

Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Administration and Finance (A&F) Committee Meeting Minutes

May 30, 2024, Meeting

9:00 AM–9:51 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Brian Kane, Chair, representing the MBTA Advisory Board

Decisions

The Administration and Finance (A&F) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of November 16, 2023
- Recommend that the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) approve the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2025 Operating Budget for the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 9.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Action Item: Approval of November 16, 2023, Meeting Minutes *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. Meeting Minutes of November 16, 2023 ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 16, 2023, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Lenard Diggins). The motion carried.

4. Executive Director Goals Update—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director* *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. Executive Director Goals Update Memorandum ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Tegin Teich, Executive Director, presented updates to the Executive Director Goals Evaluation Process.

T. Teich overviewed the evaluation process and stated that the MPO is currently carrying out the review and setting goals for SFY 2025, which begins on July 1, 2024.

T. Teich stated that she submitted the self-assessment approximately one week ago.

T. Teich will meet with the evaluation team, which consists of the MPO chair, MPO vice chair, and the A&F Committee chair, in June 2024. Once SFY 2025 begins, T. Teich will report quarterly to the A&F Committee on the goals established in the review.

T. Teich provided brief updates on goals in the following categories:

- Employee Experience and Retention
- Board Priorities and Experience
- Fiscal Responsibility and Opportunity
- Sector Leadership
- Strategic Plan Implementation

In the Employee Experience and Retention category, T. Teich provided the following updates:

- Three full-time positions accepted
- Overhauled the orientation process
- Surveyed desired benefits improvements
- Professional development
 - Held Effective Supervision Training
 - Planning to increase travel and professional development budget in SFY 2025
- Relunched Project Management Working Group

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, asked if the MPO's revenue stream was affected by the number of staff members.

T. Teich stated that this past year, the number of staff members has been balanced relative to the revenue, but that it can be a concern if the MPO has a lower number of staff members. In that case, funding could be left unused if staff are not able to complete the volume of work that has been programmed for that year.

T. Teich spoke about three updates in the Board Priorities and Experience category, including the following:

- Held two additional hybrid board meetings
- Increased engagement through TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee

- Drafted new board orientation presentation

T. Teich stated that the creation of the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee has made MPO board meetings go much more smoothly. T. Teich stated that committee meetings have been productive and very successful so far.

T. Teich spoke about updates in the Fiscal Responsibility and Opportunity category, including the following:

- Ended three quarters with an estimated surplus
- Participated in presentations by external auditor of its fiduciary
- Amended FFY 2024 contract to include de-obligated planning funds to support document accessibility, information technology, and travel demand model network initiatives
- Procured external legal support for procurement process for office space leasing

T. Teich stated that the MPO does not want to end quarters with a significant surplus or deficit, but that the quarters have ended with a balanced surplus.

In the Sector Leadership category, T. Teich provided the following updates:

- Released TDM23, a travel demand model that MPO staff will be using for the Long-Range Transportation Plan that has been made available for the broader community to utilize
- Worked with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the MBTA to pilot partial recommendations from the recognized “Unlocking the Blue Hills: Addressing Equity and Access in the Blue Hills Reservation” study
- Found opportunities to have work highlighted and interviews in the press to help the community understand the important role that MPO board members and staff play in the transportation planning process

In the Strategic Plan Implementation category, T. Teich spoke about the diversity, equity, and inclusion training and assessment, which was recently launched.

Discussion

B. Kane expressed appreciation and recognition of T. Teich’s work on the model and of the self-assessment process. In addition, B. Kane expressed appreciation for T. Teich and Gina Perille, MPO staff, for pursuing a long-term lease for office space for MPO staff members. B. Kane stated that a long-term lease would be beneficial for the MPO because it would allow the costs of rent to be fixed for a longer period. B. Kane also

expressed support for working in collaboration with entities such as the MBTA and DCR.

L. Diggins expressed support for a continued commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. L. Diggins also expressed concern for the notion of flexibility in the type of consultants that MPO staff utilize. L. Diggins stated that once MPO staff realize that a specific skill set is needed, it is already too late because of the amount of time onboarding takes.

