



## December 11, 2013 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 5, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

### DRAFT -- Meeting Summary

#### 1. Introductions

David Montgomery, Chair (Needham) called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance see page 8)

#### 2. Chair's Report—*David Montgomery, Chair*

The MPO met in Franklin on December 5 as an MPO "Away" meeting. Presentations were made by Anne McGahan on Performance Measures to be used as part of the MPO's performance based planning practice, now in development. Over the course of this year, the Advisory Council anticipates regular updates from Ms. McGahan on the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and from her colleagues Sean Pfalzer and Michelle Scott in the preparation of the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), respectively.

MPO members also heard about new software and planning tools the MPO is acquiring and will be using in their modeling efforts.

Steve Olanoff added that David Mohler, Chair of the MPO, has been promoted to Deputy Secretary of Transportation. Clinton Bench, Deputy Executive Director of the Office of Transportation Planning, will become Secretary of Transportation Richard Davey's new designee Chair of the MPO.

D. Montgomery asked members to participate in the Advisory Council committees and encouraged members to become involved.

#### 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes of November 13, 2013 - *David Montgomery, Chair*

Approval of the November 13, 2013 meeting minutes was deferred to the next meeting, pending the presence of a quorum under the Advisory Council bylaws. D. Montgomery noted that prior to the meeting J. McQueen asked that a reference to Worcester Airport be changed to T.F. Green/Providence Airport. The minutes will be revisited at an upcoming meeting.

#### 4. MBTA Accessibility – *Marie Trottier, Assistant General Manager for System-wide Accessibility Director, MBTA*

M. Trottier described the MBTA system which includes eight thousand bus stops and fifteen key routes in the MBTA region. Communication plays a big part in understanding the breadth of accessibility system needs. Accessibility-related construction projects currently underway must be reviewed and managed on an ongoing basis. Some of these projects include elevator

installations, sidewalk widening and curb cuts. Projects which have yet to be started, or are behind schedule require monitoring and managerial oversight.

A new initiative being undertaken by the MBTA is an emergency evacuation plan for the disabled. An extensive system-wide accessibility infrastructure inventory survey will be worked on over the next year plus. Stations on the MBTA's Capital Investment Plan (CIP), its State of Good Repair list, or its Moving Forward agenda will be surveyed for accessibility infrastructure. Stations which are being reviewed due to legal exposure or ongoing complaints will also be surveyed. The prioritization of accessibility needs at the surveyed stations will be based on survey data identifying ridership, usability, the number of riders and proximity to nearby shopping, healthcare and community activity centers.

The initial task order of the survey will involve beta testing for survey methodology elements currently under design. The MBTA's Systemwide Accessibility Section will contract with an accessibility consultant to conduct the work on the project. Other work will include overseeing audit and plans with an internal committee, along with an external engagement group.

### **Discussion:**

Questions on station infrastructure focused on platforms (DeMasi), express tracks (Olanoff) and elevator accessibility issues (Murray).

Several members asked questions about station platform construction and platform accessibility, express tracks and elevator accessibility issues (DeMasi, Olanoff, and Murray).

M. Trottier stated that platform accessibility options, particularly at stations with freight service, are reviewed on a station-by-station basis. Based on the characteristics of the platforms, the FTA can waive full-height accessibility which allows wheelchair access to all cars of the train; or a "mini-high" structure can provide access to just one car per train. There is no platform interference with freight cars in this case, and bridge plates typically are used to connect the platform to the train.

F. DeMasi suggested that a commuter rail station employing a "mini-high" design at either Newton or Wellesley, or both, would offer an expanded transit link to local Regional Transit Agency bus connectors to the MBTA Commuter Rail System.

M. Trottier emphasized that the MBTA is not considering placement of "mini-high" platforms at stations and that the FTA is the primary arbiter in allowing this type of installation.

