

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

September 17, 2015 Meeting

10:00 AM – 11:25 AM, Arts at the Armory, 191 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA

Steve Woelfel, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

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

- approve Amendment Six to the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2015-18 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- approve the minutes of the meetings of August 20 and September 3

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

Beth Rudolph, Engineer for the Town of Winchester, expressed support for Amendment Six to the FFYs 2015-18 TIP as the amendment will help to reprogram funds for the *Tri-Community Bikeway (Stoneham, Winchester, and Woburn)* project in FFY 2016. The project was not ready for advertisement in FFY 2015.

Cameron Bain of Stoneham, a supporter of the *Tri-Community Bikeway* project, also expressed support for Amendment Six.

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, Advisory Council*

M. Gowing reported that the Advisory Council met on September 9. At the Advisory Council's meeting, Dr. Bahar Barami and William Lyons of the Volpe Center gave presentations on transportation system resilience and climate change.

5. Executive Director's Report—Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)

There was none.

6. FFYs 2015-18 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Six—Sean Pfalzer, MPO Staff

Draft Amendment Six of the FFYs 2015-18 TIP was released for a ten-day public review period in September. S. Pfalzer gave an overview of the public comments received during the review period. Most of the comments expressed support for the amendment as it would enable the reprogramming of funds for the *Tri-Community Bikeway* project in the FFY 2016 element of the TIP. The project, which was programmed in the FFY 2015 element, was not ready for advertising in that year due to environmental and right-of-way issues.

The amendment, while removing funding for the *Tri-Community Bikeway* project in the FFY 2015 element of the FFYs 2015-18 TIP, would show the reprogrammed funds in the FFY 2016 element with a comparable reduction in funds programmed for the *Route 128 Add-a-Lane (Needham, Wellesley)* project. At the start of the new fiscal year in October, staff expects to present an amendment to the FFY 2016-20 TIP in order to incorporate these changes to the FFY 2016 element in the new TIP.

A motion to approve Amendment Six to the FFYs 2015-18 TIP was made the Advisory Council (M. Gowing), and seconded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa). The motion carried.

7. MPO Meeting Minutes—Maureen Kelly, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 20 was made by the City of Boston (Tom Kadzis), and seconded by MassDOT (Marie Rose). The motion carried. The South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) (Christine Stickney) and North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly) (Aaron Clausen) abstained.

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 3 was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa), and seconded by the At-Large Town of Lexington (Richard Canale). The motion carried. The following members abstained: Advisory Council (M. Gowing); South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) (C. Stickney); and North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly) (A. Clausen).

8. Meeting Air Quality Goals in Transportation—Anne McGahan, MPO Staff

A. McGahan discussed a report that MassDOT prepared in August as a supplement to the Long-Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) of the MPOs in the Commonwealth. The report, “Meeting Air Quality Goals in Transportation,” contains a progress report on statewide greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions – specifically carbon dioxide emissions – associated with projects in the LRTPs for compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA). It also contains information on a statewide ozone analysis as requested in a public comment from the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) during the outreach for the development of the Boston Region MPO’s new LRTP, *Charting Progress to 2040*.

There was a reference to this report in Chapter 8 of *Charting Progress to 2040*, which noted that MassDOT coordinated with the MPOs to implement GHG tracking and that MassDOT and the Boston Region MPO were in the process of modelling to make projections for statewide GHG emissions that would result from the implementation of recommended LRTP projects. The results of that modelling are available in the “Meeting Air Quality Goals in Transportation” report.

The carbon dioxide analysis shows that collectively the LRTP projects for all the MPOs in the Commonwealth would provide a reduction in emissions statewide of over 26 tons of carbon dioxide by 2020 (compared to the base case) and a reduction of nearly 25 tons by 2040. This shows that the transportation sector is expected to make positive progress in meeting GHG reduction targets in compliance with the GWSA.

All MPOs in the Commonwealth, except Martha’s Vineyard, are currently in attainment for the ozone standard, so an ozone analysis is not required. The ozone analysis in this report was provided in response to public comments for informational purposes. The report provides data on volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx), the precursors to ozone formation, expected to result from the implementation of LRTP projects.

The results of both the carbon dioxide and ozone analyses show that the LRTPs are consistent with the air quality goals of the Commonwealth.

