

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Summary of August 8, 2007 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA.

### 1. Chair's Report - *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

Steve Olanoff, Chair and Town of Westwood, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM.

S. Olanoff noted that several Advisory Council members did not receive their meeting packets. He asked other members to let the John Hersey, CTPS, know if they didn't receive their normal notice.

There will be a meeting of the Nominating Committee in August to identify candidates for Chair and Vice Chair. The annual election will take place at the September meeting.

### 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes of July 11, 2007, were approved unanimously.

### 3. Announcements

S. Olanoff announced that this month's *TRANSREPORT* was recently published. He also briefly reminded members of the studies included in the FFY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program currently out for public review and comment.

### 4. Development of Draft Certification Documents:

#### a. Advisory Council Comment: FFYs 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program

Hayes Morrison, MPO TIP Manager, described the FFYs 2008-2011 TIP. She accepted questions and comments from the Advisory Council.

#### Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

S. Olanoff suggested that the Advisory Council members deliver their comments to him so that he can finalize the Advisory Council comment. He commented about the significant funding constraints and the limitations placed on the number of projects the MPO can program.

Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association, expressed her view that the Advisory Council should not support the Urban Ring project as presently planned. Phase II does not sufficiently address rapid transit interests. She recommended inclusion of a commitment for heavy rail in the project.

Frank DeMasi, Town of Wellesley, commented that the TIP process is working. He recognized MPO staff for their good work.

Rick Arena, Association for Public Transportation, raised the possibility of amending the freight paragraph to reflect the freight committee's interest in promoting double-stack rail and intermodal freight capabilities as a means of mitigating ongoing roadway congestion and improving air quality.

Chan Rogers, South West Area Planning Committee, commented that the commuter rail extension to Fall River and New Bedford and the Green Line extension to Medford are projects that are needed now; moving their completion to 2016 is too far in the future.

Marilyn McNabb asked that "accessible" be added to the Green Line discussion.

John McQueen, *WalkBoston*, urged that the Worcester-Yawkey commuter rail connection should be addressed in the TIP. S. Olanoff suggested that this interest would be better left to the Regional Transportation Plan.

#### **b. Draft FFY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program**

Pam Wolfe, MPO staff, described the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as the document that identifies and provides information about transportation planning in the region, primarily those which are conducted with federal funds. She spoke about recent outreach and budget planning work for the development of the document, and she requested input from the Advisory Council and from the entities that its members represent. She went on to describe some of the studies listed in the FFY 2008 UPWP.

Karl Quackenbush, Deputy Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff, described the Regional Household Survey proposed in the draft UPWP. Its primary purpose is to gain information which the MPO needs in order to update its travel demand models. These models will help to inform future studies throughout the region. Households are contacted in order to recruit their involvement in survey responses using a travel diary.

#### **Points and Issues Raised During Discussion**

F. DeMasi commented that MPO studies usually do not distinguish between freight and passenger travel.

*K. Quackenbush, MPO staff, responded that the Rte. 60 study would identify freight traffic in the corridor.*

Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination, asked that future studies better analyze commercial data and that industry's impact on transportation demand should be examined.

Jim Gallagher asked whether other MPO's have examined commercial vehicle movement in the region.

*K. Quackenbush said that CTPS built a commercial model and continues to believe that a commercial vehicle survey, as well as other types of surveys, would be a useful thing to do. The household survey, however, is more important at this time.*

Chris Porter, MassBike, asked whether information on bicycle and pedestrian trips would be gathered and whether it would be sufficiently comprehensive to develop models regarding those modes.

*K. Quackenbush responded that the survey would provide significant non-motorized travel data.*

C. Rogers asked whether the method would generate statistically useful data.

*K. Quackenbush assured the Advisory Council that the method would take care to capture a useful representative sample.*

### **5. "Rail Freight as a Means of Reducing Roadway Congestion: Feasibility Considerations for Transportation Planning" – A presentation by Carl Martland, Senior Research Associate, Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

Carl Martland, senior research associate at MIT, opened his presentation describing the costs of rail freight as compared to trucking and personal transportation costs for retail goods. According to his report, it costs a typical household about \$250 per year to pick up needed items from retail stores; in comparison, it would cost about \$12 per year for rail freight service to transport those goods and \$50 to move them by truck.

C. Martland raised several freight issues in the metropolitan Boston area. Generally, the private sector lacks sufficient economic incentives to invest in rail. Specifically, C. Martland offered the following research findings:

- Traffic growth supports highway investment
- Over-reliance on trucks may lead to congestion
- City center-based railroad network developed in the nineteenth century does not meet economic demands and geographic realities of twenty-first century freight, complicating freight access in metropolitan centers and coordination between transportation modes
- Boston's global competition in part is based on the cost of providing sufficient infrastructure.