S. Olanoff expressed a need for express track bypass where appropriate, especially in Canton and Sharon Stations.

In response to a suggestion from F. DeMasi that center platforms would reduce the need for two elevators, M. Trottier said the MBTA must construct redundant elevators based on the Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) Settlement Agreement. Elevators are preferred by most communities, when they are properly maintained.

M. Murray explained that many users bypass stations that have only elevators and no ramps for fear of exiting a train and being left on the platform with no way out. Access to a ramp forestalls that possibility.

A member asked if the MBTA staff has been trained sufficiently on the subject of disability service animals and general attitude toward the disability community (M. Wellons). In response, M. Trottier said that the T is making strides in serving the diverse skills and needs of the accessibility community.

T. Fisher reported that neither the MBTA nor the City of Boston stepped up to try to solve the problem she observed (a bus stop was blocked by recycling bins). M. Trottier noted the problem and sees it as a potential area for improving inter-agency and inter-governmental cooperation.

**5. Committee Reports and Upcoming Activities:** There was none.

**6. Old Business:**

D. Montgomery asked about the current status of the MPO's response to the Advisory Council's Comment Letter. P. Wolfe indicated that the letter is now in editing and will be finalized for signature by the MPO Chair soon.

**7. New Business and Member Announcements:**

M. Gowing announced the upcoming Transportation Equity Seminar being held on January 14, 2014 in Conference Rooms 2 and 3 of the State Transportation Building from 9:00 AM to Noon.

S. Olanoff announced a conference on the National Corridors Initiative at UMASS-Lowell on December 13. The conference will be represented by New England and Canada to focus on passenger rail service network.

D. Montgomery announced that MAPC Subregion meetings for MPO Certification Documents outreach will be conducted by MPO staff in the upcoming weeks. Communities include Peabody, Concord and Hingham. Meetings will discuss TIP and UPWP development.

P. Wolfe announced that the Be Informed – Be Involved Workshops will be held at the CTPS Conference Room (Suite 2150) in the State Transportation Building on January 7, (12:30 and 5:30 PM). The workshops will cover TIP and UPWP development and also updates on other ongoing work and work that has been recently completed by the MPO staff.

**8. Updates on MPO Certification Documents - MPO Staff**

***Anne McGahan - LRTP Amendment Three: Paths to a Sustainable Region***

The comment period on the proposed Amendment started on November 7<sup>th</sup> and ended December 11<sup>th</sup>. The MPO is scheduled to discuss and vote on the Amendment at its December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. This amendment adds two projects which will be receiving federal funds outside of the MPO's target funding:

*Connect Historic Boston* project– is a \$23 million dollar initiative between the National Park Service and the Boston Transportation Department to promote improved access for visitors and workers in the downtown historic area. Designs are ready for four major projects: Connect Historic Boston Bike Trail, Constitution Road, The Blackstone Block and Joy Street.

*South Station Expansion and Layover Facility* project in Boston – MassDOT will receive funding for planning and preliminary design from the Federal Railroad Administration. The South Station Expansion project will include the following key improvements: more tracks, improved infrastructure, more train storage space, more platforms, more amenities, more signs, interactive kiosks, and clearly defined pathways.

The project also includes layover yards located close to major rail stations where trains are stored, serviced, and inspected during off-peak periods.

### **Discussion:**

Several questions were raised about the infrastructure improvements scheduled for the South Station Expansion Project (SSEP). F. DeMasi asked how a public private partnership might be incorporated into the project. T. Daley explained that this level of detail on the project is not covered in the initial environmental impact review, but might be addressed later on.

In response to a question from D. Montgomery on the role of MPO staff in the SSEP project A. McGahan explained that modelers are conducting work for the project but it is under a non-MPO contract. P. Wolfe pointed out that MassDOT made a presentation on SSEP to the Advisory Council in January, 2013. Members suggested a progress update on the SSEP project at some future meeting would be helpful.

