

# Administration and Finance (A&F) Committee Meeting Minutes Draft Memorandum for the Record

## October 8, 2024, Meeting

3:00 PM–4:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Brian Kane, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Advisory Board

## Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) A&F Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of February 29, 2024

## Meeting Agenda

### 1. Introductions

See attendance on page 10.

### 2. Public Comments

There were none.

### 3. Action Item: Approval of February 29, 2024, Meeting Minutes *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. February 29, 2024, Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

### *Vote*

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 29, 2024, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (Lenard Diggins). The motion carried.

### 4. State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2024 Year-End Budget Update: Quarter Four—*Hiral Gandhi and Silva Ayvazyan, MPO Staff*

Hiral Gandhi, MPO Staff, presented the financial results for SFY 2024, focusing on how the MPO ended the SFY with a surplus and how some of the budget's line items remain difficult to accurately estimate.

H. Gandhi stated that the MPO ended the SFY with a \$225,000 surplus, indicating that the MPO's revenue exceeded its expenses. H. Gandhi stated that although a surplus

may seem favorable, the objective is to achieve a balanced budget, which ensures optimal use of the MPO’s resources without over or under allocating funds.

H. Gandhi stated that the projected overhead rate was 120.3 percent but ended up at 113.24 percent at the end of the SFY. While this variance contributed to the surplus, the significant difference suggests that some expenses were lower than anticipated.

H. Gandhi stated that several key expense categories contributed to the overhead rate variance, such as anticipated office relocation and rent increase, legal fees related to visa support, fees related to hiring and recruitment, professional development and training for MPO staff, and staffing demands.

H. Gandhi stated that the MPO’s net position stands at \$872,767. Over the last five years, MPO staff have experienced an average change of approximately five percent, and this year’s surplus reflects the same uncertainties and challenges. H. Gandhi also stated that while SFY 2023 and 2022 both delivered surpluses, there was a deficit between SFY 2020 and 2022.

Silva Ayvazyan, MPO Staff, presented additional details of SFY 2024, shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**SFY Operating Budget by Quarter**

<b>SFY 2024</b>	<b>Quarter One</b>	<b>Quarter Two</b>	<b>Quarter Three</b>	<b>Quarter Four</b>	<b>Total</b>
Revenue	\$1,579,300	\$1,717,400	\$1,835,000	\$1,630,900	\$6,762,600
Expenses	\$1,559,500	\$1,682,400	\$1,681,400	\$1,614,300	\$6,537,600
Surplus/Deficit	\$19,800	\$35,000	\$153,600	\$16,600	\$225,000
Overhead	112.89%	115.99%	101.96%	121.96%	113.20%

SFY = State Fiscal Year.

S. Ayvazyan stated that Quarter Four’s revenue and expenses were close due to Quarter Four being in April, May, and June, when MPO staff use more vacation time. The MPO also increased Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) training for MPO staff and the MPO engaged with an external legal firm to assist the MPO in its compensation plan update.

S. Ayvazyan reviewed the SFY’s budget projections and the actual budget at the end of the SFY, shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**SFY 2024 Year-End Projections versus Actuals**

<b>SFY 2024</b>	<b>Approved/Projected Budget</b>	<b>Actual Year-End</b>
Revenue	\$7,850,000	\$6,762,600
Expenses	\$7,850,000	\$6,537,600
Surplus/Deficit	\$0	\$225,000
Overhead	120.30 %	113.20 %

SFY = State Fiscal Year.

S. Ayvazyan stated that one of the biggest impacts to this year’s variance in the MPO’s revenue was related to the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant, including delays in Vision Zero work, and changes in MPO staff, such as retirements and open MPO staff positions.

S. Ayvazyan spoke about SFY 2024 revenue through Quarter Four across multiple revenue categories, shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**SFY 2024 Revenue Through Quarter Four**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Projected Revenue</b>	<b>Actual Revenue</b>	<b>Percentage of Actual to Projected Revenue</b>
MPO and MassDOT-			
Directed PL	\$5,849,300	\$5,273,700	90%
MassDOT SPR	\$520,000	\$352,400	68%
MassDOT Other	\$172,000	\$194,600	113%
MBTA	\$658,700	\$623,700	95%
Other	\$650,000	\$318,200	49%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,850,000</b>	<b>\$6,762,600</b>	<b>86%</b>

MassDOT = Massachusetts Department of Transportation. MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. MPO = Massachusetts Planning Organization. PL = Metropolitan Planning Funds. SPR = State Planning and Research.

S. Ayvazyan stated that the MPO is on track to spend out its planning funds through the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). S. Ayvazyan also stated that the “Other” category did not meet the projection primarily due to delays in Vision Zero work within the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant.

