

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



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Summary of the February 8, 2012 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, in Boston, MA.

1. Introductions – *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

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

2. Chair's Report – *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

S. Olanoff announced that there have been two MPO meetings since the last Advisory Council meeting. On January 19 the MPO approved a work scope to study Priority Corridors identified in the Long-Range Transportation Plan Needs Assessment, and a Memorandum of Understanding among the MPO and RTA's. The Draft TIP Amendment was reviewed before approving it for the 30-day public review process.

MPO Chair, David Mohler, distributed a list of members of the MPO's three standing committees: the Administration and Finance Committee, Congestion Management Process Committee, and UPWP Committee. Eight voting members are assigned to each committee. Any member may attend committee meetings, but will not be able to vote if they are not an appointed member. Ad hoc committees will be formed as needed.

D. Mohler reported that the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration have approved the MPO's FFY 2012 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Charles Planck of the MBTA gave a PowerPoint presentation which provided an overview of the MBTA's fare increase and service reduction proposals. S. Olanoff encouraged Advisory Council members to attend the MBTA hearings.

At the February 2 meeting, the MPO approved the *MBTA Bus Route 1 Transit Signal Priority Study* and accepted changes to the proposed Draft Amendment One to the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2012 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

A work program amendment for the *MassDOT Title VI Program* was provided and discussed. A vote on the amendment is scheduled for the March 1 meeting.

K. Quackenbush, CTPS Executive Director and B. Kuttner, Project Manager presented the study – *Improving the Southeast Expressway: A Conceptual Plan*. The study addressed how to connect

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the Central Artery/Tunnel High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane with the zipper lane on the Southeast Expressway.

An executive session was held to discuss health and security evacuation planning issues. The MPO's UPWP Committee met after the MPO meeting.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2012 – Steve Olanoff, Chair

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as amended in discussion. The minutes of January 11, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved.

4. Future Freight Flows: Using Scenario Planning to Assist in Long-Term Planning – Dr. Chris Caplice, Executive Director, MIT Center for Transportation & Logistics (CTL)

Following a brief introduction by Chair Olanoff, Dr. Caplice addressed the meeting as the featured speaker.

The Scenario Planning Study conducted by the MIT Center for Transportation & Logistics was funded by a Transportation Research Board (TRB) grant (NCHRP - 20-83-1). The objective of the project was to help state DOTs, and any planning agency, with long-term planning techniques. The process has been introduced to a variety of entities including MPOs and several private firms. The original intent of the study was to focus on future freight systems for DOTs and their associated infrastructure planning.

The overarching reason for this study was to improve planning. The most standard method of planning is a point forecast. This type of forecast reviews historical evidence and projects forward from a base time period. This is typically a linear projection and it usually produces valid results for a short period of time. An improvement on this method is the risk management method which predicts a range of forecasts. This allows for variability in the predicted outcome. (For example, the projection is based on an outcome that is 5% above or below target.)

Infrastructure projects are usually greater than 10 years in the planning which lessens the likelihood that the predicted outcomes will be accurate. To demonstrate the variability of forecasts, a long range tracking of oil prices showed how poorly standard planning methods have fared. Variability in the baseline historical years contributes to the volatility of the projection both short and long-term.

The best way to avoid using a planning method that is not good at “predicting” is to shift our thinking to a method that is good at “preparing.” This entails the identification of a future set of outcomes or desired results. We do not know the future and it is impossible to identify all possible outcomes, but we can think up some likely possibilities. A handful of plausible alternative futures – scenarios – containing their most relevant dimensions are created.

The criteria for a good set of scenarios are built on:

- Decision Making – the strategic question has to match the right scenario (in freight planning, infrastructure investment must address product flow, therefore, all scenarios will change the type of flows)
- Plausibility – the scenario must fall within realistic limits

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- Alternatives – no favorites or preferred scenarios (Unofficial/Official) are pre-selected
- Differentiation – scenarios are structurally different; they must be separate and distinct
- Memorability – the scenario is easy to recall after the planning break-out event (naming the scenario helps here and is often used as a touchstone)
- Challenge – the scenario should push against established wisdom

Accuracy of event forecasting is not important.

- The skill being developed is preparation not prediction
- The focus is on effects not on individual events

Planners can then look at the “events” within the scenarios, examine the effects, and plan ways to prepare for those future possible effects. They do not change the unpredictability of life but do allow for flexibility in planning to meet external effects on any given scenario. Things that cannot be controlled are the things that shape the scenarios. Things that can be controlled are strategies to which responses are made.

