

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Draft Memorandum for the Record**

### **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

#### **September 21, 2023, Meeting**

10:00 AM–11:50 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

David Mohler, Chair, representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Acting Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

### **Decisions**

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of July 20, 2023
- Release the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) for a 15-day public review period
- Approve the work scope for Applying Conveyal to Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Scoring

### **Meeting Agenda**

#### **1. Introductions**

See attendance on page 9.

#### **2. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT***

D. Mohler stated that Monica Tibbits-Nutt was sworn in as the Acting Secretary of Transportation and CEO of MassDOT on September 11, 2023.

D. Mohler stated that Reconnecting Communities grant applications are due on September 28, 2023, so parties interested in a letter of support from MassDOT should reach out as soon as possible.

D. Mohler stated that it was announced that MassDOT will begin a planning study to eventually replace the Tobin Bridge and a request for proposal for a two-year planning effort.

### ***Discussion***

Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board, asked if it is anticipated that the MPO will provide funding for the project. D. Mohler stated that the project has not progressed to funding discussions yet.

Robert King, Town of Brookline, asked who should be contacted to request a letter of support. D. Mohler stated that requests should be sent to himself and Liz Williams at MassDOT.

Brad Rawson, Inner Core Committee (ICC) (City of Somerville), asked if there are plans to incorporate pedestrian and multimodal considerations in the planning process. D. Mohler confirmed.

### **3. Executive Director's Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff***

T. Teich stated that Shrvanathi Gopalan Narayanan has started working with the agency as a Transportation Planner on the Multimodal Planning and Design team.

T. Teich stated that two staff members will be presenting at the national Association of MPOs (AMPO) conference next week: Rebecca Morgan on grant writing related to the Safe Streets and Roads for All program and Stella Jordan on centering engagement in transportation equity studies. T. Teich stated that many staff members will be attending MassDOT's Moving Together conference.

### **4. Public Comments**

There were none.

### **5. Committee Chairs' Reports**

Jen Rowe, City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department), stated that the Ad Hoc Committee to Update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has met for the second time and discussed topics to address in an update. The committee is expected to meet for a third and final time to finalize its recommendations for the process to update the MOU.

### **6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council***

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council met to discuss the development of the Transit Transformation program. L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council went on a tour of the Massachusetts Port Authority.

## **7. Action Item: Approval of July 20, 2023, MPO Meeting Minutes**

### ***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

1. July 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

### ***Vote***

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 20, 2023, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane). The motion carried.

## **8. Action Item: Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan—Betsy Harvey, MPO Staff**

### ***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

1. CPT-HSTP ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
2. CPT-HSTP Appendices ([pdf](#))
3. CPT-HSTP Executive Summary ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
4. CPT-HSTP Executive Summary-Spanish ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
5. CPT-HSTP Executive Summary-Portuguese ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
6. CPT-HSTP Executive Summary-Traditional Chinese ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
7. CPT-HSTP Executive Summary-Simplified Chinese ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
8. CPT-HSTP Executive Summary-Haitian Creole ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
9. CPT-HSTP Executive Summary-Vietnamese ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

B. Harvey stated that the CPT-HSTP was developed in tandem with public engagement efforts for the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

The MPO updates the CPT-HSTP every four years, and it is intended to provide guidance for applicants in the Boston region to develop funding proposals for the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 program, known as the Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP) in Massachusetts. Potential projects include passenger vehicle procurement, volunteer driver programs, and wayfinding improvements, among others. Recipients can be municipalities, public or private transit operators, or nonprofit organizations. For a project to be eligible for CTGP funding, it must address a need identified in the CPT-HSTP for the region.

### ***Discussion***

L. Diggins asked if the public review period could be extended to allow for the Advisory Council to discuss the CPT-HSTP at its next meeting.

B. Kane encouraged staff to further elaborate on interagency coordination in future CPT-HSTPs, as many users of human services transportation (HST) must navigate inefficient transfers between service providers.

L. Diggins suggested ways to keep HST users informed about changes in available programs.

Susan Barrett, Town of Lexington, asked if any of the strategies outlined in Table ES-1 of the CPT-HSTP are elaborated elsewhere. B. Harvey stated that the strategies and actions were largely crowdsourced from the numerous engagement efforts, so it would be best to contact MPO staff about specific strategies.

J. Rowe commended the approachable language of the executive summary and the interactive web map that accompanies the CPT-HSTP.

