

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the May 9, 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 3:05 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page N)

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

S. Olanoff briefed the Council on the two MPO meetings and the MPO's UPWP Committee meeting which were held since the last Advisory Council meeting. The MPO approved the release of the Draft Federal Fiscal Year 2013 Unified Planning Work Program and the Draft Federal Fiscal Year 2013–16 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Changes to the TIP were made and will be addressed later in this meeting. The MPO staff has scheduled public meetings to discuss the UPWP and the TIP for May 22-23 in Melrose, Randolph and Boston.

Changes to the time bands of the Long Range Transportation Plan—"Paths to a Sustainable Region" were made that require an amendment. The draft amendment to the LRTP will be circulated for public comment in late May and June.

Other MPO activities conducted at the last meetings:

- The results of the MPO study "Arterial Traffic Signal Improvements and Coordination" were presented and discussed
- A work scope for South Station Expansion Support project was presented and discussed
- JARC (Job Access and Reverse Commute) and New Freedom Solicitation Update: Discussion on recent funding solicitation process and the presentation of proposals requesting funding
- A presentation of I-495/Metro West Development Compact Plan was made by MAPC's Barry Keppard, who covered topics of regional land use, development, and preservation planning

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

A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes. The minutes of the April 11, 2012 meeting were unanimously approved.

4. Mystic Valley Parkway Green Line Community Visioning Process – Eric Halvorsen, Transit Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

E. Halvorsen described the community envisioning process that resulted from the joint effort by Cities of Somerville and Medford. The project was conducted from late 2010 to early 2012. The study entailed a one-half mile buffer around the Mystic Valley Parkway terminus station and viewed the project in two phases. Phase one of the study covered the area from Lechmere Station to College Avenue with a spur going to Union Square. Phase two of the project covered areas between College Avenue and the proposed LRV transit station at Mystic Valley Parkway.

The impact on the area immediately surrounding the terminus transit stop would add 2,000 transit riders per day, and would convert 600 car trips to transit trips according to traffic modeling statistics. Travel times for drivers and transit users alike would result in substantial time savings for both car drivers and transit riders. In addition, the transit ride to downtown Boston would be a one-seat ride, thereby reducing transfer times.

A map of the project reveals a neighborhood that is densely populated with housing and some commercial office space. The map used at the community workshops focused on the parcels around the proposed stop at Mystic Valley Parkway. The eight meetings over the year of the community visioning process included five large meetings which were used to address the issues of parking, traffic, land takings, and aesthetics of the plan and its impact. One meeting dealt with the visual assets of the community and modeled the impact that development would have on the area in real time. A three-dimensional modeling software package was used to present different planning scenarios in real time.

Two meetings were held at smaller community centers bringing to a total of approximately 550 participants in the workshops. Study of the Boston Avenue to Mystic Valley Parkway corridor focused on walkability and accessibility, housing, business development, and anchor tenants (including Whole Foods Market). In developing a vision in this process, issues that were central to the neighborhood were expanded upon. Parking, elderly housing, low-income families, and open space were of primary importance when discussing the benefits of this transit oriented development. Benefits of development were estimated in terms of increased residential and commercial assets, as well as projected positive impacts of increased tax revenues and homeowner equity.

In conclusion, E. Halvorsen predicted that the Green Line Extension project would be a good boost to the area in terms of housing and jobs. Although some impacts of the development would need mitigation, including increased noise pollution and likely higher tax bills, the benefits of fewer vehicle trips and increases in the tax base would be positive impacts of community growth.

5. Draft Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2013-16 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Update – *Sean Pfalzer, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

S. Pfalzer discussed the development of the Draft TIP. The MPO members used the Staff Recommendation as a starting block to prioritize the target funding over the next four years.

