



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

June 10, 2020, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–3:45 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Ridership Oversight Committee

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Lenard Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page six.)

2. Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager, Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Staff*

Sandy Johnston said the public review draft of the FFY 2021 UPWP has been released. He said the UPWP is the process and document through which the MPO establishes how it will spend the funding it gets from the federal government, specifically for planning and analysis purposes. S. Johnston said the MPO is accepting public comments, including from the Advisory Council, on the part of the UPWP that lists new discrete studies.

S. Johnston gave a brief description of each item in the discrete studies document (FFY 2021 Total Budget given in parentheses):

Improving Pedestrian Variables in the Travel Demand Model (\$25,000)

This study aims to improve the how MPO's travel demand model measures pedestrian travel by adding new variables about the pedestrian environment.

Regional Travel Demand Management (TDM) Strategies Coordination (\$10,000)

Sets aside funding for the MPO and its partner agencies to convene informative conversations on the topic and provide stakeholders with a better understanding of the legal and legislative context for TDM in Massachusetts.

Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways (\$132,120)

Annually recurring studies in which Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) subregional groups identify transportation problems and issues that concern them, often those relating to bottlenecks or lack of safe access to transportation facilities in their areas. These issues can affect livability, quality of life, crash incidence, and air quality along an arterial roadway and its side streets.

Addressing Priority Corridors from the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Needs Assessment (\$137,700)

Annually recurring studies in which MPO staff develop conceptual design plans that address regional multimodal transportation needs along priority corridors identified in the MPO's LRTP, *Destination 2040*. MPO staff then collect data, conduct technical analyses, and develop recommendations for improvements.

Low-Cost Improvements to Express-Highway Bottleneck Locations (\$61,710)

Every other year, MPO engineers visit problematic interchanges or bottleneck locations and investigate low-cost solutions.

Trip Generation Rate Research (\$60,000)

These studies recalibrate the trip generation rate by using localized data and observations to make these calculations more accurate to the Boston region.

Access to Commercial Business Districts Phase 2 (\$75,000)

Additional data gathering to help planners and municipal officials in their work to improve access to commercial business districts and help make the case to the business community that investments in transportation improvements for non-driving modes are also investments in the overall economic vitality of the neighborhood.

The Future of the Curb Phase 2 (\$60,000)

This study will further examine existing curb management strategies in use around the country and will develop a guidebook for municipalities interested in planning and implementing active curb management strategies of their own.

Multimodal Resilience and Emergency Planning (\$30,000)

This study aims to update and improve the MPO's All-hazards Planning interactive application.

Staff-Generated Research and Technical Assistance (\$20,000)

Annually recurring program for MPO staff to generate and pursue research ideas and small technical assistance projects.

Mapping Major Infrastructure Projects in the Boston Region (\$20,000)

This project would compile data from various sources to update the print timeline and map created by MPO staff a number of years ago. The update would reflect the current status of the transportation network and create an interactive, layer-based online interface that would be available to the public.

Informing the Big Ideas behind the MPO's Scenario Planning Process (\$20,700)

MPO staff perform outreach to a wide range of stakeholders to inform the development of a framework for LRTP scenario planning and analysis.

Discussion

Laura Wiener, City of Watertown, and S. Johnston discussed what stage of the planning process the discrete studies list is in. S. Johnston said that although the list of studies has been approved as part of the draft FFY 2021 UPWP, MPO staff can still incorporate public feedback when they provide the final scope for each study or program.

Andy Reker, City of Cambridge; L. Diggins; and S. Johnston discussed how the discrete studies proposed in the UPWP could be reexamined to further the conversation about equity and to integrate the equity lens into all the work done by the MPO and other stakeholders on transportation issues in the Boston region.

A. Reker also said the City of Cambridge is definitely interested in the studies on trip generation rates; he said the topic is important to inner core municipalities because the Institute of Transportation Engineers' non-localized method of calculating rates does not describe the Boston region inner core well.

