



## Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

**May 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

2:30 PM–4:15 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)

### Meeting Agenda

#### 1. Introductions and Public Comments

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

#### 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2024, meeting was made by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (AnaCristina Fragoso) and seconded by an Acton resident (Franny Osman). The minutes were approved.

#### 3. Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) Comment Letter, Finalization and Approval—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins facilitated a discussion of the Advisory Council's draft comment letter on the Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2025–29 TIP.

##### ***Discussion***

John McQueen (WalkMassachusetts) suggested including a statement applauding the TIP's approach to decision-making based on project readiness. He noted that the TIP should encourage municipal applicants to have projects shovel ready to take advantage of readiness issues with other projects. L. Diggins, Andy Reker (City of Cambridge), and Owen MacDonald (Town of Weymouth) discussed the long-standing challenges for municipalities to get projects shovel ready. A. Reker stated the significance of the FFY 2024 Project Design Pilot to assist municipalities seeking project funding.

F. Osman noted that the language surrounding the Chelsea Revere-Regional On-Demand Microtransit Pilot Project could be discouraging for future microtransit pilot project applicants and advocated for more encouraging language. L. Diggins stated the comment was written in concern for municipalities' ability to sustain transit services after Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) pilot funding is no longer available.

A motion to approve the draft TIP Comment Letter was made by WalkMassachusetts (John McQueen) and an Acton resident (Franny Osman).

#### **4. Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Database Update—Casey Cooper, Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Manager, MPO Staff**

C. Cooper provided an overview of a recently completed update to Boston Region MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Database Application. Bicycle and pedestrian count data represent samples collected of the number of people observed walking and rolling at locations throughout the Boston region.

C. Cooper described three components of the discrete project that led to this update:

- Update the Count Database Application
- Improve the Manual Data Collection Process
- Develop an Automatic Data Collection Process

C. Cooper stated while the 2009 application was functional, the presentation of data could be difficult to understand. The 2023 update modernized the application's aesthetic and user accessibility, aligning it with other applications in the region.

C. Cooper noted improvements to the data collection process including an updated manual data collection process and a developed program to add data automatically to the database.

C. Cooper discussed efforts to expand data collection by acquiring automated sensors to count people walking and rolling. The use of automated count sensors can help improve planning for safer and more comfortable walking and rolling conditions. The deployment plan includes

- 26 unique locations,
- one unit on each side of the roadway, and
- two-week count periods for two years.

The location selection included an equity score, where greater weight was given to municipalities with larger equity populations and less auto-dependent municipalities. MPO staff used socioeconomic variables and travel behavior indicators to instruct the equity score to create a ranked list of the 97 cities and towns in the Boston region, which was further refined by the MPO's eight subregions.

C. Cooper noted future efforts related to refine the manual count data and the use of the automated sensors. She noted these efforts will require financial investment and staff support. She stated that with the Board's support, staff can continue to expand the work and improve stakeholder interaction with the bicycle and pedestrian count data.

### ***Discussion***

J. McQueen noted that count data should be interpreted directionally to improve accuracy because pedestrian counts can vary based on location and time. C. Cooper discussed that automated sensors provide directionality for pedestrians and cyclists but do not provide additional nuance. Therefore, combining the manual counts with the automated counts will be useful to understand the full context of travel behavior.

F. Osman asked how the data have been used. C. Cooper stated a motivation for collecting more consistent data is that it can be more widely applied to different uses.

F. Osman asked if the MPO has used phones to track pedestrian and bicycle count data. C. Cooper responded that using phone technology to track counts is outside of the scope of the MPO's current work.

F. Osman stated interest in a geographic representation of the count data, especially near new bike trails. C. Cooper stated that the process of identifying three municipalities in each subregion was to ensure a geographic distribution of data.

A.C. Frago asked when the new features will be available on the MPO website. C. Cooper stated that it will be dependent on funding and staff time. She discussed that the project work was added to a multi-year work plan for the MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, and staff is seeking other funding sources to dedicate time and resources to improving the application's features.

J. McQueen stated that skaters and scooters should be categorized in the bicyclist's range because of the equipment and nature of the movement. J. McQueen discussed the challenges of identifying and differentiating modern electric bikes. L. Diggins expressed concerns about the speed of travelers on bikes and scooters. A. Reker discussed micromobility efforts in Cambridge, stating that ridership and safety are two different pieces of understanding travel behavior.

J. McQueen stated that if the public is accessing the data for financial investment projects, they should dig deeper and do additional research to better understand the context of the data and the community.

