

JRTC Meeting Summary for May 9th, 2001

Revised June 13, 2001

Chair Report –Bill Deignan

Bill Deignan announced that the JRTC will be receiving an updated Transportation Plan for review and comment. He said that this updated document would include more modeling on the land use and the transportation networks. He reported that the Environmental Justice Ad Hoc Committee is continuing its work and is now finalizing its definition of and developing evaluation measures for Environmental Justice. He invited members to attend the next meeting, Thursday, May 17th, at 2:00 pm.

B. Deignan noted that the Sub-Signatory Committee (SSC) is continuing with recertification and is preparing for development of a Memorandum of Understanding for the MPO. The MPO is taking steps to hire a facilitator for the negotiations. He said that he will keep members informed of progress.

He suggested that the JRTC consider taking several steps to ensure that the JRTC remains active and effective, noting that additional outreach and the development of ad hoc committees within the JRTC would be two ideas worth considering. He said that the ad hoc committees would perform important functions for the whole committee. He suggested a Program Committee, a Certification Documents Review Committee, and a Transit Committee. Committees could meet during the time currently set aside for the Steering Committee meetings. He said that he and Marcy Crowley will be working on establishing the committees and would continue the discussion at the next JRTC meeting.

B. Deignan also announced that there will be an orientation program for new members (and other members who wish to attend) at 2:00pm just prior to the next JRTC meeting on June 13th. He also suggested that the JRTC, as the official public advisory group providing input to the MPO, might consider developing an outreach program to generate more interest and involvement from citizens and officials in the MPO planning process. Marcy Crowley noted that the orientation will provide a glossary defining acronyms used by the JRTC and others involved in the transportation planning process.

He reported that MassHighway has been talking to the communities about cost overruns for projects. He said that MassHighway is concerned about local projects that are way over the estimated costs. The goal is to find ways to help communities get better estimates up front, and if extra costs occur due to errors and omissions, either the community or the designer should accept responsibility for the extra costs. M. Crowley said she thinks that because of current requirements, contractors tend to keep their bids as low as possible and then submit change orders. She said that she thought the letter raised concerns with the communities because of the potential impacts to constrained local budgets and project schedules.

Heidi Roddis asked if the Chair had chosen topics for discussion for the next few JRTC meetings. B. Deignan said that he had not but that H. Roddis had suggested that the new developments in Highway Design Standards might be discussed. B. Deignan said that the JRTC presentation should correlate to the MassHighway task force's schedule for project completion. H. Roddis said that she would like to have the task force take JRTC comments into consideration. B. Deignan will work on scheduling a timely discussion. He invited members to suggest topics, especially topics that relate to the JRTC theme of livability in the Boston region.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 11th, 2001

Minutes from the April 11th, 2001, JRTC meeting were approved with a suggestion by Romin Koebel that more detail be added to the question and answer section of the Transportation Management Association Activities Discussion. (Revised meeting minutes are attached.)

Program for Mass Transportation (MBTA Presentation) by Dennis DiZoglio, Director of Planning, and Steve Woelfel, Manager of Long Range Planning, MBTA.

Dennis DiZoglio thanked the JRTC for providing the opportunity to discuss the PMT. He said that the public involvement process has just begun and that the JRTC is the first public group to hear the presentation.

D. DiZoglio said that the PMT defines the long-range vision for regional mass transportation and helps the MBTA prioritize its investments in the transit infrastructure. The PMT has a twenty-five year horizon and will help the MBTA define its capital investment plan out to the year 2025. It is unconstrained, which will allow the MBTA to freely entertain possible transit programs. The most recent update to the PMT was done in 1994. The MBTA enabling legislation now calls for the MBTA to update the PMT every five years. The MBTA service area is also larger, having grown from 78 to 175 communities. He said it is clear that the number of issues to be considered has likely grown, as well. He emphasized the MBTA's desire to solicit more input from the MBTA member communities and to involve them constructively in developing the MBTA's vision for the future of mass transit in the region.

D. DiZoglio discussed the relationship of the PMT to the MBTA Capital Improvement Program, and their relationship to the federal MPO planning process and the Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. The PMT is the MBTA's fiscally unconstrained "vision" document. It is the basis for the MBTA's Capital Investment Program (CIP), which is the five-year plan for MBTA infrastructure improvement expenditures. The federal process for transportation planning includes the development of the Transportation Plan, which has a twenty-five year horizon, and the short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Transportation Plan provides the basis for the TIP, similar to the way that the PMT provides the basis for the

CIP. The MBTA planning process and the federal transportation planning process build upon each other and result in the programming of funding for both MBTA-funded and federally-funded projects.

