

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



## Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

### December 10, 2014 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

### Draft 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 5)

#### Chair's Report—*Mike Gowing, Chair*

M. Gowing announced that the December 4 MPO meeting was postponed due to the Federal recertification of the Boston Region MPO activities currently underway through this Friday, December 12.

#### Minutes - October 8, 2014

Approval of the minutes for the October 8, 2014 Advisory Council meeting was postponed to a future meeting.

#### Sustainable Freight – *Abby Swaine, Region One, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

The Advisory Council hosted a discussion on sustainable-freight issues at which Abby Swaine of the US Environmental Protection Agency was the guest speaker. Ms. Swaine provided highlights of the discussions that occurred at the New England Transportation Forum on Freight Issues at the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center in November. The wide-ranging discussion touched on numerous freight-related issues, from federal planning efforts to environmental sustainability. The role discussed for MPOs in freight planning included outreach to freight shippers and carriers to find out the issues that affect them, collecting data in order to allocate funding to freight projects according to need, and coordinating with statewide planning efforts.

A. Swaine introduced Victoria Farr, Community Planner with the US Department of Transportation Volpe Center, and a major contributor to the November 6 forum which originally covered much of the material to be presented today. The freight program covered in Federal Region 1 is a specialty area for the New England Regional EPA

Office. The program area focusses on how freight carriers and shippers can make a valuable contribution for the environment; how citizen concerns over freight issues can be addressed; and how to support and showcase positive outcomes of shippers and carriers and land-use planners in accommodating freight uses into other land uses.

A. Swaine presented other major points of the Freight Forum held at the Volpe Transportation Systems Center held on November 6, 2014. For a link to the event agenda [click here](http://www.volpe.dot.gov/event/new-england-transportation-forum-freight-issues): (www.volpe.dot.gov/event/new-england-transportation-forum-freight-issues) She noted that several Advisory Council members were present at the Forum.

A. Swaine began by summarizing the “National Perspective” which was presented by Caitlin Rayman, Director of Office of Freight Management and Operations (FHWA). Points made here include the interest by regional DOTs to conduct a forum addressing freight; that freight movement in the region is changing; there is a change in the vehicle mix on New England roads; different fuels are being used. From the national perspective, more planning funds should become available to deal with the trends facing the region. She expressed a hope that the GROWAMERICA bill would provide more money to states for freight purposes.

One goal of national planning is to reduce noise and emissions to communities. Overall goals of the planning exercise are safe, economically efficient and environmentally sustainable freight movement. Ongoing FHWA webinars on many topics are available in their archives. “Talking Freight Webinars” are available for all the States. Some topics include freight advisory committees emphasizing their successes; sustainability strategies for addressing freight-related air quality impacts; freight movements and complete streets; and understanding freight and mega-regions.

National freight trends at the regional scale were discussed. A lack of commitment to fund infrastructure for all modes of freight movement was cited as the major problem facing the New England states along with the rest of the country. It was proposed that increasing fuel taxes and user based-funding, like charging for mileage and tolling, would help pay for a backlog of infrastructure needs. Speakers at the conference stated that there is a preponderance of truck freight and that many rail branch lines have been eliminated. A multi-modal freight strategy of bus-truck-rail is needed to continue freight movement growth. The panel proposed reaching out to the MPOs to collect data to help allocate funding for freight studies and to coordinate with statewide freight planning efforts.

The State DOTs Leadership Panel reviewed opportunities for coordination and cooperation. All New England states were present at the panel. MassDOT started the Compact of New England State Departments of Transportation which provides a source for regional influence in promoting transportation funding.

A panel on facing challenges of global competition at the regional scale was addressed by Thomas Glynn, Executive Director of Massport. He said that Boston serves 30 percent of New England freight distribution. Seaport District development is beginning to compete with the working port citing the Haul Road as an accommodation to the South Boston neighborhood. Ports should be viewed as being on the large scale thoroughway in the distribution chain. C. Rayman reported that disaster preparedness at Massport addresses resilience particularly in adapting electronics to rising sea levels.

