



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

April 10, 2024, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:15 PM, Zoom

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

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

L. Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 6.)

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2024, meeting was made by WalkMassachusetts (John McQueen) and seconded by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (AnaCristina Fragoso). The minutes were approved.

3. MPO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update - Advisory Council Draft Language—*Stella Jordan, Public Engagement Program Manager, MPO Staff*

S. Jordan presented an update on the [Draft Advisory Council Language](#) for the MPO's MOU. S. Jordan reviewed key themes from the feedback provided during the March Advisory Council meeting. The themes include the following:

- Membership
- Education
- Board seat
- Relationship with staff

S. Jordan reviewed the parameters set by the MOU Committee for updating Advisory Council language in the MOU, the Advisory Council's previous feedback, and the MPO's Engagement Program goals, and then S. Jordan facilitated a discussion about additional updates to the draft language presented.

Discussion

J. McQueen stated that there should be more emphasis on the role of the Advisory Council in providing guidance and recommendations to the MPO. L. Diggins said the Advisory Council's role in providing guidance could be categorized as Accountability within the Draft Language.

Schuyler Larrabee (Boston Society of Architects) stated that there are a lack of opportunities for the Advisory Council to advise the MPO's work. S. Larrabee said there should be more opportunities to comment on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and how funding is spent. S. Larrabee discussed frustration about meeting on Zoom versus in-person, stating there is a great deal to be lost by only meeting on Zoom. L. Diggins responded that there are considerations for an in-person meeting, but a hybrid component will allow for more people to participate.

L. Diggins suggested that members review the proposed draft language in comparison to the current MOU Advisory Council language and send feedback before the next MOU Committee meeting in early May.

4. Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2025-29 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Scenario Discussion—*Ethan Lapointe, Transportation Improvement Program Manager, MPO Staff*

E. Lapointe shared the [final programming scenario](#) developed for the FFYs 2025-29 TIP.

E. Lapointe noted the MPO board and the TIP Process and Readiness Committee met four times to propose and develop a programming scenario. He discussed the challenge of widespread project delays and cost increases due to a lack of progress on projects programmed several TIP cycles ago, and he stated that the focus of the discussions was on resolving a deficit in FFY 2027 as it represented the most significant financial challenge to overcome.

E. Lapointe provided an overview of the FFYs 2025-29 TIP. He stated that each investment program is performing closely to targets set in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The FFYs 2025-29 TIP funds 70 projects in the Regional Target program, which includes 32 new projects. He provided a breakdown of new projects across investment programs:

- 10 Community Connections projects
- Eight Transit Transformation projects
- Eight Design projects in FFYs 2025 and 2026
- Six roadway and trail projects (two of these were formerly in MassDOT's Statewide Highway Program)

Given funding surpluses in FFY 2025, staff and the MPO board recommended funding all 10 projects that applied for funding in the Community Connections program.

Regarding the FFY 2025 Design Pilot, E. Lapointe discussed that a pilot round of design funding needs to be deliverable and manageable. A successful pilot is more likely to lead to long-term opportunities to provide design funding and improve the project pipeline. The MPO board decided to fund six design projects.

In recognition of sufficient surplus in FFYs 2025 and 2026 and interest by board members and project proponents, the board, at staff's recommendation, voted to adopt partial design funding for two projects in the MPO's [Long-Range Transportation Plan](#). The two projects are fill-in projects but are programmed for FFY 2026.

E. Lapointe discussed four construction projects programmed in FFYs 2025-29, five new Transit Transformation projects, and three new MBTA projects related to accessibility improvements, operational and service improvements, and pedal-and-park modernization.

E. Lapointe stated the public comment period for the FFYs 2025-29 TIP will begin April 22 and end on May 22, 2024. The 30-day public comment period allows for additional opportunities to provide feedback beyond the 21-day minimum requirement. A vote to endorse the FFYs 2025-29 TIP is expected to take place at the June 6 MPO board meeting, with the new TIP taking effect on October 1, 2024.

