

# Memorandum for the Record

## Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

### Transit Working Group Coffee Chat Summary: Travel Demand Management

#### February 16, 2022, Meeting

4:00–5:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform. Recording available at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVE-Se0ftVU&list=PLT37eeNGYpCHBb\\_9LJp6xBrmCvTrjURYN&index=12](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVE-Se0ftVU&list=PLT37eeNGYpCHBb_9LJp6xBrmCvTrjURYN&index=12)

## Introductions

Sandy Johnston introduced the attendees and conducted a go-around introduction.

## About the MPO TDM Study

Sandy Johnston discussed the study the MPO staff is undertaking on Travel Demand Management (TDM). Over the past several years Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff have received considerable feedback from stakeholders that the MPO or another regional entity should be more involved in TDM. During FFY 2021, the MPO set aside funding in the UPWP to sponsor two virtual forums on TDM, which were well-attended and well-received.<sup>1</sup> To follow up, in FFY 2022 the MPO funded a [study](#) through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), trying to answer whether the MPO should be involved in TDM, and if so, how. The study includes the following tasks:

1. Survey and interview other MPOs to document how they engage with TDM practice
2. Survey and interview regional stakeholders to document level and specifics of interest in MPO involvement in TDM
3. Make recommendations to MPO

To gather feedback for the study, staff are sponsoring this discussion; publicizing a survey for certain regional stakeholders; conducting interviews with other MPOs engaging in TDM and with regional stakeholders; and holding a public-facing event.

---

<sup>1</sup> Recordings may be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgy240dBHOA> (February 2021 forum) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0iSZoPaYPZ8> (September 2021 forum)

They also conducted a literature review to identify specific “elements of TDM” that other MPOs engage in (see Appendix).

S. Johnston posed two overarching framing questions to attendees:

1. Would MPO involvement in TDM be valuable to you?
2. If so, which of the elements of TDM are important to you?

## Discussion

S. Johnston further posed four questions to help frame the discussion:

1. Should the MPO be involved in TDM work? Why or why not?
2. What are the specifically *regional* needs around TDM?
3. Which of the elements of TDM on the previous slide would it be valuable for the MPO to engage with?
4. What else should we know?

*The following is a largely paraphrased summary of the main points that attendees contributed to the conversation.*

Allison Simmons (NorthEase Consulting): At a minimum, there is a need for more TDM representation at the MPO or state level. Much of what has happened in Massachusetts has been at the municipal or nonprofit level, and while many things about the model works, the funding is at higher levels of government, so that has stunted the growth of the field to some extent. Also, traffic, congestion, and air quality issues don't stop at municipal borders, so planners need to look at things regionally. The BlueBikes system is a good example of municipalities collaborating rather than each doing their own thing.

Carmel Levy (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority [MBTA]): His job is to talk to employers about their commuter benefit plans, and he sees a lot of duplicative work. Some of them come at it with more sophistication than others, so a regional ranking of priorities and which benefits and programs are really effective would be valuable and would make TDM easier for everyone.

Jay Jackson (MBTA): Emphasized the importance of mode shift and supporting transit to accommodate it holistically as a part of TDM, especially by ensuring transit is reliable through priority treatments.

Steve Olanoff (Town of Westwood/TRIC Subregion MPO Alternate): On Westwood's planning board, he has to explain to everyone what TDM is. So, it would be really helpful if there was a regional categorization of standards, practices, and what has been successful for TDM.

Stephanie Groll (City of Cambridge): The more municipalities that are doing TDM in the region, the stronger everyone's programs will be, just by virtue of people not being able to run to the next town over because that town doesn't have TDM. Anything the MPO can do to help towns that don't currently have TDM programs to have them would be great. It would be great if whatever the MPO ends up doing is in service of setting up the state to run some kind of TDM program that doesn't depend on municipal efforts, especially the smaller towns with less capacity.

