

**Draft Memorandum for the Record
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee of the
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

May 5, 2011 Meeting

10:00 AM – 12:45 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 & 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

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

Decisions

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee agreed to the following:

- table the vote on the revisions to the MPO's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and further discuss this topic at a meeting to be scheduled for May 12
- approve the minutes of the meeting of April 14
- table the discussion of four work programs until the meeting of May 19, at which time they will be taken up as action items

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

State Senator Karen Spilka thanked the MPO for holding three public workshops to discuss the MPO's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the public, and for postponing the vote on the MOU. She remarked upon the themes that surfaced in public comments during the workshop in Framingham which included the following: an interest in working with the MPO to find ways to increase participation opportunities; keeping the city and town designation in the MPO elections; keeping subregional distinctions to increase representation; instituting term limits for MPO members or membership on a rotating basis; and opening seats for the Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) in the region. She urged the MPO to again delay their vote on the revisions to the MPO MOU in order to allow for further discussion.

Tom Michelman, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, spoke for the need to build a regional bicycle trail network and the need for people to have alternate transportation options. He noted that gas is selling at about \$4 per gallon and that further political changes in the Middle East could raise gas prices even higher. He beseeched the MPO to put the *Bruce Freeman Rail Trail* project in the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) in the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2016-2020 timeband. There are Enhancement Program funds available to design the project, but they cannot be used if the project is excluded from the LRTP, he said. He also spoke about strong public support for the project and noted the number of petitions that residents have sent to the MPO.

Jim Gallagher pointed out that the MPO staff did not post the materials related to the LRTP discussion online and that the MOU document was not posted with the agenda for this meeting. He urged the MPO staff to post all agenda item materials 48 hours in

advance of the MPO's meetings (or if not to table the agenda item) and to adopt that requirement in the MOU.

In response to J. Gallagher's comments, D. Mohler directed staff to post all relevant documents together with the meeting agendas in one, easily accessible location. Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, explained that the LRTP materials for today's meeting were not posted online because they were just completed and were intended for initial review by members before posting.

Jim Terry, Town of Concord's Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee, noted that the *Bruce Freeman Rail Trail* would provide direct access to the West Concord commuter rail station and allow cyclists to avoid a traffic bottleneck on Route 2. He also said that the trail will enhance livability, provide access to schools for children, and improve the economic viability of West Concord and businesses along Route 2A in Acton.

Dennis Harrington, City of Quincy, reported that the *Quincy Concourse* project is ahead of schedule. Ten million dollars of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds are being spent on the project as well as \$30 million of city funds. He also reported on a \$1.3 billion public-private partnership for the redevelopment of Quincy Center. Part of that economic development project includes the construction of a new bridge over the MBTA tracks, which would open a section of Quincy Center to economic development. He asked the MPO to include the *Burgin Parkway Access Bridge* project in the LRTP. The cost estimate for the bridge is \$15 million.

Jonah Petri, Friends of the Community Path, noted that the *Community Path* project is not currently included in the LRTP's Universe of Projects. He urged the MPO to include the project in the LRTP and in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) due to the amount of funding that would be required to build the trail to Boston. He referenced the public comments that have been sent to the MPO in support of funding the project through the LRTP and TIP.

Lynn Weissman, Friends of the Community Path, also requested that the MPO include the *Community Path* project in the LRTP's Universe of Projects. She explained that the project is "time critical" since the path cannot be designed and built without sharing infrastructure and right-of-way with the *Green Line Extension* project. The latter is required by federal mandate to be built in the next several years. She remarked that the region has 23,000 miles of roads and only 68 miles of trails. She stated that it is the connectivity and continuity of trails that makes a transportation network for thousands of people, and noted that the Community Path would provide a link that would allow bicyclists to travel from Bedford to Boston and out to Newton. She also noted that the trail would provide a low-cost transportation option to low-income neighborhoods. She also referenced the approximately 200 letters from members of the public that show support for the project and quoted some comments in which people raised concerns about the lack of safety for bicyclist on the roadway network.

Jack Gillon, City of Quincy, provided an update on the *Hancock Street at East and West Squantum Streets* project and reminded members that the project stemmed from a study conducted by the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS). He reported that a public hearing on the project was held this past winter and that the project will be at the 75% design stage in two weeks. He stated that the project will result in air quality improvements; it will improve the level of service at the intersection from F with a 50 second average delay to a C with a 30 second average delay. The project cost remains approximately \$3 million. He asked the MPO to consider funding the project if possible.

2. Chair's Report – David Mohler, MassDOT

At the chairman's request, members agreed to have staff create an online mailbox for each MPO member so that members of the public could contact the members directly.

