

Memorandum for the Record
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting

December 1, 2011 Meeting

10:00 AM – 11:40 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 & 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

David Mohler, Chair, representing Richard Davey, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed to the following:

- approve the following work programs:
 - *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership*
 - *MBTA Transit Delay Study*
 - *MBTA Rapid Transit Replacement Service Study*
 - *MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts*
- approve the minutes of the meeting of November 17

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

There were none.

2. Chair's Report – David Mohler, MassDOT

There was none.

3. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

**4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report – Steve Olanoff, Chair,
*Regional Transportation Advisory Council***

The Advisory Council will meet next on December 14. The guest speaker will be Stephanie Pollack of the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University. She will be discussing transportation finance policy issues. The Advisory Council's Freight Committee will also meet on the 14th. The Council is continuing to review its membership.

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

Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) has hired Ryan Hicks for the position of Congestion Management Process (CMP) Manager. He begins work on December 12.

There are three final candidates for the position of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Manager. CTPS expects to select one of these candidates next week.

6. Work Programs – *Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

At the meeting of November 17 members were presented with four draft work programs: *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership*, *MBTA Transit Delay Study*, *MBTA Rapid Transit Replacement Service Study*, and *MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts*. Since that time, an editorial change was made to the work program for *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership* and a revised version was provided to members.

A motion to approve the work programs for *Improving Transit Reliability to Increase Ridership*, *MBTA Transit Delay Study*, *MBTA Rapid Transit Replacement Service Study*, and *MBTA Commuter Rail Passenger Counts* was made by Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, and seconded by Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham). The motion carried. The Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford) abstained.

7. Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 17 was made by P. Regan and seconded by Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville). The motion carried.

8. Route 9 Land Use Study Update – *Eric Bourassa, Transportation Manager, Metropolitan Area Planning Council*

E. Bourassa provided an update (with a PowerPoint presentation) on the *Route 9 Land Use Study*, which is being conducted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). MAPC worked with the towns of Framingham, Natick, Southborough, and Wellesley to examine a potential smart growth solution for future development along the Route 9 corridor. The four towns are interested in economic development but concerned about increased traffic that could result from growth. They are interested in exploring strategies to manage increased traffic.

Fifty-six analysis zones that have potential for development were identified for this study. A land use and transportation analysis was conducted based on three scenarios: the existing conditions along the corridor; the potential build out under existing zoning; and an alternative smart growth land use called the “community test,” which incorporates mixed-use zoning.

There are 17.8 million square feet of development along the corridor now. At build-out under existing zoning regulations there would be 33.5 million square feet of development. The “community test” scenario, which has double the amount of housing units as compared to the alternatives, would result in 28.7 million square feet of development.

The parcels in the 56 analysis zones currently generate about 338,000 vehicle trips per day. At build-out, those trips would increase by 40%. And in the “community test” they would increase by 16%. The following assumptions account for the reduction of vehicle trips in the “community test” as compared to the build-out: housing development results

in fewer trips than retail or commercial development; mixed-use development results in more walking trips; denser nodes allow for more public transit; and improved pedestrian and transit access reduce vehicle trips.

The study concludes that while development and vehicle trips continue to grow under both scenarios, traffic congestion could be better managed by addressing land use and promoting redevelopment that can be accessed by pedestrians and transit.

The next steps are for MAPC to work with the towns to identify specific parcels for “sprawl repair,” a concept that involves changing land use to create density in existing developments. An example of a site where this could occur is at the Natick Collection and Sherwood Plaza.

Members then asked questions and made comments.

David Koses, At-Large City (City of Newton), noted that part of the *Route 128 Add-a-Lane* project would involve signalizing the intersection of Route 128 and 9. He stated that the City of Newton is concerned about potential delay caused by new signals and additional cut-through traffic. He asked if the study assumed that new signals would be at that location or considered whether there should be design changes to that intersection. E. Bourassa responded that the *Route 128 Add-a-Lane* project was not incorporated in this phase of the study. The next phase would identify parcels for more in-depth study.

