



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

September 11, 2024, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:15 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC).

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Lenard Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see pages 5–6.)

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the following minutes of the April 24, 2024, May 8, 2024, May 29, 2024, June 12, 2024, and July 10, 2024, meetings were made by WalkMassachusetts (John McQueen) and seconded by the City of Cambridge (Andy Reker). The minutes were approved.

3. Implementing best practices in membership and advisory group structures—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, MPO Staff*

Tegin Teich (Executive Director) presented a plan and led a discussion on the implementation of structural changes to the Advisory Council. The plan was based on research into peer advisory councils and advances in engagement practices and is expected to result in a diverse, representative group empowered to align with MPO engagement activities. T. Teich discussed questions and challenges that have emerged in the past year, which have informed the research leading to the planned restructuring:

- How can the Advisory Council membership be more diverse and representative of the range of public perspectives in the region, including currently underrepresented voices?
- How can the Advisory Council more closely align with the MPO's Engagement Program and activities?
- How can the Advisory Council have more direct impact on MPO processes and decision-making?

MPO staff have conducted research and planning to explore these challenges and questions through efforts including

- a peer review of advisory groups to MPOs;
- an update to the description of the Advisory Council's role in the Boston Region MPO's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); and
- the planning of a pilot public educational program (the Community Planning Lab).

T. Teich noted that the challenges with achieving diverse Advisory Council membership and empowering members to participate in impactful engagement are common across other MPOs, and discussed lessons learned from the peer review. These included the importance of having a clear definition of the purpose and function of the Advisory Council, which T. Teich noted has been accomplished through the recent update to Advisory Council language in the MPO's MOU. Other best practices from the peer review include:

- develop an application process to increase the diversity of Advisory Council membership, support deeper member engagement and commitment, and better inform meeting plans and structures
- have a strong staff role in facilitating the Advisory Council to help align with MPO discussions and projects and maximize the impact of feedback and engagement, as well as strengthen connections to engagement work and ensure consistency through membership and leadership transitions
- develop a framework for impact via a new governance document

T. Teich stated the goal for restructuring the Advisory Council is to introduce a new membership process, meeting plan and structure, and governance structure. T. Teich discussed the elements of implementing this restructuring process, stating that the current Advisory Council structure will wind down through several more meetings. There will then be a sunset or ending of the current structure and membership. Staff will finalize and initiate the restructuring plan during a gap between the sunset of the existing structure and the launch of a new structure. She noted that ultimately the restructuring process will result in the launch of a new Advisory Council group with a new membership process, new members, and new meeting plan and structure tailored to the new group.

T. Teich summarized intended outcomes of the restructuring: to bring more diverse membership that is representative of public perspectives in the region, including currently underrepresented voices; align the work of the Advisory Council with the MPO's Engagement program and engagement activities; and create opportunities for more direct impact on MPO processes and decision-making. T. Teich paused for a discussion before sharing more details about the timing of implementing the restructuring plan.

Discussion

J. McQueen and Stella Jordan (MPO Staff) discussed the Community Planning Lab's goals to bring more people and voices into the transportation planning process, especially groups that have traditionally been left out. The program seeks to provide the education and resources to empower participants to advocate for their communities' transportation needs.

Franny Osman (Acton resident) acknowledged the challenges in bringing diverse and representative perspectives to Advisory Council membership. F. Osman discussed previous and ongoing efforts of reaching out to previous Advisory Council members and asked if that information would be supportive for the restructuring efforts. T. Teich confirmed the value of information provided by Advisory Council members, and noted the significance of staff expertise to guide an effective transition.

J. McQueen suggested that MPO board members could help support the recruitment of new Advisory Council members and expressed support for the restructuring to create more impactful opportunities for members. He discussed the importance and historical experience of the Advisory Council's role in engaging more technically in the development of MPO work products. T. Teich discussed the importance of ensuring that the role of the Advisory Council is not duplicative of other spaces and forums for stakeholders to engage with and provide technical input into MPO work. Instead, she stated that the Advisory Council forum should be supplemental to these spaces and to the MPO's ongoing engagement efforts.

L. Diggins discussed the importance of education around the planning process, and the technical knowledge required to be an effective advocate. He discussed the intersections between the Community Planning Lab as an educational space, other existing forums for technical engagement, and the Advisory Council as a space for sharing knowledge and providing input and advice. He noted the challenges in fostering spaces for robust and informed public engagement. T. Teich emphasized the importance of staff's role in providing educational resources and cultivating a membership with a range of diverse perspectives with different understandings of the transportation planning process.

Once the discussion concluded, T. Teich resumed her presentation.

Presentation (continued)

T. Teich presented a draft schedule for the restructuring plans for discussion and feedback. She noted that meetings of the current group will continue in October and November, with a final meeting in November. Plans for restructuring the Advisory Council will be finalized between December 2024 and January 2025, and a new member application process and meeting plan will be developed between February 2025 and March 2025, with the launch of a new structure and new Advisory Council group in Spring 2025.

T. Teich discussed the role of the current Advisory Council membership in the restructuring planning and transition activities, including the finalization of the Public Engagement Guidebook, one-on-one or group debriefs with staff, discussion of the lessons learned from the Community Planning Lab, and the celebration of the current members' work, commitment, and accomplishments. She noted that staff will provide continued updates throughout the transition period. T. Teich also discussed the role of the current Advisory Council leadership in the restructuring process: leadership will continue to represent the Advisory Council at MPO board meetings and work with staff to help generate and refine ideas throughout the transition period. After the restructuring is complete and the new group is launched, new leadership will be elected.

T. Teich summarized that during the transition period, staff will develop a new application, membership structure and a meeting work plan, explore the use of incentives to provide stipends to members, and incorporate learnings from the Community Planning Lab.

