

Memorandum for the Record
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee of the
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

July 24, 2008 Meeting

10:00 AM –1:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza,
Boston

David Mohler, Chair, representing Bernard Cohen, Executive Office of Transportation &
Public Works (EOTPW)

Decisions

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

- Advance nine proposals (listed below) to EOTPW for consideration for grant
funding from the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Job Access and Reverse
Commute and/or New Freedom Programs:
 - North Shore Workforce Investment Board – North Shore paratransit
service to employment and mobility management
 - Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants – Rural job access for
refugees and immigrants
 - Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) –
Franklin bus route extension improving access to employment for people
with low incomes
 - SCM Community Transportation – Identifying job access transportation
needs in the MetroNorth area
 - MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) – Vehicles for Green
Line Connection for service to employment centers in Framingham
 - Mystic Valley Elder Services – Demand response service for elders and
people with disabilities in the North Suburban area
 - GATRA – Duxbury and Marshfield Demand Response Service for people
with disabilities
 - Town of Acton – Accessible taxi voucher program to extend hours of
service for people with disabilities and the elderly
 - New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America – Accessible
transportation service for veterans

Meeting Agenda

1. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

2. Chair's Report – *Stephen Woelfel, EOTPW*

There was no Chair's Report.

3. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports – *Barbara Lucas, Metropolitan Area Planning
Council*

The Suburban Mobility Subcommittee will meet at 1:00 PM today.

4. Regional Transportation Advisory Council – *Kristina Johnson, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

There was no report from the Advisory Council.

5. JARC and New Freedom Proposals – *Annette Demchur, MPO Staff*

The Committee reviewed proposals submitted to the MPO from organizations seeking funding from two Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs: the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program and the New Freedom Program. Proposals approved by the Committee would be forwarded to EOTPW, for consideration for grant funding.

A. Demchur provided an overview of the work the MPO has conducted leading up to today's activities and an overview of the two FTA programs. The MPO developed a Coordinated Human-Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP), which is required under SAFETEA-LU and allows MPO regions to be eligible to receive funding from the FTA's JARC and New Freedom programs. The goals of the JARC program are to improve access to jobs and employment-related activities for people with low incomes and reverse commuters. The goal of the New Freedom program is to improve mobility for people with disabilities, beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The MPO held a workshop in July for prospective applicants, which was attended by over twenty people. A. Demchur noted that participants generated many good ideas. (See attached memorandum for more details.) Fourteen organizations subsequently submitted proposals to the MPO. The applicants requested a total of \$776,337 in JARC funding and \$654,045 in New Freedom funding.

The Committee members discussed the proposals to determine if they met the goals and objectives of the JARC and New Freedom programs, and the regional priorities of the MPO as documented in the MPO's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, adopted June 24, 2008.

North Shore Workforce Investment Board

The North Shore Workforce Investment Board (WIB) requested a total of \$236,092 (a \$58,411 JARC operating grant, \$59,635 JARC capital grant, \$58,411 New Freedom operating grant, and \$59,635 New Freedom capital grant) to start a subscription paratransit service within the Route 114 and Route 1 corridors in Danvers and Peabody. Currently there is a gap in paratransit service in these corridors, which was identified in the MPO's regional equity work. The project would enable people with low incomes and people with disabilities to access jobs along the two corridors.

The proposed service would be limited to people with no other transportation options. The mobility management aspect of the project would ensure that this service would not duplicate the service offered by THE RIDE. The program would be coordinated by several human service organizations. Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS) would operate the service.

Members asked several questions of the project proponents.

Kristina Johnson, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, noted that a number of organizations would be involved with the project and she asked for more information about how they would interact with one another. Mark Whitmore, Executive Director of the North Shore Career Center and member of the North Shore WIB, responded by explaining that many of the organizations involved already work together. The proposed new service would be coordinated through the North Shore Career Center. The Cape Ann Transportation Operating Company (CATOC), which would conduct the mobility management portion of the project, currently has a contract with the North Shore Career Center. GLSS is the new piece to the organizational chart. M. Whitmore expressed confidence that the large organizational structure would not impede service delivery.

