

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

February 13, 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 8)

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

There were two MPO meetings since the last Advisory Council meeting. The MPO agreed to submit a letter of support to the Federal Highway Administration for a MassDOT proposal for a Climate Change Adaptation Pilot Project. The MPO also heard a presentation on the MassDOT Mode Shift program to reduce single occupant vehicle mode share and increase shares for transit and active transportation modes.

On Friday, February 22, Secretary Davey will be speaking at the Move Massachusetts meeting. RSVPs are required at MoveMass@USA.net. All parties interested in MassDOT initiative on transportation finance should consider attending the meeting.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes of January 9, 2013—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes to the January 9 meeting. John Businger, National Corridors Initiative, felt that the minutes did not accurately reflect what he said regarding questions he posed during the presentation by the project representative, M. Ciborowski, Deputy Project Manager, MassDOT, regarding the South Station Expansion Project. J. Businger said that the meeting notes should state his question which asked why the North-South Rail Link was not included in the expansion plans as well as the answer given. Mr. Businger reiterated his points of support for the North-South Rail Link.

Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff, indicated that the format of the minutes has been to capture the essence of the presentations, questions, and responses. The goal is not to quote every speaker or to quote every question asked, but to make sure the important information that pertains to the topic discussed is reported. The minutes were tabled until next meeting so that adjustments can be made to the text discussing the questions posed regarding the South Station Development Project.

Frank DeMasi felt the reporting of the responses to the questions lacked sufficient context to convey the full meaning of the conversation. He mentioned his posing of a question on relocating the South Station USPS facility.

John McQueen noted that questions in the past were memorialized in a way that identified the person asking the question, followed by a brief description of the response. He asked why the format has changed.

S. Olanoff indicated that the question and answer part would be clarified and brought back to the Advisory Council for approval.

4. Transportation Equity—*Alicia Wilson, Project Manager, MPO Staff*

Alicia Wilson discussed the MPO's Transportation Equity Program and explained that it is one way the MPO complies with the Federal mandates that relate to civil rights. The most comprehensive is Title VI, the 1964 congressional act banning discrimination in federally funded programs and activities on the basis of race, color or national origin. All entities receiving federal funds must comply.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is defined as a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Executive Order 13166 requires reasonable steps to improve access to services for LEP persons. To achieve compliance with this, interpreters and document translations are advertised as available upon request.

Title VI requires each entity for whom the law applies to:

- Prepare and post a nondiscrimination notice
- Develop complaint procedures
- Provide inclusive public participation
- Develop demographic profiles of the region
- Report on planning and program activities

As a sub-recipient of federal funds, the MPO prepares Title VI reports and submits them to MassDOT. These reports are submitted every three years and all activities are updated on an annual basis. Both the Title VI and Environmental Justice reporting requirements call for demographic profiles. These reports locate low-income and minority populations, and show where Transportation Equity Outreach is focused.

Environmental Justice (EJ) is based on a 1994 Executive Order requiring the MPO to ensure that minority and low-income communities are treated equitably in the provision of transportation services and projects. The MPO must provide for full participation by minority and low –income communities in transportation planning.

In addition to developing demographic profiles and providing for inclusive public participation, Environmental Justice requires the MPO to determine the benefits and burdens of projects for minority and low-income populations. These analytical studies must be reported in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Demographic Profiles adhere to guidelines which define populations of concern, locate populations of concern with US Census data, and present the data with maps.

Some of the functional definitions employed by the MPO in Title VI and Environmental Justice analysis include:

1. Minority – American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African-American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
2. MPO Minority Area – A transportation analysis zone (TAZ) with a minority population greater than 27.8%
3. Low-Income for MPO Environmental Justice analyses – includes a household income less than or equal to 60% of the MPO median household income based on a 2000 US Department of Housing and Urban Development report.

Several graphics relating to the Title VI analysis of the region regarding race and Hispanic Origin, language, and income were presented:

Transportation Equity is a program that fosters awareness and consideration of transportation equity/Environmental Justice transportation needs in MPO planning and programming. This program encourages participation in planning activities, and targets populations including low-income, minority, limited English proficient, and the elderly for awareness, outreach and involvement.