Jeff Bennett (128 Business Council): The Boston area has really been lacking any kind of regional or state-level leadership on TDM. In the private sector, a lot of the transportation management associations (TMA) have done great work building TDM plans or programs, but TMAs are constrained by working with the companies that fund them, which sometimes leaves baseline gaps that need to be filled. Regional leadership could help channel the companies toward filling these gaps. The MPO might not necessarily be the best organization, but the TDM field in Boston has been wandering a bit since it lost the previous statewide leadership on TDM, so now is a great time to start having this conversation again.

Pat Sullivan (Seaport TMA): Something TDM professionals see quite often is that if there is one community with really strong TDM plans, but the communities on either side of them don't [have similarly strong plans], it really can help curb or diminish the ability for that TDM program to meet its potential. Within 24 months following the publication of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council publishing its report on TDM,<sup>2</sup> there were new teams formed and new TDM polices implemented. Since then, he thinks some momentum has been lost, but could be rekindled. There's no mention of TDM in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that was recently passed, nor is there a plan at the state level to fund TDM programs. He supports a specific funding stream for TDM projects as an outcome from this process.

Stephanie Groll: It's impossible to do TDM without excellent bike infrastructure and good-to-excellent transit, sidewalks, snow clearance rules, and the like. Supporting

---

<sup>2</sup> MAPC's report on TDM is available here: [http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/TDM-FINAL-REPORT-7\\_15\\_0.pdf](http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/TDM-FINAL-REPORT-7_15_0.pdf)

regional transit and walking and biking efforts is something the MPO can do to help support TDM efforts.

Tien-Tien Chan: She worked previously in Austin, Texas, where there was a hard push for the local MPO to establish a separate funding category for TDM projects because it didn't really fit in any of the existing boxes, and so the scoring didn't make sense. There was a push to also commit to funding a certain amount of TDM projects each year. Something the [Boston Region] MPO can consider is a statement of intent to create a funding stream, and also incorporating TDM principles into the capital project review process. A few examples of funded projects from the Austin experience included the following:

- Expansion of a vanpool program in areas that were underserved
- a neighborhood based smart trips education and outreach program using local ambassadors in targeted underserved neighborhoods
- One TMA-related project

Sophia Galimore (Watertown TMA): TDM policies are being put in place with little to no understanding of exactly what it is or means to those that must have a TDM program. Along with guides there should be training and a consistent way to score or measure for the administrator of the TDM.

Steve Olanoff: MassRides, a previous MassDOT office that is no longer operational, had produced a handbook with employer options in 2018,<sup>3</sup> which could be a good example. A study to determine minimum things that each does and could do would be helpful. The threshold for the requirements attached to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) rideshare program should be lowered.<sup>4</sup> Planners can't just sit back and wait for the legislature, or the federal government to come up with these things.

Stephanie Groll: It is easier to do things if they're a shared and standard experience. A reference of what works would be helpful.

Allison Simmons: There is a lot of water under that bridge [the relationship between MassDOT and TDM]. What's really important to focus on is that pre pandemic and, soon to be post pandemic, our traffic and congestion is the worst of any state, and there is no voice at the state level talking about TDM. It is not possible to build our way out of this,

---

<sup>3</sup> The MassRides handbook is accessible at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/guidebook/download>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massdep-rideshare-program>

so the need is to manage the demand that exists in the Boston region. The state has greenhouse gas reduction goals that are looming, for which the state has done a ton in the energy sector to help meet. The next sector that needs to be addressed is transportation, but there is not a whole lot of movement on the transportation side of that. It's probably best that to put a pin in "Why we're not doing this" and just really start the conversation around why there's a need for action.

The TMA coalition put forth some model legislation a couple years ago, asking the State to implement the rideshare regulation for more employers. Right now, they're only implementing it for employers with 1,000 or more employees, but it's written for 250. The TMA coalition asked the legislature to phase in progressively lower thresholds for requiring employer participation in the program, for example 700 and then go to 500, and then 250. Because the way it is currently written, only 150 employers in the Commonwealth are subject to that regulation. So, it's only reaching the same large institutions that have been doing TDM for a long time. But the legislation hasn't gone anywhere. The TMA coalition wasn't having any luck getting Massachusetts DEP to implement it as a rule, so they went to Beacon Hill.