Members commented on the connection between the North-South Rail Link (NSRL) and the SSEP (Osman, Wellons). A. McGahan explained that there is no connection between the two projects in the LRTP Amendment. The study covers planning and up to 30 percent design. M. Wellons recalled that in the January, 2013 presentation, nothing was being done in the SSEP to prevent further expansion of the NSRL. D. Montgomery noted that the SSEP plans presented regrettably do not include additional passenger and traveler amenities.

A member questioned if the scenarios tested were contingent on the building of a large hotel near the Convention Center (Anzuoni). A. McGahan stated that project funding is included in the LRTP, but the project specifics will be determined by MassDOT.

M. Gowing asked if South Bay was being considered for train storage as displacement for the expanded use of track space at South Station. A. McGahan explained that this level of detail would be determined by MassDOT.

Members commented on the Connect Historic Boston project. M. Murray asked about the accessibility of the new bikeways throughout this project. She noted that some bikeways are

constructed with restrictive bollards at the head of the paths or along key intersections which restrict motorized vehicles. Unfortunately, they also can restrict the wheelchair rider, she noted.

Some of the details of the project were mentioned by T. Kadzis. He described some of the sections as being bike tracks, separated from vehicular traffic, and exclusively used for bicycles; other sections of the project involve widening of sidewalks which would be wheelchair accessible.

### ***Sean Pfalzer - TIP Amendment One and FFY 2015 TIP Preparation and Introduction***

The MPO is scheduled to take action on draft Amendment One to the FFYs 2014-2017 TIP at its next meeting. This amendment proposes to revise the costs of several bridge and highway maintenance projects, add multiple earmarks and discretionary grants, and program one Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant.

The annual TIP development process is underway with outreach to the MAPC sub-regions, the Advisory Council, and public workshops. These meetings give MPO staff an opportunity to receive new project proposals and updates on existing project requests. Based on this input, MPO staff creates a Universe of Projects list that serves as a comprehensive listing of project funding requests. In February, MPO staff will evaluate a subset of the Universe of Projects. The evaluation results will be posted on the website and presented to the MPO and the Advisory Council.

MPO staff plans to prepare a staff recommendation in March for the MPO that considers the evaluation ratings, readiness, Long-Range Transportation Plan commitments, geographic equity, and cost. The MPO will have an opportunity to discuss the staff recommendation in April before deciding to approve a draft document for public review and comment in early May. After a 30-day public comment period and the MPO's consideration of public comments, the MPO will take action on a final TIP by the end of June. Last year, the MPO funded 4 projects totaling approximately \$20 million.

There are several resources that are helpful to those involved in the TIP development process. These resources include:

- a list of TIP contacts for each municipality in this region
- a TIP Interactive Database that lists all projects seeking federal funding
- TIP Evaluation Criteria that details the scoring system used by the MPO to rank project funding requests
- the MassDOT Project Design Guide (Chapter 2) that details the steps involved in the MassDOT project design process

MPO staff will be available to update the Advisory Council throughout the document preparation process.

## **Discussion:**

In response to a question on the TIP letters (DeMasi), S. Pfalzer said that the letters have gone out to the cities and towns. He also indicated that he has received updated TIP contacts from several municipalities and that many of the outreach meetings have been well attended.

S. Pfalzer stated that most of the TIP projects are carried-over from the previous year (D. Montgomery). This year there will be about 5 to 10 new projects added to the universe, bringing the total number of projects to about 150. Roughly 50 projects will be far enough along in design to be evaluated by MPO staff. A project must attain a 25 percent design stage before being considered for funding (M. Gowing).

S. Pfalzer explained that previously committed projects such as the Route 128 Add-a-Lane project and ongoing commitments like the Green Line Extension, from College Avenue to Route 16 will require MPO funding over multiple years, and account for a significant share of the total funding available to the MPO.

The area under the Southeast Expressway (I-93) is not funded in the TIP (Anzuoni).