D. Mohler announced that Ginger Esty, Town of Framingham, is resigning from the MPO. He presented her with a plaque recognizing her service to the MPO and remarked that she and her professionalism would be missed. G. Esty expressed that she has enjoyed working with her fellow MPO members and that she would still be available by phone for consultations. Members and attendees applauded her.

Dennis Giombetti, Town of Framingham, is replacing G. Esty as the representative from Framingham.

3. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report – Laura Wiener, Regional Transportation Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is developing a letter to the MPO regarding the LRTP.

In response to a question from D. Mohler, L. Wiener stated that the Advisory Council has received the response from MassDOT regarding the Council's comment on the State Rail Plan.

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

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Subcommittee met last week and discussed 14 ideas for new projects. The subcommittee will meet again in two weeks to discuss the details of those projects.

The Administration and Finance Subcommittee will convene in late May or June to develop the CTPS operating budget for the next state fiscal year.

6. Memorandum of Understanding and Election Process – David Mohler, MassDOT, and Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, MPO Staff

P. Wolfe gave members an overview of the three public workshops that the MPO held in order to provide an opportunity for public discussion about the revisions to the MPO's

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). MPO members, representing the MPO Chairman's Office, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the MBTA Advisory Board, and the City of Boston, and MPO staff members attended the meetings. Attendees asked the MPO to delay the vote on the MOU revisions. They also discussed the MPO election process (and whether to maintain the city and town distinction in the elections), expanding membership, and the importance of economic matters. They also raised questions about who decides how many members will be on the MPO, whether the members represent a geographic area or the whole region, the number of members there should be on the MPO, and whether they should represent subregions.

D. Mohler added that attendees seemed most concerned about membership and that they spoke about having more than six members, subregional representation (to provide a broader perspective), and term limits. Another issue raised concerned representation from the Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs).

E. Bourassa also noted that some attendees felt that the MPO's process is confusing and not transparent.

Members discussed these topics:

Regarding the MPO elections, L. Wiener stated that under the existing MOU, certain cities and towns are precluded from running for a seat on the MPO. D. Mohler and P. Regan noted that this fact was explained at the workshop meetings.

M. Pratt expressed opposition to term limits, due to the fact that there is a steep learning curve for new members and due to the need for continuity on the board. She also expressed opposition to subregional representation and stated that the MPO members should represent the 101 municipalities in the region. She also stated that the RTAs are well represented and funded by the MPO.

David Koses, City of Newton, also expressed opposition to subregional representation and stated that it would be a step backward for the MPO since it would make the MPO's processes more political and lower the importance of the MPO's decision-making criteria.

John Romano, MassDOT Highway Division, stated that he is strongly in favor of removing the city/town distinction from the MPO election process so that all municipalities in the region are able to run.

Jim Gillooly, City of Boston, posited an alternative that would have the MPO keep the city/town distinction in the election process, but remove the limits having to do with subregions. This would allow any city or town in the region to run.

J. Gillooly also spoke regarding the idea of expanding the MPO membership. He expressed concern that expanding membership could dilute Boston's role in the MPO to a point where geographic equity would not be maintained. He distributed population

figures for the neighborhoods of Boston and noted that some Boston neighborhoods have larger populations than many cities and towns in the region, and that the city represents 20% of the regional population. (See attached figures.) Also, given that the city houses much of the region's transportation infrastructure, the city has a great interest in making sure those systems are maintained, he said.

D. Giombetti recommended that the MPO delay the vote on the MOU in order to have time to digest the public comments raised at the workshops and to deliberate.

P. Regan and E. Bourassa noted that the MOU revisions should be done in by early summer so that the MPO has time to conduct outreach before the fall election. D. Mohler added that the federal transportation agencies originally set March 31 as the deadline for the MPO to approve the MOU revisions. If the MOU is not approved, the federal agencies will likely not approve the State Transportation Improvement Program or the MPO's LRTP.

Members agreed to table the vote on the MOU and to add the item to a Transportation Planning and Programming Committee meeting to be scheduled for May 12.

Staff was directed to notify the chief elected officers for the 101 municipalities in the MPO of the upcoming MOU discussions. Staff was also directed to prepare a detailed agenda for the May 12 meeting that lays out the main issues to be addressed.

7. Meeting Minutes – *Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, MPO Staff*
A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting April 14 was made by T. Bent, and seconded by L. Wiener. The motion carried.

8. Long-Range Transportation Plan – *Anne McGahan, Plan Manager, and Michael Callahan, Public Outreach Manager, MPO Staff, Hayes Morrison, TIP Manager*
Staff provided information and updates on the development of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), *Paths to a Sustainable Region*.

