

## **Draft Memorandum for the Record**

### **Transportation Planning and Programming Committee of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

#### **October 18, 2007 Meeting**

10:30 AM –12:30 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park  
Plaza, Boston

Barbara Lucas, Vice Chair, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

#### **Decisions**

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee voted to take the following actions:

- Approve the work program for the South Coast Commuter Rail Extension Ridership Forecast Study as revised
- Approve the work program for the Support to the Green Line Extension Environmental Review
- Approve the minutes of the October 4 meeting with recommended changes

#### **Meeting Agenda**

##### **1. Introductions**

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee members, staff, and members of the public introduced themselves. B. Lucas welcomed Kristina Johnson, newly elected Chair of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council, as a new member of the Committee.

##### **2. Public Comments**

There were none.

**3. Chair's Report** – *Barbara Lucas, MAPC*

The Vice Chair voiced her interest in having segments of upcoming Committee meetings devoted to the discussion of important issues that have implications for the MPO and transportation planning work. Topics identified as priorities for discussion include the reorganization of the state's transportation agencies, and the Administration's proposals to fund transportation projects, including the recent one concerning casinos. Staff has maintained a list of possible discussion topics identified by members and this should be circulated to them. Members wishing to add topics to the list should send them to Pam Wolfe, MPO staff.

**4. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports** – *Steve Woelfel, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW) and Barbara Lucas, MAPC*

The next Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) subcommittee meeting will be held on November 1 at 1 PM. The Route 28 study and the quarterly report will be on the agenda.

MPO staff is working on web updates for the Suburban Mobility/Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program and those updates are expected to be ready by the end of the month. Announcements regarding the program will be sent to contacts by letter and email. TDM applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.

**5. Regional Transportation Advisory Council** – *Kristina Johnson, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

K. Johnson, a planner for the City of Quincy, introduced herself and stated that it is a pleasure to be serving as the Advisory Council Chair and the Council's representative at the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. She stated that the priorities for her term include getting more input from municipalities into the Advisory Council.

The last meeting, on October 10, was focused on the Advisory Council's elections and on discussing ways to deal with non-participating members. The agenda for the next Advisory Council meetings may include a briefing on the Green Line Extension project

by Kate Fichter, EOTPW. Also, Mike Leone, Director of the Port of Boston, has been invited to speak. David Mohler, EOTPW, will also be invited to brief the Advisory Council on the MPO's activities.

Steve Olanoff, Advisory Council, added that some Council members recently participated in a trip on the Greenbush commuter rail line, sponsored for the Council by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).

## **6. Action Items**

### **Work Scopes**

#### **South Coast Rail** –*Karl Quackenbush, MPO Staff*

Members received a briefing on the South Coast Rail work program at the October 4 meeting. Following that meeting, MPO staff discussed issues raised by members with project supervisor Kristina Egan, EOTPW. Staff also received input from the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD). The work program was then revised to address members' comments. (See attached.)

The revisions include a clarification about the role of SRPEDD and show that Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) will rely heavily on SRPEDD's data for expanding the model set to incorporate the entire project area. The revisions also highlight the role of the interagency task force.

The section of the work program that describes the baseline land use forecasts was also revised to explain that CTPS will use the baseline forecasts developed by MAPC, which include the 101 municipalities in the region, plus forecasts developed by SRPEDD for municipalities in that MPO's region. In response to a member's question, K. Quackenbush explained that the two data sets would be consistent in that they are the forecasts that will have been formally adopted by each MPO. It was further noted that forecasts that MAPC had prepared for 63 communities beyond the MPO's 101, including

several in SRPEDD, will not be used. EOTPW prefers that, from now on, land use forecasts prepared by other MPOs be used for those 63 communities.

The revised work program also clarifies that, at the request of EOTPW, CTPS will model an alternative land use scenario to examine the potential effects on transit ridership if more compact, Smart Growth development patterns are pursued. This scenario will only be used by EOTPW for educational purposes.