T. Teich responded that setting a numerical goal for staff member positions does not mean that MPO staff are not being thoughtful in the hiring process when considering the needs of MPO staff members. T. Teich stated that the current staffing plan accounts for 61 staff members and assumes a broad range of skill sets across the teams. In addition, there is an ongoing tracking system for new staff members joining, staff members retiring, and other changes to MPO staff.

B. Kane stated that it is rare in government to have a strategic plan in place before a staff member leaves the organization, so the hiring process can only begin once that person has already left the organization.

5. Action Item: SFY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget—*Hiral Gandhi and Silva Ayvazyan, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. SFY 2025 Projected Revenue ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))
2. SFY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget Memorandum ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Hiral Gandhi, MPO staff, presented an overview of the presentation, including the status of the SFY 2024 Operating Budget through Quarter Three and the Proposed SFY 2025 Operating Budget.

H. Gandhi stated that there continues to be a surplus in the SFY 2024 Operating Budget, which aligns with expectations because the MPO holds some expenses to see how the revenues and expenditures pan out. In Quarter Three and Four, there tends to be an increase in expenses based on if there is a surplus. H. Gandhi stated that in Quarter Three, the MPO expected more administrative expenses, but that those have been delayed into Quarter Four, and the Administrative Overhead is expected to increase in Quarter Four because of hiring within the administrative team.

Silva Ayvazyan, MPO staff, presented the SFY 2024 Operating Budget by quarter, shown in Table 1.

Table 1
SFY 2024 Operating Budget by Quarter

SFY 2024	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total through Q3
Revenue	\$1,579,300	\$1,717,400	\$1,835,000	\$5,131,700
Expenses	\$1,559,500	\$1,682,400	\$1,681,400	\$4,923,300
Surplus/Deficit	\$19,800	\$35,000	\$153,600	\$208,400
Overhead	116.95%	115.99%	101.96%	111.63%

SFY = state fiscal year. Q = quarter.

S. Ayvazyan stated that there was an increase in revenue compared to prior quarters, and revenue is at its peak in Quarter Three.

S. Ayvazyan stated that the expenses did not fluctuate as much when compared to the last quarter.

S. Ayvazyan presented the SFY 2024 revenue through Quarter Three, shown in Table 2.

Table 2
SFY 2024 Revenue Through Quarter Three

Funding Source	Projected Revenue	Actual Revenue	Percentage of Actual to Projected Revenue
MPO and MD-			
Directed PL	\$4,387,000	\$3,951,100	90%
MassDOT SPR	\$390,000	\$261,900	67%
MassDOT Other	\$129,000	\$95,000	74%
MBTA	\$494,000	\$507,400	103%
Other	\$487,500	\$203,400	42%
Total	\$5,887,500	\$5,018,800	85%

MassDOT = Massachusetts Department of Transportation. MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. MD-Directed PL = MassDOT-directed planning funds. MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization. SPR = State Planning and Research. SFY = state fiscal year.

S. Ayvazyan stated that the MPO is on track to spend out the remaining planning (PL) funds through the rest of the fiscal year. Overall, the rest of the other funding categories have continued to increase from prior quarters.

S. Ayvazyan stated that in total, the MPO's revenue has been about 85 percent of what was expected through Quarter Three, which aligns with expectations.

S. Ayvazyan spoke about SFY 2024 expenses through Quarter Three, which is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
SFY 2024 Expenses Through Quarter Three

Expense Source	Projected Expenses	Actual Expenses	Percentage of Actual to Projected Expenses
Administrative Expenses	\$2,738,000	\$2,292,200	84%
Direct Labor	\$2,475,000	\$2,280,700	92%
Direct Cost	\$435,000	\$103,800	24%
Total	\$5,648,000	\$4,676,700	83%

SFY = state fiscal year.