David Koses, City of Newton, asked whether people who are registered for THE RIDE would be eligible for the new service. M. Whitmore explained his organization's approach to matching services with customers. The least restrictive and least expensive options are considered first, and if those options do not meet the customer's need, more restrictive and expensive options are considered. He noted that the organization helps people obtain services from THE RIDE. The customer would choose whether to use the new service or THE RIDE.

Jim Gallagher, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), asked for more information about the mobility management work that is conducted by CATOC. Kay Nordstrom, CATOC, explained that CATOC takes calls from human service agencies on the North Shore that are helping customers with disabilities and CATOC helps connect those individuals to transportation services. CATOC currently relies on grants to fund this work, but the grants will be ending. She noted that some people with disabilities are not eligible for THE RIDE and, since they have no other transportation options, they cannot access jobs in the area. The proposed service will help those individuals as well as people with low-incomes who do not own cars. CATOC would provide one-on-one technical assistance to customers and help them to sign on to the new service.

Barbara Lucas, MAPC, raised a question about how the proposed service would fit in with other human-service transportation services operating in the region. K. Nordstrom remarked upon several services targeted to people with specific needs and noted that there are still some people who are not served by the existing services. The proposed new service would be targeted to people who have no other transportation options.

B. Lucas noted that the project proponents are dealing with providing transportation services in an environment of sprawl. She requested that CATOC and its partners weigh in on discussions of land use in the region to encourage an approach to land use that is more amenable to transit and alternatives to automobile transportation.

Thomas Bent, City of Somerville, asked whether the proponents had coordinated with the business community and the Chamber of Commerce. M. Whitmore stated that they have worked with the local Chamber of Commerce, however, due to the quick turn-around

required to meet the grant proposal deadline, the proponents did not have time to get the Chamber actively engaged in promoting the project. He also noted that the board of the North Shore WIB is a private sector-led board, and that the board supports the proposal.

Norm Ketola, CATOC, added that the proponents conducted a survey of approximately 30 employers to gather information about transportation issues along the corridors, and to determine if employers would support the proposed service. CATOC is planning to conduct new mobility management activities that will involve working with employers to build on-going financial support for the service.

Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants

The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (MORI) requested \$10,266 in JARC operating funds for a project to identify opportunities to provide job access for low-income immigrants and refugees with agrarian backgrounds to jobs at local farms. The project is regional in nature and could be used as a model for programs in other areas.

Lutheran Social Services of New England

Lutheran Social Services of New England requested \$180,144 in JARC funding over two years for the implementation of a local Ways to Work program that would provide small loans to low-income families for the purchase or repair of a car. The program has been implemented in 21 states. The program has proven particularly advantageous to single mothers whose transportation needs are not met by public transportation. The project could be implemented across the region.

B. Lucas raised a concern that the interest rate on the loans could be as high as 8%.

Mary Pratt, Town of Hopkinton, asked if the program would be targeted only to Lutherans. A. Demchur stated that the program is open to the public.

D. Koses asked for more information about the loan program. A. Demchur replied that the recipient could receive a loan of up to \$4,000 and would have to pay it off within two years. Participants would also receive financial counseling. The aim of the program is to help people become self-sufficient. D. Mohler added that it is his understanding that the program would provide manageable loans to people who would not otherwise qualify for a loan at a manageable interest rate.

K. Johnson asked if the proponent has a way to minimize the risk of default on the loans. D. Mohler stated that the JARC capital money would guarantee the loan. D. Koses then raised a question about who would own the vehicle in the event of a default. This information was not available at the time.