D. Giombetti remarked that the first phase of the study was well received and that there is interest in the second phase. He noted that this study will have a third phase that will examine transportation to the Tech Park area where there has been municipal investment in water and sewer infrastructure to allow growth. The challenge now is to determine how to get people to jobs at that site. He also raised a concern about the marketability of mixed-use development along the Route 9 corridor. He noted that the commercial sector is robust on the corridor.

P. Regan commented that the customer base for bus service to commercial centers would be different than the customer base in a densely developed corridor (with the first group traveling in from outside of the corridor, and the second moving within the corridor). He asked whether that issue had been addressed. E. Bourassa explained that work would have to be done to build density and make pedestrian connections in the corridor to make transit successful there.

P. Regan asked about how “sprawl repair” strategies would address parking. E. Bourassa discussed options such as privately-owned, structured parking lots that would reduce the need for surface parking lots.

Ed Tarallo, North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn), asked about the assumptions used for land use in the “community test” scenario. E. Bourassa explained that MAPC worked with the communities to develop the scenario, which includes assumptions for changes in zoning.

D. Mohler asked if the scenarios are consistent with the growth projected in MAPC's long-range plan, MetroFuture. E. Bourassa replied that it is in some places, but not others. The growth assigned to Southborough is not consistent with MetroFuture, for example.

D. Mohler asked MAPC to provide more information about how much each vehicle trip reduction factor contributes to future trip reductions in these scenarios. E. Bourassa offered to provide more specifics in the next phase of the study.

9. Work Program for TIP Project Impacts Before-After Evaluation, FFY 2012 –

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff
Members were provided with the work program for *TIP Project Impacts Before-After Evaluation, FFY 2012*. K. Quackenbush provided an overview of the work program in the context of transportation planning regulations. This work program is consistent with federal guidance and regulations that emphasize performance based planning and require the evaluation of the effectiveness of transportation investments through the Congestion Management Process (CMP). The results of the analysis will cycle back into the Long-Range Transportation, Transportation Improvement Program, and Congestion Management Processes in order to enhance future decision-making.

This study is a pilot project that will analyze the impacts of up to six constructed projects. Staff would first identify potential candidate projects that were constructed in the past few years. The challenge would be to identify projects where enough time has elapsed so that traffic conditions have stabilized, but not so long that the impacts of the project have been altered by confounding influences.

Candidate projects would have functional design reports that documented conditions in project areas before construction (such as traffic volumes, mobility, pedestrian flows, transit flows, and crash data). Staff would collect comparable data for post-construction conditions.

This is going to be a challenging study in the sense that it may be difficult to clearly measure improvements in the field and associate them unequivocally with the subject project. In any event, it is expected that useful information about how to structure future evaluations will result.

Members then asked questions and made comments.

P. Regan asked if the study would involve evaluating projects based on TIP project selection criteria and whether the methods used in the study could allow the MPO to evaluate the claims of project proponents. K. Quackenbush discussed the need for using data that matches the available "before" data and noted that in some cases there may be overlap with the TIP criteria. He also noted a challenge due to the fact that projects often change from the time the functional design report is written to the final constructed

project. D. Mohler added that a comparison could be done between the study results and the metrics that staff uses to evaluate TIP projects.

E. Tarallo cautioned about selecting projects that have been implemented very recently. He stated that there should be three years of data after the facility begins functioning for the study results to be meaningful.

D. Koses remarked about the importance of crash data for this project.

Richard Reed, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford), and S. Olanoff both recommended selecting similar types of projects for study, so that the results could be better compared.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), expressed agreement with the other commenters. He also noted that he is pleased that this project, which was supported by the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Subcommittee, is going forward.

Marie Rose, MassDOT Highway Division, asked if staff would be selecting projects based on funding source. K. Quackenbush noted that it was not staff's intention to do so, but that they could consider the idea.

Jim Gallagher, Somerville resident, stated that he is pleased that the MPO is conducting this project. He suggested using data from the CMP to measure traffic congestion, tracking land use changes in the area of study (as project proponents often make claims about economic development), and asking users of the new facilities (residents, businesses, and pedestrians, for example) if they think that the project is an improvement.

Alison Felix, MAPC, suggested that staff tap into surveys that the Department of Environmental Protection require businesses employing more than 100 employees to complete. She noted that these surveys include data on employee mode choice.

Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation, asked if the study would measure greenhouse gas emissions. K. Quackenbush and D. Mohler indicated that this could be measured if baseline data is available for comparison.

D. Giombetti suggested looking to the best practices of other organizations that conduct post-construction reviews. He also cautioned about making the study too large at first, and recommended keeping it simple.

D. Mohler asked staff to revise the work program over the coming month.

10. Boston Region MPO Draft FFY 2012 Schedule – Certification Activities – Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff

Members were presented with the draft schedule for the Certification Activities Group's activities in FFY 2012. This schedule outlines the timeframe for the MPO staff's work on

the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the UPWP, the Clean Air and Mobility Program, the TIP, and other Certification-related programs.

Members discussed the schedule. Several members – E. Tarallo, Richard Canale, At-Large Town (Town of Lexington), and Tom Kadzis, City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department) – expressed concern about the scheduling of the public comment periods and endorsement of the TIP and the UPWP. These activities generally occur during the summer and conflict with vacation times. As a result, staff was asked to reschedule the public comment periods to May and the endorsement of the documents to the end of June. This action will also allow the MPO to have more time to review public comments before voting on the documents.

There was also a discussion of the constraints on the schedule. The development of the TIP must conform to the targets the Commonwealth sets for the State Transportation Improvement Program. The TIP schedule also depends on when the MPO receives its TIP financial targets and federal decisions that affect those targets.

T. Kadzis also raised the issue of rescissions by the federal government that can affect the MPO's planning. D. Mohler explained that moving forward MassDOT and the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) will set targets for the MPO if the federal agencies do not provide that guidance by a set date. MPOs could then program to those targets until the federal agencies provide the official targets, at which time the MPOs will have to react to the new targets.

Lourenço Dantas, Massachusetts Port Authority, and E. Bourassa suggested that the schedule for the development of the next LRTP allow more time for the evaluation and modeling of alternative project scenarios. K. Quackenbush pointed out that the modeling for the LRTP is dependent upon the development of demographic forecasts for the region, which are developed by MAPC. He stated that MPO staff will be using a new software modeling package for the next LRTP, which will allow the modeling tasks to be done quicker.

S. Olanoff inquired about plans for quarterly MPO meetings outside of Boston. Staff was asked to prepare a proposal for quarterly meetings locations and to provide a summary of where the MPO has held workshops and public meetings in the last few years.

11. Members Items

J. Cosgrove announced that workshops and a public hearing focused on the development of the MBTA's Capital Investment Program (CIP) will be held this month. Meetings are scheduled at the following locations:

- Quincy, December 5, 6 PM
- Mattapan, December 7, 6 PM
- Roxbury, December 8, 6 PM
- Worcester, December 13, 6:30 PM
- Boston, State Transportation Building, December 14, 5:30 PM

S. Olanoff invited members to attend the Regional Transportation Advisory Council meeting on December 14 prior to the CIP public hearing.

12. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by P. Regan, and seconded by E. Tarallo. The motion carried.

**Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting Attendance
Thursday, December 1, 2011, 10:00 AM**

Members

At-Large City (City of Everett)
At-Large City (City of Newton)
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MassDOT Highway Division
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)
Massachusetts Port Authority
MBTA Advisory Board
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham)
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination
(Town of Bedford)
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)
Regional Transportation Advisory Council
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)

Representatives and Alternates

Marzie Galazka
David Koses
Laura Wiener
Richard Canale
Lara Mérida
Tom Kadzis
Tom Bent
David Mohler
Marie Rose
Joe Cosgrove
Lourenço Dantas
Paul Regan
Eric Bourassa
Dennis Giombetti
Richard Reed

Tina Cassidy
Ed Tarallo
Steve Olanoff
Christine Stickney
Tom O'Rourke

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director

Michael Callahan

David Fargen

Maureen Kelly

Robin Mannion

Efi Pagitsas

Sean Pfalzer

Mary Ellen Sullivan

Other Attendees

Callida Cenizal

Alison Felix

Jim Gallagher

David Manngian

Rafael Mares

Mary Ann Murray

Joe Onorato

MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning

MAPC

Somerville resident

Town of Ashland

Conservation Law Foundation

Regional Transportation Advisory Council / Access Advisory

Committee to the MBTA

MassDOT Highway