

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

January 8, 2015 Meeting

10:10 AM – 11:25 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Steve Woelfel, Chair, representing Frank DePaola, Acting Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- approve the Coordinated Human-Services Transportation Plan
- release draft Amendment Two to the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2015—18 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for a 15-day public review period
- approve the work program for *Core Capacity Constraints*

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

Lee Auspitz, Somerville resident, expressed thanks for the correction to the geographic reference to Medford Hillside in the draft Amendment Two of the FFYs 2015-18 TIP.

2. Chair's Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Mike Gowing, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

M. Gowing reported that the Advisory Council will meet next on January 14. The agenda will include presentations on the Congestion Management Program and the Unified Planning Work Program.

5. Executive Director's Report—*Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

K. Quackenbush reminded members that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will be holding a public meeting on the MPO's

certification process on the evening of January 15 in Conference Rooms 2 & 3 of the State Transportation Building.

6. Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan—*Alicia Wilson, MPO Staff*

In November, the MPO released the draft Coordinated Public Transit-Human-Services Transportation Plan for a 30-day public review period, which ran from December 1 to December 30. This plan identifies the transportation needs of the elderly and people with disabilities in the Boston region and the services that currently exist to serve them.

A. Wilson provided a summary of the public comments received and actions taken to address them.

In response to comments from MPO members, staff revised text in the plan to correct references to transportation services in Bedford and Lexington, and to include the services of the Lowell Regional Transit Authority that enter into this region.

A member of the public raised a question at an MPO meeting in November about whether customers of services identified in the plan are reflective of the region's demographic make-up. Staff posed this question to service providers in the region but has not yet received definitive responses. One agency replied that because services are fragmented and siloed, the agency would have to survey each Council on Aging and service provider to answer the question. The agency noted that users of its services tend to be people with low incomes and/or disabilities. Other entities surveyed have not responded. Staff will await the MPO's direction about whether to pursue this question further.

The MPO received written comments from CrossTown Connect, a transportation management association (TMA), and the Northeast Center for Independent Living. (The full text of both comments was distributed). In response to the comment from CrossTown Connect, staff added a new section (4.12) to the plan to address the uniqueness of this TMA as a public-private partnership. The majority of the issues raised by the Northeast Center for Independent Living had already been addressed in the plan. Staff will add this organization to its Transportation Equity database and mailing list for notices.

A motion to approve the Coordinated Public Transit-Human-Services Transportation Plan was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan), and seconded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Eric Bourassa). The motion carried.

7. TIP Amendment Two—Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff

Members were presented with Draft Amendment Two to the FFYs 2015—18 TIP. S. Pfalzer gave an overview of the proposed changes. The amendment includes changes to both the highway and transit programs of the TIP.

The changes include the following:

- addition of federal discretionary grants to the MBTA, including the following:
 - a TIGER grant for the modernization of Ruggles Station, which includes the construction of a new platform (\$30 million)
 - a FTA Public Transportation Emergency Relief program grant for the *Green Line Fenway Portal Flood Proofing* project, which involves the construction of flood gates along the Green Line's E Branch (nearly \$29 million)
 - a FTA Public Transportation Emergency Relief program grant for the *Charlestown Seawall Replacement* project, which will repair a deteriorating seawall by the Charlestown bus garage (\$17.8 million)
- addition of three federal New Freedom grants to the City of Salem for the North Shore Career Center's transportation service; these are carryover funds
- addition of Section 5339 funding awarded by the MassDOT Rail and Transit Division for an MBTA program to rehabilitate and rebuild spare parts for buses; toll credits will be used for the match to the federal dollars
- adjustments to line items for capital projects of the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) to increase funding for its ADA paratransit service
- addition of a grant from the FHWA's Ferry Boat Discretionary Program to the City of Medford for a feasibility study and preliminary engineering of a water taxi dock
- elimination of the term "Medford Hillside" in references to the *Green Line Extension* project

Motion and Discussion

A motion to release draft Amendment Two to the FFYs 2015—18 TIP for a 15-day public review period was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (John Romano), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent).

