

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

## June 30, 2022, Meeting

2:00 PM-4:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

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:

- Approved meeting summary of May 19, 2022, meeting
- Approved final list of discrete studies for inclusion in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023 Draft UPWP

## Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. [Meeting Summary of May 19, 2022, meeting](#)
2. [Scenarios for FFY 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies](#)
3. [Feedback Received from June 15, 2022, UPWP Committee Meeting](#)
4. [FFY 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies](#)

## Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

### 1. Introductions

See attendance on page 10.

### 2. Public Comments

There were none.

### 3. Meeting Summary of May 19, 2022—*Approval of this summary*

A motion to approve the summary was made by the At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (Daniel Amstutz) and seconded by the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce) (Tom O'Rourke). The motion carried.

#### **4. Finalizing Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies—*Srilekha Murthy, UPWP Manager***

Tegin Teich (Executive Director of the MPO staff) began the presentation with a discussion on the overall UPWP funding allocation for FFY 2023 and the context behind some of the funding decisions made in this year's document. As a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the UPWP incorporated a 17 percent increase in funding in this year's budget. This influx of funding has given the agency more room to strategize about how it can evolve its work programs across the board to both meet new federal requirements and better accomplish the MPO's goals in its existing work.

The increased funding primarily went to existing programs, such as Support to the MPO, the MPO's Resilience Program, and Freight Planning Support, among others, in order to build out the agency's capacity to conduct necessary work in each of these programs. For example, the increase in Support to the MPO is partially due to the upcoming Federal Certification Review process, finishing later in the calendar year, which is a requirement for all MPOs to complete and takes a significant amount of staff effort. Another program that saw a significant expansion in its budget is the MPO's Resilience Program. Part of the BIL contains an emphasis area on tackling the climate crisis, and this budget increase reflects the MPO's goal of addressing this emphasis area.

Additionally, the increase in funding has resulted in two new programs, the Data Program and the Multimodal Mobility Infrastructure Program. The first rolls existing data requests into one program, but also looks to develop a forward-thinking data strategy. The second program acts as a successor to the recurring UPWP studies that have taken place every year on a rotating schedule, such as Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways, Addressing Priority Corridors from the Long-Range Transportation Plan Needs Assessment, and Low-Cost Improvements to Express Highway Bottlenecks, to name a few.

Finally, this UPWP additionally changes how the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS), the staff to the MPO, accounts for work. Starting in FFY 2023, the Provision of Materials in Accessible Formats line item will be rolled into the larger Graphics line item, and the Editorial and Communications and Outreach groups now have separate budgets. Given this reorganization and revised emphasis areas, UPWP discrete studies are level funded from FFY 2022.

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town [Town of Arlington]) thanked T. Teich for providing this context and for providing more information on the Multimodal Mobility Infrastructure Program.

Steve Olanoff (Three Rivers Interlocal Council [Town of Westwood]) asked for clarification on the exact amount set aside for discrete studies. T. Teich clarified that there is \$368,000 set aside for new discrete studies and the Multimodal Mobility Infrastructure Program.

S. Murthy then began her presentation with a recapitulation of the discussion of the previous UPWP Committee meeting and presented members with a list of possible discrete study scenarios based on budget. S. Murthy stated that the goal for today's meeting was to decide on priorities, and she noted that exact project costs are subject to change once full work scopes are developed.

Derek Krevat (MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning) noted that there were multiple handouts posted on the meeting calendar and encouraged members to review them during the discussion.

S. Olanoff asked what the total cost for each scenario would be. S. Murthy responded that each scenario contained the project costs of each study, so the total scenario cost would be the sum of those costs.

D. Amstutz asked how the committee should decide between scenarios. S. Murthy replied that the goal of presenting the scenarios is to guide a discussion on the committee's priorities, and it is ultimately up to the committee to decide which scenario or combination of studies makes the most sense.