Regarding the issue of freight, K. Egan is planning to have further discussion with the Advisory Council to better understand the Council's ideas. She also intends to seek freight experts to include among the consultants working on the project.

During a discussion period, members raised several issues concerning the expansion of South Station and the impacts on freight traffic. S. Woelfel explained that the \$1.4 billion estimated cost of the South Coast Rail project includes a portion (attributable to the South Coast Rail project) of the estimated cost of the South Station Project. In response to a member's comment that there should be an estimate of the eminent domain takings for the South Station expansion, he noted that this would be an issue to be addressed during the development of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Members stressed the importance of addressing rail freight parking in a regional manner to avoid back-ups in freight traffic. S. Woelfel stated that EOTPW is aware of the issue and it will be looked into. In response to a member's question, K. Quackenbush reiterated that the project team will be considering the trade-offs between rail and truck freight movement.

Another issue raised was the potential for the South Coast Rail project to encounter delays due to the need for municipalities to approve Transit Oriented Development and 40R project plans that might be associated with the rail project.

A question was raised about how various agencies and consultants would be interacting on the project. It was noted that it would be helpful if there was a flowchart that showed how all parties would be coordinating and which ones are responsible for certain aspects of the project. It was noted that the MPO should remain connected to the process and receive updates as the project moves forward.

A motion to approve the work program for the South Coast Commuter Rail Extension Ridership Forecast Study as revised was made by S. Woelfel, and seconded by Shirin Karanfiloglu, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MassPike). The motion passed unanimously.

**Green Line Extension** – *Steve Woelfel, EOTPW*

The timeline for the Green Line Extension project, showing the 2014 deadline, was redistributed. (See attached.) S. Woelfel provided an update on the project.

Last week, Governor Patrick held a press conference at which he announced the state's commitment to the project. The state is looking at ways to move the project forward expeditiously.

The advisory group for the project was recently formed and will hold its first meeting on October 25 at the Somerville Visiting Nurses Association. Vanasse, Hangen, Brustlin (VHB) is the consultant under contract for the project. An advertisement for an engineering consultant to design the new Green Line subway cars will be issued. The project's website will be up soon.

A question was raised about how the timeframe for the work program for the Support to the Green Line Extension Environmental Review, which was presented to members at the October 4 meeting, fits in with the 18-month schedule for the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) environmental process. S. Woelfel explained that there is a possibility that the work program would require work beyond the 12 months shown in the work scope schedule, but that any extension would not change the work

program cost unless there were new tasks added. He also noted that the project's Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) is being prepared in the hope that it can easily be converted into a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).

Thomas Bent, City of Somerville, expressed thanks to the Governor and others involved for the state's commitment to the project and for holding the press conference to announce it. He noted that Congressman Capuano and city councilors were in attendance at the press conference.

A motion to approve the work program for the Support to the Green Line Extension Environmental Review was made by T. Bent, and seconded by Joe Cosgrove, MBTA. The motion passed unanimously.

**Meeting Minutes** – *Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff*

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 4 meeting – with changes to pages 2, 5, 9, and 11 recommended by Mary Pratt, Town of Hopkington, Gordon Feltman, Town of Bedford, and B. Lucas – was made by M. Pratt, and seconded by S. Woelfel. The motion passed. Ginger Esty, Town of Framingham, and Paul Regan, MBTA Advisory Board, abstained.

**7. Work Scopes** – *Karl Quackenbush, MPO Staff*

**Alewife Station: Improvements to Feeder Bus Routes, Bus Access and Egress, and Route 2/Route 16 Intersection**

The Alewife Station work program had been distributed to members for review. (See attached.) This work program describes the next phase of work to follow the Route 2/Route 16 (Alewife Brook Parkway) Eastbound: Traffic Patterns and Alewife Station Parking Garage Survey, which was approved by the MPO in August. The goal of the work program is to determine if the transportation system in the Alewife area can be made more efficient through relatively modest actions, and to identify feasible improvements to the bus system and the immediate vicinity.