L. Diggins asked if there was an update to the comparison between automatic and manual count data. C. Cooper discussed encouraging results, stating the data are similar between the automatic sensors and manual counts.

L. Diggins asked if there was a way to encourage participation to collect data in municipalities where data are desired. C. Cooper discussed recent efforts to seek suggestions for locations where municipalities and the public want data. In addition, this summer staff will be working

on revamping the manual count selection process and consolidating the locations for deploying volunteers.

### **5. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update—*Stella Jordan, Public Engagement Program Manager, MPO Staff***

S. Jordan provided an overview of previous discussions about the MOU update process and the Advisory Council Draft Language. S. Jordan noted that at a recent meeting, the MOU Update Committee had similar takeaways to the Advisory Council about the importance of several key elements within the updated language, which include

- membership,
- education, and
- engagement in the 3C planning process.

S. Jordan stated that the MOU Update Committee aims to finalize the Advisory Council Update by the beginning of July.

#### ***Discussion***

L. Diggins discussed language surrounding the advisory role of the Advisory Council, and its role in relation to the MPO Board and committees. He highlighted the significance of the Advisory Committee's seat on the board to sustain engagement and to influence change.

F. Osman emphasized the importance of the Advisory Council's role in educating members of the public and asked if there are other similar paths for the public to engage in transportation topics. L. Diggins agreed that education is an important component of the Advisory Council in creating a better informed and engaged public.

J. McQueen stated the draft language does not adequately encapsulate the role of the Advisory Council to critically review and provide thoughtful advice on the MPO's programs and studies. He suggested that components such as review and advice should be elevated in the Advisory Council's role. L. Diggins noted that while he agrees providing review and advice is a component of the Council's role, it has been difficult to engage members to participate in the 3C letter writing process. J. McQueen and L. Diggins discussed the role that the Advisory Council played historically in engaging with the MPO's 3C planning process.

S. Jordan noted that the Advisory Council Draft Language is meant to be a high-level framework of how the Advisory Council operates in relation with the MPO process. She encouraged a future discussion about specific strategies for how the Council engages with the MPO's work by examining the Council's bylaws.

**6. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Comment Letter, Preliminary Discussion—*Lenard Diggins, Chair***

L. Diggins discussed convening the 3C Committee to draft comment letters on the FFY 2025 UPWP. L. Diggins suggested an additional special meeting in a few weeks to draft a letter, noting the timing of the UPWP public comment period.

**7. Chair's Report—*Len Diggins, Chair***

L. Diggins stated that the Council should review the UPWP discrete studies and the universe in preparation for drafting the UPWP comment letter.

**8. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by an Acton resident (Franny Osman) and seconded by the Town of Weymouth (Owen MacDonald). The motion carried.

## Attendees

---

<b>Member Municipalities</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
Cambridge	Andy Reker
Weymouth	Owen MacDonald

---

---

<b>Citizen Advocacy Groups</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaCristina Fragoso
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
WalkMassachusetts	John McQueen
Acton Resident	Franny Osman

---

---

<b>Agencies</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
National Rural Transit Assistance Program	Scott Zadakis

---

---

<b>Agencies (Non-Voting)</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
MassDOT	Joseph O'Malley
MWRTA	Tyler Terrasi
MWRTA	Jim Nee

---

---

<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Sheila Page	Lexington
Paul Molta	Needham
Karen Winger	Longwood Collective
Dan Murphy	

---

---

**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

---

Annette Demchur

Casey Cooper

David Hong

Jia Huang

Stella Jordan

Ethan Lapointe

Erin Maguire

Srilekha Murthy

Sean Rourke

---

## CIVIL RIGHTS NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

Welcome. Bem Vinda. Bienvenido. Akeyi. 欢迎. 歡迎.



You are invited to participate in our transportation planning process, free from discrimination. The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is committed to nondiscrimination in all activities and complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency). Related federal and state nondiscrimination laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, disability, and additional protected characteristics.

For additional information or to file a civil rights complaint, visit [www.bostonmpo.org/mpo\\_non\\_discrimination](http://www.bostonmpo.org/mpo_non_discrimination).

To request accommodations at meetings (such as assistive listening devices, materials in accessible formats and languages other than English, and interpreters in American Sign Language and other languages) or if you need this information in another language, please contact:

**Boston Region MPO Title VI Specialist**

10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150

Boston, MA 02116

Phone: 857.702.3700

Email: [civilrights@ctps.org](mailto:civilrights@ctps.org)

For people with hearing or speaking difficulties, connect through the state MassRelay service, [www.mass.gov/massrelay](http://www.mass.gov/massrelay). Please allow at least five business days for your request to be fulfilled.