GATRA – Franklin Bus Route Extension

GATRA requested \$84,512 in JARC operating funds to extend its bus service, which currently operates in the Town of Franklin, to commercial developments in the Interstate 495 and Route 126 area in the Town of Bellingham. The extension of service would

provide job access for people with low incomes, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The match to the grant would come from MBTA assessment funds.

M. Pratt voiced her support for the proposal but raised the issue that towns in the GATRA service area might have to pay for the first year of the service out of their general funds since the MBTA assessment funds that could be applied to the project would not be available until the next year. She noted that the funding should not come from the town's general funds since the towns would then be subsidizing the service.

SCM Community Transportation

SCM Community Transportation requested \$51,788 in JARC operating funds for the first phase of a project to identify transportation barriers (for access to jobs) faced by welfare recipients, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities in the Metro North area. SCM requested \$63,288 for the second phase, a pilot project. A. Demchur stated that the funds requested for the second phase could not be considered because the amount was merely a placeholder and no support was included in the proposal.

Reed Cochran, Executive Director of SCM, provided an overview of the proposed project. SCM is offering to convene human-service agencies to develop an inventory of job access transportation needs unmet by the existing transportation network and the resources that could meet those needs, and then conduct a pilot project, which would involve employers. She noted that SCM is focused on the needs of elders, but that there is a movement among human-service agencies to coordinate across missions. The proposed project would help the agencies improve their service efficiency by coordinating and avoiding the duplication of service. With the involvement of Go Local, a ridesharing service, it would be possible to help individuals avoid buying cars. SCM's goal is to have employers provide funding in three years.

B. Lucas and D. Koses raised questions about whether SCM, a vendor of transportation services, is the appropriate entity to conduct this work. D. Koses suggested that an independent consulting firm might be more appropriate than a service provider, or that the work could be done through an MPO Unified Planning Work Program study.

R. Cochran noted that SCM has the skills, expertise, and local knowledge to do the work. She also stated that the project deliverable – a plan for a pilot program – could be handed over to any entity. T. Bent voiced confidence in SCM's ability to conduct the work. M. Pratt also voiced support for having SCM, rather than a consultant, conduct the work.

J. Gallagher noted that SCM is listed as a partner of Mystic Valley Elder Services in the latter's proposal. He inquired as to how SCM's proposal differs from Mystic Valley Elder Services' proposal. It was noted that SCM's is focused on job access transportation, while Mystic Valley's addresses transportation for elders and people with disabilities. Their approach to coordination is similar.

B. Lucas noted that there have been a number of previous coordination efforts by various entities, including the state Health and Human Services. She spoke about the need for a

regionwide plan and the need to coordinate, possibly funded by Mobility Assistance or Health and Human Services programs, to address human-service transportation needs. R. Cochran noted that the proposed pilot project could be replicated in other parts of the state.

When asked if a service provider could be eligible for a JARC grant, Bill Gordon, FTA, explained that MPOs must decide which proposal to advance through the CHSTP. A. Demchur added that EOTPW is the recipient of the grant funds and the entities that are awarded grants are sub-recipients.

GATRA – Pembroke Demand Response Service

GATRA requested a total of \$76,895 (\$24,000 in JARC operating funds and \$52,895 in New Freedom operating funds) to expand its demand response service in Pembroke and run a subscription call-in, “first come, first serve” shuttle service from Pembroke to the commuter rail station in Plympton. A. Demchur stated that the proposal does not meet the requirements of JARC in that the shuttle would not give priority to people with low incomes and is not serving reverse commuters. She noted that the demand response portion would qualify for New Freedom.

B. Lucas expressed concern about the MPO supporting projects that limit ridership to particular groups, excluding other potential riders when seats are available. D. Mohler stated that the issue of concern is whether or not the programs are targeted to at-need populations.

MWRTA – Green Line Connection

MWRTA requested \$400,000 in JARC capital funds for a service that would provide connections from the Green Line in Newton to the MetroWest area, particularly to high job centers in Framingham. The local match would come from the RTA’s capital funds. The MPO is also considering this project for a Suburban Mobility grant for operating costs.