The MPO made changes to the Staff Recommendation that included adding the Green Line Extension Phase 2 and adjusting the years that several projects will be funded. The \$8.1 million programmed in FFY 2015 for Phase 2 will serve as an initial investment and is for design costs. The MPO also approved moving amounts for the Canal Street project in Salem, Route 53 project in Hanover, and Liberty Street project in Danvers into earlier program years. Given the change of the Route 53 project in Hanover from FFY 2016 to FFY 2014, the MPO decision triggered a need for a change in the LRTP Air Quality Compliance Determination. An amendment to the LRTP is required to bring the TIP into conformity with the LRTP. This amendment process will include a public comment period.

S. Pfalzer reviewed the Draft TIP tables and provided an overview of the other funding categories such as the Bridge, Statewide Transportation Enhancements, and Interstate Maintenance programs also incorporated into the Draft TIP. He indicated that several projects from the MPO Universe of Projects, particularly multi-use trails, have been programmed through statewide funding programs.

The public comment period for the FFYs 2013-16 TIP and the FFY 2013 UPWP will end on May 31, 2012. After that time the MPO will consider the comments and then take action on the two documents at the June 28 MPO meeting.

S. Pfalzer responded to questions posed by members:

- Although the Staff Recommendation did not include the Green Line Extension and the Assabet River Rail Trail projects, the MPO voted to include the Green Line Extension in the draft TIP. The Assabet River Rail Trail project was not advanced.
- Federal funding is available for the Bowker Overpass project on a split of 80 % federal funding and 20% state funding. The bridge, a former DCR structure, was transferred to MassDOT in 2009 as part of the transportation reform.
- CMAQ funding for certain suburban transit projects is available for a three year period. The TIP has annual formula funding for MetroWest RTA and CATA. In addition, JARC/New Freedom grants provide discretionary funding for projects that may address suburban mobility issues.

6. Comment Letter on the Draft FFYs Transportation Improvement Program and FFY 2013 Unified Planning Work Program – *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

Members reviewed and discussed the Draft letter and offered suggestions for a final version of the letter. A greater emphasis on freight, and a direct bicycle, pedestrian and transit orientation was suggested. The proper ordering of the concerns in the letter was decided. The Council voted to send the letter to the MPO Chairman after comments are folded into the letter. Staff will re-draft the letter to include revisions and send the letter to the Chair.

7. Member Announcements – There were none

8. Committee Reports – There were none

9. Adjourn – 4:30 PM

Regional Transportation Advisory Council

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Cities and Towns:

Acton, Mike Gowing
Arlington, Laura Wiener
Boston, Tom Kadzis
Lexington, Richard Canale
Marlborough, Walter Bonin
Millis, Dom D'Eramo
Quincy, Kristina Johnson
Wellesley, Frank DeMasi
Westwood, Steve Olanoff, Chair

Agencies:

MassDOT - Planning, Calli Cenizal
MassDOT Aeronautics Division, Steven Rawding
MBTA Advisory Board, Brian Kane
MAPC - Inner Core, Kristina Johnson
MAPC - MAGIC, Franny Osman
MAPC - SWAP, Chan Rogers
Joint Legislative Transportation Committee, Steven Smalley
(Sen McGee)
MassRides, Catherine Paquette

Citizen Groups:

AACT, Mary Ann Murray
American Council of Engineering Companies, Tom Daily
Association for Public Transportation, Barry Steinberg
Boston Society of Architects, Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers, Balek Al-Khatib
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition, Jenna Bernabe
Massachusetts Bus Association, Chris Anzuoni
Massachusetts Motor Transportation Assoc., Anne Lynch &
Jillian Zywer
MassBike, Chris Porter
MoveMassachusetts, Jon Seward
National Corridors Initiative, John Businger
Riverside Neighborhood Association, Marilyn Wellons
Route 128 Business Council, Monica Tibbits, Vice-chair
WalkBoston, John McQueech

Guests and Visitors:

Ed Lowney

MPO Staff:

Mike Callahan
David Fargen
Bill Kuttner

Karl Quackenbush, Director, CTPS
Sean Pfalzer
Pam Wolfe, Manager, Certification Activities