S. Ayvazyan reviewed SFY 2024 expenses through Quarter Four by category, shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**  
**SFY 2024 Expenses Through Quarter Four**

<b>Expense Source</b>	<b>Projected Expenses</b>	<b>Actual Expenses</b>	<b>Percentage of Actual to Projected Expenses</b>
Administrative Expenses	\$3,650,000	\$3,387,600	93%
Direct Labor	\$3,300,000	\$3,000,000	91%
Direct Cost	\$580,000	\$150,000	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,530,000</b>	<b>\$6,537,600</b>	<b>87%</b>

SFY = State Fiscal Year.

S. Ayvazyan stated that the MPO’s administrative expenses and direct labor are very close to the projections, however, the direct cost category was low. A large contributor to the direct cost category included delayed and limited consultant work related to the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant.

***Discussion***

Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board, expressed appreciation for the MPO staff’s work managing the budget, and stated that it is difficult to have a completely balanced budget when it is developed 18 months in advance.

In addition, B. Kane expressed concern due to the lack of a lease with respect to office space. B. Kane encouraged MPO staff to obtain a lease or continue to search for an alternative space. B. Kane also offered resources to assist MPO staff in the process of obtaining a lease or searching for alternative spaces.

B. Kane additionally congratulated the MPO’s leadership for recruiting many new MPO staff members in the last year, especially considering the effort involved in onboarding new staff members.

Tegin Teich, Executive Director, stated that MPO staff have not given up on the search for a new lease, and the MPO has had capacity challenges in the skill sets needed to go through the lease procurement process. The process is ongoing, but not at the anticipated rate.

**5. SFY 2025 Projected Revenue—*Hiral Gandhi, MPO Staff***

H. Gandhi presented the SFY 2025 operating budget update, which includes the addition of \$370,600 to the 3C funding from deobligated funds for the following key Initiatives:

- Website Redesign: \$100,000
- Identity and Rebranding: \$100,000
- Development of a Federal Transit Administration STOPS Model: \$100,000
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Data Collection Equipment: \$35,600
- DEIA Assessment: \$35,000

H. Gandhi stated that this addition increases the total for the SFY 2025 budget to \$8,870,600. The additional funding will allow the MPO to advance several key initiatives in SFY 2025. H. Gandhi stated that the funds are primarily allocated for consultants, so there is no impact on the MPO's overhead rate.

### ***Discussion***

B. Kane asked for additional information on the deobligated funds, and why they were included after the development of the SFY 2025 budget.

H. Gandhi responded that working with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to secure and get approval to access these funds took time, and MPO staff were not able to include the funds in April 2024 when the SFY 2025 budget was being developed.

B. Kane expressed gratitude for the additional funds and that the way they are being used makes a lot of sense. B. Kane stated that he looks forward to the results of the DEIA assessment.

Eric Bourassa, MAPC, expressed support for obtaining the deobligated funds, and stated that he thought this was the first time that the MPO has been able to access deobligated funds.

H. Gandhi responded that the MPO obtained approximately \$140,000 in deobligated funds in FFY 2024.

T. Teich expressed appreciation for MassDOT's coordination on accessing the deobligated funds. T. Teich stated that in the last SFY, MassDOT asked MPOs if they wanted to access the deobligated funds for certain areas of work that MassDOT would review and decide whether to allocate those funds for FFY 2025. T. Teich stated that MPO staff began the process to obtain the deobligated funds at the beginning of FFY 2024 so they could be included in the FFY 2025 contract, but they were not able to meet the deadline for inclusion in the SFY 2025 budget when it was initially being developed.

B. Kane reiterated gratitude for MassDOT revising its approach and streamlining the process for MPOs to access deobligated funds.

## **6. Executive Director Goals Update—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

1. SFY 2025 Goals and First Quarter Updates ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

T. Teich presented the Executive Director's SFY 2025 agency goals and a quarterly update on the progress made towards these goals.

T. Teich overviewed the evaluation process and stated that the executive director's evaluation occurred in June 2024. T. Teich met with the evaluation team, which consisted of the MPO chair, MPO vice-chair, and the A&F Committee chair.

T. Teich provided brief updates on goals in the following categories:

- Identity and Awareness
  - Expand forums to speak about the MPO
  - Identify funding and implement an identity and branding exercise
- Programs and Services
  - Implement the first stage of multiyear planning at the agency
  - Continue to develop and engage staff in the agency's overall focus areas to inform the individual multiyear plans
  - Align the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) development process to be complementary to multiyear work planning
- Governance
  - Embed the Operations Plan into ongoing agency work
  - Hold new learning opportunities for board members
- Organizational Structure and Staffing
  - Refresh the Compensation Plan with improved employee engagement
  - Move or renovate the existing office
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)
  - Fund a significant DEI initiative identified by the DEIA Committee
- Funding and Opportunities
  - Complete and sign a fiduciary agent agreement
  - Operate neither with a significant deficit nor surplus
  - Identify and bring in one new revenue source
  - Continue to build relationships with potential partners

In the Identity and Awareness goal category, T. Teich engaged with three additional speaking opportunities, including a City of Boston Council Hearing, the YW Lead Boston

equity program, and the Barr Foundation grantee development sessions. In addition, T. Teich attended the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations' (AMPO) 2024 annual conference and obtained \$100,000 in deobligated planning funds for a branding and identity process in FFY 2025.