### ***Michelle Scott - UPWP Introduction to FFY 2015***

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the annual work program for the MPO. It includes the processes that support the decision making done by the MPO; the creation of Certification Documents including the TIP and the LRTP; and a number of different studies, data collection efforts and research projects worked on over the federal fiscal year. MAPC Subregions and communities in the regions often generate ideas or support for various corridor studies, transit service, or other planning studies. The Freight Planning Support program, one of the projects supported by the Advisory Council, is an example of an activity funded through the FFY 2014 UPWP.

Work on the Federal Fiscal Year 2015 UPWP is currently underway. It will be in effect between October 1, 2014, and September 30, 2015. The work referenced in the UPWP is work that will be undertaken by MPO staff or staff at MAPC over the FFY2015 time period.

The UPWP outreach and development process parallels the TIP process. Staff activities include talking to subregions and gathering ideas communities may have for potential projects for the upcoming year. Outreach activities will last through mid-January.

By the end of March, the MPO's UPWP Committee will take the new ideas and recommend a subset of those ideas to fund next year. This recommendation will be based on funding targets for the next federal fiscal year. This recommendation will be presented to the MPO. The UPWP Committee meetings are open to the public, and regular Advisory Council input is noted and welcome. In April, the MPO discusses the UPWP Committee's recommendation of studies for inclusion in the plan. A draft UPWP is prepared and released for public comment in May and the final decision on document endorsement will take place in late June. As part of the public review

of the final draft, the Advisory Council usually prepares a letter commenting on the draft for consideration by the MPO.

**Discussion:**

In response to a question, M. Scott noted that TREDIS is the software used in the Transportation Investments for Economic Development study. (Gowing)

M. Scott explained that the topic of DMU (diesel multiple unit) development could be considered for future study. (DeMasi)

**9. Members' Views**

F. DeMasi expressed an interest in having the Council scheduling a project update on the South Station Expansion project from MassDOT in 2014. He also asked that the new Industrial Rail Freight Project Program might be addressed at the Freight Committee and then reported to the Council. F. DeMasi also wanted to know if any field trips have been scheduled and if not, offered several possible trips including one focusing on Seaport development.

D. Montgomery suggested that field trips would be better in warmer weather.

C. Anzuoni expressed interest in field trips where long-range planning considerations might be addressed.

Members felt that casino development and its impact on adjacent infrastructure and how that impacts the casino application process might be a good field trip topic (Montgomery, Gowing).

F. DeMasi suggested bringing in other MPOs to share common experiences while M. Wellons wants to see an update on the new Worcester yard as a possible field trip.

D. Montgomery stated he wants a couple of field trips but feels the primary thrust of Council activity should focus on committee development and working on the primary responsibilities of the Council.

**10. Adjourn:**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:55 PM. The motion passed, unanimously.

## Attendance:

### **Agencies (\* MPO & other non-voting)**

MAGIC\*

HST\*

### **Agencies (Voting)**

MassRides

### **Municipalities (Voting) \*MPO Member**

Acton

Arlington\*

Boston\*

Cambridge

Needham

Newton\*

Wellesley

Westwood

### **Citizen Groups**

AACT

American Council of Engineering Companies

Boston Society of Architects

Massachusetts Bus Association

MassCommute

Riverside Neighborhood Association

### Attendee

Franny Osman

Theodora Fisher

Catherine Paquette

Mike Gowing

Laura Wiener

Tom Kadzis

Cleo Stoughton

David Montgomery

David Koses

Frank DeMasi

Steve Olanoff

Mary Ann Murray

Tom Daley

Schuyler Larrabee

Chris Anzuoni

David Kucharsky

Marilyn Wellons

### **Guests**

Ed Lowney, Malden resident

Marie Trottier, MBTA

### **MPO Staff**

Pam Wolfe, Manager, Certification

Activities

David Fargen

Anne McGahan

Michelle Scott

Matt Archer

Sean Pfalzer