Ali Kleyman (Inner Core Committee [City of Somerville]) asked how the proposed Shared-Use Path Guidebook study fits in with existing Mass Trails shared-use path planning and design guides. Mark Abbott (MPO Staff) stated that this study aimed to go beyond existing resources and understand the kinds of challenges and opportunities municipalities have faced when implementing shared-use paths in their communities.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) suggested that the committee decide on which projects they unanimously support and proceed with discussion from there. D. Krevat agreed and suggested that they begin with the studies that were highly ranked by the committee, beginning with the Lab and Municipal Parking Study. As no members expressed opposition, this study was included in the final list.

The next study that saw near-unanimous support was the Sustainability and Decarbonization in the Freight and Logistics Sector in the North Suffolk Area study. Tom O'Rourke (Three Rivers Interlocal Council [Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce]) expressed that he initially did not rank this study but is willing to support it now.

The following study, the Shared-Use Path Guidebook, had less consensus, and members skipped discussion momentarily.

The Update Bicycle/Pedestrian Count Database study had unanimous support.

A. Kleyman expressed that as a municipality, these data can be very difficult to obtain but are valuable to their planning efforts, and thus she supports funding this study.

D. Amstutz agreed, and D. Krevat stated that MassDOT District 6 was very interested in this study as well. L. Diggins asked if this work could be done by a different entity than the MPO; D. Krevat said he would look into it, but likely this study would fit CTPS's work.

S. Olanoff asked about the purpose of the Transit Modernization Program (TMP) study. Sandy Johnston (MPO Staff) stated that this program, similar to the Community Connections Program in the Transportation Improvement Program, will be launched in 2025, and this study would fund preliminary preparations on the part of staff to ensure that the program is launched successfully. S. Olanoff responded that the proposed budget—\$75,000—seems quite large for the scale of the study. S. Johnston responded that while it is more than what was initially set aside for the Community Connections Program, the funding for that program was inadequate.

David Koses (At-Large City [City of Newton]) asked for a clarification on the ranking system, where 8 was the highest rank and 1 was the lowest. L. Diggins clarified that there is precedent in the UPWP for funding this kind of preliminary work on programs. S. Johnston replied in the affirmative. L. Diggins then asked whether funding for this work can come out of a different program or budget line, because this study did not seem to exactly count as a discrete study. A. Kleyman stated that when the City of Somerville applied for a Community Connections grant, the preliminary work staff conducted was very helpful to the City, and thus similar work prior to the launching of the Transit Modernization Program would be a great benefit to municipalities and regional transit authorities (RTA).

Annette Demchur (MPO Staff) stated that one of the main reasons staff chose to keep this study under the discrete studies umbrella is to ensure that its funding stays its own without being absorbed by other tasks in a program. D. Krevat stated that there seemed

to be general support for this task. T. O'Rourke asked for clarification on how much money the discrete studies program had in total. D. Krevat responded that the budget is \$330,000 and that, as it stands, the chosen discrete studies have surpassed this budget. L. Diggins asked whether this work could be completed through another program or agency, and he also asked about the time scale of this study and how many years staff expect to prepare for the launch of the program. S. Johnston replied that since the TMP is launching in FFY 2025, it is likely that staff will take two fiscal years to prepare for it, similar to the Community Connections Program.

D. Amstutz proposed that since staff will need two years to prepare for the program launch, the study in FFY 2023 could be funded at a lower level this year and increased in the next UPWP. He asked how much preliminary funding was allocated to the Community Connections Program. S. Johnston replied that the total spending was about \$45,000 over two years, with \$20,000 allocated in the first year and \$25,000 in the second year. He stated that this was an insufficient amount of funding, but he was unsure if the study proponent intended for all the work to be completed in FFY 2023.

Jonathan Church (MPO Staff) stated that it would be possible to split the work into two phases with a total spending ceiling of \$75,000 over the two years. D. Krevat thanked him for the clarification and suggested that the committee return to this topic after completing discussion on the rest of the studies.