Discussion

J. McQueen asked if the restructuring would also include the development of a new name for the Advisory Council. T. Teich stated that this could be a consideration, and she discussed the historical context of the Advisory Council's structure and name, and how both have changed over time.

L. Diggins asked why the Advisory Council has a voting seat on the board. T. Teich stated that the voting seat was intended to ensure the representation and direct participation of a broad group of stakeholders and perspectives on the board, begun in a time where there was little local representation on the board. L. Diggins, T. Teich, and Steve Olanoff (Westwood/Three Rivers Interlocal Council Subregion Representative) discussed the history of the voting seat and its significance. T. Teich noted that the existence of an Advisory Council and its voting seat on the board is called for in the MPO's MOU.

L. Diggins discussed the importance of a commitment to understanding the complexities of the transportation planning process to contribute effectively and meaningfully. L. Diggins suggested framing the Advisory Council as a high-functioning focus group. T. Teich noted that the complexities within transportation planning processes can create a barrier to engaging with an MPO and discussed the importance of efforts and spaces to share knowledge and education.

J. McQueen discussed the significance of the MPO's former freight committee, especially as the design of major roadways is being considered. T. Teich recognized the interest in and importance of freight, and discussed the MPO's efforts related to freight, including its freight program, which is considering establishing a stakeholder group.

4. 2024 Elections: Nominations—Nominating Committee

AnaCristina Fragoso (Boston Society of Civil Engineers) and F. Osman nominated L. Diggins as the Chair and A. Reker as the Vice Chair of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. A.C. Fragoso stated that any members interested in being considered for the Chair and Vice Chair positions should submit a letter of interest to the Nominating Committee.

Discussion

L. Diggins and A. Reker accepted the nominations for their respective positions. L. Diggins noted that elections will be held at the October meeting.

5. Chair’s Report—Lenard Diggins, Chair

L. Diggins highlighted the MPO’s [Route 37 Priority Corridor Study in Braintree](#) and encouraged members to read the MPO’s publications and research.

6. Old Business, New Business, and Members’ Items

S. Olanoff suggested exploring the possibility of the Advisory Council taking a field trip to visit the newly constructed South Coast Rail. L. Diggins stated that he would work with S. Jordan to connect with Keolis to make the request.

A. Reker stated the City of Cambridge is hiring a Senior Technical Traffic Engineer.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA ROC (Lenard Diggins) and seconded by WalkMassachusetts (John McQueen). The motion carried.

Attendees

| Member Municipalities | Representatives and Alternates |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cambridge | Andy Reker |

| Citizen Advocacy Groups | Attendees |
|---|---------------------|
| Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES) | AnaCristina Fragoso |
| MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC) | Lenard Diggins |
| WalkMassachusetts | John McQueen |
| Acton resident | Franny Osman |

Agencies (Non-Voting)

MassDOT
MBTA Advisory Board

Attendees

Derek Krevat
Hanna Switlesowski

Other Attendees

Susan Barrett
Logan Casey

Steve Olanoff

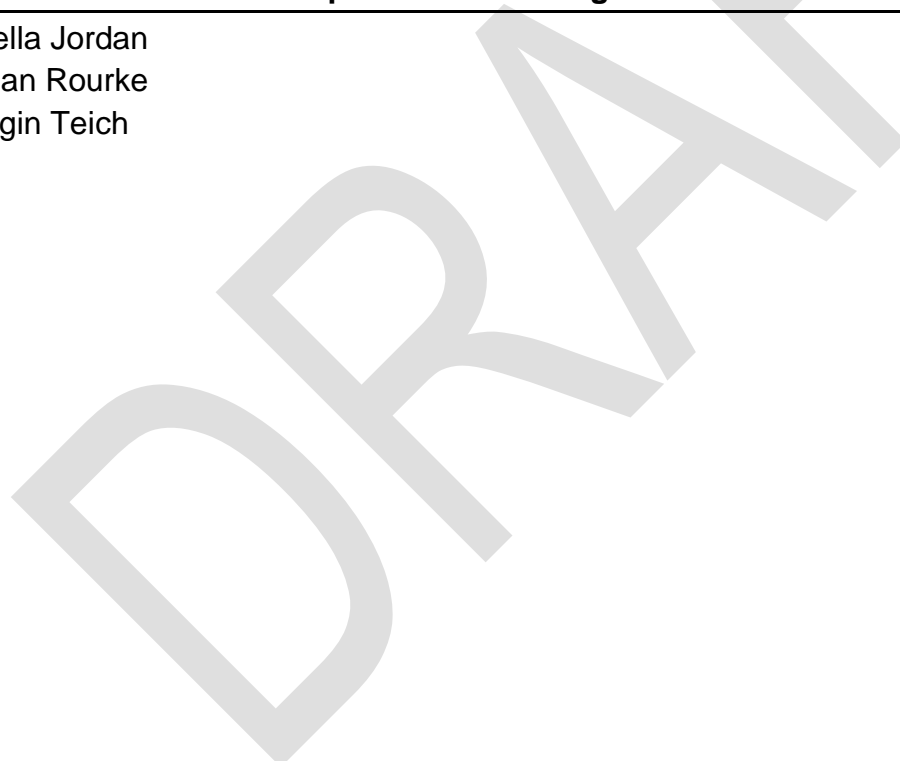
Tyler Terrasi

Affiliation

Lexington Transportation
Town of Marblehead
Town of Westwood, Three Rivers
Interlocal Council (TRIC)
Subregion Representative
MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
(MWRTA)

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Stella Jordan
Sean Rourke
Tegin Teich



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