

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update Committee Meeting Summary

March 6, 2024, Meeting

1:30 PM–2:24 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Tom Bent, representing the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) and Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

Decisions

The Committee to Update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of October 25, 2023
- Recommend adding one permanent voting board seat shared by the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) and MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) with alternating terms of two years and the ability for one entity to serve as the alternate

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 8.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Action Item: Approval of October 25, 2023, Committee to Update the MOU Meeting Minutes

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. MOU Meeting Minutes of October 25, 2023 ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 25, 2023, was made by the City of Boston (Jen Rowe) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane).

The motion carried.

4. Follow-up Items from Previous Meeting—Abby Cutrumbes, MPO Staff, and Erin Maguire, MPO Staff

Erin Maguire, MPO staff, and Abby Cutrumbes, MPO staff, presented on two follow-up topics that were requested from the previous MOU Update Committee meeting:

- 2020 population by subregion
- Federal funding distribution by region

2020 Population by Subregion

E. Maguire presented a map which represented the population of subregions, which was based on data from the 2020 Census. Both maps represented the population of each subregion, where darker shades of blue indicated a larger population. One map represented the population of the Inner Core Committee (ICC) that includes the population of Boston within the count, and the other map separated the Boston population from the ICC. The key takeaways were as follows:

- The largest population is the ICC including Boston with a population of approximately 1.8 million.
- When Boston is separated, the population of Boston proper is approximately 620,000 people.

Discussion

Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board, asked if the subregions' voting capacity on the MPO board is equitable and representative. E. Maguire responded that that question has broader implications than the study allowed for. B. Kane asked how the subregions were determined, and Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), responded that these are the subregions determined by the MAPC, but E. Bourassa was unsure of their origin. E. Bourassa stated that the Boston Region MPO later adopted the MAPC's subregions for public engagement purposes.

Tegin Teich, Executive Director of the MPO staff, stated that each subregion has one seat on the MPO board. Brian Kane expressed his discontent at the subregions' votes not being representative of their population.

Jen Rowe, City of Boston, stated that an analysis showed that, if the four at-large seats on the MPO board are seen also as ICC seats, the representation across the subregions is relatively equal and Boston is slightly underrepresented. However, if Boston is kept separate from the ICC, then the ICC is severely underrepresented and Boston is adequately represented.

Federal Funding by Subregion, FFYs 2011–28

E. Maguire spoke about the federal funding the subregions received in FFYs 2011–28 and presented a chart that displayed the population distribution of each subregion relative to the MPO’s total population, the percentage of total federal funding each subregion received, and the percentage of MPO-allocated, Regional Target funding each subregion received. The chart displayed the information shown in Table 1.

**Table 1
Federal Funding by Subregion, FFYs 2011–28**

Subregion	Percentage of Population	Percentage of all Federal Funding	Percentage of Regional Target Funding
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC)	8%	8%	13%
North Shore Planning Council (NSPC)	6%	8%	8%
South Shore Coalition (SSC)	7%	3%	5%
North Shore Task Force (NSTF)	9%	9%	8%
South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP)	5%	7%	4%
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC)	7%	7%	11%
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC)	5%	4%	7%
Inner Core Committee (ICC)	53%	52%	44%

Discussion

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, stated that the information presented in the charts is interesting but needs to be put into a larger context before being used to draw conclusions.

Derek Krevat, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, asked if the percentages of total federal funding and Regional Target funding included the total amount of a project that was within a given subregion, or if it was based on the amount that was programmed through 2028. E. Maguire responded that it was based only on funds programmed through 2028.

5. Action Item: Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Representation—*Dave Hong, MPO Staff*

D. Hong asked attendees if there were any remaining questions for the MWRTA and CATA related to MPO representation.

E. Bourassa asked about how the seat would be shared between CATA and MWRTA. Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), responded that the two organizations will share the seat serving two-year alternating terms with one being the primary and the other being the alternate. E. Bourassa expressed his support for adding the RTA seat to the board, but also mentioned that when the board revisits the decision to add the seat, the board should evaluate if the added seat changed the dynamic of the MPO.

L. Diggins asked for further clarification about the justification for the MAPC subregions. E. Bourassa stated that there is not a record of when or why the subregions were first created, adding that the subregions have changed over time in accordance with what makes sense for the MAPC and the regions' demographics. E. Bourassa also stated that he can investigate getting documentation on the subregions. L. Diggins responded that the issue may recur and that having documentation on the subregions' creation would be beneficial for future conversations.

Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham), expressed his support for adding the seat and conducting periodical reviews of the membership.

Vote

A motion to recommend adding one permanent voting board seat shared by CATA and MWRTA with alternating terms of two years and the ability for one entity to serve as the alternate was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Lenard Diggins). The motion carried.

6. Discussion: Board Education—*Dave Hong, MPO Staff*

D. Hong presented on educational avenues for board members that could be included in the updated MOU language. Modes for education included online resources, events, peer exchanges, guest speakers, and other methods, such as coursework and training.

