

Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting

May 1, 2014 Meeting

9:00 AM to 10:00 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Materials

Materials for this meeting included:

- A copy of the meeting agenda
- A report classifying work scopes that have been presented to the MPO since January 2012

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Sree Allam, Chair, Unified Planning Work Program Committee (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00 AM. UPWP Committee members, MPO staff, and other attendees introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 7.) Michelle Scott (MPO Staff) reviewed the meeting materials.

2. Update on FFY 2015 Metropolitan Planning Funding Allocations

S. Allam indicated that MassDOT staff were continuing to finalize information on FFY 2015 FTA Section 5303 funding (which is part of the MPO's metropolitan planning, or "3C" funding). She did not have details on when these amounts would be finalized.

Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director, said that that MPO staff received information on the amount of FHWA PL funding (also part of metropolitan planning, or "3C" funding) that the MPO will receive for FFY 2015. This amount is approximately \$129,000 less than what was available in FFY 2014. He identified four possible approaches for adjusting the budget and new projects to address this decrease:

- Scale back the funding for, or eliminate, some of the new discrete projects

- Only remove funding from ongoing or continuing 3C-funded UPWP projects and programs, leaving the new discrete projects as-is
- Reduce the funding of all (ongoing, continuing, and new discrete) projects and programs uniformly
- Pursue a combination of these approaches

K. Quackenbush asked UPWP Committee members whether they would be more comfortable with MPO staff reducing the budgets of ongoing and continuing work than with eliminating one or more new discrete projects. Laura Wiener, At-Large Towns (Town of Arlington) noted that if the scopes of these projects were to change in response to reduced funding, the Committee should be made aware of it, but if MPO staff can make adjustments without changing scopes significantly, then that would be fine.

K. Quackenbush proposed a strategy to address the funding reductions that would remove \$5,000 from the Household- Survey-Based Travel Profiles and Trends project (UPWP Project Universe number G-1); remove \$5,000 from the Safety Analysis for Intersections near MAGIC Schools (C-1) project; and remove the Community and Human-Services Transportation Support (D-1) project from the recommendation, instead adding \$20,000 to the Transportation Equity / Environmental Justice Support program to explore this topic. He explained that MPO staff could still do justice to these project topics using this strategy. He added that the funding for the proposed corridor study projects could be reduced, as the number of corridors that are studied can, to an extent, be adjusted to meet the available budget. While no decisions have been made yet, K. Quackenbush said that he is inclined to use this approach for the new discrete projects and then make adjustments to ongoing and continuing projects to account for the balance. He added that this strategy could be pursued if the FTA Section 5303 (metropolitan planning) funding is level with FFY 2014. If this amount is lower, another strategy to address the funding reductions may be needed.

3. Schedule of Upcoming UPWP Development Activities

S. Allam asked whether MPO staff felt it would be necessary for the UPWP Committee to meet on May 8 or if they should meet on May 15. M. Scott indicated that early in the week of May 5, she would inform Committee members on whether there is sufficient information available for MPO members to meet on May 8; otherwise the committee would reconvene on May 15.

4. Discussion of UPWP Committee Role in Work Scope and Work Program Review

K. Quackenbush reminded the group that this topic relates to a proposal that work scopes not occupy as much time on MPO meeting agendas as they currently do, and that many members of the MPO seem to support an alternative approach. One question related to this proposal is whether a subgroup of the MPO, perhaps the UPWP Committee, would need to spend more time reviewing the work scopes. He emphasized that at least a few members of the MPO should be interacting with the work scopes to the degree they desire, because one of the core activities of MPOs is to identify transportation problems and structure studies to address them. He added that, as he explained to the MPO at the April 17 meeting, all work scopes should continue to be sent to all MPO members in their packets, and that at a minimum, the MPO Executive Director or UPWP Committee Chair should continue to mention the work scopes available in the packets as part of their reports at MPO meetings.

K. Quackenbush then described the structure of a report that lists every work program presented to the MPO from CY 2012 through early CY 2014, which is based on a work program status report that MPO members regularly receive. The report categorizes work scopes by their funding source (3C funding or agency funding), and whether and how they are included in the UPWP. He reminded UPWP Committee members that one suggestion made at the April 17 MPO meeting was to not discuss scopes for projects or programs that are included in the UPWP at MPO meetings, and instead focus on scopes for projects that are not included in the UPWP, with some exceptions for both 3C-funded and agency projects.

Laura Wiener, At-Large Towns (Town of Arlington) said that there is too much information presented at MPO meetings, including in technical presentations on study outcomes. She said that not all study outcomes should be discussed the same way in terms of presentation length and detail. K. Quackenbush explained that the feedback he has received regarding the length and detail of study outcome presentations has varied widely, with other members expressing appreciation for the current level of detail. He added that MPO staff work to make these presentations in ten minutes or less. L. Wiener added that there needs to be a way for MPO staff to get MPO member input on work scopes.

