

Advisory Council Meeting Summary for January 9, 2002

Chair Report – Marcy Crowley

Marcy Crowley opened the meeting 3:10 PM.

M. Crowley would like to form several committees to work on specific Advisory Council responsibilities. Some are ongoing, such as the Program Committee, and some are short lived, with specific termination dates related to the development of various certification documents. Phil Hodge will serve as chair of the By-Law Committee, with Malcom Davis as a member. Other Advisory Council members are invited to join.

The Regional Transportation Plan Update committee will be meeting on January 28th and February 4th and possibly on February 11th to prepare draft comments for the Advisory Council to discuss. Members are asked to attend if they are interested.

Approval of meeting minutes, November 14th and December 12th, 2001.

Minutes of both sets of meetings were approved as submitted.

Briefing on the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization Memorandum of Understanding – Luisa Paiewonsky and Marcy Crowley

M. Crowley then introduced Luisa Paiewonsky, who is Director of the Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development for the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) and immediate past Executive Secretary of the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Chair of the Sub-Signatory Committee. She provided an overview of MassHighway's role in transportation planning, background about the Boston MPO, and some context for the renegotiation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). She explained the major elements of the MOU and its significance to transportation planning in the region.

The Boston MPO is the largest in Massachusetts, with nearly half of the state's population. The MPO must be certified by the federal government to be eligible for federal funding and MPO's are recertified every few years. In September 2000, the federal review resulted in a conditional certification that called for several corrective actions. These included: (1) bring together the state and local memberships to unify decision-making, (2) develop a better way to set priorities for projects in the certification documents, and (3) renegotiate the MOU.

There are several major elements of the new MOU. One of the most important is a new approach to preparing the TIP. The funding commitment for the Central Artery project was revised so as to be consistent with the most recently approved Central Artery finance plan. There are significant improvements in the flow of information, including regular reporting by the agencies on projects and on finances which will greatly improve the TIP and the municipalities' ability to plan. There will be criteria to set priorities for TIP

project selection. The MOU does not include the guaranteed \$40 million for local road and bridge programs and projects are no longer designated “local” or “state.” Projects chosen will be those most important for the region. Another change was to strengthen the link with transit issues, programs, and projects.

Other certification deadlines are submission of the Regional Transportation Plan Update (including a definition of environmental justice) on March 15th, and development of a revised public participation program.

M. Crowley, served during the negotiations, made many important contributions, and represented the Advisory Council well. She was involved and very influential in many parts of the MOU. Ms. Crowley has the respect and thanks of the members of the negotiating team.

M. Crowley explained the MOU has strengthened the Advisory Council’s role as key advisor on public views and is a partner with the MPO in this capacity. The Advisory Council Chair will lead the Public Participation Committee. This committee has produced a draft public involvement program. MAPC will have a key role in public outreach, particularly to the municipalities. CTPS staff has a major role. MPO members themselves reach out to the public.

The Advisory Council may serve on every MPO committee. The TIP Prioritization Committee is at work. If Advisory Council members (other than the chair and vice chair) wish to serve, they are invited. There are committees being formed on Operations and another on Election Procedures.

The change of the group’s name from JRTC to Regional Transportation Advisory Council was to allow the name to convey the function. Members should call the group the Advisory Council instead of RTAC.

Points Raised During Discussion

- There are ten official MPOs across the state and three regions without sufficient population to be considered MPOs (though MassHighway treats each like one.)
- MassHighway works very closely with the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) which is a source information for regional plans across the state. MassHighway agreed with MARPA to allocate \$400 million for road and bridge programs.
- It seems as though there is a wave of major highway expansion projects being advanced.
- Transportation planning is now multi-modal and highway projects consider transit alternatives. There are very few major highway capacity expansion projects, though

it may seem as though there is a large number. The large majority are preserving and managing the existing system.

- The Lower North Shore Transportation Study and Telecom City roadway improvements seem not to have seriously entertained transit alternatives.
- Getting clear and timely information is critical to this Council. It would be very helpful if the public comments on the Regional Transportation Plan Update could be summarized in a more condensed format.
- It would be very useful to have a graphic laying out the planning steps in the development of the various certification documents.
- Written responses and status reports on projects are very important for members of the public participating in the planning process.
- The MOU might be improved if it were in a format more similar to a set of by-laws.