The discussion turned to TE-1, Analyzing the Environmental Justice Impacts of Congestion Pricing. D. Krevat expressed MassDOT's position of following the administration's lead on this subject, and he urged the committee to weigh the costs of this study versus the rest of the projects being considered for funding. L. Diggins stated that last year, the committee committed to seeing a congestion pricing study in the Universe of Proposed Studies, and it seems important to include this study as a matter of public trust. D. Koses explained that he did not vote for this study. T. Teich stated that the goal in including this study was to ensure that the committee was able to discuss a congestion pricing study; however, this exact scope does not have to necessarily be the one that is funded, and staff are working to refine and tweak the study scope into something that may be more suited to the MPO board's priorities.

D. Amstutz stated that in the last few years, each time a congestion pricing study was presented the board or committee has declined to fund it citing a lack of information or wrong timing. As this conversation seemed to be leaning to that conclusion, he expressed disappointment that this committee could not move this study forward. T. Teich stated that staff are very much able to tweak the scope of this study as long as the committee supports funding it at some level.

L. Diggins expressed that he would like to keep this study in the Universe and make the effort to study congestion pricing this year. A. Kleyman expressed agreement with D. Amstutz and stated that T. Teich's idea to tweak the scope and fund the study is a good idea.

D. Krevat proposed that, due to time constraints, the committee decide on the studies that were ranked the lowest: The Impact of New Active Transportation Facilities in the Boston Region and Assessing Mobility Options at Affordable Housing Developments. D. Amstutz stated that he also questioned the timing of the Bus Rapid Transit study due to the ongoing Bus Network Redesign work conducted by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). He also expressed that the value capture study may not be as interesting as the others in the Universe. L. Diggins expressed interest in the Demand-Response Study, as it seems like a study that would greatly benefit RTAs.

D. Krevat asked staff to clarify the combined Demand-Response Transit and Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service study. S. Murthy replied that both studies shared somewhat similar principles, but staff did not have time to write a revised description for the combined study just yet. D. Krevat suggested that, given how the committee ranked the studies and the staff-recommended list, the committee should drop the following studies from consideration: Impact of New Active Transportation Facilities in the Boston Region, Funding Free Fares, and Assessing Mobility Options at Affordable Housing Developments.

Laura Gilmore (MBTA) shared that the MBTA's perspective on the Funding Free Fares study would be to expand the scope to include transit financing methods in general. D. Krevat stated that this study could be left as an option, while the other two studies could be removed from consideration.

D. Krevat then asked members for their opinions on T-3, Opportunities for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the Boston Region. L. Diggins responded that this might be a study the committee considers for the next fiscal year. With this study, the members decided on a tentative list of studies for further discussion: Lab and Municipal Parking Study, Sustainability and Decarbonization in the Freight and Logistics Sector in the North Suffolk Area, Update Bicycle/Pedestrian Count Database, Transit Modernization Program, Analyzing the Environmental Justice Impacts of Congestion Pricing, Funding Free Fares, and a combined study of Equity Analysis of Demand-Response Transit and Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service.

S. Murthy stated that while it is helpful for staff to have a list of seven studies narrowed down, there may not be enough time for another meeting of the UPWP Committee

before the draft UPWP needs to be published. She asked if the committee is able to make a final decision on studies today. D. Krevat stated that the congestion pricing and value capture studies had the most division among the committee, and he asked whether the committee would be open to dropping one of them. L. Diggins stated his support for dropping one of these studies. S. Murthy then raised the possibility of splitting the Transit Modernization Program study into two years and funding it for a total of \$75,000 over two UPWP cycles.

T. Teich raised the potential for funding the congestion pricing study at a lower amount and with a reduced scope to allow for a little more funding to be available for another study. Even if the work is not completed at the scale initially envisioned, it is still important for the study to be included in some form in the UPWP. D. Krevat agreed that having the study lay the groundwork for a larger policy examination on congestion pricing would be a good idea for the committee to undertake.

S. Murthy agreed and asked if the committee would be able to make a final decision on how much project budgets should be reduced, especially for the combined study. L. Diggins asked by how much the discrete studies budget was over. S. Murthy stated that the budget was over by \$240,000.