In the first phase of the study, CTPS ran license plate data from vehicles that were parking at the garage and traveling thorough the study area against the 2003 data file from the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) to determine the origin of those vehicles. As part of the new work program, staff will re-run the license plate data against the new, 2006 RMV data file. (Staff is currently unable to read the 2006 RMV file because the RMV's technology is much older than CTPS's, however, staff is working to resolve the problem.)

The findings will enable the project to compare the locations of vehicle origin to the bus route network that feeds Alewife Station, and to identify whether the bus routes could be adjusted (either by re-routing or changing frequencies, for example) to capture more riders, including those who currently drive to the station and those who drive through the area.

CTPS will also examine the infrastructure surrounding Alewife Station to determine if there are ways for buses to enter and exit the station more efficiently. Consideration will be given to changing traffic signal timing at the Route 2/Route 16 intersection to provide more green time for buses, and to providing a dedicated ramp for buses entering the station.

Members made several suggestions:

- Staff should look at possibilities for signal pre-emption for buses at the Route 2/Route 16 intersection.
- The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) may wish to have input since it owns the Alewife Brook Parkway. (Staff will interact with DCR as appropriate.)
- MBTA bus routes #79 and 350 should be included in the study.
- The geometry of the Route 2/Route 16-intersection and garage entrances should be examined as the geometry can affect traffic flow and congestion. (K. Quackenbush noted that the budget for this work program does not allow for the

study of major infrastructure changes, however, modest geometrical changes will be considered under this work program. Language will be added to the work program to clarify this.)

- Changes to the bus system should be advertised to attract new riders. (Joe Cosgrove, MBTA, stated that marketing would likely be the next step after the study is completed.)
- Eastbound traffic on Route 2 should be discouraged from using the MBTA bus ramp to avoid the intersection.
- Consideration should be given to re-striping the road where buses leave Route 2 to enter the garage so that it is a two-lane road.

A member asked whether the study would look beyond the Route 2/Route 16 intersection to other areas along the corridor near Rindge Avenue. K. Quackenbush explained that staff intends to focus its study just on the intersection, but could expand the study area if the work program's budget allows.

Another member inquired about the incentives for attracting more people to use the transit system. K. Quackenbush explained that potentially more people could be attracted to transit use if the bus service were improved or re-routed, if the interaction between the MBTA buses and the LEXPRESS were improved, or if service frequency were increased.

Staff will revise the work program prior to the Committee's vote at the next meeting.

### **2008 – 2009 MBTA Passenger Survey**

The work program for the 2008 – 2009 MBTA Passenger Survey had been distributed for members' review. (See attached.) Under this work program, CTPS will conduct an on-board passenger survey for the entire MBTA system over the next two years. This \$1 million work program is being paid for by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to enhance the technical analysis used in its alternatives analysis and New Starts Programs.

The last surveys on the MBTA system occurred between 1993 and 1998 for the rail and bus systems, in 2000 for commuter boats, and between 2003 and 2006 for the Silver Line. Work will involve designing a survey instrument. The previous surveys have provided experience for developing questions that yield useful information.

The surveys will be distributed to as many individuals as possible as they enter the transit system. The goal is to collect a statistically valid sample at both the line and station level for the rail and rapid transit system and at the route level for the bus system. Surveys will be distributed at rapid transit stations between 6:30 AM and 3:30 PM on a weekday. For bus routes, a composite day may need to be created in order to cover all trips. For routes with low ridership, CTPS will likely endeavor to survey all passengers.

Riders will have the option of returning their surveys by handing them back to surveyors, by dropping them in boxes at stations, by mail, or by responding via the Web. The survey will elicit information on the traveler (age, gender, etc.), trip information (origin, destination, etc.), and attitudinal information. It will be available in multiple languages identified by the MBTA through its Title VI process.

