

# Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

## January 9, 2013 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

## DRAFT Meeting Summary

### 1. Introductions

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 5)

### 2. Chair's Report—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

On December 20, the MPO approved TIP Amendment 3, as well as a work program for Part 2 of an HOV Lane study. MPO staff presented Part I of the HOV study on screening regional highways for possible preferential lane implementation, conducted for the MPO. Staff recently reported to the MPO on Community Transportation Technical Study program studies where specific local traffic problems were analyzed and solutions were recommended to the city or town. These studies are part of the presentation today.

### 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2012—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes. The December 12, 2012, minutes were approved unanimously, with one abstention.

### 4. South Station Expansion Project—*Matthew Ciborowski, Deputy Project Manager, MassDOT, Office of Transportation Planning*

The goal of this project is to expand South Station. The project includes planning and engineering work. The expanded South Station would be beneficial for rail service both in and outside the MPO region.

The project will include planning for an expanded number of tracks, platforms, and waiting areas. The scope of the project will include creation of railroad layover storage. It will also include enhanced streetscape design and the development of commercial and residential space over the existing South Station. The project will partner with South Station and the South Boston neighborhood to provide for best outcomes.

M. Ciborowski described the project area with a graphic. He then discussed the project's main issues:

- South Station is congested and needs added rail capacity to meet expected growth

- South Station and the area need to be served by a sustainable roadway
- The plan should provide for re-opening Dorchester Avenue and creating a Harborwalk extension

The plan envisions track expansion to the east of existing tracks. The largest obstacle to be addressed in the project is the removal of the USPS Post Office along the Fort Point Channel to allow for that.

South Station was opened in 1899 with 28 tracks. Gradually, the USPS bought much of the area where the current Post Office facility exists. Now there are 13 tracks. After years of neglect, the station was almost demolished in the late 1970's but the MBTA bought South Station and undertook a major redevelopment. Demand for rail service has grown to the point where there is major expansion needed today. To that end, the MassDOT was awarded a Federal Rail Administration-funded High Speed Passenger Inter City Rail Grant which includes planning and environmental and engineering work for this project.

- The study activity includes:
  - Civic engagement
  - Looking at transportation issues and rail operational analysis
  - Environmental impact analysis and review
  - Preliminary engineering and architectural designs
  - Review and analysis of joint development
  - Cost and scheduling
  - Analysis of the relocation of the USPS General Mail Facility (GMF)

Activity that has been conducted over the past six months includes:

- Open houses
- Working with Amtrak and the MBTA to understand issues
- Review of traffic and passenger counts in the area for baseline traffic survey purposes
- Environmental analysis; an Environmental Notification Form will be filed later this year
- Looking at layouts and egress analysis
- Reviewing other major US city rail facilities, including those undergoing development activities
- Reviewing the replacement site facilities for the USPS
- Examining potential alternatives for midday layover facilities

The project personnel are working closely with Amtrak and BRA and other major partners to make sure all the needs of all involved are met.

Conceptual preliminary artistic drawings of the project were presented depicting the completed project. Items noted in the drawing included the potential development area along the Fort Point Channel and the streetscape along a newly reopened Dorchester Avenue, which reconnects South Boston and the Financial District.

More information on the project is available at the MassDOT website, [MassDOT.gov](http://MassDOT.gov).

M. Ciborowski responded to questions:

- Amtrak and Federal Railroad Administration have been extensively involved in the review of this project which is considered a keystone to the NE Corridor. The scope of this project does not include the North-South Rail Link, but nothing is being done to preclude its possibility in the future.
- Demand for commuter rail to Worcester indicates a need for South Station expansion. Studying the alignment of the tracks poses engineering and environmental concerns and project personnel are working not to preclude this or any other future need. They are seeking to design for accommodating the largest number of trains. In addition to project considerations in the immediate South Station area, Beacon Park is being reviewed as a possible layover area.
- The USPS GMF sites being reviewed are close to the port of Boston. Members are working not to preclude anything and are reviewing all designs of all of the development plans in the area.
- Concerns with sea level rise are being discussed with the appropriate agency.
- The status of air rights includes the 40 story Heinz Development tower which currently has its environmental and FAA permits. The existing façade of South Station will remain. The planning completion date for the project is June 2015. This will include three components: planning, environment and 30% design.
- The project planning is careful not to produce products that would preclude future possible construction of the North-South Rail Link.

## **5. Community Transportation Technical Assistance –*Seth Asante, MPO Staff***

Seth Asante described the recent Community Technical Assistance studies conducted in four municipalities. The theme of the studies often relates to safety and operations, bicycle and pedestrian issues, livability issues and other traffic operations issues.

- In Winchester, travel modeling was used to determine the best lane channelization and to determine how land use changes impact the traffic in downtown.

- In Revere, mitigation of traffic congestion on Crescent Avenue was the main objective. In this study, local lane channelizing and traffic signal analysis was reviewed. MPO staff proposed short-term improvements in channeling, painting and signage, which were implemented. A long-term recommendation proposed converting Winthrop Avenue into a two-way street, signalizing an intersection, and expanding lane width with replacement of a bus stop.
- Traffic mitigation concerns in the Swampscott study addressed poor traffic circulation at the intersection of Monument Ave, Burrill St. and Route 129. The intersection is adjacent to Linscott Park. Monument Avenue is a National Historical District which makes major changes subject to considerable additional review. Short-term improvements in painting and signage were implemented as a result of the study. Long-term recommendations included the installation of a roundabout and signalization and lane channelization.
- In Danvers, different types of pedestrian crossing signals were reviewed for effectiveness in alerting traffic at intersections with rail-trail crossings. An improved type of flashing signal will be installed at the rail-trail crossing.

## **6. New Business:**

There was none.

## **7. Committee Meeting:**

The Membership Committee met in January, but will present new wording prior to the February meeting. A vote to accept any changes will be done at the following meeting. The documents will be circulated prior to the meetings.

## **8. Old Business—*Steve Olanoff, Chair***

There was none.

## **9. Member Announcements—*Steve Olanoff, Chair***

There were none.

## **10. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:25 PM. The motion carried.

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**ATTENDANCE**

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MassDOT*	Calli Cenizal
MassDOT - Office of Transportation Planning*	Mathew Ciborowski
MassDOT - Aeronautics Division*	Steven Rawding
BRA*	John Read
Joint Legislative Transportation Committee	Amanda Richard (Sen. McGee)
MassRides	Catherine Paquette
Arlington*	Laura Wiener
Boston*	Tom Kadzis
Canton	William Friel
Lexington*	Richard Canale
Marlborough	Walter Bonin
Millis	Dom D'Eramo
Wellesley	Frank DeMasi
Westwood	Steve Olanoff
American Council of Engineering Companies	Thomas Daley
Association for Public Transportation	Barry M Steinberg
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	Topher Smith
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition	Jenna Bernabe
Massachusetts Bus Association	Chris Anzuoni
MassBike	Chris Porter; P. Armstrong
MoveMassachusetts	John Seward
National Corridors Initiative	John Businger
Riverside Neighborhood Association	Marilyn Wellons
WalkBoston	John McQueen

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**Guests**

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Ed Lowney

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**CTPS Staff**

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Pam Wolfe	Efi Pagitsas
David Fargen	Seth Asante
Dan Amstutz	

(\* Non-voting members)