S. Murthy displayed an Excel sheet with project ID numbers and their associated budgets to visualize the amount by which each project would need to be adjusted to fit within the overall discrete studies budget. L. Diggins asked how much the surplus would reduce when the value capture study is removed; S. Murthy responded and displayed that the surplus would be reduced to \$270,000. D. Krevat asked if the Transit Modernization Program could be reduced to \$37,500, and Hiral Gandhi (MPO Staff) noted that the congestion pricing study's budget was \$70,000.

L. Diggins asked if it would be possible to study just the Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service instead of a combined task, thereby reducing that item's budget down to \$20,000.

D. Amstutz asked if the Multi-Municipality Parking Study and Freight studies could be completed in phases because their respective budgets are relatively high compared to the rest of the proposed projects. S. Johnston replied that the parking study is being done in collaboration with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and he stated that it could be completed in phases with some additional support from MAPC. He noted that parking data collection is very time- and labor-intensive, so some of that cost cannot be reduced; however, this could be a multi-year study. The same is true for the freight study, which S. Johnston has been envisioning completing in modules.

D. Amstutz asked what MAPC's contribution to the two studies is expected to be. S. Johnston replied that their conversations have not yet been at that level of detail; but regarding the freight study, they are looking at leveraging external funding sources as well.

A. Kleyman asked whether the proposed budget for the Equity Analysis of Demand-Response Transit study would be sufficient to complete the work. Rose McCarron (MPO Staff) responded saying that this is a study that can also be completed in modules given different levels of funding. There has already been some work completed in this realm through the Human Services Transportation Plan, so this scope aims to build off of that existing work and focus on specific populations, such as people who have low access to resources or areas with a high concentration of older adults.

D. Koses expressed that dragging out a study over two years when it could be completed in one year with sufficient funding is not an efficient way of conducting work.

L. Diggins raised the issue that less dense environments are prone to sidewalk infrastructure loss, so flexible stops may help with demand. He also pointed out that the budget for the Freight Study was over the amount originally proposed in the Universe.

D. Krevat stated that the next step would be to confirm MAPC's contribution to the Parking Study and to tweak the scope and budget of the congestion pricing study.

A. Demchur asked whether the Demand-Response Transit and Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service studies were ultimately combined or if the committee had chosen one.

D. Krevat stated that the Demand-Response Transit Study had ultimately been chosen, and he asked that staff clarify scopes when sending around a final list of studies.

L. Diggins thanked A. Demchur for the clarification on TE-2's scope.

A. Demchur stated that, if the committee can agree on this list, staff can work on trimming budgets and adjusting scopes to fit within the amount allocated for discrete studies. D. Krevat agreed and acknowledged that budgets can change over the course of the year, but these are good estimates for the time being. D. Krevat then stated that the next step is for staff to develop new amounts for the chosen studies and circulate an updated list to the committee for their thoughts.

## **5. Members Items**

There were none.

## **6. Next Meeting**

The next meeting date will be announced at a later date.

## **7. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the Advisory Council (Len Diggins) and seconded by the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce) (Tom O'Rourke). The motion carried.

**Attendance**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
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
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	
Inner Core Committee alternate (City of Somerville)	Ali Kleyman
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)	

<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Jon Seward	Town of Burlington
Laura Gilmore	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
Amira Patterson	MBTA Advisory Board

<b>MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff</b>
Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning
Hiral Gandhi, Director of Finance and Operations
Rebecca Morgan, Director of Projects and Partnerships
Marty Milkovits, Director of Modeling and Analytics
Mark Abbott, Manager of Traffic Analysis and Design
Paul Christner, Manager of Transit Analysis and Planning
Jonathan Church, Manager of Certification Activities
Rose McCarron, Manager of Data Analysis and Applications
Sean Rourke, Manager of Communications and Engagement
Steven Andrews, Data Strategist
Silva Ayvazyan, Project Accountant
Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager
Sandy Johnston, Transportation Planner
Stella Jordan, Communications Coordinator
Srilekha Murthy, UPWP Manager
Logan Casey, Administrative Coordinator

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

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