Discussion of the Regional Transportation Plan Update

Anne McGahan, CTPS Project Manager for the Regional Transportation Plan Update (Plan Update), discussed recent work. A list of projects recommended for the public circulation draft and a matrix listing the universe of projects were sent to members and were available at the meeting. The list was developed in consideration of the MPO policies and land use alternatives. The draft Plan Update is scheduled to be circulated for a 30-day public review period from the end of January to the end of February. The February Advisory Council meeting will fall within the review period. The MPO will also review the Plan Update with the MAPC Subregions and with other members of the public in a series of discussions around the region.

Nick Rubino had prepared comments for members' consideration which were summarized.

Points Raised During Discussion:

- It seemed that some of the information on the North South Rail Link is incorrect and there were concerns about the statement (requesting more information on the North South Rail Link project) which was included in the Advisory Council comment to the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. It is not correct to put the Urban Ring and the North South Rail Link in the same sentence, because there is nothing similar about them. The Rail Link is not a transit project. It is a national and regional intercity rail project. The last cost developed for the Rail Link was \$2.6 billion, not the \$5 billion reported in these documents. The cost estimating methods for the Rail Link and the Urban Ring are different. The North South Rail Link Citizens Advisory Council should be consulted on cost estimates.

- There is a local element of the Rail Link project, as it would serve MBTA commuter rail trains. The MBTA is providing \$3 million for additional study of the Rail Link and the Urban Ring is not at that level of development.
- Some federal rail funds are going to neighboring states.
- Flexing funds from highway to transit was discussed at the Transportation Planning and Programming Committee meeting of December 20,2002, in the context of the projects discussed by the committee. MassHighway feels that flexing highway funds to transit, when more than half of the federal funds are being spent on the Central Artery and when other highway improvements have been under-funded in recent years, is not prudent. One alternative examined in the Plan Update analysis showed that flexing \$500 million to transit would not decrease congestion.
- Excluding Central Artery funds, more money is spent on transit in the region than on highways, however, this is not true if Central Artery funds are included in the consideration.
- The Tri-city project, which has been noted at a regional conference, was not included in the recommended list. There may be more information available and additional discussion.

Member Items and Announcements

Tom Lenthall noted that a meeting of South Shore legislators, FTA, the Governor's office, private bus operators, and the MBTA was conducted last summer. There was an agreement to start a dialogue with private carriers regarding South Shore bus service. A question was raised about additional bus purchases related to the Old Colony project.

Other Business/Adjourn

Examples of several alternatives for the Advisory Council letterhead were circulated for members' review and comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 PM.

Meeting Action Items:

- Identify the members of the other Massachusetts MPOs.
- Prepare a graphic depicting the steps and calendar milestones in the development of the certification documents.
- Provide information on projects included in the Plan Update.
- Explore whether there is a federal funding category for Intercity projects.

**Regional Transportation Advisory Council
Attendance at the January 9, 2002 Meeting**

Cities and Towns

Tom Kadzis, Boston
John Maximuk, Braintree
Bill Deignan, Cambridge
Arnold Pinsley, Framingham
Lou Mercuri, Newton
Seth Novoselsky, Revere
Marcy Crowley, Wayland
Steve Olanoff, Westwood
Andy Sumanadasa, Weymouth

Agencies

Ken Miller, MassHighway
Jim Gallagher, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Representative, Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Denise Garcia, Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission
David Lenhardt, Metropolitan District Commission
Phil Hodge, Metrowest Growth Management Committee
Jeff Lewis, South Shore Coalition

Citizen Groups

Lillian Haynes, Access Advisory Committee to the T
Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies
Joseph Barr, Association for Commuter Transportation
Fred Moore, Association for Public Transportation
Robert Sturgis, Boston Society of Architects
Ben Haynes, Brookline Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities
Donna Smallwood, Caravan for Commuters
Ted Hamann, MassBike
Thomas Lenthall, New England Bus Transportation Association
Malcolm Davis, Walk Boston

Visitors

Luisa Paiewonsky, MassHighway
Ed Lowney, Malden
Herbert Pence, Gulbankian Bus
Romin Koebel
Andrew Lenton, MASCO
John Businger, North South Rail Link CAC

Staff

Cathy Lewis, CTPS
Anne McGahan, CTPS
Pam Wolfe, CTPS