Discussion

Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, asked if there is a breakdown showing the air quality impact of individual projects. A. McGahan replied that, in regard to projects in the Boston Region MPO, there are project descriptions in Chapter 5 of *Charting Progress to 2040* and a discussion of how the projects meet the MPO’s goals.

Wig Zamore, Somerville resident, pointed out that the regulatory framework is not in line with the scientific recommendations regarding ozone levels and that, based on the scientific recommendations, the Commonwealth would not be compliant. He then discussed black carbon, a particle pollutant generated from diesel emissions, citing scientific research that shows black carbon as the second most potent pollutant affecting the climate after carbon dioxide. He suggested that Massachusetts could become a leader in addressing climate impacts from the transportation sector by addressing black carbon emissions. He provided staff with research papers with more information.

Rafael Mares, CLF, thanked MassDOT and the MPO for conducting the supplemental air quality analyses and discussed why CLF requested the analyses. He explained that normally when a region achieves attainment for ozone, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will put the region on a 20-year maintenance plan requiring air quality conformity analyses. Due to a change in EPA rules, the maintenance plan was no longer required for this region. Lawsuits, to which CLF is a party, would require that conformity analyses be resumed in the future.

9. Welcome from Host Municipality—Mayor Joseph Curtatone

Mayor Joseph Curtatone welcomed the MPO members to Somerville and discussed the importance of the *Green Line Extension* project for the region and Commonwealth.

He described the Boston area as among the “alpha cities,” which are major economic regions in the global economy, and noted that major demographic shifts to urban areas are occurring. The Boston area is already one of the most congested regions in the nation, according to a recent MIT study, and the urban population is projected to grow through 2050. To be successful in the future, he said, alpha cities must plan for providing a better quality of life, make infrastructure improvements to unlock economic opportunities, and take responsibility for protecting the environment.

Mayor Curtatone then discussed how the *Green Line Extension* project, which is a legal obligation of the Commonwealth, is the best opportunity that the Commonwealth has had in years meet these aims. The extension would serve Somerville, the most densely populated city in New England, but also serve the needs of the Commonwealth by unlocking economic development potential around new Green Line stations, as well as providing opportunities for new housing construction and job creation. The Commonwealth has designated areas around the planned new Green Line stations as priority development areas.

The Mayor discussed how the investment in the *Green Line Extension* would pay off for the Commonwealth as a whole by generating an expected \$5.5 billion in private investment into the Massachusetts economy and \$2.5 billion net new state tax revenue, with about 18 million square feet of redevelopment and the creation of more than 30,000 new jobs.

He then provided an update on the work currently underway on the project. A community-based planning process has been underway to plan for land-use around the new stations. The city has already invested several million dollars into the construction of the first three stations on the new line (Lechmere, Washington Street, and Union Square). In the next two years, the development of 2.3 million square feet of space will be breaking ground in Union Square, including 800 new homes.

He discussed plans for the Brickbottom and Inner Belt area of Somerville, where the *Green Line Extension* would open up access to developable land, with the potential for 10 million square feet of new development, more than 2,000 new homes, and 10,000 new jobs. He also noted that the *Green Line Extension* would unlock the full potential of the North Point area of Cambridge.

Additional potential for development, housing, and job creation exists around other station areas farther down the line. A transit-oriented development grant has been awarded for the area around the planned Lowell Street station. The Mayor also explained that College Avenue station would provide a link between Tufts University's Medford campus and downtown Boston medical campus. He also discussed the importance of building the *Green Line Extension* beyond College Avenue (the legal requirement) to Route 16 in Medford to provide access to 10,000 residents, and to reduce congestion and environmental impacts.

He also discussed the impact of the *Green Line Extension* in terms of environmental justice and remarked on the moral and social responsibility we have to alleviate suffering from the health impacts of highway transportation, which falls heaviest on non-white populations. He referenced a study by the Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health (CAFEH), that studied health impacts from exposure to pollution near highways and the higher risk of heart disease, asthma, and respiratory issues that come from that exposure. The Green Line is expected to reduce automobile traffic through the city by more than 25,000 trips per day. Further, he addressed how investments in transportation can help the city to maintain its diversity. He noted that while gentrification is occurring in Somerville, affordable transportation can make a difference in enabling people to stay in the city and reduce the need for car ownership.