Ed Carr, MWRTA Administrator, addressed questions about the proposal. D. Mohler asked if the MWRTA would be able to operate the proposed service if it received only one of the grants for which it applied in either the FTA program or the MPO’s Suburban Mobility program. E. Carr stated that if the Suburban Mobility grant is awarded and the JARC grant is not awarded, or vice versa, the MWRTA would seek the required operating or capital funding for the project from another source, such as 5309 funds.

G. Esty suggested that the service might attract more users if it were extended to the area on Route 9 where Genzyme and Bose are located. E. Carr stated that there is a service in place that runs on Route 9 every 45 minutes.

B. Lucas asked whether the MWRTA or the service provider would own and operate the buses. E. Carr replied that normally the RTA owns the capital and contracts out operating service.

G. Esty asked about the expected level or ridership. E. Carr stated that the service is expected to serve about 140 people.

Mystic Valley Elder Services

Mystic Valley Elder Services requested \$109,216 in New Freedom operating funds for a demand response transportation program for seniors and adults with disabilities in the towns of Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, North Reading, Stoneham, and Wakefield. Eight letters of support accompanied the proposal. Mystic Valley Elder Services would match the grant funds with its Title 3 (Older Americans Act) fund.

Jenny Vanasse, Director of Development for the Mystic Valley Elder Services, stated that her organization received a grant from the Boston Foundation to conduct planning for the program and is now aiming to implement the program. The program would include a central dispatch operation and improve coordination among providers. Ideally, the program would be based on the ITNAmerica model.

GATRA – Duxbury and Marshfield Demand Response Service

GATRA requested \$57,888 in New Freedom operating funds to expand a demand response service, targeting people with disabilities, in Duxbury and Marshfield. GATRA seeks to expand its hours of service and service area. The match would come from the towns' MBTA assessments.

Town of Acton

The Town of Acton requested \$10,000 in New Freedom operating funds to extend the hours of an accessible transportation service through a taxi voucher program for the elderly and people with disabilities. The town is contributing funding for the program and it might seek a Suburban Mobility grant next year.

M. Pratt expressed interest in the program and recommended that the proposal move forward.

Ms. Osmond, Transportation Advisory Committee of the Town of Acton, noted that the town could use more funding for the proposed program, however, due to the short lead time on the application, the proponents did not have time to seek matching funds from the town or to access the funds the town pays in MBTA assessments. She remarked upon the need for extending the voucher program due to the high cost one must pay to take a taxi to reach accessible MBTA services. (A subsidized trip from Acton to Concord could cost \$25 to \$40.) D. Mohler stated that, EOTPW would provide more advanced notice for subsequent solicitations.

New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America

The New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America requested \$64,000 in New Freedom capital funds and \$46,000 in operating funds to start a service that would transport disabled veterans to their medical appointments and activities. The program would address the need to provide veterans with wheelchair accessible vans. (The Veterans Administration's (VA) shuttles are not accessible for wheelchair users.) The

service would connect with services at the VA medical centers in West Roxbury and Jamaica Plain.

A. Demchur stated that the need for this type of service is evident from the MPO's regional equity work. She noted that the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America has approximately 1,000 members in the region. It was unclear from the proposal whether the proponents planned to advertise the service only to its members or to all disabled veterans in the region. The proponents were not in attendance to clarify this issue.

B. Lucas expressed concern about public funds being used to support programs that serve narrowly defined groups. She stated that she did not wish to vote against a program that serves disabled veterans, however, she expressed concern that the proposed service might only serve members of the organization and not be available to a broader group of people.

M. Pratt stated that the federal government should be looking to address the need for wheelchair accessible transportation to the VA hospitals. She stated that this proposal is a step in the right direction.