D. DiZoglio explained that the PMT will include consideration of: maintenance of the system, equitable distribution of benefits and burdens, service reliability improvement, improving mobility and access to jobs, providing cost effective service, increasing ridership, accessibility, relieving traffic congestion, reducing pollution and supporting the regional economy.

There are three major program areas for implementation of the PMT vision: maintenance of the existing infrastructure, system enhancements, and system expansions. The existing infrastructure is extensive and the MBTA views its maintenance as a priority. System enhancements will address accessibility and reliability, parking at rapid transit and commuter rail stations, automatic fare collection, telecommunications, double-decker commuter rail coaches, and bicycle facilities, among other issues. System expansions will allow the MBTA to address mobility issues and meet the growing demand for transit in many areas, including the new service area communities. All modes of transit will be considered in order to develop an integrated system.

He said that the MBTA will be asking the public for feedback on the existing visions and for additional elements for the vision for the next twenty-five years. He listed some current suggestions, including: more alternative fuel vehicles, cross-town bus service, Green Line extension to Medford Hillside, expansion of Blue Line to Lynn, expansion of park and ride facilities, North/South rail link, reverse commuting, and increased water shuttle service. The MBTA will be asking people for their ideas.

D. DiZoglio said that the MBTA will develop evaluation criteria for determining how well each idea suits the PMT vision. Modeling work will provide data on projected ridership and cost effectiveness and will be used to prioritize projects by mode. Though the PMT is fiscally unconstrained, it will discuss funding, including alternative funding mechanisms.

There will be a series of opportunities for customers and the public to learn about the PMT and have input. The public review process will include reviews by the PMT Steering Committee, which will be made up of members of the MBTA Advisory Board, other interested state agencies, and members of the municipalities. The MBTA will be conducting a number of community forums. The MPO will assist in developing the PMT. The MBTA Advisory Board will review and accept it, and then it will go to the MBTA Board of Directors.

Questions, Answers and Comments:

John Gillon said that bus scheduling and reliability maintaining existing ridership are important issues for Quincy. He mentioned the new signal prioritization for buses, which provides advance traffic control to help buses delayed by traffic get back on schedule and asked if this is being considered in Boston. D. DiZoglio

said yes, the prototype is being designed for the Silver Line, Washington Street corridor. He said that this prioritization system should improve bus reliability, and offered to work with Quincy and other communities to share this technology.

Susan Hamilton wondered if there is a new definition of “Boston Region” considering the expanded MBTA service area. D. DiZoglio said that the “Boston Region” for the PMT is the 175 communities in the MBTA service area; different from the Boston MPO, which is 101 cities and towns. M. Crowley said that the communities outside the Boston MPO are included in other MPOs.

Thomas Lenthall suggested removing commuter rail financing responsibility from the MBTA to a state-wide agency. He said that the communities outside the 101 communities do not have to pay their commuter rail deficit. He suggested seeing to it that the MBTA meet its operating costs.

H. Roddis commented that the involvement of multiple MPOs creates problems, particularly siting commuter rail parking lots. She suggested setting up a fair process that would include all interested parties in planning for future facilities such as regional commuter rail parking. She said that this might take the form of corridor planning that might include some communities that are not directly on the rail line, but that are MBTA communities whose citizens use the commuter rail service. D. DiZoglio said that the MBTA has been communicating with the other MPOs and is looking forward to discussing the PMT with them. She also suggested including, as criteria for PMT project evaluation, environmental impacts and benefits, and projects that serve areas with severe traffic congestion. She said that the North/South rail link is more than a commuter rail project; it is also a rapid transit project and the MBTA should consider its benefits for both systems.

Lynda Hoffman said that making the existing system accessible should be a priority before system expansion projects. She explained that there are many accessibility needs, and noted that in Newburyport a building is totally inaccessible by wheelchair. She asked the MBTA to open a seat for the Access Advisory Committee for Transit on the PMT Steering Committee. She also suggested that when the MBTA expands rail service, that it add to mid-day service as well as rush hour service. This will better serve people who rely on public transit entirely.

Arnold Pinsley suggested that the MBTA complete its projects in a timely fashion. He said that, in particular, at the Framingham commuter rail station, traffic was tied up for at least 10 minutes and the bus schedule was delayed because of train passbys that, because of the unfinished station improvements, kept grade crossing gates down. He said that this project should have been finished long ago. D. DiZigloio noted this comment.

P. Lambert said that the Old Colony lines and the Red Line work well, fulfilling their functions (commuter rail serving the distant communities and rapid transit serving the closer communities). He said that, similarly, in the Southwest

Corridor, rapid transit should be extended rather than have the commuter rail service stop at Hyde Park. He said he thinks this problem exists in other corridors, too.