Members discussed the amendment.

P. Regan inquired about the funding split for the New Freedom grants to the City of Salem for the North Shore Career Center. S. Pfalzer explained that the \$662,600 grant

is for operating costs and that the match between federal and RTA funds is 50-50. The two other grants are for capital projects and have a 80-20 split.

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, asked for more details about the *Green Line Fenway Portal Flood Proofing* project and potential impacts to right-of-way for a conceptual bicycle and pedestrian project (*Linking the Corridors*) in the area. S. Woelfel noted that the funding for the *Green Line Fenway Portal Flood Proofing* and *Charlestown Seawall Replacement* projects became available for climate change adaptation improvements to infrastructure following Hurricane Sandy.

Benjamin Bloomenthal, MBTA, provided further details about the *Green Line Fenway Portal Flood Proofing* project. The MBTA has received federal discretionary funding from FTA (above the funding the MBTA receives through the federal formula program), which became available as part of the response to Hurricane Sandy. The project would construct flood gates to ensure that floodwaters do not seep into the Fenway subway portal as occurred when the Muddy River overflowed in the 1990s. He noted that the project would not have an adverse effect on the bicycle path project.

David Koses, At-Large City of Newton, asked if there would be any impacts to the operation of the Green Line during construction of the flood gates. B. Bloomenthal replied that no adverse impact to operations is anticipated. Questions about operations can be referred to Andrew Brennan.

Members then voted on the motion to release draft Amendment Two to the FFYs 2015—18 TIP for a 15-day public review period. The motion carried.

The public review period will run from Monday, January 12 until 5:00 PM on Monday, January 26. The review period is shortened because of the requirement to program discretionary grants in a timely way. The MPO will take action on the amendment at its meeting of February 5.

8. Work Program: Core Capacity Constraints—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff

K. Quackenbush presented the work program for *Core Capacity Constraints*, a study included in the Unified Planning Work Program. The impetus for this work program was interest expressed by State Senator William Brownsberger for an analysis of the capacity of the transportation system in the urban core and the ability of the system to handle future demand.

Through this work program, the MPO staff will examine future levels of congestion in the core area (including highway bottlenecks and transit loads), considering the impact of

20 or so of the largest anticipated developments. Staff will conduct travel modeling to understand the impact of these developments on the future transportation system, projected to the year 2040.

The products of the study will include a profile of current conditions and a profile of conditions forecast to 2040 showing the collective impacts of the anticipated development projects. Staff will be interacting with MAPC and communities to refine the assumptions about the development projects. Staff will also research existing mitigation policies, particularly as they relate to transit-oriented mitigation.

Motion and Discussion

A motion to approve the work program for *Core Capacity Constraints* was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (J. Romano), and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent).

Members then discussed the work program.

J. Romano suggested examining if mitigation measures proposed for recent development projects have resolved the issues they were intended to address. Jim Fitzgerald, City of Boston, supported the idea and added a suggestion to conduct research into the historic expenditure of mitigation dollars by mode. He noted that the transit system is not getting a fair share of mitigation dollars.

K. Quackenbush replied that staff would do as much justice to this issue as possible. Staff can discuss the issue in conversations with public officials and determine where mitigation dollars have been allocated. In this scope of work, however, staff may not be able to fully analyze the effectiveness of those expenditures.

M. Gowing remarked on the impact that local development projects, coordinated on the city or town level, can have at a regional level. He suggested that there be a means to measure the impacts to the transportation system of these development projects.

E. Bourassa then discussed the state and local permitting processes that development projects must go through. He remarked that mitigation is focused on the roadway system and typically none goes to transit for operating costs, with the exception of some public/private partnerships, such as the Assembly Row project in Somerville.