D. Mohler expressed his support for helping the population of disabled veterans. He was also concerned about the possibility that an individual must be a member of the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America to use the service. He stated that, to address this concern, the proponents should conduct outreach to advertise the program beyond the membership of the organization.

Shirin Karanfiloglu, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, recommended that the MPO accept the proposal with a caveat that would require the proponents to market the service broadly to disabled veterans in the region. Members accepted S. Karnafiloglu's suggestion. It was noted that staff would be able to follow-up with the proponents regarding the questions that were raised during the discussion.

Tommy's Taxi, Inc.

Tommy's Taxi, Inc. requested three years of funding totaling \$112,000 (\$56,000 for the first year and \$28,000 for each following year) to purchase four wheelchair accessible taxis over the course of three years. The new taxis would be integrated into the company's regular fleet, which operates in the Framingham area, and would provide disabled passengers with the opportunity to travel more spontaneously and with a greater degree of flexibility than they may have when using most ADA services.

D. Mohler expressed concern that supporting this proposal might create a conflict of interest in that the state might give an unfair advantage to Tommy's Taxis if the company were to bid for future THE RIDE or MWRTA paratransit contracts.

E. Carr, MWRTA, noted that the RTA has placed a request to purchase eight of the same sort of vehicles.

Peabody Council on Aging

The Peabody Council on Aging (COA) requested \$100,000 in New Freedom capital funds to upgrade access areas to the Torigian Community Life Center.

Catherine Tassinari, City of Peabody COA, spoke about the extensive transportation services provided by the COA and noted that those services are being used more and more. The COA provides 250 to 300 rides per day. She explained that the access areas to the COA facility are in poor repair. The parking lot needs to be repaved, and new sidewalks and sidewalk cuts need to be installed. The COA is seeking to maintain its transportation service in the face of budget cuts.

While the Committee recognized the COA's needs, the proposal did not address well the goals of the JARC and New Freedom Programs since the request was not for a new or expanded transportation service or for coordination services.

K. Johnson suggested that the COA consider looking into seeking Community Development Block Grant funding from the town.

MWRTA – Mobility Management

The MWRTA requested \$40,000 in New Freedom capital funds to create an operational plan for mobility management technology. The grant would be matched by RTA capital funds.

E. Carr provided an overview of the proposal. The funds would be used to plan for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies for use in the operation of the MWRTA's call center. The MWRTA is working toward incorporating users of THE RIDE from Natick and Framingham into the MWRTA's demand response system. The MWRTA wants to upgrade its communication technologies to provide real-time information to disabled customers. The system would enable customers to determine the location of the vehicle that would be picking them up, and feature a voice activated response system for the blind.

D. Mohler noted that while the technology upgrade would provide real-time information to customers, those using the "dial-a-ride" option would not have opportunities to schedule another trip if, for example, their ride was late.

E. Carr noted that the MWRTA is moving toward integrating its fixed route system with its demand response system. Some individuals might have the option to use both aspects of the system. (Medical patients, for example, who might normally be able to use the fixed route system, might require the demand response service after treatments.)

Discussion

Members decided to select proposals to advance to EOTPW, but not to prioritize those proposals. They had further discussions about several proposals.

They determined that the proposals for the Peabody COA and GATRA – Pembroke Demand Response Service were ineligible for the JARC and New Freedom programs.

G. Esty expressed support for the MWRTA – Mobility Management proposal, however there was consensus to not advance the proposal.

Members further discussed the MWRTA – Green Line Connection proposal and its relationship to the MWRTA’s proposal requesting operating funds through the Suburban Mobility Program. For clarification, E. Carr reiterated that if the MWRTA were awarded funding for only one of its proposals, then it would allocate other RTA funds to meet the necessary capital or operating funds for the Green Line Connection. He stated that the MWRTA plans to purchase five buses; Suburban Mobility funding would be used to operate four buses.

