

Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting Summary

October 21, 2021, Meeting

9:00 AM–9:30 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform, recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jMkUXT4PsY>

Derek Krevat, Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, 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 summary of the September 2, 2021, meeting
- Recommend that the MPO board vote to release Amendment Two to the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2021 UPWP for public comment

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Summary of the September 2, 2021, meeting
2. Technical memorandum on the draft Amendment One to the FFY 2022 UPWP
3. Updated FFY 2021 UPWP reflecting Amendment One, pending approval of the MPO

Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

D. Krevat introduced the meeting, read the guidelines and accessibility statement, and called the roll.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Meeting Summary of September 2, 2021—Approval of this summary

A motion to approve the summary of the September 2, 2021, meeting was made by Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC]) and seconded by Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee/City of Somerville). The motion carried with one abstention.

4. Action Item: Amendment One to the FFY 2022 UPWP—Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager

S. Johnston stated that Amendment One to the FFY 2022 UPWP extends \$45,000 in unused FFY 2021 3C funds for two major purposes. The proposed amendment would allocate \$20,000 to support new skill development, particularly toward preparing some MPO staff to implement a new suite of modeling tools. A relatively light workload at the beginning of FFY 2022 presents an opportunity to immediately and efficiently use these funds. The remaining \$25,000 will be used to procure support from Caliper, the developer of TransCAD, the travel demand software used by MPO staff. This support will accelerate the development of the next phase of travel demand modeling tools. As the proposed funds are carried over from FFY 2021, there is no negative impact on existing programs in the UPWP.

The amendment also makes several minor typo corrections and textual corrections. A memo detailing the amendment is available on the [MPO website](#).

D. Krevat asked for a motion and second to recommend that the MPO release Amendment One for public comment. E. Bourassa motioned and T. Bent seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Update on Subregional Outreach—Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager

At the September UPWP Committee meeting, members requested an update on MPO staff's plans for subregional outreach and additional outreach plans during the fall in support of development of the FFY 2023 UPWP. MPO staff are attending all eight MAPC subregional meetings during the fall. As of October 21, MPO staff had attended meetings with the Minuteman Advisory Council on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC), the Inner Core Committee (ICC), and the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC). In addition, S. Johnston spoke with the MBTA Rider Oversight Committee on October 19 to discuss UPWP development. MPO staff will release a public-facing survey regarding ideas for the upcoming UPWP. MPO staff will also generate ideas internally and reach out to partner agencies over the coming months.

S. Johnston encouraged the UPWP Committee members to attend upcoming subregional meetings and to provide him with information about other groups that MPO

staff should contact. MPO staff will include as many groups and individuals in support of UPWP development as possible.

David Koses (City of Newton) asked about the attendance of the three subregional meetings that MPO staff have attended. S. Johnston stated that attendance has been slightly lower than the previous year. He explained that enthusiasm for digital meetings has waned during the COVID-19 pandemic, but he added that this is likely not a major trend. He stated that while attendance at the ICC meeting was lower than normal, it coincided with a particularly busy week. Attendance at the MAGIC and TRIC meetings were at normal levels. He added that these meetings include discussion of the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program and the Long-Range Transportation Plan. This amounts to approximately 45 minutes to one hour of discussion about MPO planning in addition to other agenda items that the subregional groups regularly discuss.

D. Krevat asked about the topics that are discussed during subregional meetings and if corridor studies are specifically discussed. S. Johnston stated he begins presentations by explaining the UPWP process, but the emphasis for discussion is the solicitation of ideas for studies and to position the MPO as an entity that can be supportive of its municipalities. Many ideas for specific corridors to study are generated at subregional meetings. Transit topics have been discussed frequently, particularly the future of the transit network, the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MBTA's bus network redesign, and other transformation projects. Although some themes are repeated between subregional meetings, S. Johnston noted the importance of hearing the local needs of each subregion.

D. Koses asked about the MPO's plans for in-person attendance of meetings. Jonathan Church stated that the MPO will discuss this issue in January. S. Johnston noted the logistical advantage of virtual meetings for a committee that includes people from throughout the region. The Transit Working Group will likely stay predominantly virtual due to increased participation. E. Bourassa stated that prior to the pandemic, MAPC's events typically drew 40 to 50 attendees, while their current virtual meetings routinely see 100 to 150 attendees. He stated that there is a recognition that MAPC needs to maintain a virtual component for events and meetings in the future. MAPC's community engagement staff are working on a hybrid meeting plan and have held webinars on hybrid meeting policy and procedures. D. Koses noted that the City of Newton has also seen increased participation, but he expressed concern that the virtual environment may not capture all individuals who wish to participate.

T. Bent expressed that, in his experience, some meetings move more quickly in the virtual environment and generally see more discussion. E. Bourassa stated that while

the virtual environment is beneficial for informational sessions, meetings which require deeper discussion of issues can be more difficult. He added that feedback from MAPC subregional groups indicates that participants lack the opportunity in virtual environments to have smaller discussions before and after a meeting, which is a benefit of in-person meetings. He stated that MAPC wants to maintain the ability for participants to network while also providing the virtual element to people who cannot attend in-person.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) expressed that he has seen meetings take more time in the virtual environment, as they have seen increased participation. He stated that while public bodies may lose some benefits of in-person meetings in the short term, virtual meetings will ultimately provide a net benefit.

6. Members Items

Daniel Amstutz (Town of Arlington) stated that the Town of Arlington has started a project to study safety and accessibility improvements on the Minuteman Bikeway. He noted the importance of the bikeway for Arlington residents and users traveling into and through Arlington. He added that the Town received a MassTrails grant to conduct a feasibility study for a trail from the Mystic River that would connect to the Minuteman Bikeway. The Town will work with the City of Medford to create a regional trail link. He encouraged members to contact him for additional information.

7. Next Meeting

D. Krevat stated that the next UPWP Committee meeting is expected to be held on November 18. Members will vote on whether to recommend that the MPO endorse Amendment One to the UPWP.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by E. Bourassa and seconded by T. Bent. The motion carried.

Attendance

| Members | Representatives and Alternates |
|--|---|
| Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Office of Transportation Planning) | Derek Krevat |
| 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 |
| Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) | Tom Bent |
| Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Westwood) | Tom O'Rourke |
| City of Framingham (MetroWest Regional Collaborative) | Erika Oliver Jerram |
| MBTA Advisory Board | Amira Patterson |

Other Attendees Affiliation

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Wesley Lickus | MassDOT |
| Benjamin Muller | MassDOT |
| Gus Norrbom | MassDOT |
| Cassie Ostrander | Federal Highway Administration |
| Steve Olanoff | TRIC Alternate |

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning
Mark Abbott, Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager
Matt Archer, Transportation Planner
Jonathan Church, Certification Activities Manager
Hiral Gandhi, Director of Finance and Operations
Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Manager
Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager

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Title VI Specialist

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857.702.3702 (voice)

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