E. Bourassa asked for clarification about the work product associated with the research into mitigation policies. K. Quackenbush replied that staff would research current mitigation policies and document them, and then make inferences about what the impacts of those policies may be.

E. Bourassa then discussed the Value Capture Commission, a group created by the state legislature, on which MAPC serves. The Commission is looking at value capture (recovering value that public infrastructure generates for private landowners) as a transportation finance mechanism. He noted that developers that build with limited parking are not required in Massachusetts to provide mitigation money to off-set the developments' impact on the transit system. Other cities require such mitigation.

E. Bourassa expressed agreement with the need to understand the impacts of development on the transit system in this region. He asked why staff is limiting the number of developments in the study to 20, and how staff is defining a development site (i.e. does a development site include multiple development parcels, such as the Seaport area of Boston). He also noted that MAPC has recently updated its development database and has a good sense of which projects are conceptual, proposed, and permitted.

K. Quackenbush noted that staff would refine the number of development sites considered for this study after interacting with MAPC. Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services at CTPS, added that the number of sites that will be considered is flexible, within the limits of funding. Staff will select sites that have a direct impact on the transit system. If sites are grouped together, it will be easier to include more in the study. He also noted that a transportation study has recently been conducted for the Seaport area; staff will not be duplicating work that has already been done.

E. Bourassa raised a question about a product under Task 5 of the work program. The product would list the core area transit services with future-year ridership-to-capacity ratios that exceed MBTA service policy levels. He asked whether this product would also include an assessment of how much travel times would increase for those services. He noted that this is a core question that those who proposed the study are interested in understanding. S. Peterson replied that staff was not planning to include such an assessment, however it could be quantified to some degree through understanding where peak travel times are increasing. K. Quackenbush added that staff will be able to make some inferences about the travel time impacts.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), suggested that an output from this study should include recommendations for ways to strengthen the state laws for gaining mitigation from developers. This may be particularly important since the legislature is interested in the study.

D. Koses inquired about which rail lines and large employment sites would be considered in the study. S. Peterson explained that projects in the geographic area that is covered by the commuter rail's fare zone 1A will be considered in this study.

D. Koses asked for a map of the study area and the location of the development sites that would be considered in the study. He noted that some large developments outside of zone 1A would affect the transit system in the urban core area. S. Peterson noted that staff would identify developments outside of zone 1A consistent with the forecasts from the LRTP.

Members discussed certain developments outside of the zone 1A area that they believe would have significant impacts to the transit system of the urban core, including developments in Needham and Quincy Center. In response to these concerns, S. Peterson suggested that this scope of work could be considered as Phase 1 of scalable project.

D. Koses suggested that staff request additional funding to expand the project appropriately. Dennis Crowley, South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway), also suggested finding ways to supplement the projects budget, by looking at shifting funds from other UPWP projects that are not on track or under budget. Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham), suggested that this issue be referred to the UPWP Committee.

S. Woelfel advocated for approving the work program today with the understanding that staff will present a map of the study area and the development sites to the MPO for feedback before going forward. He also suggested that staff monitor other UPWP studies throughout the year to see if additional funds could be drawn to support this study.

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, expressed support for R. Reed's suggestion that staff consider developing recommendations for strengthening the state laws regarding mitigation. He urged staff to accommodate this request.

S. Woelfel noted that while it is not in the MPO's purview to draft legislation, the study findings should be shared with legislators and others who can make changes to legislation.

R. Reed clarified that his suggestion was not to draft legislation, but to look at the existing laws for mitigation and determine if they are effective ways to obtain mitigation.

Members then voted on the motion to approve the work program for *Core Capacity Constraints*. The motion carried.

9. Roadway Network Inventory for Emergency Needs Pilot Study— Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

M. Kelly presented the results of the *Roadway Network Inventory for Emergency Needs Pilot Study*. This pilot study explored the feasibility of adding a new data layer to the MPO's All-Hazards Planning Application that would show the location of traffic signals in the region and provide information about the signal's capabilities (i.e. coordination, emergency vehicle pre-emption, and control type).