C. Martland's research suggests that, while political leaders are becoming more aware of the benefits of freight service, rail infrastructure capacity is constrained and freight companies have significant difficulty funding capital improvements. Much of the speaker's work has involved informing both the freight operators and local and regional officials about each other's objectives and challenges in an effort to support the public/private partnerships needed to increase use of rail freight. Freight projects and policies should better utilize planning with respect to environmental issues and economic development to encourage successful public/private partnerships.

C. Martland supported the potential for short-haul rail freight shipping in the region. He compared Boston to Seattle in terms of its nearby sister cities and freight destinations. Seattle,

Portland and other cities on the Pacific coast have built infrastructure to accommodate double-stack rail freight movement as a competitive alternative to trucking freight.

He concluded by stating that: rail freight is viable; when it wins traffic, it results in efficiencies; public/private partnerships can be productive; institutional barriers are surmountable. He recommended that the Boston region continue to explore investments in double-stack capabilities on the region's rail network.

### **Points and Issues Raised During Discussion**

R. Arena asked how much fear, uncertainty and doubt affect both the public and the private sectors' perspectives.

*Unpredictability is a considerable challenge to both parties, but it is a short-term concern for the private sector and a long-term concern for the public sector. Capital costs are the most significant concern for the private sector, and leading freight corporations would welcome policies and innovative funding mechanisms that would encourage investment in rail freight infrastructure. Few uniform methods for the private and public sectors to weigh and analyze public-private partnership projects continue to limit discussion. (C. Martland)*

## **6. Advisory Council Committees**

### *Storrow Drive Committee*

Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association, presented a summary of recent events involving the Storrow Drive Tunnel project. The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) requested a two-month delay to file the Draft EIR pending more information, but Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner Richard Sullivan denied the request. August 31 is the deadline. The CAC and the Advisory Council's Storrow Drive Committee developed technical variations of previously drafted options for the tunnel's rehabilitation, steering and focusing discussion toward Option A, which would rehabilitate the existing design and add a footbridge at Clarendon St., and toward Option B4, which would include a level land bridge from Arlington St. to the Esplanade.

The Committee strongly recommends that the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works takes a lead role to coordinate the various planning elements included in the project. The elements include but are not limited to redevelopment projects in the area, a new interchange to I-90 at the Bowker overpass, changes to the Fairmount Line at Yawkey Station, and the evolving Urban Ring project.

### **Points and Issues Raised During Discussion**

C. Porter supported the street at-grade options (Option B4), noting that connections would then be easier than over a footbridge.

*M Wellons responded that the footbridge proposed in Option A may be more conducive to cycling over the bridge than is anticipated. Option A remains the least expensive and quickest option on the table.*

F. DeMasi asked how much of the proposal is a “boat section” and about the “Daylighting” (making the existing tunnel sections boat sections) for the tunnel sections proposed in Option A. He also noted that he prefers the “boat section” approach; there would be less long-term maintenance, the traffic wouldn’t be visible from ground level and there would be no ventilation issues.

*M. Wellons described the proposed layout for Option A and explained that the road would appear to be a surface parkway for drivers, because the stretch has daylight features. Providing a depressed road with daylight features would provide an aesthetic amenity for drivers and pedestrians alike. The other options have six lanes and “boat sections.” She said that Option D would have the biggest negative impact to the Esplanade.*

C. Rogers commented that a study detailing the extent of needed repairs will not be available until the fall. The study is needed to determine the cost of the project. Until then, any discussion on the cost of the project seems premature.

R. Arena asked about the existing condition of the tunnels and commented that repairing the tunnel would be a misuse of scarce funding.

*C. Rogers responded that the tunnel could be replaced and repaired efficiently. He went on to support the expertise of the consultant commissioned by DCR for the project.*

*M. Wellons informed the Committee that the tunnel’s ceilings are more critical to the project than the walls and surface.*

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

### **Attachments:**

1. Attendance List for August 8, 2007
2. “Rail Freight as a Means of Reducing Roadway Congestion” Presentation

## **Attendance List for August 8, 2007**

### **Cities and Towns**

Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
Bob Campbell, Braintree  
Marcy Crowley, Wayland  
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
Tom Kadzis, Boston  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

### **Agencies**

Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination  
Jim Gallagher, Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Steve Rawding, Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission  
Hayes Morrison, MPO Staff  
Karl Quackenbush, MPO Staff  
David Rand, Division of Energy Resources  
Chan Rogers, Southwest Area Planning Committee  
Lynn Vikesland, MassPort  
Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff

### **Citizens Groups**

Michael Abend, American Planning Association – Massachusetts Chapter  
Rick Arena, Association for Public Transportation  
Vince Dixon, Association for Public Transportation  
John Gillon, Institute of Transportation Engineers  
Chris Howell, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce  
John McQueen, *WalkBoston*  
Chris Porter, Mass Bike  
Rob Rottenbucher, American Council of Engineering Companies  
Bill Scully, Boston Society of Civil Engineers  
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association

### **Guests and Visitors**

Jason Kurian  
Ed Lowney  
Marilyn MacNab  
Carl Martland  
Cheryl Ravalli