B. Lucas expressed support for advancing the MWRTA – Green Line Connection proposal. M. Pratt stated that if the MWRTA is going to buy buses to serve reverse commuters, the service should extend farther up Route 9 to reach the science companies there. S. Woelfel raised an issue about whether, by using JARC funding to purchase the buses, the MWRTA would be restricted in its use of the buses if ridership turned out to be low. After these comments were voiced, the members agreed to advance the proposal.

D. Koses and K. Johnson recommended not advancing the Lutheran Social Services of New England proposal. D. Koses expressed concern about a program that would add cars to the region’s roadways, given that the MPO aims to reduce the number of vehicles on the road. He also noted that there are outstanding questions regarding the loan interest rate and the ownership of vehicles in the event of a default.

D. Mohler and Carey Duques, City of Salem, expressed support for the proposal. C. Duques noted that the program would help single mothers and children, that it includes a segment that helps the loan recipients repay their loans, and that the program would require participants to enroll in a ridesharing program. D. Mohler liked that the program would not just offer people rides, but would empower them to better address their transportation needs.

B. Gordon noted that FTA has supported like programs in rural areas where there is no transit service. A. Demchur added that there are regions of the Boston Region MPO where people have no access to transit.

With only two members supporting the proposal, the Committee did not advance the Lutheran Social Services proposal.

S. Woelfel recommended that the Tommy’s Taxi proposal not be advanced due to a potential conflict of interest. M. Pratt expressed support for it. It did not advance.

Members also discussed a possible conflict of interest with the SCM proposal in that the outcome of the project could benefit the business of SCM. A. Demchur noted that SCM

would only be conducting the planning portion of the work, and not the implementation. D. Mohler and T. Bent expressed support for the proposal and confidence that the conflict would not occur. B. Lucas gave the proposal her support with the caveat that SCM report its results to the MPO. D. Koses registered his opposition and stated that the work would be more appropriate for a consultant or a UPWP study. With only one member opposing, the Committee advanced the proposal.

Members also agreed to advance the proposal of the New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America with the caveat that the organization must conduct marketing and outreach to disabled veterans (beyond the members of the organization) that might require transportation to the VA hospitals.

B. Lucas asked that staff show the Committee the recommendations it prepares for EOTPW.

A motion to advance the following proposals to EOTPW as the Committee's recommendations for consideration for JARC and New Freedom funding was made by S. Woelfel, and seconded by T. Bent:

- North Shore Workforce Investment Board
- Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants
- GATRA – Franklin Bus Route Extension
- SCM Community Transportation, Phase I
- MWRTA – Green Line Connection
- Mystic Valley Elder Services
- GATRA – Duxbury and Marshfield Demand Response Service
- Town of Acton
- New England Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America, with caveats

The motion passed unanimously.

The following proposals did not advance:

- Lutheran Social Services of New England
- GATRA – Pembroke Demand Response Service
- Tommy's Taxi, Inc.
- Peabody Council on Aging
- MWRTA – Mobility Management

6. Meeting Minutes – *Pam Wolfe, Manager of Certification Activities, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

Members did not take up this agenda item.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by S. Woelfel, and seconded by D. Mohler. The motion passed unanimously.

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Meeting Attendance
Thursday, July 24, 2008, 10:00 AM

Member Agencies

EOTPW
City of Newton
City of Salem
City of Somerville

Federal Highway
Administration
Federal Transit
Administration
MAPC

MassHighway/EOTPW
MassPike
MBTA
Regional Transportation
Advisory Council
Town of Bedford
Town of Framingham
Town of Hopkinton

Representatives and Alternates

David Mohler
David Koses
Carey Duques
Thomas Bent
Sergiu Luchian
Michael Chong
Ed Silva
Bill Gordon

Barbara Lucas
Jim Gallagher
Stephen Woelfel
Shirin Karanfiloglu
Joe Cosgrove
Kristina Johnson
Steve Olanoff
Richard Reed
Ginger Esty
Mary Pratt