John McQueen, Walk Boston, asked whether the trip generation study would factor in different density and land use contexts such as interurban, inner core, suburban, commercial, residential, research, and mixed use.

AnaCristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, and S. Johnston discussed how closely MPO staff are working with the City of Boston regarding multimodal and resiliency planning, since Boston has already published a climate resiliency plan. They also discussed whether the budget for the Multimodal Resilience and Emergency Planning program was adequate to address its scope.

Franny Osman, Acton Transportation Advisory Committee; L. Diggins; and S. Johnston discussed to whom the results of the discrete studies are presented; they discussed what use is made of comments that are submitted during the period of public review; and they discussed the process of culling some of the proposed studies prior to approval of the draft version of the UPWP each year.

3. Advisory Council Comment Letter on the FFY 2021 UPWP—*Chris Porter, Chair, 3C Documents Committee*

Chris Porter led a discussion of the Advisory Council comment letter on the FFY 2021 UPWP. C. Porter presented a list showing which of the FFY 2021 discrete studies were selected and which did not get funded. He said the 3C Documents Committee met earlier and discussed the studies and the effects of COVID-19 on funding and the timing of when studies can be conducted.

C. Porter said the comment letter drafted by the 3C Documents Committee had three main points:

- The Advisory Council appreciates the opportunity for provide input into the UPWP project list.
- Especially in light of recent events, the Advisory Council encourages the MPO to continue to include a strong focus on equity in the studies as they are scoped.
- The Advisory Council welcomes the chance to comment on UPWP study scopes as they are developed.

Discussion

David Montgomery, Town of Needham, and L. Diggins discussed rephrasing part of the first sentence of the comment letter to read, “The Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC) is an independent group of citizen and regional advocacy groups, municipal officials, and agencies charged to provide advice to the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization...” D. Montgomery explained that the revised wording is more accurate. A motion to change the wording was made and seconded, and the change was approved.

4. Chair’s Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

Lenard Diggins and Matt Archer, MPO staff, discussed how cost overruns on programmed major infrastructure projects had become a big topic at the recent MPO board meeting. They said discussions are underway about revising the definition of what qualifies as a major infrastructure project.

5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

F. Osman mentioned that Acton and some neighboring municipalities are applying for a grant through the Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s “Urgent COVID-19 Taxicab, Livery, and Hackney Transportation Partnership Grants.” CrossTown Connect Transportation Management Association is coordinating the grant application on behalf of the Towns.

A. Reker mentioned that the City of Cambridge is a member of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO). He encouraged Advisory Council attendees to look into NACTO’s COVID-19 resources and other efforts.

L. Diggins asked attendees to email him and M. Archer their thoughts about the bonus meeting held in late May.

L. Diggins mentioned that he is bringing in Casey Claude, MPO staff, to present on the MPO's Pedestrian Report Card Assessment at the July Advisory Council meeting. He also said he wants to include a Meet and Greet on an upcoming Advisory Council meeting agenda.

L. Diggins said he narrowly won an election to be on the Select Board in the Town of Arlington.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the City of Weymouth (Owen MacDonald) and seconded by the City of Cambridge (A. Reker). The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Town of Brookline	Dan Martin
City of Cambridge	Andy Reker
Town of Needham	David Montgomery
City of Watertown	Laura Wiener
City of Weymouth	Owen MacDonald

Member Citizen Advocacy Groups	Representatives and Alternates
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee	Lenard Diggins
CrossTown Connect	Scott Zadakis
Acton Transportation Advisory Committee	Franny Osman
American Council of Engineering Companies	Fred Moseley
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	AnaCristina Fragoso
MassBike	Chris Porter
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Lisa Weber	Office of Consumer Affairs
Marilyn Wellons	Riverside Neighborhood Association

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff
Matt Archer
Sandy Johnston
Barbara Rutman

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Title VI Specialist

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