A roundtable discussion with U.S. DOT reviewed critical single and multimodal freight safety initiatives. The session was followed by a panel on planning for sustainability and resilience in the regional freight system was discussed at the conference. Panelists warned that states' core infrastructure is falling behind and state and local governments are not putting a high enough priority on the required investments to insure freight connections to the ports.

A. Swaine presented highlights of the SmartWay Transport Partnership. Launched in 2004, SmartWay is an EPA program that helps the freight transportation sector to improve supply chain efficiency. SmartWay reduces transportation-related emissions that affect climate change, reduce environmental risk for companies and increase global energy security.

Public and private carbon accountability programs are asking shippers to account for their carbon footprints which are easily monitored using EPA's carbon accountability tools. A SmartWay program workbook was developed for use in global market including China and South America.

A national excellence award honors outstanding performance in achieving shipping efficiency while in New England, a Shipper of the Year Award honors program members for achievements and best practices. The awards programs encourage professional development within the shipping industry.

## Questions and Comments

Other forum attendees were asked to share their experience at the November conference.

F. DeMasi was encouraged by the presence of all New England states at the conference and that they were able to work together on their freight plans. He also stated that regional planning agencies should engage in the freight planning process, because of the interaction of all different planning activities. He also noted that the Seaport Advisory Council had orchestrated port activity throughout the state in the past, however, the current activity involving the port issues, including the Port of Boston, has

very little interaction with the MPO. He suggested that the MPO become more involved in planning activities involving the Port of Boston.

D. Montgomery said the notion of having the Volpe Center present a truly regional perspective was very much needed. More conferences like this should be held.

J. Businger agreed that regional perspectives are useful and that the term really applies to cross state border issues. A. Swaine noted that the DOT leaders at the conference did work well together.

M. Wellons expressed an interest in how regional cooperation can be achieved at ports when there is competition between them. She also expressed concern with the imbalance of inter-regional trade and its impact on development, and also, the resulting noise and air quality impacts.

J. McQueen noted that data on underutilized and empty carriers should be identified so that efficient software can be developed much along the lines of a privatized carrier like Uber to maximize freight efficiencies and loads.

M. Gowing indicated the recent advances in the energy industry have caused us to reconsider the role of freight in exporting petroleum and natural gas products.

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

D. Montgomery reminded members he would like to work with the Membership Committee to address quorum issues that may require looking at the bylaws.

B. Kuttner announced the inclusion of a freight workscope on the MPO website relating to the South Boston Seafront. ([See MPO Meeting Calendar Documents for December 18, 2014](#))

## **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

## ATTENDANCE

### **Agencies (Voting)**

MassRides  
Seaport Advisory Council

### **Municipalities (Voting) \*MPO Member**

Acton  
Cambridge  
Needham  
Weymouth

### **Municipalities (Other Non-Voting)**

Westwood

### **Citizen Groups**

AACT  
American Council of Engineering Companies  
Association for Public Transportation  
Boston Society of Architects  
Massachusetts Bus Association  
MoveMassachusetts  
National Corridors Initiative  
Riverside Neighborhood Association  
WalkBoston

### **Guests**

Victoria Farr  
Frank DeMasi  
Arthur Strang

### **Staff**

David Fargen  
Bill Kuttner  
Matt Archer

### **Attendees**

Catherine Paquette

Mike Gowing  
Cleo Stoughton  
David Montgomery  
Owen MacDonald

Steve Olanoff

Mary Ann Murray  
Tom Daley  
Barry M. Steinberg  
Schuyler Larrabee  
Mark Sanborn  
Jon Seward  
John Businger  
Marilyn Wellons  
John McQueen

U.S. DOT/Volpe  
Wellesley Resident  
Fresh Pond Residents  
Association