MPO Staff/CTPS

Jonathan Belcher
Annette Demchur
John Hersey
Maureen Kelly
Ryan Lundergan
Anne McGahan
Karl Quackenbush
Arnie Soolman
Mary Ellen Sullivan
Pam Wolfe

Other Attendees

Ed Carr

Tony Centore
Reed Cochran
Norm Ketola

Kay Nordstrom

Ms. Osmond

John Stasik

Catherine Tassinari

Jenny Vanasse
Mark Whitmore

MetroWest Regional Transit
Authority
Consulting Engineer
SCM Community Transportation
Cape Ann Transportation
Operating Company
Cape Ann Transportation
Operating Company
Town of Acton, Transportation
Advisory Committee
MetroWest Regional Transit
Authority
City of Peabody, Council on
Aging
Mystic Valley Elder Services
North Shore Career Center/
Workforce Investment Board

MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning and Programming Committee July 24, 2008

FROM: Annette Demchur, Regional Equity Program Manager
Central Transportation Planning Staff

RE: Recommendations for Advancing Proposals for Funding in the Job Access
and Reverse Commute Program and New Freedom Program – July
Solicitation

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (Boston Region MPO) has solicited proposals for funding in two Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs: Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom. This solicitation was undertaken in order to provide possible recipients access to federal funds for projects that support the goals of the federal programs in the Boston Region MPO area. This solicitation was completed within a very brief timetable in order to comply with the schedule established by the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW) requiring MPOs to submit priority projects by July 25, 2008.

This memorandum and the attached matrix provide information and context to support the MPO's consideration of the projects proposed for funding. After consideration, the MPO may wish to decide which projects to advance to EOTPW for funding and may also identify priority projects among them.

BACKGROUND

SAFETEA-LU, which is the source of current federal regulations and funding for programming transportation funds, requires that an MPO develop a Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) for its region in order to access funding in the FTA JARC and New Freedom programs. The Boston Region MPO developed its plan this spring and approved it on June 26.

This important step enables the Boston MPO to participate in the EOTPW-managed process for allocating funding from the JARC and New Freedom programs for the Boston Urbanized Area (UZA), an area that includes the Boston Region MPO and four other MPOs.

Federal fiscal year 2006 funds are being allocated in this round; \$1.3 million for JARC and \$1.2 million for New Freedom. The EOTPW set the July 25 deadline in order to allow time for participation from MPOs, including from the Boston Region MPO, and to provide enough time to allocate the funds before the federal lapse date.

GOALS OF THE JARC AND NEW FREEDOM PROGRAMS

The goals of the JARC program are to improve access to jobs and employment-related activities for low-income individuals and to transport residents of urban areas to suburban jobs.

Examples of eligible projects are those that:

- Provide a service that fills gaps spatially or temporally
- Promote services that meet program goals
- Are innovative approaches to facilitate job access/reverse commuting
- Coordinate existing providers and welfare agencies

The goal of the New Freedom program is to go beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements to improve mobility for people with disabilities.

Examples of eligible projects are those that provide new public transportation services or alternatives such as:

- Expanding service boundaries beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, expanding service hours, or creating feeder services
- Purchasing accessible vehicles or supporting new voucher programs or mobility management and coordination activities

THE BOSTON REGION MPO COORDINATED HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Criteria for Evaluation

The Boston MPO's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) lays out several criteria for each of the two programs. For JARC funds, the criteria suggest that the proposed projects improve access to employment or employment-related activities for people with low incomes, or improve access to reverse-commute employment. For New Freedom funds, the criteria include consideration of whether the project would reduce barriers to transportation services or expand transportation mobility for people with disabilities.