In the Programs and Services category, T. Teich has worked with MPO program managers to get most of their multiyear work plans submitted, which allows the MPO's leadership to understand how its program work will evolve. T. Teich stated that the MPO has begun creating an agency multiyear plan that will create a framework around the body of work that the MPO's programs accomplish.

In the Governance category, the MPO has begun embedding its Operations Plan into the agenda-setting process with MassDOT and MAPC. In addition, the MPO has developed a new board member orientation training.

In the Organizational Structure and Staffing category, the MPO has begun its Compensation Plan update, which will inform next year's performance assessments and salary adjustments. In addition, the update will include a framework for hourly part-time or per diem pay, updates and refinements in job classifications and titles, refined benchmarking on individual manager and director roles, and consideration of a track or special tiering for specialized skills.

In the DEI category, the MPO has supported the DEIA Committee by hiring consultants to coach the committee. In addition, the MPO has completed an initial diagnostic on an approach to a larger DEIA assessment. T. Teich stated that the MPO has also secured deobligated planning funds for a FFY 2025 organizational assessment.

Lastly, in the category of Funding and Operations, the MPO is advancing the fiduciary agent agreement and making progress on how the MPO will approach negotiations in that agreement. T. Teich also stated that the MPO has been awarded the following three new grants:

- Mobility, Access, and Transportation Insecurity (MATI): \$150,000
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant: more than \$1 million
- Safe Streets and Roads for All discretionary supplemental planning and demonstration activities grant: \$9 million with a local match

T. Teich emphasized the great opportunity that these grants have provided not only for additional funding, but for building partnerships and relationships with other agencies and stakeholders through the public engagement process.

***Discussion***

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, asked if there was any consideration for updating the Compensation Plan in coordination with MAPC.

T. Teich responded that the MPO used the same consultants for its Compensation Plan update as MAPC did, and the consultants will be able to build on the work they completed for MAPC.

L. Diggins asked if the DEI goal was limited to physical accessibility or if it expanded to broader forms of accessibility, such as website accessibility.

T. Teich responded that the goal encompasses a broad sense of accessibility, and it can be physical, mental, or any kind of disability that an individual might face. T. Teich stated that MPO staff feel strongly about including accessibility in its DEI initiatives, and for it to stand out as its own emphasis area.

L. Diggins asked if board learning opportunities are geared toward new board members.

T. Teich responded that the MPO's recent efforts have been focused on new board members, but that the MPO wants to support the board members and provide more opportunities to interact with peers and learn in helpful ways, such as sending board members to an AMPO conference.

L. Diggins asked if it would be possible to bring back materials from the AMPO conference and share them with the MPO board.

T. Teich stated that she plans to send those materials to the board, and they are very helpful.

L. Diggins asked for clarification on the term "board buy-in" written in the memorandum posted to the MPO calendar.

T. Teich stated that board buy-in is important for the MPO's DEI initiatives and to continue to have the board's ongoing support for the MPO advancing its DEI initiatives.

B. Kane asked T. Teich how she thinks the progress towards these goals is going, if T. Teich would change anything about these goals, and how the A&F Committee can support progress towards these goals.

T. Teich stated that these goals are in line with what is important to advance her career in this role and with the agency, and that the goals are for the benefit of the agency. T.



Teich stated that she feels comfortable with the goals she has set for herself and welcomes feedback from Committee members.

B. Kane stated that the MPO has done a lot of work over the last few years, and the benefits of those actions are showing. B. Kane thanked T. Teich for her work on these goals and stated that he will work to ensure that the board and the Committee continue its support for T. Teich and the MPO.

## **7. Members' Items**

There were none.

## **8. Next Meeting**

H. Gandhi stated that the next meeting would be near the end of November 2024.

In addition, H. Gandhi introduced Ronan Buggle, who recently joined the MPO staff as an accountant in the Finance team.

## **9. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

## Attendance

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### Members

### Representatives and Alternates

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Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	Derek Krevat
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative	Dennis Giombetti
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins

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### Other Attendees

### Affiliation

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Gisell De la Cruz	City of Salem
Brad Rawson	City of Somerville
Chris Klem	MassDOT
Isabella MacKinnon	MBTA Advisory Board
Tyler Terrasi	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Benjamin Coulombe	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Heidi Doyle	Town of Sherborn

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### MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
Hiral Gandhi  
Lauren Magee  
Ronan Buggle  
Silva Ayvazyan

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