

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Summary of September 10, 2008 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building.

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 PM.

### **1. Chair's Report** – Kristina Johnson, *Chair and City of Quincy*

K. Johnson reported that the Advisory Council would soon convene the long-range Transportation Plan Committee (Plan Committee) to work with MPO Staff to become the Advisory Council's experts on the upcoming Plan Amendment. By following the Plan Amendment's development closely, the Plan Committee will be able to inform the Advisory Council and to lead in drafting a clear, concise comment on the developing Draft Amendment based on the Advisory Council's priorities. The MPO is currently waiting for project cost estimates and finance information from the State before moving forward with the Draft Amendment, but the MPO anticipates releasing the draft before the end of the calendar year. Members interested in participating on the TIP Committee should contact John Hersey, MPO Staff.

At its September 18 meeting, the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee will release a Draft Amendment for the FFYs 2009 and 2010 Elements of the FFYs 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), triggering a 30-day public comment period. The Advisory Council's TIP Committee will meet with Hayes Morrison, MPO Staff and TIP Manager, draft a comment letter, and present that letter to the Advisory Council at its October 8 meeting for approval to submit to the MPO. Members interested in participating on the TIP Committee should contact J. Hersey.

### **2. Approval of the Draft Meeting Minutes of August 13, 2008**

K. Johnson asked if there were changes or corrections for the meeting minutes.

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

Regarding the Urban Ring presentation, points were made that noted the challenges of bus rapid transit's (BRT) ability to meet the considerable projected ridership and to reduce congestion on the proposed 25-mile corridor, concerns about the congestion in the corridor that the service could face, and the nearly \$3 billion cost of the project. It is disappointing that Massachusetts insists on BRT for critical transportation projects when other states pursue rail for similar projects. In light of the above concerns, why did EOTPW not select rail as the preferred alternative for the Urban Ring? (Richard Arena, Association for Public Transportation)

The rhetorical question at the end of the conversation is inaccurately phrased. Please review and revise. (Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects)

With those changes, the minutes were approved unanimously.

### **3. Member Announcements**

The Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board (MABPAB) recently delivered a letter to Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW) Secretary Cohen and Undersecretary Stern, MassHighway Commissioner Paiewonsky, and Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Bigby regarding bicycle and pedestrian safety measures encouraged by statewide planning documents as they relate to reconstruction projects in the state. The Advisory Council should submit a letter to David Mohler, EOTPW and chair of the MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee, supporting the MABPAB letter and further encouraging multimodal, non-motorized integration in reconstruction projects. (John McQueen, WalkBoston)

Robert Sturgis, a regular participant at Advisory Council meetings and a member of the Boston Society of Architects, passed away over the summer. The Advisory Council should send its condolences to the Sturgis family. (Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association)

The new GATRA park-and-ride transit service in Medway has gained in popularity and is, at times, over-capacity. It shows how popular suburban transportation demand management programs can be. (Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee)

At the next meeting of the Freight Committee on October 8, Ned Codd, EOTPW, will present an update on the Statewide Freight and Rail Plan. There will also be a field trip to the Freight Terminal at the Boston Marine Industrial Park on the morning of October 8. For more information about this field trip or to reserve a spot on the van, please contact John Hersey, MPO Staff. (Walter Bonin, Marlborough)

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

The same statewide planning documents require sidewalks to be integrated into reconstruction projects, but sidewalks on both sides of the road are too often overlooked. Attention for sidewalks specifically should be addressed in the letter. (Steve Olanoff, vice chair and Westwood)

How much would these non-motorized improvements cost? (Bill Friel, Canton)

*Rolling these non-motorized features into a project's early planning phase would be less expensive than retrofitting them into a project later in the planning phases or after construction.* (J. McQueen)

*This issue is more a concern of a programmatic directive than a project-specific consideration. The State should actively integrate non-motorized infrastructure into their projects.* (K. Johnson)  
*Integrating these non-motorized features often does not affect cost. For instance, it would cost the same to stripe a bike lane as it would be to stripe a roadway's fog line.* (Chris Porter, MassBike)

MPO staff will draft a letter and present it for approval to the Advisory Council at the October 10 meeting. Upon approval, MPO staff will submit the letter to David Mohler.