Scenario planning is a qualitative process. One must become immersed in the scenario and prepare “as if it were a reality” and should avoid preconceived notions. For example, the study for DOTs created four future freight flow scenarios.

1. *Global Market Place*: a scenario exclusively based on free market enterprise, with a very robust world economy
2. *Naftástique!*: major trading block in free trading agreements within blocks but not between blocks
3. *One World Order*: monitored markets with more controls and regulations on trade
4. *Millions of Markets*: technology comes into greater fruition here with additive manufacturing and technological advancement

The scenarios represent different mixes and variants of themes; they are not meant to be perfect in their depiction of the future viewpoint. Demographics are not added to the scenario, nor are unforeseen impacts like war or energy meltdown.

Using the scenarios in planning workshops is a brainstorming activity.

- Invite a diverse set of stakeholders
- Have them consider a set of strategic options or alternatives

Dr. Caplice responded to questions posed by those present:

Scenario Planning was integrated into the planning process as a precursor to the Long Range Transportation Plan in one state; in other states it was not used at all. Since it functions much like a brainstorming session, it can be applied with latitude at various states or other entities.

The scenario is viewed in terms of its sensitivity to external events such as wars, volatility in fuel prices and the like. These external events are not planned, they are responded to in the context of the individual scenario. This is not an analytical process as much as it is forward-thinking approach to interpreting the future.

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5. TIP Update – S. Pfalzer, MPO Staff

During the course of any federal fiscal year (FFY) there is often information about projects and programs that becomes available and other changes that arise that were not known when the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was developed. The metropolitan transportation planning process provides mechanisms for MPOs to adapt their TIPs to these changing conditions: TIP amendments and administrative modifications. If the change(s) are minor and amount to less than 10% of a project's original cost, the change can be made by administrative modification. A public comment period is not required for an administrative modification. If the change is not minor, an amendment is necessary. Amendments have a 30-day public comment period in advance of the MPO taking action.

Sean P. provided an update on the TIP with a focus on two points:

A. Amendment to the Federal Fiscal Years 2012–2015 Transportation Improvement Program

The Boston Region MPO recently circulated for public review and comments: a Draft Amendment to the FFYs 2012–2015 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Since the release of that initial proposed amendment, the MPO has made minor changes to it.

The initial amendment proposed changes to the highway and transit elements of the TIP.

The highway element of the amendment incorporates:

- funding available for Transportation Enhancements
- several discretionary grants
- a TIFIA (Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act) loan request by Massport
- changes to the costs of three bridge projects
- changes to the construction schedule of one bridge project
- revised costs for the last three years of the Central Artery payments

The transit element changes are:

- reorganizing the transit element for Section 5307 and Section 5309 formula funds in order to be consistent with the MBTA Capital Investment Program (CIP) funding categories
- adding all carryover transit 5307 and 5309 projects
- adding several carryover earmark funds
- adding an MBTA TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) III grant

The revisions to the initially proposed amendment would add two new projects: a bridge project in Danvers and a new discretionary grant award for a Pay-as-You-Drive Insurance Pilot Program.

The 30-day public comment period for the proposed amendment, including all proposed changes, will end on Tuesday, February 21, 2012. The MPO is planning to take action on the amendment at its meeting currently scheduled for March 1, 2012. Comments on the draft amendment will be

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accepted in writing at the address below before the close of the public comment period and at the meeting.

This MPO meeting is the first of four this year that are scheduled to be held outside of Boston. This meeting will be in Beverly. The MPO meeting will begin at 10:00 AM in the Barnet Gallery of the Beverly Public Library, 32 Essex Street, Beverly, MA. Members of the public are invited to attend. MPO meetings are conducted in locations that are accessible to persons with disabilities and are conducted in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act and the MPO's standards for accessibility.

B. Development of the FFY 2013-16 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP development schedule shows current status, indicating finalizing of Universe of Projects for evaluation.

Evaluation of the projects:

- The projects are scored using the evaluation guide (Handout). Projects will be evaluated by March 2. Communities may comment after the initial evaluation. Staff will make a First Tier (\$60M) list of projects. These are projects that evaluate well and can be made ready in the upcoming federal fiscal year.
- The evaluations help staff to form the staff recommendation; it will be discussed at the April 5 meeting. On April 19, the MPO will vote on a draft TIP for public review and comment. After a 30-day comment period, there will be an additional time period for the MPO to consider public comment. This is an expedited schedule.

S. Pfalzer responded to questions posed by those present:

The MBTA is looking into potential cutbacks in funding. Its CIP feeds into the TIP so there is a link to future TIP programming.

