



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

January 14, 2015 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza,
Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

Mike Gowing, Chair (Acton) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 8)

Chair's Report—*Mike Gowing, Chair*

M. Gowing reviewed items covered at the January 8 MPO meeting. The Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan was presented; 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. Staff provided a summary of the public comments received and actions taken to address them.

Staff gave an overview of the changes in TIP Amendment 2 to the 2015-2018 TIP. The Amendment added several federal discretionary grants to the MBTA and made some wording changes to a project. The Amendment was released for public review. Individual Advisory Council members are encouraged to submit comments on the proposed Amendment through the MPO website.

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director of CTPS presented a work program titled Core Capacity Constraints. This Work Program is the result of a request 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.

Minutes - October 8, 2014

Meeting minutes for the October 8, 2014 Advisory Council meeting were approved with revisions noted.

Congestion Management Process – *Ryan Hicks, CMP Manager, MPO Staff*

R. Hicks delivered a brief overview of the Boston Region MPO's performance monitoring system and also demonstrated the express highway and arterial performance dashboards, or application tools.

The congestion management process (CMP) is federally required for MPOs with populations greater than 200,000. CMP monitors performance of a region's transportation facilities including all modes of transportation.

Currently, for the purposes of acquiring CMP data, travel-time data was purchased from a third party vendor, INRIX, in order to develop the Express Highway Performance Dashboard and the Arterial Performance Dashboard. The INRIX data covers an entire year (2012) and is reported in one-minute increments. There are 9280 Traffic Message Channels in the Boston Modelling area. Each analysis zone for the Boston MPO model area contains a half-million speed records with approximately five billion records in total.

The INRIX data produced speeds that were slightly faster than those collected by using previous data-collection technique. A high variability in travel speed records resulted from the presence of outliers. Some challenges to the data set included accuracy of the arterial data, the database size, the display extent of congestion, and missing data from certain dates.

Uses for the dashboard applications include calibrating the travel model; selecting congested corridors for the LRTP; determine congested locations for planning studies; determine bottlenecks in individual municipalities; TIP project evaluations; and daily commute planning by the public.

Roadway performance measures are derived from studying congestion duration, extent, intensity and the reliability of non-congested peak periods. R. Hicks mentioned the performance measures that are used for the two dashboards and listed which dimensions of congestion were monitored.

- Congestion time measures duration and shows the average number of minutes that drivers experience congested conditions
- Travel Speed measures Intensity, or the average travel speed of all records within the CMP
- Speed Index measures Intensity, or the average speed divided by the posted speed limit of a roadway segment
- Delay Per Mile measures Intensity and indicates the amount of delay a vehicle expects to experience per mile of travel

- Travel Time Index measures Reliability, or the ratio of peak-period travel time to free-flow travel time
- Planning Time Index measures Reliability, and compares the near-worst-case travel time to free-flow travel time to determine contingency time needed to ensure 95 percentile on-time arrival

R. Hicks explained some of the next steps included in fully analyzing the congestion data. These activities will expand the dashboard tools to all expressways, create congestion scans for arterial roads, calculate and analyze costs of congestion and compare congestion trends between years.

R. Hicks showed how the two dashboards worked by leading a brief demonstration and identifying where the dashboards can be found. The dashboards represent typical peak period commutes in the Boston Region and are found on the Boston MPO website under Plans and Programs / Programs/ Congestion Management Process, or by clicking on the links below:

Express Highway Performance Dashboard ([click here](#))

Arterial Performance Dashboard ([click here](#))

Questions and Comments

R. Hicks explained that days in which school was not in session were not included in the sample data set. He would consider the impact of starting the monitoring time an hour earlier in response to a request from J. McQueen.

R. Hicks indicated that INRIX processes data in such a way that outliers are not considered in the tracking. As a result, monitoring of days where there are serious incidents and resulting delays was filtered. In addition, he said that on arterials the speed index and the travel time index was used which factors out the variability in the speed differences most noted in arterial roads. (O. MacDonald)

R. Hicks stated that before and after studies could be conducted using INRIX data to measure the effects of plans and operational changes, such as tolls on the Mass Pike. (M. Wellons)

In response to a question, R. Hicks said some of the INRIX data is fleet data; some is a voluntary program of tracking by drivers along with several different sources. He noted that possible gaps exist along long arterial segments with many cross-streets. He also stated that he is monitoring the rule making at FHWA and that CMP will be adjusted to meet any changes in federal standards as they arise. (A. Strang)

Unified Planning Work Program – *Michelle Scott, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff*

M. Scott's presentation covered three major points: A quick refresher on what the UPWP is; the development process schedule and ways to be involved; and a review of technical assistance programs.

UPWP Refresher

The MPO receives two types of dollars from the federal government – funding for capital projects programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and funding for carrying out transportation planning activities.

The MPO receives approximately \$5 million a year for transportation planning activities. Approximately 80 percent of this money comes to the MPO staff, the Central Transportation Planning Staff, and the remaining funds go to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

The UPWP covers several different types of transportation planning activities. Some studies make recommendations for improving the transportation system—along roadway corridors, at intersections, on bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and on transit routes. Other studies entail data collection and analysis for solving transportation problems at the local or regional level.

Some planning studies research big-picture transportation issues, while some planning activities involve processes that support MPO transportation decision-making and keep residents of the Boston region informed and involved.

The MPO develops a UPWP every year. Currently, the FFY 2015 UPWP is active; copies are available on the UPWP page of the Boston MPO website ([click here](#)).

Highlights in this year's UPWP include funds for the Fairmount Line Station Access Analysis; the continuation of the Freight Planning Support Program; and continuation of Corridor Study Programs.