During this public review period MPO staff will continue to engage members of the public to increase awareness of the TIP and look for additional opportunities for in-person engagement about the draft TIP. MPO staff intends to leverage the TIP Process and Readiness Committee as an additional forum for detailed discussion and development strategies. MPO staff hopes to use the time in June and later months to reflect on this past TIP cycle and employ measures to prevent similar issues from arising in the FFYs 2026-30 development cycle. Some concerns staff have heard already include the following:

- Timeliness and level of detail provided for project information
- Creating spaces for focused, project-level discussions
- Better avenues for collaboration between municipalities and state/regional stakeholders on projects

Discussion

J. McQueen stated that the design for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is almost ready to be shared at the May 6 Sudbury town meeting.

A.C. Fragoso asked if there has been a new metric implemented that considers when a municipality last received funding. E. Lapointe explained that, in response to MPO members indicating a preference for prioritizing projects in communities that have not been represented on the TIP recently, project prioritization this year did incorporate this consideration.

Franny Osman (Acton resident) and E. Lapointe discussed the major infrastructure projects, the other core MPO investment programs (Complete Streets, Intersection Improvements, Transit Transformation, and Bicycle and Pedestrian), and declines in application volumes for new projects. E. Lapointe clarified that the core investment programs represent a minority of the projects programmed but a majority of funding (approximately 70 percent) in recent TIP cycles. He noted that approximately 25 percent of funding is allocated to the Major Infrastructure investment program, which funds larger projects that have often been on the TIP for some time. This program has seen the greatest decline in new applications. F. Osman and E. Lapointe discussed causes for the trend in declining application volumes and actions the MPO has taken to address this trend, such as the new project design pilot.

F. Osman asked about the alignment of TIP funding allocations with LRTP investment targets. E. Lapointe noted that the alignment is similar to last year and that staff solicit projects that reflect the goals of the LRTP.

5. FFY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Discussion—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins facilitated a discussion about the FFY 2025 UPWP study selection.

Discussion

A.C. Fragoso asked if MPO staff will develop a matrix detailing study development and outcomes. Srilekha Murthy (MPO staff) stated that, to her knowledge, the MPO has not previously conducted such evaluations for UPWP studies. S. Jordan discussed the possibility of sharing regular updates with the Advisory Council throughout development of UPWP studies, in order to monitor progress and outcomes. S. Larrabee and L. Diggins discussed the presentation of final reports and findings from UPWP studies to the Advisory Council. J. McQueen noted that members have been advocating for a matrix for approved studies and that, moving forward, staff should deliver a final summary of project development. Annette Demchur (Director of Policy and Planning, MPO Staff) noted that staff are currently in the process of conducting a TIP before-and-after study which will be presented to the MPO board in May or June 2024. S. Larrabee discussed the availability and ease of access to final reports and presentations for studies.

6. 3C Committee Planning—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins discussed convening the 3C Committee to draft comment letters on the FFYs 2025-29 TIP and the FFY 2025 UPWP. L. Diggins suggested an additional meeting in a few weeks to draft a letter.

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

L. Diggins discussed the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee, which was created to support and supplement the work done by the full board related to the TIP. He noted that the committee is currently working on solutions to funding challenges.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (A.C. Fragoso) and seconded by the Town of Weymouth (Owen MacDonald). The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
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Weymouth	Owen MacDonald
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Citizen Advocacy Groups	Attendees
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Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaCristina Fragoso
National Rural Transit Assistance Program	Scott Zadakis
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
WalkMassachusetts	John McQueen
Acton Resident	Franny Osman

Agencies (Non-Voting)	Attendees
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MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)	Tyler Terrasi
MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)	Jim Nee

Other Attendees	Affiliation
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John Strauss	Town of Burlington
Scott Peterson	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich
Gina Perille
Annette Demchur
Abby Cutrumbes
Jia Huang
Stella Jordan
Srilekha Murthy

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