Ted Hamann asked to what degree the MBTA is able to plan improvements or expanded service to more developed areas and to encourage development around rail stations so that more people will live within walking distance of the transit service. He said that this would reduce the number of cars on the roads and the amount of parking required at stations. He also asked that the MBTA consider including bicycle parking in its parking facilities. S. Woelfel said that the MBTA is working on this issue and that the MBTA meets quarterly with Mass Bike. D. DiZoglio said that this request is specifically being considered for the Red Line stations that are being reconstructed. He said that, regarding the land use issue, the MBTA is actively working with a number of communities, including the City of Boston and the Town of Kingston, to cooperate with local initiatives concerning transit-oriented development. He explained that the MBTA does not control land use or get involved in local planning issues, but will be more coordinated with local communities.

B. Diegnan said that he is always interested in maximizing the number of MBTA passengers who don't have to drive to stations. He said that he reviews projects to see that bicycle and pedestrian access is optimized. He asked the MBTA to look to improving pedestrian access and suggested that implementing parking fees at stations where there now are none might be a way to encourage walking.

Richard Canale asked if the 1994 PMT might be available on the MBTA website. D. DiZoglio said that he will place a copy in the State Transportation Library for anyone who is interested in reviewing it.

Fred Moore said that he was pleased with the MBTA's plan for developing the PMT and asked if the MBTA would make this presentation for the Association for Public Transportation. D. DiZoglio said that he would. F. Moore suggested that the MBTA consider that there is pent up demand in the concentric ring of communities around the center of Boston, since, in the past much of the transit focus has been on Boston. He said that on top of this, there are highway expansion projects and related development that are totally ignoring transit. He cited Telecom City. He said that the system needs to consider the concept of expanding what he is calling the destination envelope. He explained that this would make the system function better and be more productive and would support reverse commuting. S. Woelfel said that the MBTA, as requested by the Boston MPO, is expanding the municipalities represented in MBTA planning outreach, and has included Chelsea, Somerville and Sharon, for example.

Ben Haynes asked that he be sent meeting materials in advance so that he will be more prepared to participate at meetings. He asked what the MBTA is going to do to make the transit system user-friendly to senior citizens. D. DiZoglio said that Intelligent Transportation Systems are available today that could provide useful information, such as the next bus arrival time, for elderly patrons. B. Haynes said that he is aware that this system is now in the works for the inner

Boston services. He said that he is concerned about the senior citizens who live outside of Boston and who need improved access to transit services, not just information systems. D. DiZoglio said that this would be considered.

Malcom Davis said that the photos of the MBTA vehicles in MBTA colors were crisp and well-defined. He said that he thinks that the MBTA is doing itself a disservice by shrink-wrapping MBTA buses. He said that shrink-wrapping does not encourage ridership, does not dignify the system or the residential areas through which the buses run, and that the buses are an eyesore. He asked the MBTA to reevaluate the financial benefits of shrink-wrapping and suggested that the MBTA discontinue the practice.

A JRTC Member suggested that the MBTA develop principles to guide planning and design for bicycle and pedestrian access. S. Woelfel said that MassBike will be involved in reviewing planning for the four Ashmont Station improvements. He said that the MBTA is making progress institutionalizing this. T. Hamman commented that the MBTA is doing better at incorporating suggestions and meeting community needs.

R. Koebel said that he was pleased to hear how the PMT planning process relates to the MPO planning process. He asked whether AMTRAK would play a role in the planning process. D. DiZoglio said that AMTRAK is a contractor to the MBTA. He said that MBTA Railroad Operations monitors their service and that MBTA Operations will provide the needed input for the PMT.

B. Deignan asked if there would be a PMT website for public information and submitting comments. S. Woelfel said that the MBTA will have a page on its website.

Silver Line Project Update and Public Information Video

The MBTA showed the most recent public information video on the Silver Line project. The video's narrator said that the Silver Line would serve the Washington Street corridor starting at Dudley Street and would have Boston destinations at Boylston Street Station, Chinatown Station, South Station, the Federal Courthouse, the World Trade Center and eventually, Logan Airport. It will use 60 foot-long articulated buses operating on the surface in the Corridor and in tunnel in other areas. They will be dual mode, using electricity and alternative fuel. The Silver Line will use a dedicated lane on Washington Street and will serve over 60,000 riders daily. It will operate on five to six minute headways during rush hours. Real-time tracking and other ITS equipment will maintain reliable on-time performance. Stations will have shelters, seating, variable message signing and other amenities. The project will be constructed in three sections: the Washington Street surface facilities, from Dudley Station to the New England Medical Center; the Tremont Street tunnel section, which will terminate at South Station and will connect to the Green Line at Boylston Street station and to the Orange Line at Chinatown Station; and another tunnel section from South Station to the South Boston waterfront, the Federal Courthouse and

the World Trade Center, after which it will rise to the surface, connecting to the Boston Convention Center and allowing connections through the Ted Williams Tunnel to Logan Airport. One out of every four Boston residents lives within five blocks of Washington Street. The corridor is also an active commercial area. The Silver Line will be an important link for the entire Washington Street area and to transportation facilities, job centers and other destinations. Landscape and streetscape improvements will be installed as part of the Silver Line project.

