S. Johnston also expressed their appreciation for T. Kadzis, and wishes for a happy retirement.

8. Next Meeting

S. Johnston said the next meeting would likely be June 17th, and would involve an amendment to the FFY 2021 UPWP, in addition to further discussion of the study concept materials.

9. Adjourn

T. Kadzis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Office of Transportation Planning)	Ben Muller
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
City of Framingham (Metrowest Regional Collaborative)	Eric Johnson

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Chris Dempsey	Transportation for Massachusetts
Josh Ostroff	Transportation for Massachusetts
Judy Lehrer Jacobs	Friends of the Blue Hills
J. R. Frey	Town of Hingham
Mark Smith	Mary May Binney Wakefield Arboretum
Matthew Petersen	TransitMatters
Maile Panerio-Langer	Friends of the Blue Hills
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Shavel'le Olivier	Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition
Dunbar Carpenter	TransitMatters

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning

Hiral Gandhi, Director of Operations and Finance

Mark Abbott, Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager

Jonathan Church, Manager of MPO Activities

Anne McGahan, Chief Transportation Planner

Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager

Kate White, Public Outreach Coordinator

Matt Archer, Transportation Planner

Ariel Patterson, 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. 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

By Telephone:

857.702.3702 (voice)

For people with hearing or speaking difficulties, connect through the state MassRelay service:

- **Relay Using TTY or Hearing Carry-over:** 800.439.2370
- **Relay Using Voice Carry-over:** 866.887.6619
- **Relay Using Text to Speech:** 866.645.9870

For more information, including numbers for Spanish speakers, visit <https://www.mass.gov/massrelay>