Public Outreach

Members were provided with copies of public comments received over the past two months regarding the LRTP. (See attached letters and comment matrix.) M. Callahan summarized the comments, which expressed the following:

- a update from the Town of Medway regarding the reconstruction of Route 109
- support from institutions and neighborhood groups for the *Boston – Commonwealth Avenue, Phase 2A* project
- support from the Downtown North Association for the *Boston – Causeway Street Crossroads Initiative*
- a question from the Conservation Law Foundation regarding how the MPO will incorporate the GreenDOT policy into the LRTP
- a request from the Friends of the Community Path that the *Community Path* be extended to Cambridge in conjunction with the *Green Line Extension*, and that the trail be included in the LRTP's Universe of Projects

- support for the *Belmont – Trapelo Road* project from State Senator Steven Tolman, State Representative William Brownsberger, and the Belmont Board of Selectmen
- support from the Charles River Conservancy for the *Community Path* project
- concerns from a Sudbury resident about the *Bruce Freeman Rail Trail* project
- support for the *Community Path* project
- support for the *Bruce Freeman Rail Trail* project

Financials

Members were provided with updated financial information for the LRTP. (See attached financial tables.) H. Morrison provided an overview of the changes made to the financial information since these figures were first presented to the members in March.

Since that time the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) has agreed to a reduced amount of money available to the MPOs in the Commonwealth to program in the years of the LRTP from FFY 2022 through FFY 2035. Originally, there was an expectation that more money would be available for MPO programming in those years (as compared to the early years of the LRTP) because after FFY 2022 the Commonwealth will no longer be paying off Grant Anticipation Notes (GANs) borrowed for the Central Artery/Tunnel project and the Accelerated Bridge Program. However, MARPA has agreed with a MassDOT request to direct some of those funds toward statewide maintenance items rather than for the discretion of MPOs. (These figures are provided on the attached financial table titled, “MassDOT Statewide Finance Plan Summary.”)

Investment Strategies

At the meeting of April 14, staff was given approval to develop several investment strategies for funding highway projects. Staff has since prepared three potential investment strategies, which A. McGahan explained. (See attached memorandum titled, “Investment Strategies for *Paths to a Sustainable Region*,” and investment strategy tables.)

The tables show how three different approaches to programming the LRTP could play out. Each proposed strategy is explained through two tables. One lists projects and programs with their corresponding investment categories, the dollars to be allocated to those projects and programs, and in which time bands they are to be funded. The other table shows the percentage of dollars programmed toward those projects’ and programs’ respective investment categories, and the percentage of funding left unassigned (the amount that could be programmed for the TIP), and other percentages of available funding.

These strategies assume that the MPO has nearly \$2.8 billion to program over the 25 years of the LRTP, and do not factor in potential reductions in the MPO’s funding which may occur due to congressional action.

Strategy 1, Current Approach (corresponding with the attached Tables 1A, and 1B) proposes the MPO advance all the projects in the current LRTP except for those that are built, advertised, or programmed in the TIP. In this strategy, 52 % of projects are in the Roadway Modernization category, 34% in Roadway Expansion, 9% in Transit Expansion, 2% in Bicycle and Pedestrian Expansion, and 2% in the Clean Air and Mobility Program.

Strategy 2, Regional Needs-Based Focus (corresponding with the attached Table 2A and 2B) proposes advancing projects that are in the current LRTP that meet regional needs, as identified in the LRTP regional needs assessment. This option also includes several programs that the Committee expressed interest in: an Isolated Intersection Improvement Program with which the MPO could direct \$2 million per year to intersection projects identified by the MPO's Congestion Management Process. This scenario has 55 % of projects in the Roadway Modernization category, 42% in Roadway Expansion, 0% in Transit Expansion, 0% in Bicycle and Pedestrian Expansion, and 3% in the Clean Air and Mobility Program.

Strategy 3, New Mix of Projects and Programs – Lower Cost/More Flexibility (corresponding with the attached Table 3A and 3B) proposes selecting lower cost projects that relate to identified needs from the needs assessment and adding several programs: Bottlenecks, Complete Streets, Isolated Intersection Improvement, MBTA Safety, Advanced Transit Management, Management and Operations, and MassDOT Bay State Greenway Priority 100. All of the programs have \$4 million per year. This approach would allow the MPO to fund more projects addressing varied needs in more locations around the region. This scenario has 52 % of projects in the Roadway Modernization category, 24% in Roadway Expansion, 9% in Transit Maintenance and Modernization, 4% in Bicycle and Pedestrian Expansion, 4% in the Clean Air and Mobility Program, and 7% in Roadway Management and Operations.

Members then discussed the strategies:

D. Koses pointed out that the percentage of Bicycle and Pedestrian funding might be higher in these scenarios if one were to consider the bicycle and pedestrian accommodations on roadway projects rather than just the projects wholly categorized as Bicycle and Pedestrian projects.