The evaluations pertain to projects under consideration for the FFYs 2013-16 TIP. FFY 2016 is the year where there are as yet un-programmed funds. The Route 128 Add-a-Lane project will take \$30M, so this will leave about \$25M in FFY 2016 for projects to add to the TIP.

Beacon Park Yard Viaduct is not currently programmed and is not on the TIP.

Salem Ferry Service to Boston is a private enterprise and will be voted on in March by the MPO, in advance of the MBTA service cutback decision. The MBTA will not eliminate the service, but it does control the subsidy given to the firms.

Questions for evaluation that address freight fall under the category of mobility and the safety and security where there are two criteria.

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6. FFY 2013 Unified Planning Work Program Development – Mary Ellen Sullivan, MPO Staff.

The schedule of the UPWP, like the TIP, is being prepared in a much shorter time frame to facilitate review of public comments. The UPWP programs the federal planning funds that come from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). It also programs funds for CTPS to conduct studies on behalf of the funding agencies at their request.

The bulk of MPO's planning funds go to carrying out the ongoing process from year to year and to complete the studies that began last year. The Advisory Council is being asked to contribute ideas for new planning studies which are programmed through the UPWP process. MPO staff has added several projects to the universe of proposed projects based on findings in the Long Range Transportation Plan – Needs Assessment. Other sources of ideas for new planning studies are the MBTA's Capital Investment Plan (CIP), comment letters from the FFY2012 UPWP process, as well as ideas generated at the MAPC subregions.

M. Sullivan asked that new ideas from the Advisory Council be submitted to MPO staff by March 8, the date the MPO will receive word on planning target funding for the upcoming federal fiscal year. A staff recommendation of the universe of new planning studies will be presented to the UPWP Committee of the MPO on March 15, so the earlier the ideas come from the Advisory Council, the better. The UPWP Committee will decide on a recommendation to the MPO for the public review Draft FFY2013 UPWP on March 29.

M. Sullivan responded to questions from those present:

- MPO staff is engaged in evaluating project effectiveness in two ways: A study in the FFY 2012, "TIP Project Impact Before-After Evaluation," is underway, there is a newly indoctrinated process in the Long-Range Transportation Plan which incorporates performance measurement as a standard for evaluating project effectiveness in the Plan.
- Findings of the newly completed Freight Study will be presented to the MPO in the near future. The findings will be used to identify areas of interest and they may eventually generate projects in the TIP and UPWP. MassDOT is involved in the YouMoveMassachusetts process, which is intended to provide an overall umbrella for long-term transportation project planning.
- At the upcoming March 14 meeting, a "Universe of Proposed Projects" list will be presented along with the evaluation of those projects. The list will be comprised of all projects submitted by March 8. Submission of new planning projects to be offered by the Advisory Council will be coordinated with MPO staff liaison D. Fargen.

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7. Member Announcements – There were none.

8. Committee Reports:

Freight – A written report of the Freight Committee was made available. The report is posted on the MPO website under documents for this meeting.

Programs – The committee met and discussed possible upcoming topics and speakers. A list resulting from the discussion will be made available in the near future. The committee is going to try to schedule some field trips as well as panel discussions.

9. Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.

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ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for February 8, 2012

Cities and Towns:

Arlington, Laura Wiener
Belmont, Robert McGaw
Boston, Tom Kadzis
Lexington, Richard Canale
Millis, Dom D'Eramo
Wellesley, Frank DeMasi
Westwood, Steve Olanoff

Agencies:

Inner Core, Kristina Johnson
MAGIC, Franny Osman
MassDOT, Calli Cenizal
MBTA Advisory Board, Brian Kane
Joint Legislative Transportation Committee, Amanda Richard
MassDOT - Aeronautics Division, Steven Rawding

Citizen Groups:

AACT, Mary Ann Murray
American Council of Engineering Companies, Tom Daily
Association for Public Transportation,
Barry Steinberg & Rick Arena
Massachusetts Bus Association, Chris Anzuoni
MassCommute, David Kucharsky
National Corridors Initiative, John Businger
Massachusetts Motor Transportation Assoc., Jillian Zywer
Route 128 Business Council, Monica Tibbits
WalkBoston, John McQueen

Guests and Visitors:

Rachel Fichtenbaum – Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Ed Lowney
Alex Bloomenstiel
Romin Koebil
Simon Wright, P&B Bus

MPO Staff:

Pam Wolfe
Anne McGahan

Mary Ellen Sullivan
David Fargen

Mike Callahan
Daniel Amstutz