Steps in the Development Process

M. Scott handed out a UPWP document preparation schedule. She pointed out that the year began with outreach for the UPWP in September, 2014, at the MAPC subregions and at the TIP/UPWP workshops. This year, the outreach is being coordinated with outreach on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which is updated every four years. The LRTP has a significant influence on the development on this year's and UPWP future years. The LRTP shapes the MPO goals and objectives that drive UPWP study development and selection.

Through February, 2015, staff will gather study and project ideas for the UPWP Universe of Projects which is presented to the MPO's UPWP Committee for their consideration. The Advisory Council chair or vice chair, regularly attend the UPWP Committee and offer comments on the content of the Universe of Planning Projects.

M. Scott suggested that members who may have a suggestion for a UPWP study contact her through the MPO website. She also noted that the UPWP Committee meetings are open to the public.

Between February and March, MPO staff proposes a UPWP budget and set of projects and programs to be included in the upcoming UPWP. This includes a mix of ongoing work to support the MPO, and new studies. The Advisory Council chair or vice chair, regularly attend the UPWP Committee meetings and offer comments on the project selection and budget development process.

From April through June, the UPWP Committee recommends a UPWP budget and set of projects to the MPO. The MPO considers this recommendation and ultimately approves the draft UPWP to be released for public review. MPO staff conducts outreach on the draft document – including with the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council provides feedback on the draft UPWP at their meeting, and via a comment letter that is submitted to the MPO. Members of the public are welcome to attend workshops hosted by MPO staff as well as to provide comments on the draft documents.

Questions and Comments (Part 1)

M. Scott explained, in response to a member, that surface transportation is covered in UPWP study plans and that the process of drafting a proposal is an informal process. Consideration of a study of drones might be best reviewed by Massport. However, noise and public health analysis is becoming more prevalent in research themes. (M. Wellons)

A member posed a question on the transportation impacts from a recently expanded MBTA Commuter Rail station, M. Scott stated that a planning project could be funded to search for a solution to a problem, even if there is a capital improvement underway.

Technical Assistance Programs

The MPO funds two technical assistance programs through the UPWP. In these programs, staff meets with individual communities on transportation concerns and provides quick-response guidance and recommendations. These activities are not as extensive as large scale UPWP studies, but they have a shorter-turn around and can take place before the next UPWP goes into effect in October, 2015. CTPS and MAPC each provide support to this program.

- *Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program* – This program provides municipal officials with technical advice on local transportation concerns such as traffic operations, safety, bicycle and pedestrian access, parking, bus stop locations among other areas. It includes site visits, documentation of issues and recommendations for action. For more information on Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program, [click here](#).
- *Livable Community Workshop Program* – These workshops are designed to provide communities with strategies for enhancing livability and to facilitate local discussions on topics such as walking, bicycling, transit, parking, land use, urban design housing, public health, economic development, energy, and climate change. Community workshops focus on a particular livability issue and report documenting issues and ideas. For more information on Livable Community Workshop Program, [click here](#).

Like other UPWP studies, the costs are covered through the UPWP; there isn't a funding match requirement.

Questions and Comments (Part 2)

M. Scott stated that UPWP information and notices on the development process and schedule was emailed to TIP Contacts and the MAPC subregions. (D. Montgomery)

In response to a member's question, M. Scott indicated that there is a process involved in the submission of requests for planning studies. All municipalities are asked either through direct emailing, subregional outreach, or outreach workshops. Proponents work with MPO staff, and often there is a program manager who deals directly with each applicant. All of the proposals are listed on the MPO website; however, there may be a posting lag.

An additional point led to discussion on the follow-up on studies that are selected to see if they are ever implemented. M. Scott indicated that the question is considered at UPWP Committee meetings.

S. Olanoff commented that a Livable Community Workshop is a very positive activity and it pays off with a host of community activity that improves bicycle and pedestrian community environment.

Member Take-Away Points; Old Business, New Business, Member Announcements

M. Gowing announced that Stephanie Pollack was named the new Secretary of Transportation. She has addressed the Advisory Council in the past on several occasions.

M. Gowing announced that Acton will be invoking the Local Option Sales Tax and will use the revenue stream to fund local busing. Acton has been working with the MAPC on this project and the busing part of the program will be in done in conjunction with the local RTAs.

P. Wolfe announced that the City of Boston is seeking input on the “Go Boston 2030” community survey to measure the community concerns about transportation in Boston’s future.

Members engaged in a general discussion on the issues and considerations of a possible successful Olympics bid.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

ATTENDANCE

Agencies (Voting)

MassRides

Municipalities (Voting)

Acton

Belmont

Brookline

Cambridge

Canton

Needham

Weymouth

Citizen Groups (Voting)

American Council of Engineering Companies

Association for Public Transportation

Boston Society of Architects

Massachusetts Bus Association

MassBike

MassCommute

MoveMassachusetts

National Corridors Initiative

Riverside Neighborhood Association

WalkBoston

Other (Non-Voting)

MassDOT - Aeronautics

Westwood

Guests

Ed Lowney

Arthur Strang

Staff

Pam Wolfe

Matt Archer

Attendee

Catherine Paquette

Mike Gowing

Bob McGaw

Cleo Stoughton

William Friel

David Montgomery;

Rhain Hoyland

Owen MacDonald

Tom Daley

Barry M. Steinberg

Schuyler Larrabee

Mark Sanborn

David Ernst

Julia Prange Waller

Jon Seward

John Businger

Marilyn Wellons

John McQueen

Steve Rawding

Steve Olanoff

Malden Resident

Fresh Pond Residents

Association

Natalie Raffol

Ryan Hicks