T. Bent asked if the forms of education that required funding would be funded from the board's operating budget. T. Teich responded that funding for education would come from the PL funds, which is the largest revenue source that comes to the staff at the MPO. T. Teich also stated that there have been some years in which not all the PL funds were utilized, and MassDOT released guidance on using previously de-obligated PL funds, which could be an opportunity for educational initiatives.

L. Diggins commented that an educational initiative could include inviting board members to Advisory Council meetings.

E. Bourassa stated that there is potential to apply for federal funding for educational initiatives, such as peer exchanges. E. Bourassa cited an example in which Transportation for America proposed funding to allow a group of MPOs and external stakeholders to participate in a peer exchange. E. Bourassa stated that there are opportunities to be proactive in applying for funding, and that it would be helpful if MPO staff initiated conversations with board members about what they are interested in learning.

T. Bent expressed support for requiring new members to attend educational training, and stated that previously, new members were required to attend a one-day MPO 101 session, which gave members a better understanding of the MPO's purpose. T. Bent also expressed support for peer exchanges and guest speakers for the purpose of learning about what other MPOs are doing.

J. Rowe suggested shifting the language to allow for a range of approaches to educational initiatives rather than choosing just one or two modes of education, and noted that there should be some sort of new member orientation. J. Rowe also suggested an annual or bi-annual briefing on changes to federal guidance that board members should be aware of.

D. Krevat expressed support for education on changes to federal guidance. D. Krevat also stated that MassDOT is contemplating methods for outreach regarding capital investment plans and the processes for project development and completion. There could be opportunities for collaboration between MassDOT's educational initiatives and the MPO.

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T. Teich expressed support for providing language in the MOU that is not restrictive to any certain type of education. T. Teich also stated that there is an opportunity to propose more general language about the intent in the MOU and simultaneously work on language that might be supportive in the operations plan, which would allow education to be addressed in different ways without being overly prescriptive.

J. Rowe expressed support for sending individuals to conferences, especially with peers, to facilitate conversations about how topics can apply to the MPO, and possibly even have members present to the remainder of MPO board about the takeaways.

T. Bent expressed surprise that the MPO has not sent members to national conferences. T. Bent added that during his time with the Housing Authority, some of the most successful ideas they implemented came from peer exchange events.

L. Diggins reiterated his offer to integrate the Advisory Council into these educational initiatives. L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council meetings can be very informative for new members and can also be a long-term training opportunity for current members.

D. Hong reiterated the conversation's takeaways about the MOU update, which included sending board members to conferences, non-prescriptive language, expressing intent for educational initiatives, articulating finer aspects within the operations plan, and exploring alternative funding opportunities.

J. Rowe suggested sending out a survey to collect board members' preferences on educational initiatives, or to provide a way for members to share new information they have learned or read.

L. Diggins asked for clarification on J. Rowe's survey idea, and J. Rowe responded that it could be a regularly occurring survey to gauge what board members want to learn about, identify gaps in knowledge, and understand what modes of learning would work best for them.

T. Bent suggested that MPO staff let board members know when new training or events come up that may be of interest to them.

T. Teich stated that MPO staff have done that in the past and that staff will continue to process and think about how they can accomplish some of these ideas after the meeting. T. Teich also expressed support for including Advisory Council or Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee members for educational initiatives.

7. Members' Items

There were none.

8. Work Planning: Upcoming Committee Activities—*Dave Hong, MPO Staff*

D. Hong discussed a draft of the 2024 MOU work plan:

- March 6 (MOU Update Committee)
 - Motion to bring the RTA representation recommendations to the board
 - Committee input on board education
- March 7 (MPO board)
 - Committee chair report: Early preview of recommendation on RTA representation
- March 20 (MOU Update Committee)
 - Discussion on board education with sample training and resources from staff
 - Advisory Council role
- March 21 (MPO board)
 - MPO board agenda item: RTA representation on the board
- April 3 (MOU Update Committee)
 - Interim update on Advisory Council discussions
 - Update on public engagement
 - Board education discussion
- April 4 (MPO board)
 - Committee chair report: To be determined

D. Hong presented a graphic showing the committee's progress in relation to the previously discussed work plan.

L. Diggins asked for clarification on further discussions about the RTA roles. D. Hong responded that there is time budgeted for further discussion, in case it is needed, but a more accelerated timeline is expected.

9. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane) and seconded by the City of Boston (Jen Rowe). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
Inner Core Committee, City of Somerville	Tom Bent
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
MetroWest Regional Collaborative, City of Framingham	Dennis Giombetti
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Derek Krevat
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	John Romano
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Len Diggins
City of Boston	Jen Rowe
Town of Brookline	Michael Sandman

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Jim Nee	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Tyler Terrasi	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Cam Sullivan	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Paula Doucette	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Eva Willens	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Felicia Webb	Cape Ann Transportation Authority

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Dave Hong
Erin Maguire
Annette Demchur
Ethan Lapointe
Abby Cutrumbes

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