Means of implementing the MPO's Transportation Equity Program include identifying community contacts, conducting surveys and interviews, holding forums, and reporting input to the MPO

Questions and Answers

- In response to a question by Chris Porter on increasing participation by populations of concern in the Advisory Council, A. Wilson said that yes, increasing participation at the Advisory Council would be good. At the direction of the Advisory Council Membership Committee, staff is trying to make more people aware of the Advisory Council and its work. New members, including municipalities and social service organizations representing minority, low-income and LEP populations, are being invited to attend the Advisory Council meetings. After attending, if they wish, they can apply to join and if approved by the Advisory Council members, could become voting members.

- In response to a question by F. DeMasi, A. Wilson added that the MPO provides technical assistance to potential grant applicants for Job Access Reverse Commute grants that could reach EJ communities. Communities can ask for specific data needs for their community including community profiles and other demographic data.
- In response to a question by C. Porter about EJ analysis of the outcomes of transportation investment and the quality of transportation services in terms of transit, as measured by quality and accessibility and congestion, A. Wilson stated that the MBTA determines those evaluation metrics. In the Long Range Transportation Plan, the proposed new projects are included in the transportation network and the model determines if there are system-level differences in access, mobility and air quality.
- John McQueen asked whether fares are taken into account in terms of fare adjustments for the neighborhoods that may lack service options. A. Wilson referred such inquiries to the recent analysis on fare increase conducted by CTPS. The analysis conforms to strict FTA requirements.
- S. Olanoff asked if regional equity is being achieved. A. Wilson pointed out that the analysis the MPO conducts is the systemwide analysis comparing accessibility and mobility systemwide for EJ populations versus non-EJ populations. There are other studies conducted by other organizations and agencies that focus on specific pricing policy issues.

5. Screening Regional Express Highways for Possible Preferential Lane Implementation –*Bill Kuttner, MPO Staff*

Bill Kuttner introduced his presentation by directing members to review the full Regional HOV Lane System Planning Study on the Boston Region MPO website at www.bostonmpo.org. The purpose of this study was to examine the problems that are associated with freeway congestion in the region. Since there are no new freeways planned and few lane additions being considered, preferential lanes could offer flexible and lower-cost alternatives to relieving congestion. The study methodically reviewed route segments to identify where lanes might be appropriate. Some locations selected in this phase of the study will be studied in detail in Phase II.

Definition of preferential lanes

Preferential lanes are those that have higher level of service than the associated general-purpose lanes. Rules practiced in the U.S. for eligibility of use of these lanes typically include 2+ or 3+ carpools (HOVs), buses, “green” vehicles, fixed or variable tolls, or a combination of criteria.

Study Assumptions

Underlying assumptions employed in the study were that preferential lanes would be new construction; 1500 vehicles per hour (vph) use the preferential lane; lanes will operate as single reversible lanes; lanes include breakdown/enforcement area; design criteria may require land takings; and lane eligibility criteria may change.

Analysis Process

The highway system in the MPO region was divided into major components. The congested segments were identified using a comparison of weekday traffic per lane, peak-hour traffic per lane, slowest peak-period speed, and duration of the segment being substantially full.

Highway segments experiencing “problem” congestion were flagged. These segments were screened for user benefits. Nearby segments were reviewed to identify the extent of congestion while right-of-way constraints and construction issues were identified. Based on the analytical review, a preferential lane system is recommended.

Conclusions

Following the ground rules in which the users of both the general lanes and the preferential lanes benefit, specific candidate locations were identified.

- I-93 corridor north to the New Hampshire border
- I-95/Route 128 between I-93 and Winter Street in Waltham
- Southeast Expressway from downtown Boston to the existing “zipper” lane
- State Highways 24 and 3 through the Braintree Split connecting with the “zipper” lane

Questions and Answers:

In response to questions about the definition of capacity offered by Robert McGaw, B. Kuttner stated that the capacity calculation used in the analysis was a peak hour level of 1,500 vph in the preferential lane.

Several questions on median use and road width were posed (M. Gowing, F. Osman, F. DeMasi). The I-95 from I-93 to Waltham segment is congested in both directions during both peak hours but could still benefit from adding a new reversible lane. B. Kuttner noted that, although using the median for a light-rail development or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) adaptation is conceivable, the likely rail expansion strategy would be to “double-track” the existing single track rail lines in this part of the MPO region. Further, BRT connections to off-line stations require substantially wider highway rights-of-way which may be challenging in a densely populated corridor.

