



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

July 9, 2014 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza,
Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

David Montgomery, Chair (Needham) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 5)

Chair's Report—*David Montgomery, Chair*

The UPWP was finalized at the last MPO meeting. The MPO is expected to endorse the draft of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at its next meeting and then distribute the document for public comment. The Advisory Council submitted its comment letter on both the TIP and UPWP drafts to the MPO in June.

MassDOT indicated that a presentation on the South Station Expansion Project, requested by the Advisory Council on several occasions during this program year, will happen at a time in the future when project managers conclude the project has advanced to a stage that warrants it.

Pedestrian-Bicycle Planning – *Beth Isler, PE/PTP, MPO Staff*

B. Isler provided an overview of MPO bicycle and pedestrian planning, showcasing a recently completed project. The benefits of increased bicycle-pedestrian activity are decreased energy usage, improved public health, better air quality and reduced traffic congestion.

Increased bicycle-pedestrian activity reflects national, statewide and regional goals. Within the MPO region, there is strong support for bicycling and walking and further development of these modes is one of the major goals in the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). There are also many bicycle-pedestrian initiatives at both MassDOT and the Federal Highway Administration.

The MPO program includes a volunteer element for counting bicyclists and pedestrians at locations throughout the region. Staff is working to add permanent automated

counters at various locations and a website to host an online registration system for count volunteers.

A crash database has been created based on reports from first responders to accident scenes. A method of filing reports for typically unreported incidents, like hitting a pothole or being cut-off and crashing the bike, is being developed by the MPO staff.

The Bicycle Network Evaluation project was recently completed in coordination with MassDOT and MAPC. Many private local groups contributed to the program whose goal was to develop a cohesive regional bicycle network by creating an inventory of existing facilities, identifying and evaluating gaps in the network and recommending connectivity priorities.

Individual segments are evaluated with respect to both their utility and recreation value, their proximity to parks and other open space and whether there might be benefits to communities with environmental justice populations, employment and municipal centers, central business districts and schools, colleges and universities.

Technical criteria included whether the segment serves a traffic analysis zone (TAZ) that is forecasted to have more than the mean (2200) bicycle-pedestrian trips in 2035 from the travel demand model used to support the LRTP

Other questions considered include: Would constructing the new bicycle-pedestrian facility provide an opportunity to address an existing safety issue? Is it in a crash cluster? Is it consistent with recommendations from previous significant plans, such as the Bay State Greenway Network, Livable Streets Alliance Green Routes, the LRTP Needs Assessment, the MPO/MAPC Regional Bicycle Plan, or the Northeastern University Regional Bicycle Plan?

Examples of geographic information systems (GIS) analysis of high-density employment data were presented which identify existing gaps in areas with high employment numbers to help prioritize construction of segments in areas that would serve employment-based population centers.

Examination of data revealed 36 high priority locations. The top 10 were then further organized into groups based on right-of-way issues, project readiness, and funding availability.

Projects that need to be addressed with right-of-way or land ownership issues were the Mass Central Rail Trail (Waltham) and the Upper Charles Trail (Framingham, Sherborn, Ashland). Projects recommended for further planning and design were the Somerville Community Path/Green Line Extension, Sudbury Aqueduct in Framingham, Dorchester Connector, Boston University Bridge to Emerald Necklace, Central Square in Cambridge, Charlesgate and Minuteman to Mystic Valley in Arlington. Projects

representing gaps in the network that have been programmed for funding are the Chelsea Commuter Rail to East Boston Greenway and the Canal Street Bikeway in Salem.

The gap analysis process is based primarily on US Census data in conjunction with GIS mapping computer software and can easily be implemented anywhere.

Some MAPC subregions had so few facilities that the tool identified no gaps, only expansion projects, whereas the Inner Core subregion was so dense that the whole subregion analysis could be undertaken.