S. Ayvazyan spoke about the SFY 2024 Year-End Projections, which are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
SFY 2024 Year-End Projections

SFY 2024	Approved Budget	Projected Year-End
Revenue	\$7,850,000	\$7,000,000
Expenses	\$7,850,000	\$6,972,000
Surplus/Deficit	\$0	\$28,000
Overhead	120.3%	118.28%

SFY = state fiscal year.

H. Gandhi presented the SFY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget. The three components to the Operating Budget include the revenue projections, anticipated expenses, and provisional overhead rate.

H. Gandhi stated that the projected revenue table provided a comprehensive breakdown of the anticipated funding sources, which was provided in the MPO calendar. The total revenue projection for SFY 2025 was \$8.5 million. Approximately \$6 million of that is projected to derive from the MPO 3C planning funds, constituting approximately 71 percent of the total projected revenue. This is consistent with previous years. The remainder of the projected revenue will derive from the MBTA, Safe Streets for All (SS4A), and MassDOT.

H. Gandhi stated that the table attached to the memorandum linked in the MPO meeting calendar provides an overview of the anticipated expenses in SFY 2025. Total

anticipated expenses for SFY 2025 are \$8.5 million, which is the same as the projected revenue. Approximately \$4 million is allocated for Administrative Expenses, \$3.4 million is allocated for Direct Labor, and \$1.1 million is allocated for Direct Costs.

H. Gandhi stated that Administrative Expenses account for approximately 47 percent of the projected expenses, and encompass a range of operational tasks, including group collaboration, resource planning, budget maintenance, strategic planning activities, and Human Resources-related functions. Changes from previous years include an additional \$100,000 for office rent and maintenance because of an anticipated lease renewal and possible office move. There is also a budget increase for recruitment expenses to address the hiring needs of specialized technical roles.

H. Gandhi stated that Direct Costs, which account for approximately 13 percent of the total projected expenses, are associated with specific projects or contracts and typically require prior approval from MassDOT. These costs do not affect the overhead rate. Direct Costs for SFY 2025 include consultants for Vision Zero work, IT equipment, conferences and travel, membership dues, and public engagement.

Direct Labor accounts for 39 percent of the total projected expenses for SFY 2025.

H. Gandhi stated that MPO staff anticipate having 61 professional positions, which is consistent with the SFY 2024 projected staffing levels.

H. Gandhi overviewed the projected Overhead Rate, which is calculated by dividing the annual Administrative Expenses by the Direct Labor costs, resulting in an overhead rate of 120.3 percent for SFY 2025.

Discussion

B. Kane asked what the difference was between Items 47, Conference and Travel (Administration-related), and Item 5, Conferences and Travel (Project-related), on the Proposed Operating Budget table.

H. Gandhi responded that Item 47 refers to costs related to MPO staff members on the leadership team specifically traveling or attending a conference, whereas Item 5 refers to project-related expenses, such as staff members traveling to project-related conferences.

In addition, B. Kane expressed concern about increasing the budget for consultants by 304 percent. He stated that he prefers to use internal expertise but noted that is not always possible.

B. Kane also asked if the MPO funds Paid Family and Medical Leave, or if it is included in the Massachusetts line item.

H. Gandhi stated that it is included in Item 11, Paid Time Off Benefits.

T. Teich expressed support for B. Kane's sentiment on the use of consultants and stated that the MPO uses consultants in a strategic way. Consultants are typically used for unusual efforts that are outside of the core MPO work, such as for compensation reviews.

Vote

A motion to vote on the approval of the SFY 2025 Operating Budget for CTPS, was made by the MAPC (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the MassDOT (Derek Krevat). The motion carried.

6. Members' Items

There were none.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
Derek Krevat	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Brian Kane	MBTA Advisory Board
Eric Bourassa	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Dennis Giombetti	MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)
Lenard Diggins	Regional Transportation Advisory Council

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Brad Rawson	Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)
Kristine Gorman	Jacobs Engineering Group
Perry Grossman	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Annette Demchur
Erin Maguire
Gina Perille
Hiral Gandhi
Silva Ayvazyan

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