This new data layer could have several applications for MPO planning activities, including for use in TIP project evaluations and programs that address the causes of roadway congestion. The layer could also be used to identify signalized intersections that lie in natural hazard zones and that may be candidates for climate-change adaption or flood resilience features. It could also be used to identify where there are gaps in signal coordination on evacuation corridors.

Staff gathered data by submitting requests to MassDOT and municipalities in the study area, which consisted of Boston and the surrounding communities. The information request focused on the signal locations, model and type of signal-controller equipment, traffic-monitoring equipment, back-up power sources, emergency vehicle pre-emption, coordination with other signals, and traffic operation center control. With the data gathered, staff created an All-Signals Database and a new data layer that maps the location of signalized intersections and symbolizes them based on the type of signal coordination at the locations (i.e. centralized, local coordination, or pre-timed).

At this time, staff is not recommending that the signal layer be made public for several reasons. Additional work would be required to standardize the data set. And, because many of the signal records give only a location and lack data about the signal equipment there, field work would have to be done to obtain data about the capabilities of those signals.

A secondary goal of this project was to prepare an inventory of signals and bridge condition on Boston's evacuation routes and the routes that they flow into in the adjacent communities. Because of the additional work that remains to be done on the signal layer, staff did not prepare the signal portion of the inventory. The bridge condition portion of the inventory was completed in draft form. Because the bridge condition layer of the All-Hazards Planning application has since been updated, staff would update that inventory if requested.

Discussion

P. Regan asked if any parts of the region's evacuation routing system are in the flood plain. M. Kelly replied yes, noting that evacuation corridor near the Fresh Pond area of Cambridge is one example.

10. Members Items

J. Romano reported that MassDOT will be holding a public information meeting about the *Casey Overpass* project at 6:30 PM on January 21 at English High School.

P. Regan reported that 1,000 people have participated in the MBTA Advisory Board's Transit Diary, a project aimed at understanding typical transit commutes. It will be rolled out to the general public on January 20. The participants are sent a weekly survey.

P. Regan invited organizations to submit question ideas for the survey.

T. Bent reported that the agreement with the FTA to fund the *Green Line Extension* (to College Avenue and Union Square) project is official. At a ceremony announcing the agreement, Mayor Joseph Curtatone of Somerville thanked the MPO for its support. T. Bent also thanked the MPO members for their support over the years.

11. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

Attendance

| Members | Representatives and Alternates |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| At-Large City (City of Everett) | Tony Sousa |
| At-Large City (City of Newton) | David Koses |
| At-Large Town (Town of Lexington) | Richard Canale |
| City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority) | Jim Fitzgerald |
| City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department) | Tom Kadzis |
| Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) | Tom Bent |
| Massachusetts Department of Transportation | Steve Woelfel |
| | David Anderson |
| MassDOT Highway Division | John Romano |
| Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) | Janice Ramsay |
| MBTA Advisory Board | Paul Regan |
| Metropolitan Area Planning Council | Eric Bourassa |
| MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham) | Dennis Giombetti |
| Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford) | Richard Reed |
| North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) | Tina Cassidy |
| Regional Transportation Advisory Council | Mike Gowing |
| South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) | Dennis Crowley |
| Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) | Tom O'Rourke |

| Other Attendees | Affiliation |
|------------------------|---|
| Sreelatha Allam | MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning |
| Lee Auspitz | Somerville resident |
| Benjamin Bloomenthal | MBTA |
| Sarah Bradbury | MassDOT District 3 |
| Steve Olanoff | Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood) |
| Joe Onorato | MassDOT District 4 |
| Arthur Strang | Cambridge resident |

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Maureen Kelly

Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director

Anne McGahan

Elizabeth Moore

Scott Peterson

Sean Pfalzer

Natalie Raffol

Michelle Scott

Alicia Wilson

Pam Wolfe