### **4. Advisory Council Elections – K. Johnson**

At the August meeting the Nominating Committee nominated a slate of candidates, Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, and Sue McQuaid, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce, for chair and vice chair, respectively. MPO staff solicited other nominations and circulated candidate statements to members. There were no other nominations.

Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

Comments at the previous meeting regarding the potential for a conflict of interest given M. Al-Khatib's position with an engineering firm are unwarranted. Several previous chairs of the Advisory Council (when it was named the Joint Regional Transportation Committee) have worked for private firms and have performed the functions of the chairmanship honorably. We are professionals in both roles. (Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies)

M. Al-Khatib and K. Johnson, on behalf of S. McQuaid, both offered further statements of their qualifications.

M. Al-Khatib and S. McQuaid were elected with one abstention (C. Rogers).

**5. Membership Committee Update** – Steve Olanoff, *Committee Chair*

The Membership Committee made the following recommendations to enhance participation in the Advisory Council:

- In response to concerns about the standard meeting time, MPO staff should ask members for their input on their preferred time to meet.
- Two or three meetings a year should be held in different communities throughout the region. These meeting venues must be transit- and handicap-accessible. Some of the presentations and agenda items will relate to the host community.
- MPO staff should contact under-participating members and ask whether the Advisory Council could entice them to participate more in the coming year.
- MPO staff should prepare a list of possible entities to invite for membership in the Advisory Council, including communities in the Boston Region not represented on the Advisory Council and other stakeholders with a regional interest on transportation.

These actions were approved unanimously.

Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

Is it appropriate for the MPO to address coordination of grade school and transit service buses? (Elliot Rothman, Boston Society of Architects)

*The rising cost of busing is pushing more communities to reduce or to cut their school bus service altogether, compelling students to use transit service. This is an important concern.* (Frank DeMasi, Wellesley)

*The MPO is responsible for programming federal funds for highway and transit projects. The MPO does not get involved with locally operated school bus service. The Advisory Council should focus on generating participation from entities with regional transportation interests.* (Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff)

There should be more discussion for the role of institutions of higher education in regional transportation systems. (S. Larrabee)

*The Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization (MASCO) coordinates transportation in the Longwood Medical Area for the several universities operating there. MASCO is an active member of the Advisory Council. (K. Johnson)*

*There are clusters of other universities in the region without similar coordinating councils. It may be worthwhile for the MPO to pursue support for further coordination by encouraging these coordinating councils' participation in the MPO. (S. Larrabee)*

*MASCO serves the medical institutions of the Longwood Medical Area – not necessarily the academic institutions; there is a gap in service and support for the academic institutions of Boston. The Advisory Council may wish to include transportation planning interests of the region's colleges and universities. (John Businger, National Corridors Initiative)*

Outreach to public and private stakeholders must be fair and inclusive. (M. Al-Khatib)  
*Stakeholders must have a direct interest in regional transportation, as is the MPO perspective. (K. Johnson)*

The Fenway Community Development Corporation has an interest in the City's links to regional transportation and, consequently, would be a good candidate for membership in the Advisory Council. (Romin Koebel)

As members in the Advisory Council, statewide disability advocacy groups would bring a broad, multimodal background to the table. (Marilyn MacNab)

Does secretary of the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works need to approve of the members of the Advisory Council, as he did years ago when the Advisory Council was known as the Joint Regional Transportation Committee? (M. Miller)

*No, the secretary does not review Advisory Council membership. (K. Johnson)*

A high level of participation should be required for membership in the Advisory Council. (M. Miller)

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy and the Fenway Alliance would be good candidates for membership in the Advisory Council, but it is important for membership to balance the variety of members' interests and objectives. (J. Businger)

Membership should rely on a prospective member's concern for *regional* transportation issues. The work of the Advisory Council serves to inform the MPO with perspectives on regional transportation. (Dom D'Eramo, Millis)

*While the Advisory Council must consider issues relating to regional transportation, the group also needs to consider how regionally significant projects will affect neighborhoods. (M. Wellons)*

The Advisory Council bylaws require members to regularly attend meetings. The Advisory Council should better define how many meetings members are expected to attend. (M. Miller)

Members have said in passing that the meeting time does not work. If results from the email survey indicate a preference for another time, participation may increase for under-participating members and for the Advisory Council generally. (K. Johnson)

## **6. Program Committee Update – K. Johnson**

K. Johnson reported that the Program Committee developed a list of timely regional transportation topics to learn more about over the coming year. (A list of these topics is included as an attachment.)

