

# REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

## Summary of October 8, 2008 Meeting

This meeting was held in the EOTPW Office of Transportation Planning Conference Room in Suite 4150 of the State Transportation Building.

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

### **1. Chair's Report and Introductions** – Malek Al-Khatib, *Chair and Boston Society of Civil Engineers*

One of the objectives for the new federal fiscal year will be to engage the Advisory Council's committees more in the group's critical work. Focusing MPO policy-related discussions at the committee level should strengthen the Advisory Council's positions on those policies and should encourage a better use of time at general body meetings. A list of committees will be distributed, and members are strongly encouraged to participate on one or several of them.

Also in the interest of better using time at general body meetings, summaries of forthcoming presentations, committee work, the agenda, draft minutes, and other meeting material will be distributed before meetings. Instead of seeing these materials first at the meeting and reading them then, members should read these materials before the meeting and have questions prepared.

### **2. Approval of the Draft Meeting Minutes of September 10, 2008**

These minutes were approved unanimously

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

The Medical, Academic, and Scientific Community Organization, Inc., (MASCO) operates shuttles for the colleges and medical institutions in the Longwood Medical Area. (Tom Yardley, MASCO)

*Despite MASCO's presence in the Longwood Medical Area, MASCO does not serve as a regional transportation agency. The Advisory Council should encourage greater participation from regional transportation agencies.* (John Businger, National Corridors Initiative)

### **3. Member Announcements**

M. Al-Khatib presented a comment letter developed to support a recent letter from the Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board to State transportation officials about multimodal access and safety integrated into transportation projects. The Advisory Council letter echoes similar sentiments.

### Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

The Advisory Council should always produce similar strong letters. (Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee)

*I agree.* (Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies)

The issues of multimodal access and safety are similar to freight access and safety, as both topics are necessary to include in a comprehensive understanding of transportation planning. (Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association)

Will the Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board letter be attached to the Advisory Council letter? (John McQueen, WalkBoston)

*Yes.* (M. Al-Khatib)

The Advisory Council comment letter was approved unanimously.

#### **4. Committee Announcements**

The Advisory Council reviewed the current committees: Executive, Membership, long-range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, Nominating, Freight, and Programs.

Members of the Freight Committee are planning to attend the next Massachusetts Regional Planning Agency meeting to discuss the possibility of forming an inter-MPO freight advocacy group. This meeting is not related to the Advisory Council. This proposed, new freight advocacy group would not impede or alter the work of the Advisory Council's Freight Committee (Dom D'Eramo, Millis)

There should be a discussion from the committees, including the topic of membership to the Advisory Council in November. (Frank DeMasi, Wellesley)

### Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

Was the Storrow Drive Tunnel Committee temporary? (C. Rogers)

*Yes. The Committee concluded its work when the Department of Conservation and Recreation concluded the work of the project's citizens advisory committee.* (M. Wellons)

*This ad hoc committee may form again when the citizens advisory committee forms again in January.* (M. Al-Khatib)

In the past, committee chairs have had no time to present summaries, but these summaries are important for coordination with and education of the general body. (Frank DeMasi, Wellesley)

*Committee updates will be an agenda item, and committee chairs should work with MPO staff to circulate these summaries to Advisory Council members before the meetings. Again, much of the Advisory Council's work will happen at the committee level.* (M. Al-Khatib)

M. Al-Khatib's focus on committees taking the lion's share of the work is appropriate and will prove valuable for the Advisory Council. (C. Rogers)

Much of the Advisory Council's work can happen outside of the general body meetings, and the work of the committees will enhance the quality of these meetings. (Sue McQuaid, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)

*Committee work will also enhance the organizational integrity between the Advisory Council and its committees.* (M. Al-Khatib)

## **5. Presentation: "Update on TIP Amendment" – Hayes Morrison, MPO Staff**

The MPO has released a draft Amendment to the FFYs 2009 and 2010 Elements of the FFYs 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The FFY 2009 element reflects projects that are ready to be advertised and projects that were approved on June 19, 2008, for inclusion in the upcoming Draft FFYs 2009-2012 TIP. The FFY 2010 element includes projects that cannot be removed from the FFYs 2007-2010 TIP due to compliance with air quality conformity; the Amendment moved air quality conformity projects that were programmed in FFY 2009 to 2010.

The Amendment is a measure to update the FFYs 2007-2010 TIP; the MPO expects to release the Draft FFYs 2009-2012 TIP in early Spring 2009 with an updated list of projects and new air quality conformity. The release of the FFYs 2009-2012 TIP has been delayed because the document's air quality conformity relies on analysis and information provided in the long-range Transportation Plan, which is undergoing amendment currently. When the Draft Amendment to the long-range Transportation Plan is approved, the Draft FFYs 2009 – 2012 TIP will be released concurrently.

### Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

This Amendment seems like an administrative change more than a substantive change. (D. D'Eramo)

*Yes, as far as the FFY 2009 element is concerned this Amendment serves mostly to include projects that the MPO in June programmed for funding in FFY 2009. This is the appropriate method to get those projects underway.* (H. Morrison)

Reconstruction of Route 109 is a priority for the Southwest Advisory Planning Committee. When will that project be on the TIP? (C. Rogers)

*The Route 109 project is not on the list of proposed projects for the Draft FFYs 2009-2012 TIP, and that list is programmed to the target. There is no funding remaining for this project; another project from the list would have to be removed for this project to be on the FFYs 2009-2012 TIP. The MPO is open to public comments and also, in Spring 2009, the MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee will review the list.* (H. Morrison)

If the Route 109 project receives a federal earmark, would the project be included in the Draft FFYs 2009-2012 TIP then? (C. Rogers)

*If the project receives a full-funding federal earmark, the towns involved in the project would enter into a contract with Federal and State partners and the project would not be subject to the*

*TIP's target funding limits. If the earmark does not fund the entirety of the project, though, the project would need to compete for target funding in the TIP before it can be programmed or advertised. (H. Morrison)*

*When the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee considers projects to include in the TIP, a project's readiness is an important factor. Projects on the TIP typically have completed 25% design. (Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff)*

What are the transportation elements of the Cambridge Common and Ipswich Green projects? (M. Wellons)

*These projects utilize transportation enhancement funding to make improvements to existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. (H. Morrison)*

Are MassHighway bridge preservation and on-call programs reflected in the TIP? (M. Miller)

*The bridge preservation program is in the TIP. The on-call program is likely an internal program at MassHighway, but I am not aware of the program. (H. Morrison)*

Will projects on the TIP meet MassHighway's Design Guidelines? The Massachusetts Avenue Improvement project does not follow the Guidelines well. (J. McQueen)

*All projects initially advertised since the Guidelines were introduced in 2006 should reflect that process and those standards. (H. Morrison)*

*Bridges will be a potential caveat to this rule, as making them inclusive of multimodal access may require widening or more prohibitively expensive replacement work. (M. Al-Khatib)*

*The Massachusetts Avenue Improvement project's design accommodates multimodal access through wide travel lanes in which both bikes and cars can travel and the inclusion of bike sensors at traffic signals. While the Massachusetts Avenue project does not uniformly conform to MassHighway's interest in exclusive bike lanes, the project is confined by a narrow right-of-way and frequent curb cuts. The most pressing concern of this project was to provide left-turn lanes in order to reduce congestion and to reduce the number of congestion-related accidents in the corridor, and this design accomplishes those objectives. (Tom Kadzis, Boston)*

*Current conditions near the Boston University Bridge are a safety concern for bicycle and pedestrian mobility. (M. Wellons)*

The MPO and its Transportation Planning and Programming Committee have shown great concern for multimodalism, and the MPO is working toward a multimodal future. (S. McQuaid)

Given the economic crises of the State and nation, is there a guarantee that the projects in the Amendment will go forward? What will happen if the income tax is repealed? (M. Miller)

*The transportation bond bill provides matching funds for projects advertised from 2008 to 2010. (H. Morrison)*

If the State chooses not to sell its bonds, what will happen with the TIP? (M. Miller)

*The overarching nature of the MPO's funding source is a question is better meant for the long-range Transportation Plan. (Kristina Johnson, Quincy)*

*This Amendment authorizes the State to advertise projects as long as funding is available. If funding becomes unavailable, the projects would not be advertised. (P. Wolfe)*

While considerate, many of these comments are better suited for a comment letter regarding the FFYs 2009-2012 TIP. We are commenting here only on a two-year Amendment. (F. DeMasi)

## **6. Action Item: “Approval of Comment Letter re: TIP Amendment Letter”**

The Advisory Council’s TIP Committee drafted a letter supporting the Amendment as proposed and “assumes and trusts” that the Draft FFYs 2009-2012 TIP will follow the list of projects as proposed in June. (S. McQuaid)

The proposed comment letter passed unanimously.

### *Points and Issues Raised During Discussion*

The TIP Committee’s comment letter asks the MPO to consider new funding mechanisms as outlined by the Transportation Finance Commission. Does the Committee recommend specific mechanisms? (F. DeMasi)

*No. The Committee urges the MPO to examine the several alternatives outlined by the Transportation Finance Commission and pursuing the most appropriate option(s).* (S. McQuaid)

The language in the letter is not strong enough. The Advisory Council should agitate for more funding from the State and Federal governments. (C. Rogers)

*A motion to approve a more strongly worded letter failed.*

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.

### **Attachments:**

1. Attendance List for October 8, 2008
2. Comment Letter Re: TIP Amendment
3. Comment Letter Re: Multimodalism vis-à-vis Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board Comment Letter
4. Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board Comment Letter

## **Attendance List for October 8, 2008**

### **Agencies**

Jim Gallagher, Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
David Rand, Division of Energy Resources  
Steven Rawding, Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission  
Donna Smallwood, MassRIDES

### **Cities and Towns**

Walter Bonin, Marlborough  
Marcy Crowley, Wayland  
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley  
Dom D'Eramo, Millis  
Kristina Johnson, Quincy  
Tom Kadzis, Boston  
Kurt Mullen, Needham  
Steve Olanoff, Westwood  
John Squibb, Revere

### **Citizens Groups**

Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers  
Dennis Baker, American Council of Engineering Companies  
John Businger, National Corridors Initiative  
Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects  
Sue McQuaid, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce  
John McQueen, WalkBoston  
Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies  
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee  
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association  
Tom Yardley, MASCO

### **Guests and Visitors**

Steve Kaiser, Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods

### **MPO Staff**

Hayes Morrison  
Pam Wolfe