Strategies for Addressing Needs and Prioritizing Projects

The CHSTP includes suggestions for possible ways to address the transportation needs of people with low incomes, people with disabilities, and the elderly and to improve coordination of services. These strategies include:

- Increasing hours of operation of a service; increasing service coverage (new or expanded routes, paratransit beyond ADA requirements, or expanded service boundaries)
- Improving the accessibility of existing services (appropriate vehicles, amenities such as shelters, maps and non-English signs; better access to stations/stops)

- Improving and standardizing driver training; improving communications (scheduling systems, promotion and marketing, use of information technology)
- Providing travel training
- Creating or expanding voucher programs
- Reducing duplication of services through coordination
- Improving intermodal connections
- Arranging for group purchasing

The geographic distribution of the projects and the amount of public input included in the planning process are additional factors considered in prioritizing projects.

PROCESS FOR SOLICITATION OF PROJECTS

The Boston Region MPO conducted extensive outreach to possible interested parties. Legal notices were printed in the *Boston Globe*, the *Bay State Banner*, and in Spanish in *El Mundo* and *La Semana*. Press releases were sent to all daily and weekly newspapers in the region. Notices were sent to the region's councils on aging, workforce investment boards, regional transit authorities, regional planning agencies, municipal officials, regional equity contacts (which include human service agencies, public housing authorities, community development corporations, human service agencies, and planning action councils), transportation management associations, non-profit and private transportation providers, the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA, and several government agencies. Email notices were sent to the MPO's listserve, MPOinfo.

MPO staff researched program requirements and worked with EOTPW to develop informational materials for potential applicants and an application form, including an electronic budget submittal.

A workshop was held on July 8, 2008, to provide information for potential applicants to either program. Twenty-one interested parties representing thirteen organizations attended. Other possible applicants contacted staff to discuss the programs and process. Contact information for workshop participants was shared with all participants, as many were interested in collaborating. Staff also sent to all workshop participants answers to questions raised at the workshop and in non-confidential conversations with other possible applicants.

Thirteen applications for funding through the two programs were received by the deadline of 4:00, July 18, 2008. One was received three hours late in electronic form. Staff forwarded all submittals to members of the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee along with a matrix that summarizes the proposals.

Additional review and analysis of proposals was conducted and is included in an expanded matrix, attached. This presents, in summary form, information useful for Transportation Planning and Programming Committee members' consideration of the projects.

SUBMITTALS

Proposals were received from a broad spectrum of applicants and would fund a wide variety of projects. Some proposals are focused on one municipality, while others would provide service in a broader area, even possibly throughout the Boston Region MPO area. Some of the proposals seek funding in only one program, others in both programs. Some seek only operating funds, which is a category preferred by EOTPW. Others seek both operating and capital funds. Please see the attached matrix for details.

STAFF REVIEW

All but one of the proposals meet the goals of the JARC and/or New Freedom programs and are derived from the Boston Region CHSTP. Several proposals are less fully-defined and call for development and clarification. Two raise questions about local match funding sources. Based on the goals and criteria, staff thinks the following projects could be considered as priorities in this round of funding:

JARC

- North Shore Workforce Investment Board
- Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants
- Lutheran Social Services
- GATRA Service Extension from Franklin to Bellingham
- SCM Community Transportation (needs clarification)

New Freedom

- North Shore Workforce Investment Board
- Mystic Valley Elder Services
- GATRA Demand-Responsive Service Enhancement in Duxbury and Marshfield
- Acton Taxi Vouchers
- New England Paralyzed Veterans of America (needs development)
- Tommy's Taxi Accessible Vehicles

NEXT STEPS

After consideration of proposed projects, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee might decide to send EOTPW some or all of these projects as candidates for funding. Members might also identify some as having higher priority than

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others. The other four MPOs in the Boston UZA are likely to submit projects for funding as well.

EOTPW will review and evaluate all proposals from the Boston UZA using a rating system it has developed as part of an earlier solicitation for these programs. There will be a working session with staff of the MPOs to discuss proposals. EOTPW will make the final decisions on which projects are selected for funding.

AD/PDW
Encl.