J. Gillooly raised a question about the proposed Isolated Intersection Improvement Program in Strategy 2. He noted that Strategy 2 excludes projects such as *Boston – Sullivan Square* project, which he said would provide improvements to a regional road. A. McGahan responded that this scenario simply offers an idea for a way to work toward implementing GreenDOT policies.

D. Mohler explained that the MPO cannot program projects in TIP that cost more than \$10 million or that add capacity, unless those projects are in the LRTP. The MPO could, however, amend the LRTP as long as it remains financially constrained. He also pointed out that a project cannot go through the federal environmental review process unless it is listed in the LRTP.

D. Mohler raised a question regarding whether a relatively higher cost projects in Strategy 3 programs could be funded if the program received only \$4 million a year. He also asked why the *Canton Interchange* project, which is a high priority for MassDOT, was not included in Strategy 3. A. McGahan explained that the *I-93-I-95 Interchange* in Woburn is funded in the strategy and that that was the only high cost project that was consistent with the intent of this strategy. P. Wolfe explained that the underlying philosophy in developing this strategy was a consideration that there could be less funding coming from the federal government and that the MPO might want more flexibility to meet mobility needs by funding smaller projects in more locations around the region.

T. Bent suggested that the *Somerville – Community Path* project should be included in the strategies since MassDOT is committed to bringing the project to 100% design. A. McGahan noted that the project could fit into the MassDOT Bay State Greenway Priority 100 Program under Strategy 3.

D. Mohler spoke to the need for the MPO to develop a proper balance between funding maintenance and expansion projects. Given the maintenance needs of the system, the MPO should choose its expansion projects wisely.

D. Koses expressed concern that adding programs, as in Strategy 3, would limit the MPO's flexibility when programming funds.

L. Wiener noted that the *Green Line Extension* project – which the Commonwealth is required to build – is not listed in all the scenarios. A. McGahan noted that the reason is because in two of the scenarios there was an assumption that highway money would not be flexed to transit. She noted that the members will also have to decide if they want to flex funds.

T. Bent stated that the *Green Line Extension* project with a terminus at Route 16 should be included in all strategies since the MPO is committed to the project.

J. Gillooly explained that the *Boston – Sullivan Square* and *Rutherford Avenue* projects, which are included in Strategy 1, are actually one project with two phases. The project came out of the same study.

T. Michelman provided his email address, tmichelman@comcast.net, and offered to discuss ways to increase the amount of transportation money to anyone who is interested. He suggested having a petition to increase the gas tax. T. Bent added that the U.S. Conference of Mayors recently put forth a plan to increase the gas tax.

A. McGahan described the schedule for the LRTP, which must be adopted by August 15. Members agreed to discuss LRTP projects at the meeting of May 19.

9. Work Program

The discussion of four work programs was tabled until the meeting of May 19.

10. Members Items

There were none.

11. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by P. Regan and seconded by J. Gillooly. The motion carried.

The MPO meeting that was to follow the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee meeting was not held due to the tabling of the MOU item.

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Meeting Attendance
Thursday, May 5, 2011, 10:00 AM

Member Agencies

MassDOT
MassDOT Highway

City of Boston

City of Newton
City of Somerville
MAPC

MassPort
MBTA
MBTA Advisory Board
Regional Transportation
 Advisory Council
Town of Braintree
Town of Framingham

Town of Hopkinton

Representatives and Alternates

David Mohler
David Anderson
John Romano
Jim Gillooly
Tom Kadzis
David Koses
Tom Bent
Eric Bourassa
Eric Halvorsen
Lourenço Dantas
Joe Cosgrove
Paul Regan
Laura Wiener
Steve Olanoff
Christine Stickney
Ginger Esty
Dennis Giombetti
Mary Pratt

MPO Staff/CTPS

Steven Andrews
Michael Callahan
Maureen Kelly
Robin Mannion
Anne McGahan
Hayes Morrison
Sean Pfalzer
Karl Quackenbush
Alicia Wilson
Pam Wolfe

Other Attendees

Jim Gallagher
Jack Gillon
Seth Goldberg

Mark Guenard
Dennis Harrington
Kien Ho
Kristina Johnson
Patel Mares
Tom Michelman

Mary Ann Murray

Joe Onorato
Tom O'Rourke

City of Quincy
Office of State Representative
Tom Sannicandro
MassDOT
City of Quincy
BETA Group
City of Quincy
Conservation Law Foundation
Friends of the Bruce Freeman
Rail Trail
Access Advisory Committee to
the MBTA
MassDOT District 4
Neponset Valley Chamber of
Commerce

Jonah Petri	Friends of the Community Path
Arnold Pinsley	Natick
Senator Karen Spilka	State Senate
Jim Terry	Town of Concord's Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Advisory Committee
Sheri Warrington	Office of State Senator Thomas McGee
Lynn Weissman	Friends of the Community Path
Michael H. Wright	Office of State Senator Karen Spilka