Next steps should include updating this (Bicycle Network Evaluation) program periodically; updating the 2006 regional bike plan; and moving top project priorities into design and implementation.

Discussion:

In response to a member's question, B. Isler identified the location of the Cambridge Central Square project. She also indicated that better before-and-after studies could be conducted with improved bike counts at specific locations. B. Isler agreed with a member's assessment that bicycle counts with trip-purpose data should be expanded for transportation planning purposes.

B. Isler agreed with a member's statement that walkability and livability concerns should be forward-thinking and address connectivity issues and that municipalities conform to regional standards.

In response to a member's question, B. Isler explained that all criteria in the evaluation were weighted equally with the exception of safety, which was weighted more heavily. In addition, she indicated that outside organizations can contribute their counts for inclusion in the database. The Bicycle Network Evaluation Study can be found on the MPO website.

B. Isler agreed with a member who emphasized connectivity to transit node as a critical selection factor. She stated that connectivity is not a scoring criterion, but that it was a locating criterion, thus it is a defining factor in the analysis. Additional concern by a member was expressed about the continuity of bike crash data from the RMV.

In response to a member's question, B. Isler indicated that the Canal Street project in Salem will resolve the connectivity gap that was identified in the network evaluation.

In response to a member's question, B. Isler stated that a lack of data prevents the analysis of projects by time of year and time of day. Currently, lighting quality and pavement inventories are not being used in the evaluation, but could be expanded in the future to include these data points.

In response to a member's comment, P. Wolfe stated that improvements for the bicycle and pedestrian modes are an integral part of the LRTP and the TIP and UPWP evaluation process. B. Isler indicated that it may become a more integral part of the design process for all projects. This will require adjusting design standards similar to recent changes undertaken by MassDOT (and more than the simple addition of lane striping).

In response to a member's comments on wheelchair accessibility, B. Isler stated that standards for installation of bollards and signage are not designed to exclude wheelchair access. She recommended reporting paths that restrict wheelchair access to state or local authorities because those designs are supposed to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Election Committee

D. Montgomery announced the commencement of the election process for the upcoming year. Members were encouraged to run for office and/or participate on the Election Committee.

D. Fargen said nominations from the Election Committee will be made along with any nominations taken from the floor until the end of the Advisory Council's September meeting. The election will then take place at the October meeting and the new officers will assume their positions as of the beginning of November.

Members' Views and Take-Away Points for MPO

D. Montgomery will voice the Advisory Council's concern on bicycle path accessibility restrictions that was noted earlier in this meeting.

A member asked that the South Station Expansion project presentation be made once reportable progress is made.

A member requested there be better placement of wheelchair stationing on the new commuter rail cars.

A member suggested that elected federal representatives be contacted to voice support for passage of transportation trust fund legislation.

Approval of Meeting Minutes of February - April Meetings 2014 - *David Montgomery, Chair*

Approval of the February, March and April meeting minutes was deferred to the next meeting, pending the presence of a quorum as required under the Advisory Council bylaws.

Old Business: There was none.

New Business and Member Announcements:

There will be no Advisory Council meeting in August.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 PM.

ATTENDANCE

Agencies (* MPO & other non-voting)

MassDOT*
TRIC*

Attendee

Pete Sutton
Steve Olanoff

Agencies (Voting)

MassRides

Catherine Paquette

Municipalities (Voting) *MPO Member

Cambridge
Needham
Weymouth

Cleo Stoughton
David Montgomery
Owen MacDonald

Municipalities (* MPO & other non-voting)

Boston*

Tom Kadzis

Citizen Groups

AACT
American Council of Engineering Companies
Association for Public Transportation
MassBike
MASCO
WalkBoston

Mary Ann Murray
Tom Daley
Barry M. Steinberg
David Ernst
Sarah Hamilton
John McQueen

Guests

Ed Lowney

Malden Resident

Staff

Pam Wolfe

Beth Isler

David Fargen

Katherine Dubreck