Addressing the recent cost increase to the project, the Mayor expressed his commitment to continue working with the Governor and the Commonwealth on this issue and to bring the costs down. He noted that \$338 million of taxpayer money is already committed for the construction of the *Green Line Extension* with \$1 billion in federal grants awarded because it is one of the best transit projects in the nation. He emphasized the need to continue moving forward on the project, which he said is the most important project in the Commonwealth because of the benefits that it will return.

The Mayor also pointed to the redevelopment of Assembly Square in Somerville, which included a new Orange Line station, as an example of how investment in transportation infrastructure can grow the economy in a sustainable way. He noted that the project leveraged \$1.5 billion into the Massachusetts economy and created 22,000 new jobs. He thanked the MPO members for their support and leadership on that project.

In closing, the Mayor thanked the MPO for its commitment to the *Green Line Extension* and other projects in Somerville, and noted that he looks forwards to future conversations about building a 21st Century transportation system that makes the region competitive in the global economy.

10. Evolution of the MBTA Rapid Transit System “Spider” Map—Ken Dumas, MPO Staff

K. Dumas, the MPO’s cartographer, gave a presentation on the history of the design of the MBTA’s rapid transit maps.

The maps are intended to provide a transit customer with three pieces of information: entry, transfer, and exit points for their transit trip. K. Dumas explained the various considerations that go into designing the maps, including shape constraints, use of color and text fonts, and line work. Consideration must be given to people who are partially or totally colorblind, or who have low-vision, so text is generally displayed in san serif fonts, and black on a white background. The rule regarding line work is that parallel lines should never touch. The International Symbol of Access (ISA) is used to indicate stations that are accessible to people with disabilities.

The first MBTA rapid transit map was produced in 1965. It was in use for more than 30-years. The map was redesigned in the mid-1990s with K. Dumas as the cartographer. The revised map had stylized lines approximating the location of the various MBTA lines and major highways, geographical features, and updates to the transit lines. The creation of the Silver Line prompted another revision of the map. The MBTA Key Bus Route system was added to the depiction of the rapid transit system as well.

The most recent map design was based on a winning entry to a 2013 design contest and other public comments. K. Dumas described the development of the design, which involved revisions to the winning design entry, including a redeposition of the Green and Silver Lines.

Discussion

Lourenço Dantas, Massachusetts Port Authority, asked K. Dumas to comment on the evolution of the presentation and design of the maps going into a more digital world. K. Dumas replied that maps must now be designed to work in all formats. He noted that larger text has been in use both for readability in digital formats and because it was requested by the disability community.

11. State Implementation Plan Annual Report—*Bryan Pounds, MassDOT*

B. Pounds gave an update on the State Implementation Plan (SIP). MassDOT's annual report on the SIP projects was due in July but, with the concurrence of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the submission of the report was delayed until August 28 in order to provide the most up-to-date information. The report is posted on MassDOT's website. MassDOT is working with DEP to schedule the annual public hearing for the SIP.

12. Members Items

S. Woelfel announced that registration is open for the annual Moving Together Conference, which will be held on November 4. He encouraged those interested to sign up as soon as possible because registration is capped this year.

Brad Rawson, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), invited members to take a tour of the sites of the future Green Line station areas and Assembly Square this afternoon.

13. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by MassDOT (Marie Rose) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Richard Canale
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jim Gillooly Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Ken Miller
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Mayor Joseph Curtatone Tom Bent Brad Rawson
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel Marie Rose
Massachusetts Port Authority	Lourenço Dantas
MBTA	Victor Rivas
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Richard Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Aaron Clausen
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Mike Gowing
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Christine Stickney
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Tom Holder
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Cameron Bain	Stoneham Tri-Community Bikeway
Brian Beaucher	Ward Maps LLC
Joe Dumas	
Jim Gallagher	Somerville Resident
Danny LeBlanc	Somerville Community Corporation
Rafael Mares	Conservation Law Foundation
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council
Bryan Pounds	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Constance Raphael	MassDOT District 4
Ellin Reisner	Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership
Beth Rudolph	Town of Winchester
Arthur Strang	Transit Committee, City of Cambridge
Wig Zamore	Somerville resident

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Ken Dumas
David Fargen
Maureen Kelly
Anne McGahan
Elizabeth Moore
Scott Peterson
Sean Pfalzer