Carmel Levy: The MBTA supports connecting municipal compliance with the MBTA Communities legislation with MPO capital programming. It would bring us a lot more revenue.

## **Conclusion and Upcoming Events**

S. Johnston thanked everyone for their participation and mentioned upcoming Transit Working Group events, including a coffee chat on transit fleet electrification on February 28, 2022.

## Appendix: Slide Explaining Elements of TDM

Include a permanent line item for TDM in its planning budget (Unified Planning Work Program, or UPWP)	Include TDM in its Congestion Management Process	Include TDM in the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP, a strategic plan looking out to 2050)	Develop standalone TDM plan(s) for itself or constituent entities	Develop and maintain TDM performance measures/metrics
Consider TDM in capital project evaluation in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and LRTP	Fund TDM projects through the TIP/LRTP	Provide technical assistance or resources on TDM	Host a TDM committee or working group	Otherwise facilitate coordination and/or partnerships on TDM
Determine or act as the lead agency on regional TDM policy	Act as support for other lead agencies on regional TDM policy	Guide regional investments in TDM activities	Conduct community outreach and engagement for local populations on TDM impacts	Initiate new research ventures that benefit MPO and other agencies
Liaise between similar transportation entities in region to establish TDM baseline agreements	Conduct employer outreach in order to modify employee commute practices compatible with TDM guidelines	Ensure TDM compliance with the statewide Capital Improvement Program (CIP)	Expand TDM guidelines to be adaptable by other MPOs	Support, plan for, or foster TransitOriented Development (TOD)

### Elements of TDM



## Attendance

Attendee	Affiliation
Jay Jackson	MBTA
Jeff Bennett	128 BC
Patrick Sullivan	Seaport TMA
Tien-Tien Chan	Former MBTA, future Nelson/Nygaard
Stephanie Groll	City of Cambridge
Sophia Galimore	TransAction Associates/Watertown TMA
Allison Simmons	NorthEase Consulting
Steve Olanoff	Town of Westwood
Laura Wiener	Town of Watertown
Carmel Levy	MBTA
Alaa Mukahhal	City of Boston

---

**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

---

Stella Jordan

Sandy Johnston

---

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) operates its programs, services, and activities in compliance with federal nondiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and related statutes and regulations. Title VI prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and requires that no person in the United States of America shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (including limited English proficiency), be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives federal assistance. Related federal nondiscrimination laws administered by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, or both, prohibit discrimination on the basis of age, sex, and disability. The Boston Region MPO considers these protected populations in its Title VI Programs, consistent with federal interpretation and administration. In addition, the Boston Region MPO provides meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities to individuals with limited English proficiency, in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation policy and guidance on federal Executive Order 13166.

The Boston Region MPO also complies with the Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law, M.G.L. c 272 sections 92a, 98, 98a, which prohibits making any distinction, discrimination, or restriction in admission to, or treatment in a place of public accommodation based on race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or ancestry. Likewise, the Boston Region MPO complies with the Governor's Executive Order 526, section 4, which requires that all programs, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), or background.

A complaint form and additional information can be obtained by contacting the MPO or at [http://www.bostonmpo.org/mpo\\_non\\_discrimination](http://www.bostonmpo.org/mpo_non_discrimination). To request this information in a different language or in an accessible format, please contact

**Title VI Specialist**

Boston Region MPO  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116  
[civilrights@ctps.org](mailto:civilrights@ctps.org)

**By Telephone:**

857.702.3702 (voice)

For people with hearing or speaking difficulties, connect through the state MassRelay service:

- **Relay Using TTY or Hearing Carry-over:** 800.439.2370
- **Relay Using Voice Carry-over:** 866.887.6619
- **Relay Using Text to Speech:** 866.645.9870

For more information, including numbers for Spanish speakers, visit <https://www.mass.gov/massrelay>