In response to a question by C. Porter, B. Kuttner said Phase 2 of the study will include model runs to verify that the flows capture the volume that is needed. The study will also identify bridges and other infrastructure that would need to be considered for replacement should there be an expansion of preferential lanes in the future.

Jon Seward expressed concern over the impact of reduced traffic congestion and whether congestion might have the unexpected, secondary effect of increasing suburbanization. B. Kuttner stated that even though I-93 is a backbone corridor of New England, the issue of suburbanization is beyond the scope of this study.

Tom Kadzis expressed concern over construction conflicts between the add-a-lane project on Route 3 South and the HOV lane candidate segment approaching the Braintree Split. B. Kuttner said this is a topic for a later study.

F. DeMasi commented on whether preferential lane projects or improved local service to existing commuter rail stations would offer more of a benefit to local communities. B. Kuttner said that improvements in both modes are needed; however, the tools used in this analysis focused on highway bottleneck areas.

6. Bylaws Review –*Monica Tibbitts-Nutt, Membership Committee Chair*

The proposed changes to the Bylaws were distributed to the members. After review and discussion, the Advisory Council will vote on the adoption of these changes at the March, 2013, meeting.

Committee Chair, M. Tibbitts-Nutt explained the changes. She noted that many of the changes are updates to naming. The biggest change stipulates that “any member of the MPO will be a non-voting member of the Advisory Council.” Members’ attention was directed to the red-lined text in the bottom paragraph of page 1. Other changes pertain to the election process. The Nominating Committee (which will be re-named the Election Committee) will initiate the election process in July. At that time, the Election Committee will seek nominations for elected offices from the Advisory Council members. Nominations will be open until the close of the September Advisory Council meeting. Elections will be held at the October meeting. New elected officers will take office on November 1.

Questions and Answers:

M. Tibbitts-Nutt clarified that nominations will be accepted from the floor up to the end of the September meeting. No nominations will be accepted after the September meeting, thereby allowing Advisory Council members time to review all possible candidates prior to the election, which will be held at the October meeting.

It was reiterated that MPO members would not be able to vote at Advisory Council meetings.

S. Olanoff stated that the Bylaws will be distributed prior to the March 13, 2013, meeting at which time a vote to accept the changes will be taken.

7. Committee Reports:

Please see the report (above) of the Membership Committee Chair regarding the Bylaws.

8. New Business:

F. DeMasi wondered whether the Advisory Council ought to weigh-in on the issues related to the Governor's new transportation finance plan. S. Olanoff said that although the Advisory Council has been supportive of transit and transportation projects in the past, the most effective way to support the Governor's finance plan would be for individual members to advocate for the transportation finance plan with their own state representatives and municipal leaders. This is the course of action taken at the most recent MPO meeting, where individual members were encouraged to take this approach in advocating for the plan.

9. Member Announcements:

It was announced that Rail Enthusiasts were going to hold a "Dinner in the Depot" in Malden, on March 21. Guest speaker is Scott Conti, President of the Providence and Worcester Railroad. The free program starts at 8:00 PM.

An announcement of the upcoming MoveMassachusetts meeting was made. Secretary Davey will address the meeting and it is suggested that anyone interested in attending sign up in advance at www.MoveMass@USA.net.

8. Old Business—*Steve Olanoff, Chair*

There was none.

10. Adjourn

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

Attendance	Representative
MassDOT*	Calli Cenizal
MAGIC*	Franny Osman
BRA*	Tad Read
Joint Legislative Transportation Committee	Steven Smalley
MassRIDES	Leon Papadopoulos
Acton	Mike Gowing
Belmont	Robert McGaw
Boston*	Tom Kadzis
Needham	David Montgomery
Quincy	Susan C Karim
Wellesley	Frank DeMasi
Westwood	Steve Olanoff, Chair
AACT	Mary Ann Murray
American Council of Engineering Companies	Tom Daley
Association for Public Transportation	Barry M Steinberg
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	Todd M Clark
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition	Jenna Bernabe
MassBike	Chris Porter
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
National Corridors Initiative	John Businger
Riverside Neighborhood Association	Marilyn Wellons
Route 128 Business Council	Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Vice Chair
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Guests	
Department of Developmental Services	Ralph Edwards
Ed Lowney	Resident

CTPS Staff	
Pam Wolfe	MPO Staff
Alicia Wilson	MPO Staff
Bill Kuttner	MPO Staff
Dan Amstutz	MPO Staff
David Fargen	MPO Staff

(* Non-voting members)