

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

August 18, 2011 Meeting

10:00 AM – 11:15 AM, 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:

- approve the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2012 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- approve the work program for the *Regional HOV Lane System Planning Study*

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

Jim Gallagher registered his objection to the way in which MassDOT announced its proposal to seek an amendment to the State Implementation Plan (SIP). He believes that MassDOT should have brought its proposal to the community before requesting the amendment from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The proposed amendment to the SIP would eliminate the requirement to complete the final design of the *Red Line – Blue Line Connector* project.

Wig Zamore, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership and Mystic View Task Force, noted that there is no funding source for the *Green Line Extension* project listed in the draft FFYs 2012 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and he suggested that the information be added. D. Mohler stated that the funding source would be included in the document soon.

In response to a question from Bob McGaw, Belmont resident, D. Mohler provided information on the status of the SIP projects and MassDOT's proposed amendment to the SIP. He explained that MassDOT will complete all of the SIP projects, except the design of *Red Line – Blue Line Connector* project. The projects will be completed behind their original schedules, as outlined in the proposed amendment.

J. Gallagher stated that the TIP should not have been released for public comment without the financial information for the *Green Line Extension* project included in it. D. Mohler responded by noting that the current cash flow information for that project is included in the TIP.. He directed staff to add a note to the TIP document to specify that the project will be funded by state bonds and possibly with federal New Starts funding (up to 50%), if approved.

Tom Bent, City of Somerville, noted that he submitted questions to MPO staff regarding the *Green Line Extension* project. He asked when MassDOT would be filing a petition to delay the project. D. Mohler replied that MassDOT must prepare a mitigation proposal first. It is possible that the petition may be filed in the first quarter of 2012. A public process will follow.

T. Bent then inquired about the availability of the risk analysis that MassDOT conducted for the *Green Line Extension* project. D. Mohler stated that MassDOT will post the documents on its website after it redacts certain information that should not be made available to potential bidders at this time. It is possible the documents may be available by the end of next week.

W. Zamore commented that it appears that MassDOT does not have enough staff working on the *Green Line Extension* project to execute the project in a timely manner. He then suggested a possible study idea for the MPO's next UPWP, which would have the MPO staff research how other light rail construction projects in the country are managed.

2. Chair's Report – David Mohler, MassDOT

The DEP has released a schedule for an upcoming public hearing on the SIP. The hearing will be held in September.

The chair will be scheduling a meeting of the Executive Director Search Committee, which is overseeing the process for hiring a new Director of the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS).

The Secretary of Transportation, Jeffrey Mullan, will step down from his position on September 2. Richard Davey will become Secretary of Transportation on September 3.

3. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

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

The Advisory Council heard a presentation from the Massachusetts Port Authority at its August meeting. Two subcommittees will meet next week to develop the Council's comments on the TIP and Long-Range Transportation Plan.

The Council will also hold its election for chair and vice chair in September. S. Olanoff is a candidate for chair, and Monica Tibbits, 128 Business Council, is a candidate for vice chair.

5. Director's Report – Karl Quackenbush, Acting Director, CTPS

Staff distributed copies of the MPO's new Memorandum of Understanding. Copies of a red-lined version showing edits made to the document were also made available on request.

Ariel Godwin, Congestion Management Process (CMP) Manager, has resigned from CTPS to relocate to Florida. CTPS will be running an advertisement for two positions: Congestion Management Process (CMP) Manager and TIP Manager.

In response to members' questions, K. Quackenbush stated that CTPS hopes to fill the TIP Manager position soon. Sean Pfalzer, Assistant TIP Manager and MPO staff, and Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, are currently handling the functions of the TIP Manager.

6. FFY 2012 Unified Planning Work Program – *Mary Ellen Sullivan, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff*

Members were provided with documentation for the *FFY 2012 Unified Planning Work Program* (UPWP), including a chapter on the budget (Chapter 8), public comment letters and draft responses (Appendix B), and a description of the South Station Expansion study (which was requested by MassDOT since the release of the draft UPWP). (See attached.)

M.E. Sullivan noted that most of the public comment letters expressed support for the Needs Assessment of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and requested specific corridor studies. The Regional Transportation Advisory Council submitted a comment requesting the completion of the *Freight Survey* project and the *Regional HOV-Lane System* study.

A motion to approve the FFY 2012 UPWP was made by John Romano, MassDOT Highway Department, and seconded by Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The motion carried.

7. Work Programs – *Karl Quackenbush, Acting Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) and Mark Berger, MassDOT*

Members heard presentations on two draft work programs at the meeting of August 4: the *Regional HOV Lane System Planning Study* and the *Boston Ramp Study*. (See attached.)

A motion to approve the work program for the *Regional HOV Lane System Planning Study* was made by T. Bent, and seconded by John Westerling, Town of Hopkinton. The motion carried.

Members further discussed the *Boston Ramp Study* and Mark Berger, Project Supervisor, MassDOT, answered questions. This study would support a study being conducted by MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning. MassDOT is studying the potential for building new ramps on the Massachusetts Turnpike between Brookline Avenue and Berkeley Street in Boston. CTPS would conduct travel forecasting for four potential ramp configurations and provide data on traffic volumes on the Turnpike, on the potential new ramps, and on surface streets.