The Advisory Council unanimously approved this list, asking MPO Staff to pursue presentations for these topics.

### Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

Advisory Council members expressed interest in the following topics:

- The upcoming amendment to the long-range Regional Transportation Plan (K. Johnson)
- Field trips related to upcoming presentations to complement those presentations (S. Olanoff)
  - o Presentations and, consequently, field trips should relate to MPO work. (K. Johnson)
  - o Participation from MPO members at field trips as well as at meetings would help to enhance the meetings and Advisory Council work (K. Johnson)
- Issues related to transportation finance with greater focus on revenue (C. Rogers)
- Meetings across the region with presentations that reflect that month's location (e.g. the presentation on district improvement financing at the February 2008 meeting that was hosted by Quincy) (F. DeMasi)
- A discussion with leadership from a variety of planning-related executive offices (Housing and Economic Development, Energy and Environmental Affairs, Health and Human Services, etc.) (C. Porter)
- Issues related to new developments on air-rights parcels, like Columbus Center. (R. Koebel)
- Water transit (J. McQueen)
- A tour of the proposed Urban Ring corridor (R. Arena)
- Regular meetings with executives of EOTPW, not just staff (D. D'Eramo)
- Capacity on bridges (M. Miller)
- Projects of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) (J. McQueen)
- The North South Rail Link (E. Rothman)
  - o The MPO considers that project an illustrative project, and the MPO agreed to not consider illustrative projects in this amendment of the long-range Transportation Plan (K. Johnson)

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 pm.

### **Attachments:**

1. Attendance List for September 10, 2008
2. Topics recommended by the Program Committee

## **Attendance List for September 10, 2008**

### **Agencies**

Jim Gallagher, Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Steven Rawding, Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission  
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee

### **Cities and Towns**

Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
Dom D'Eramo, Millis  
Bill Friel, Canton  
Kristina Johnson, Quincy  
Tom Kadzis, Boston  
Todd Kirrane, Brookline  
Kurt Mullen, Needham  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood  
Laura Wiener, Arlington

### **Citizens Groups**

Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers  
Richard Arena, Association for Public Transportation  
Dennis Baker, American Council of Engineering Companies  
John Businger, National Corridors Initiative  
John Kane, AACT  
Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects  
John McQueen, WalkBoston  
Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies  
Chris Porter, MassBike  
Elliot Rothman, Boston Society of Architects  
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association

### **Guests and Visitors**

Steve Kaiser, Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods  
Romin Koebel  
Ed Lowney  
Marilyn MacNab  
Robert McGraw

### **MPO Staff**

John Hersey  
Pam Wolfe

## **Topics Established by the Program Cmte.**

September 4, 2008

- Certification documents (Plan, TIP & UPWP) and their respective criteria for analysis
- Environmental Justice
- Mobility Management System
- Program for Mass Transportation
- Regional Equity
- Title VI – Non-discrimination
  
- Boston University/Commonwealth Ave. Improvements
- Rte. 128 Add-A-Lane
  
- Accelerated Bridge Program
- DCR Projects
- Design/Build Programs
- Fitchburg Line Improvements
- I-93/95 Interchange in Reading
- Interdisciplinary Coordination w/ Executive Offices of Housing & Economic Development, Energy & Environmental Affairs, and Health and Human Services
- Regular Meetings w/ EOTPW Staff
- Safety – Intelligent Transportation Systems, Strategic Highway Safety Plan
- SIP Commitments
- Statewide Bike Plan
- Statewide Freight and Rail Plan
- Statewide Transportation Plan
- Transportation Revenue and Expenses – Flaggers/Detail, Tolls, MassTrans, Gas Tax, Casinos