#### ***Vote***

A motion to release the CPT-HSTP for its 15-day public review period was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

### **9. Action Item: Work Scope: Applying Conveyal to TIP Project Scoring—*Srilekha Murthy, MPO Staff***

#### ***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

1. Work Scope: Applying Conveyal to TIP Project Scoring [\(pdf\)](#) [\(html\)](#)

S. Murthy stated that the work scope for Applying Conveyal to TIP Project Scoring is expected to take place over ten months from the notice to proceed and is budgeted for \$59,652. The objectives of the study are to determine the feasibility of using Conveyal in TIP project scoring, recommend metrics to use to assess destination access, and develop methodology and recommendations to implement Conveyal in project scoring.

Task One will establish analysis parameters for Conveyal. In Task Two, staff will select destinations to use in the analysis and relevant TIP projects. In Task Three, staff will run the analysis, and Task Four will document the process and results of the analysis and create a memorandum recommending how to incorporate Conveyal into existing TIP project scoring.

#### ***Discussion***

B. Rawson spoke about the impacts of using new technology in project evaluation.

E. Bourassa spoke of the importance of understanding the different impacts of destination access in the scoring process.

**Vote**

A motion to approve the work scope Applying Conveyal to TIP Project Scoring was made by the ICC (B. Rawson) and seconded by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

**10. Transit Transformation Program: Update and Discussion—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff***

***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

1. Transit Transformation Literature Review ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe stated that the Transit Transformation program was established in the *Destination 2050* Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Transit Transformation program is a modification of the existing Transit Modernization program. It expands the scope of Transit Modernization from state of good repair and preservation to incorporate accessibility and resilience improvements.

Stakeholder engagement included an MPO member workshop on August 24, an Advisory Council workshop on September 13, and a MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) workshop on September 6. A workshop is scheduled with the MBTA, and times are being identified with the Cape Ann Transportation Authority. Feedback topics included funding priorities, balancing needs across subregions, new project types, and ways for municipalities to access the program. Stated investment priorities from these workshops include accessibility, station capacity, multimodal improvements, transit equity, state of good repair, and resilience.

High-level takeaways from workshops were the need for partnerships between municipalities and regional transit authorities (RTAs), investments in municipality-prioritized projects, and investments in small-scale improvements.

Projects funded under this program are anticipated to range in size from \$250,000 to \$4 million, with the opportunity to flex funds across years. Potential RTA projects under this program could include bus transit hub improvements, intelligent transportation systems, and low- or no-emissions vehicle transition support. Criteria to evaluate projects are under development and will be shared with board members for feedback.

**Discussion**

B. Rawson asked if there are specific project opportunities that municipalities can prepare to partner with the MBTA or other RTAs on. E. Lapointe suggested continued

partnership on transit signal priority projects and spoke of other opportunities through different investment programs.

### **11. TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff***

E. Lapointe stated that the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee was established in the Operations Plan, which called for an additional forum for proponents and stakeholders to understand project developments. This committee will allow feedback on the TIP Universe of Projects, scoring criteria and final scores, and scenario development earlier in the TIP process.

The committee was created, in part, to address the downward trend of applications to investment programs other than the Community Connections program. At the same time, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has modified formula funds and created more discretionary grant opportunities. In the Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2024–28 TIP, 65 percent of municipalities did not receive Regional Target funding. In the period of FFYs 2011–28, 33 percent of municipalities have not received Regional Target funding.

E. Lapointe requested that anyone interested in volunteering to serve on the committee contact him.

#### ***Discussion***

B. Rawson spoke of opportunities to engage municipalities beyond Regional Target funding and spoke of a recent project in Chelsea where Regional Target funding was not able to be used, resulting in MassDOT filling in the funding gap on short notice.

John Bechard, MassDOT, stated that Richard Benevento is interested in volunteering to participate in the committee.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative, asked if municipal engagement has begun for the Project Design Pilot. E. Lapointe stated that engagement has begun and feedback is largely positive.

### **12. Lab and Municipal Parking Study—*Sophie Fox, MPO Staff*** ***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

1. Lab and Municipal Parking Study Memo ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

S. Fox stated that Phase One of the Lab and Municipal Parking Study was completed in FFY 2023 and Phase Two will be completed in FFY 2024. The Boston region is experiencing a boom in laboratory and life sciences developments and a need has emerged to determine parameters for parking regulations at lab and life sciences

developments. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the life sciences industry and parking policies in the region. An additional goal of the study is to develop a methodology for collecting and analyzing parking utilization data. The study consisted of industry research and parking policy review, interviews with stakeholders, and the development of a data collection strategy.