Jim Gillooly, City of Boston, asked if MassDOT has made a decision about electronic tolling on the potential new exit ramps. M. Berger replied that MassDOT is considering

equity-based tolling (a driver would pay a toll amount based on the distance of his or her trip).

J. Gillooly expressed concern that it would be premature to assume tolling at this stage of the study. And he noted that adding tolls in the downtown area might be a disincentive for drivers to use the Turnpike when traveling from the waterfront area. He suggested adding language to the work program stating that “should there be tolls, electronic tolling would be used.”

While the study, as presented, would model traffic with the assumption that there are tolls, J. Gillooly suggested adding a step to model traffic assuming that there are no tolls. This information would help determine how much use the Turnpike would get under both conditions and, in the future, it could inform a public process regarding tolling.

Three of the proposed modeling scenarios would examine potential new westbound off-ramps. J. Gillooly recommended that the fourth scenario examine an eastbound on-ramp. He suggested adding language to the work program to that effect; the MassDOT representatives agreed. He also asked that consideration be given to the concept of a reverse lane loop that would allow westbound traffic to reverse direction. M. Berger noted that MassDOT is developing an alternative for an eastbound on-ramp.

David Koses, City of Newton, expressed agreement with J. Gillooly’s comments. He also expressed concern about a perceived policy shift by MassDOT to toll all segments of the Turnpike. D. Mohler responded that MassDOT has not set a new tolling policy yet, but is studying alternatives.

D. Koses remarked that the alternatives posed in the work program (closing ramps to the Turnpike at Cortez Street, Arlington Street, Clarendon Street, and Massachusetts Avenue) seem difficult to envision. S. Olanoff suggested studying the traffic impacts of closing those on-ramps prior to testing the alternatives proposed in this study. He also suggested giving the work program a more descriptive name.

In response to these comments, M. Berger provided background information regarding how the proposed alternatives were selected. MassDOT first conducted an existing conditions analysis of the study area, in which the City of Boston, MAPC, neighborhood groups, a study advisory group, and others participated. The analysis identified “fatal flaws” or factors that would limit the design of new ramps. These factors include the Worcester rail line, which limits the ability to add eastbound on-ramps, and the area near the Bowker Overpass where there are restrictions due to environmental and historic issues. The three scenarios presented in the work program are those that passed the “fatal flaw” analysis and that seemed reasonable from the point of view of the members of the advisory group. While MassDOT is not recommending these alternatives at this time, it would like to examine the potential number of people that would use the ramps and the potential traffic impacts.

S. Olanoff advised studying the potential ramps both with and without closing the existing ramps. He stated that it is possible to close Newbury Street between Kenmore Street and Brookline Avenue, and suggested that there are more possibilities for closures than are included in the work program. M. Berger noted, however, that MassDOT is bound by the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) design guidelines, which would limit the ability to implement certain options.

Members returned to the discussion of whether to model the scenarios with the assumption that the ramps will be tolled or not tolled. E. Bourassa noted that building a new ramp would necessarily require MassDOT to apply tolls. D. Mohler agreed, and noted that it can be assumed that an untolled road would attract more users. J. Gillooly argued, however, that the cost of the tolls would have an impact on how many users are attracted to the Turnpike. He advocated for modeling both with and without tolls. D. Mohler noted that the additional modeling work would increase the cost of the work program.

No agreement was reached on these issues. This agenda item was tabled.

8. Members Items

J. Romano reminded members of the upcoming hearings on proposed routing of non-radioactive hazardous materials through Boston. The first hearing will be held on August 23 in Conference Rooms 2 & 3 of the State Transportation Building from 6:30 to 8:30 PM.

J. Gillooly provided background information about the routing proposal. The City of Boston is seeking state approval to restrict the trucking of hazardous materials through downtown Boston, unless authorized to make a delivery or pick-up in the city. The city funded a study that shows that the re-routing of such trucks would improve safety both in the daytime and evening hours.

Joe Cosgrove, MBTA, announced that the Federal Transit Administration awarded a \$3 million Asset Management Grant to the MBTA.

D. Mohler announced that FHWA released its Discretionary Awards, which included \$1 million for Commonwealth Avenue and additional funds for several other projects in the region. .

9. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn and convene the MPO meeting was made by J. Westerling, and seconded by J. Romano. The motion carried.

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Meeting Attendance
Thursday, August 18, 2011, 10:00 AM

Member Agencies

MassDOT
MassDOT Highway

City of Boston
City of Newton
City of Somerville
MAPC

MBTA
Regional Transportation
Advisory Council

Town of Bedford
Town of Braintree
Town of Hopkinton

Representatives and Alternates

David Mohler
Marie Rose
John Romano
Jim Gillooly
David Koses
Tom Bent
Eric Bourassa
Eric Halvorson
Joe Cosgrove
Steve Olanoff

Richard Reed
Christine Stickney
John Westerling
Mary Pratt

MPO Staff/CTPS

Michael Callahan
David Fargen
Maureen Kelly
Gregg Lantos
Robin Mannion
Anne McGahan
Sean Pfalzer
Karl Quackenbush
Mary Ellen Sullivan
Alicia Wilson
Pam Wolfe

Other Attendees

Jim Gallagher
Bob McGaw
Joe Onorato
Karen Pearson

Wig Zamore

Belmont resident
MassDOT Highway
MassDOT Office of
Transportation Planning
Somerville Transportation Equity
Partnership / Mystic View Task
Force