When the survey is complete, a database of response information will be developed, and the data will be processed and analyzed.

K. Quackenbush provided the following explanations to questions that were raised by members:

- The survey will include the Silver Line even though the riders of that service were surveyed in recent years. The new survey of Silver Line riders will be conducted toward the end of the work program's timeframe when the previous data will have become more dated. The new data will provide input for the MBTA's New Starts application for the Silver Line Phase 3 project.
- The new survey data will be compatible with the old data.

- Only one website response per passenger will be permitted. In order to respond to the survey via the website, a person must first have received a paper survey form. The form will include a code necessary for responding via the website.
- The data gathered from this survey will be used to validate the MPO's transportation model (to check model output accuracy). The data will not, however, be a replacement for the Regional Household Survey, which will include household and other travel data and which will provide the ability to build new models.
- The survey will shed light on cachement areas and provide information on how far people are walking to reach stations.
- Staff will aim to maximize the returns by designing a survey that includes an appropriate number and order of questions.

Members offered several suggestions:

- Staff should conduct outreach to communities with environmental justice populations to alert them that the survey will be released. This will help to deal with problems that may arise due to language barriers or community or individual privacy concerns.
- Staff should review sample surveys from other cities, such as New York and Philadelphia.
- Riders that travel during the 3:30 PM to 7:30 PM weekday period and weekend riders should also be surveyed. K. Quackenbush noted that this might be beyond the work program's budget.

Members asked to review the survey questions. Staff will distribute past survey questions to members before the vote on the work program at the next meeting.

## **8. Members' Items**

S. Woelfel announced that EOTPW held a scoping session on the Red/Blue Line Connector project on October 17. Neighborhood groups and residents in attendance expressed interest in how the project would be coordinated with other projects in the area,

and in exploring other options, such as a pedestrian connection. Public comments are due on November 8. The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is expected to issue a MEPA certificate on November 15.

Michael Chong, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), reported that FHWA issued its approval of the FFY 2008 UPWP. The agency is finalizing its review of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and expects to be sending correspondence on it the first week in November.

B. Lucas raised the issue of a possible amendment to the FFY 2008 – 2011 TIP. Staff is anticipating recommending an amendment that will include carry-overs from the MBTA and Cape Ann Transportation Authority that might be ready for discussion at the November 1 Committee meeting.

B. Lucas announced that there will be a Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) meeting on the afternoon of October 22 in Sutton. EOTPW and MassHighway will report on project updates and bridges. The agencies will be reporting to MARPA quarterly.

## **9. Adjourn**

**Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Meeting Attendance**  
**Thursday, October 18, 2007, 10:00 AM**

**Member Agencies**

EOTPW  
City of Boston  
City of Newton  
City of Salem  
City of Somerville  
Federal Highway  
Administration  
MAPC  
  
MassPike  
MBTA  
MBTA Advisory Board  
Advisory Council  
  
Town of Bedford  
Town of Framingham  
Town of Hopkinton

**Representatives and Alternates**

Steve Woelfel  
Thomas Kadzis  
David Koses  
Lynn Duncan  
Thomas Bent  
Michael Chong  
  
Barbara Lucas  
Jim Gallagher  
Shirin Karanfiloglu  
Joe Cosgrove  
Paul Regan  
Kristina Johnson  
Steve Olanoff  
Gordon Feltman  
Ginger Esty  
Mary Pratt

**MPO Staff/CTPS**

Clinton Bench  
John Hersey  
Maureen Kelly  
Anne McGahan  
Hayes Morrison  
Karl Quackenbush  
Arnie Soolman  
Mary Ellen Sullivan  
Pam Wolfe

**Other Attendees**

Sue McQuaid, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Ellin Reisner, Somerville Transportation Equity  
Partnership  
Wig Zamore, Mystic View Task Force/Somerville  
Transportation Equity Partnership