The life sciences industry has been experiencing a growth in both workforce and geographic distribution. Due to recent market trends, supply of life science facilities has begun to outgrow demand and developers are starting to back out of deals, while others are opting to remain in the Cambridge area. There has been a shift in consumer behavior from transit to driving, due to reasons such as transit speed, reliability, availability, and mismatched schedules. The amount of parking provided at a lab site is often driven by a municipality's zoning ordinance. Life science facilities have been classified as research and development, office, or industrial and manufacturing. Notably, these facilities have a lower worker density, requiring fewer parking spaces.

Through research staff found that parking policies dictated higher ratios of parking spaces the further they are from Boston and Cambridge. Policies that set a parking maximum versus a minimum helped to encourage mode shift.

From interviews, staff found that municipalities would like to update parking requirements to include a more robust set of guidance. Developers shared that they use a market-driven parking approach, which may not match their desires since parking is expensive. Developers face pressure from lenders unless lenders believe there is sufficient parking.

Strategies that emerged from interviews to avoid excess parking include the following:

- Repurposing unused parking
  - Recreational space
  - Residential use
- Mixed-Use Locations
  - Lab and office space together
  - Staggered peak demand
  - Shared parking with the public
- Accessibility of Non-Driving Modes
  - Transit accessibility-based parking requirements
  - Non-accessible municipalities
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategies
  - Bike and pedestrian networks

- Transit subsidies
- Shuttle service

Phase Two of the study will involve data collection and analysis. A property manager survey will focus on building characteristics, types of parking, parking utilization patterns, and TDM strategies. Materials have been prepared for in-person data collectors to document types of parking spaces and vehicles, including loading zones at life sciences facilities.

### ***Discussion***

B. Rawson asked if the data collection will include questions of building occupancy throughout the day. S. Fox stated that the property manager survey asks about peak traffic times and how much of each building is dedicated to different functions.

B. Rawson suggested counting trips in and out of parking garages at peak hours of the day.

L. Diggins asked approximately how many people are employed in the life sciences sector in the Boston region. S. Fox stated that she would have to verify the number.

## **13. Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Infrastructure and Signs and Lines Grant Solicitation—*Miranda Briseño, MassDOT Staff***

M. Briseño stated that the Signs and Lines grant supports projects that will eliminate small barriers that students encounter when walking, bicycling, or using a wheeled mobility device to get to or from schools. It is a \$10,000 reimbursement program and projects must be completed by June 30, 2024. To date, 20 projects have been completed and as many as five projects will be selected in this cycle.

The SRTS Infrastructure Grant program supports projects that improve safety, access, and mobility for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (K-12) students, while encouraging more students to walk and bicycle to school. The program supports projects \$300,000 to \$2 million in size. A total of 39 projects have been completed and 40 are currently in progress; as many as 10 additional projects will be selected this cycle. Projects typically have a five-year timeline.

Eligible applicants are K-12 schools that have been in partnership with MassDOT for at least six months, receive public funding, and are committed to ongoing SRTS activities.

M. Briseño discussed eligible project scopes.

### ***Discussion***

B. Rawson stated that there are approximately 10 municipalities that have an SRTS project in the Boston Region MPO's Federal Fiscal Years 2024–28 TIP.



#### **14. Members' Items**

There were none.

#### **15. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane) and seconded by the MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

## Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	Eric Molinari
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	John Alessi
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Robert King
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jim Fitzgerald
Federal Highway Administration	Matthew Moran
Federal Transit Administration	Jen Rowe
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Brad Rawson
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	John Romano
Massachusetts Port Authority	Ali Kleyman
MBTA Advisory Board	Sarah Lee
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Brian Kane
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Eric Bourassa
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Dennis Giombetti
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Kristen Guichard
North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington)	Darlene Wynne
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Hull)	
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
	Steve Olanoff

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Susan Barrett	Town of Lexington
Miranda Briseño	MassDOT
Tyler Distefano	Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Council
Daniela Espinosa	BPDA
Seth Gadbois	Conservation Law Foundation
Joy Glynn	MWRTA
Morgan Griffiths	Town of Natick
Lil Hartman	Town of North Reading
Sandy Johnston	MBTA
Chris Klem	MassDOT
Raissah Kouame	MassDOT
Derek Krevat	MassDOT
Andrew McCaul	Pioneer Valley Planning Council
Benjamin Muller	MassDOT
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Michelle Scott	MassDOT
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Tyler Terrasi	MWRTA
Julia Wallerice	MAPC
Andrew Wang	MassDOT

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
Rounaq Basu  
Logan Casey  
Annette Demchur  
Sophie Fox  
Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan  
Betsy Harvey  
Stella Jordan  
Ethan Lapointe  
Marty Milkovits  
Rebecca Morgan  
Srilekha Murthy  
Gina Perille  
Sarah Philbrick  
Sean Rourke  
Judy Taylor  
Sam Taylor

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