Questions, Answers and Comments:

S. Woelfel collected questions and comments and will provide responses for the next JRTC meeting.

L. Hoffman asked about whether the elevator at the Chinatown Station and accessibility improvements at the Boylston Street Stations would be done on time.

Robert Sturgis asked about the order of completion of the three sections. S. Woelfel said that the Transitway section is well under way and the Washington Street section is already under construction. The Boylston Street section will be last. The entire project will be completed by 2025.

Joseph Barr asked about the performance measures for evaluating the project. He wondered if improved speed or increased capacity were included.

T. Lenthall said that Chicago spent \$238 million in a similar situation and asked about potential civil rights issues.

T. Hamann asked when the one-seat ride from Dudley to Logan would be possible.

F. Moore asked if there is currently demand for service from Dudley to Logan, or whether the MBTA felt that the demand would develop once the service is in place.

B. Haynes wondered if parking would be available for patrons who needed to drive to stations. B. Deignan said that the Silver Line will serve mainly walk-ins. B. Haynes said that parking is needed so that people who can't walk to the station can use the Silver Line.

B. Deignan wondered how the MBTA will prevent parking within the dedicated right-of-way. S. Woelfel said that the MBTA Police and Boston Police will work together on enforcement to keep parking out of the right-of-way.

B. Haynes asked about wheelchair access to the Silver Line and, in particular, whether the RIDE vehicles would have access to the right-of-way for transfers from the RIDE to the Silver Line.

R. Koebel asked if there had been geo-environmental engineering studies done for the Boylston to South Station segment. S. Woelfel said that he thought that studies had been done.

In response to a question, S. Woelfel said that the MBTA is moving forward in using alternative fuels throughout the bus system.

Transportation Plan Update

This topic will be discussed at the June meeting. In the interim, B. Deignan invited members to submit questions or comments to him, Marcy or to CTPS. A. Pinsley asked if the results of the modeling would be done by next month's presentation. He said that he is particularly concerned about the North/South rail link. B. Deignan said that he thought some modeling would be available for discussion.

Members Items and Announcements

F. Moore said that two items were discussed during a recent Boston Society of Architects charette: the Urban Ring and Telecom City. He said that he thinks that Telecom City is a prize site for transit-oriented development, but that the opportunity is missed because under the current plan, development of the site will call for \$56 million of highway-related access improvements and will not include any transit improvements.

Other Business/Adjournment

No other business was raised.

Meeting Action Items:

The MBTA will take comments on the PMT and the Silver Line into consideration and will provide responses to questions on the Silver Line for the next JRTC meeting.

JRTC comments on the PMT and the Silver Line will be submitted to the SSC.

JRTC Attendance: May 9th , 2001 Meeting

Cities and Towns

Tom Kadzis, Boston
Bill Deignan, Cambridge
Paul Lambert, Canton
Arnold Pinsley, Framingham
Sarkis Sarkisian, Natick
John T. Gillon, Quincy
Marcy Crowley, Wayland
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Agencies

Stephen Woelfel, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
Karen S. Pearson, Massachusetts Highway Department
David Ravel, Division of Energy Resources
Phil Hodge, Metrowest Growth Management Committee
Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination

Citizen Groups

Lillian Haynes, Access Advisory Committee to the T
Jay Duncan, American Planning Association/Massachusetts Chapter
Joseph Barr, Association for Commuter Transportation
Fred Moore, Association for Public Transportation
Robert S. Sturgis, Boston Society of Architects
Donna Smallwood, Caravan for Commuters, Inc.
Heidi Roddis, Massachusetts Audubon Society
Ted Hamann, MassBike
Thomal Lenthall, New England Bus Transportation Association
S.M. Hamilton, Sierra Club
M.M Davis, Walk Boston

Visitors

Dennis DiZoglio, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
Stephen Dodge, Mass. Petroleum Council
Romin Koebel, Boston Architect Center
Anne Fanton, Artery Environmental Oversight Committee
Lynda Hoffman, Cambridge
Joe Cosgrove, MBTA
Cathy Lewis, CTPS
Pam Wolfe, CTPS