David Koses, At-Large Cities (City of Newton) said that all MPO members should have the opportunity to look at and hear about work scopes, as these presentations give them the opportunity to shape work scopes. He said that over the past few years, MPO members have given feedback that has changed scopes. He added that currently, work

scope discussions are quick, that when discussions are longer they are warranted, and that he was not in favor of procedures that might make it more difficult to get input from MPO members. He added that some technical presentations are very detailed, and suggested that some of them could be moved to the end of MPO meeting agendas, and then MPO members could vote to release the technical products at the following MPO meeting.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) said that significant changes should not be made to the existing process, and that instead efforts should be made to be more time-efficient. He noted that it is a good thing when MPO members notice items in work scopes and comment on them, even if it takes more time. He added that there was a noticeable difference between past study outcomes presentations and a recent one that was held to 10 minutes, but added that the time limits of presentations should vary depending on the topic being discussed. K. Quackenbush noted that the prepared remarks for MPO staff presentations are generally held to 10 minutes, but that the length of the MPO's discussion afterward varies depending on the number of MPO questions and comments. He added that briefings on topics that are less routine for the MPO, or are of wider interest, may be given 15 minutes. He said that he was open to adjusting these parameters, but that it is important for MPO members to understand the outcomes of endeavors that the MPO commissions staff to do.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) said that he agreed with D. Koses's remarks, and that transitioning review of the work scopes to the UPWP Committee would reduce the number of people looking at the scopes and increase the Committee's workload. If the full MPO would still vote to approve the scopes, then discussions would likely happen at the MPO level anyway. He said that there needs to be an expectation that all MPO members have read the scopes, and that presentations of the scopes to the MPO could be shortened and focus more on member questions. Also, the number of other items on the agenda needs to be taken into account when scheduling MPO presentation on study outcomes and other topics, and that these presentations could be scheduled when agendas are lighter. He added that the most recent MPO technical presentation was more concise.

S. Allam asked whether the work scopes could be bundled to facilitate a minimal number of meetings of review, if the Committee were to have a larger role in reviewing them. K. Quackenbush replied that MPO staff could do a good job of bundling 3C-funded work scopes, as staff has more control over their timing. Staff has less control

over the timing of work scopes for agency/other entity-funded projects, which would make bundling them more difficult.

S. Allam noted that agency-funded projects that are not listed in the UPWP should continue to be presented to the full MPO. K. Quackenbush asked how she thought that work scopes for SPR or MassDOT 5303-funded projects should be presented; S. Allam indicated that a UPWP-Committee level review would be appropriate for these.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham) asked whether all requests for agency/other entity-funded projects come before the MPO, or if MPO staff turns down some requests beforehand. K. Quackenbush replied that in some cases, CTPS may turn down a project if CTPS does not have appropriate qualifications or sufficient staff resources. D. Giombetti said that therefore, works scopes that come before the MPO for review are effectively recommended by staff. He suggested that the MPO place mention of work scopes at the end of the agenda, with no presentation, so that MPO members could review the scopes on their own time and ask questions about the scopes at the end of the MPO meeting.

Tom O'Rourke, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) agreed with D. Giombetti's suggestion, noting that there is a fine line between promoting transparency and holding efficient meetings. He explained that in the non-profit world, meetings often include consent agendas, where routine items receive blanket approval unless members have questions. D. Giombetti suggested that some scopes could be exempted from this process, and receive longer presentations, based on criteria such as whether the project budget exceeds a certain threshold.

D. Koses noted that, of the scopes that the MPO reviews, the scopes for MPO-funded projects perhaps should receive the most attention. For agency/other entity-funded projects, other entities should be paying close attention to scope content. E. Bourassa responded that MPO members do see the UPWP projects, but they are generally not aware of the agency/other-entity funded projects, which can generate large infrastructure projects that affect MPO decision-making.

E. Bourassa asked D. Giombetti whether, under his proposal, MPO members would continue to vote on work scopes. D. Giombetti indicated that MPO members could raise an issue or make a motion if they did not want MPO staff to proceed under the proposed work scope. T. Bent noted that under this proposal, members would still need to be present to vote on the work scope, either at the end of a given meeting when the work scopes were being mentioned, or at the beginning of the following meeting. Lara

Mérida, City of Boston, said that the main issue appears to be that the presentations need to be shorter, and that the agenda may need to be organized according to the number and type of items for discussion.

A motion—to bring all work scopes to the MPO board, organize the agenda wisely, to keep work scope presentations short when they are warranted, to focus only on questions when presentations are not warranted, and to approve work scopes automatically unless there was a motion not to do so—was made by Dennis Giombetti, and seconded by Tom O'Rourke.

D. Koses asked whether the MPO Executive Director would still be giving a three minute synopsis on each work scope at MPO meetings. T. Bent said that members still want the briefing, just for it to be kept to three minutes or so. D. Koses recommended that the Executive Director continue to use his judgment in determining the length of work scope presentations to ensure that MPO members were getting enough background. E. Bourassa confirmed that the motion would involve moving the work scope discussion to the end of the agenda.

The motion carried. D. Koses opposed the motion; there were no abstentions.

5. Member Items

There were none.

6. Next Meeting

MPO staff indicated that they would follow up with UPWP Committee members early in the week of May 5 regarding whether the Committee should meet on May 8 or May 15 (prior to the MPO meeting).

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10 AM.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Laura Wiener
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Lara Mérida
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Sree Allam
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (Town of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees Affiliation

Steve Olanoff Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director
Elizabeth Moore
Scott Peterson
Michelle Scott
Pam Wolfe
