

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting Summary for January 8, 2003

Chairman's Report – Richard Canale

Richard Canale opened the meeting at 3:10 PM.

Letters have been sent to all chief executive officers of member entities asking for an affirmation of continued membership and designation of a representative and alternate. Copies have been sent to existing representatives so they can expedite responses. R. Canale will attend a meeting at the Department of Energy Resources to discuss the Council and this agency's membership.

There will be a new agenda item, "Brief Announcements" which will take place early in the meeting and provide an opportunity for members to relay short messages. Members were reminded to make sure their name and organization is shown on the front page of any information they'd like to make available at meetings.

Members, invited speakers, other members of the public, and staff introduced themselves.

R. Canale thanked the speakers, Dennis DiZoglio and Joe Cosgrove, and the staff at Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) for their participation at Council meetings. This year, the Council has tried to initiate early its subcommittee work on the certification documents and CTPS staff has been very helpful.

Members should contact P. Wolfe to reserve a place on the Fairmount Line field trip.

Approval of Meeting Minutes, December 11, 2002

A motion to approve the minutes was made, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Brief Announcements

None were made.

Discussion of the Program for Mass Transportation

Dennis DiZoglio discussed the MBTA's Program for Mass Transportation (PMT) and its preliminary findings. He noted that an outreach process asking for public feedback is about to get underway. The PMT is the MBTA's long range (25-year horizon) planning document and lays out the region's vision for mass transportation. It prioritizes projects to be considered for the future. The MBTA has conducted extensive public outreach. The PMT Working Committee has provided ongoing input and guidance.

The PMT is the foundation for all transit project programming. It is a source of projects to be included in the MPO's long range Regional Transportation Plan (Plan), and it feeds projects into the Capital Investment Program (CIP)(5-year), which is also a source of transit projects eligible for programming in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The PMT has evaluated projects by mode in several investment categories: system preservation, service enhancement, and system expansion. Performance measures (based on the PMT vision and goals) for each category were used to analyze projects and preliminary priority rankings were assigned.

System preservation is very important, and makes up approximately 70% of the MBTA capital budget. Preliminary priorities include replacing aging fleets, rehabilitating bridges, upgrading signal and communication systems, replacing track, and improving stations.

Service Enhancements were analyzed considering utilization, mobility, cost effectiveness, air quality, service quality, and environmental justice. Preliminary priorities for general enhancements in this category include improving access (including for pedestrians and bicycles) to stations and ITS. Accessibility enhancement evaluations considered boardings, improved transfers, terminal locations, and service to major centers. Parking enhancement evaluations were based on customer access, projected demand, potential usage, cost per space, environmental status, ease of construction, community support, and funding availability.

System expansion measures were similar to those used for service enhancements with the additional consideration of economic and land use impacts. MAPC provided information that was used to identify projects that would stimulate smart growth and transit-oriented development. Preliminary priorities include the Silver Line, Phase III, the Urban Ring, and the Fairmount Line.

MBTA Investment strategies include: addressing the backlog of system preservation, upgrading the MBTA bus system, improving environmental performance of facilities and operations, relieving system capacity constraints, and balancing urban needs and suburban demand for transit. The MBTA will call on conventional and innovative sources of financing to fund projects.

Council members should make comments on these preliminary materials before the second week in February. By mid-February, a circulation draft PMT will be available for additional comment. There will be public hearings March 5th at 6:00 PM and the 6th at 1:00 PM in the Transportation Building. After completion of public review, comments will be incorporated in to the draft PMT. It will be submitted to the MBTA Board of Directors in April and then to the MBTA Advisory Board for final approval.

The PMT is used for planning and prioritizing, not programming.

B. Deignan, the Council representative on the PMT Working Committee, thanked the MBTA for responding positively to his comments. Improving access to stations by all modes, not just by automobile, will be a consideration in the draft PMT evaluations.

Please see meeting handouts for details on PMT vision and goals, projects, performance measures, and preliminary priority rankings.

Points and Issues Raised During Discussion:

- The approach to the evaluation process is good.
- The North/South Rail Link is very important and more significant than its characterization as a commuter rail expansion project implies.
- The Automatic Fare Collection is important and may increase fare collections. Will the fare structure for transfers be revised?
- It is good that the PMT included electrification of rail lines. The MBTA should think of using the suburban system as a rapid transit rail overlay and take advantage of existing commuter rail parking lots.
- Please consider the Association for Public Transportation as a source of members for advisory committees for projects.
- The commuter rail system doesn't meet environmental justice needs or improve mobility in the suburbs. The North/South rail link would make it a truly regional system.
- The New England Bus Transportation Association would like to work with the MBTA as it develops its revised regional fare system. Passenger rail service north of Boston is FTA-funded, but AMTRAK has provided rolling stock and other equipment and services.
- Evaluation of the extension of commuter rail to Leominster from Framingham by way of Northborough should not include providing double track in Newton. This would make the project much more expensive and less feasible.
- There are no schedules for implementation. Could they be added?
- Will the MBTA use the design-build process on some of these projects?

Introduction to the Fairmount Line Service Upgrade

Joe Cosgrove, MBTA Director of Planning, discussed the Fairmount Line Service Upgrade Project. The MBTA would like to upgrade this line to provide improved service (half hour headways during the peak) and new or better access from surrounding neighborhoods (with station modernization and new construction). Better marketing, scheduling, and signing will result in some short-term improvements. Others will require construction: space at South Station, mid-day storage accommodations, stations, and the signal system. The project will greatly relieve overcrowding on the buses serving the area (2,500 trips from buses.) The line currently has 1,800 inbound boardings per weekday. Weekend service is planned.

Construction of infrastructure improvements can be phased. The first phase, improving existing stations, signals, and some bridges, is projected to cost \$70 million. The Fairmount station in Hyde Park is now being rehabilitated.

The Fairmount Line extends 9.1 miles through Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park and serves four stations. Forty-one bridges and walkways were constructed to eliminate all grade crossings. Service was suspended from the early 1940's to the late 1970's, but has been in operation since.

The MBTA is working closely with the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) on opportunities for joint development along the line. Upham's Corner, an area of high transit dependency, is one area in particular in which the MBTA is hoping to work with a development partner. The City of Boston owns much of the land along the right-of-way.

Points and Issues Raised During Discussion:

- This project is a great idea. This is an area that really needs improved service. Good work has gone into this.
- You will need interagency coordination in some areas. It is possible that several agencies could have jurisdictions in an area of construction.
- Please upgrade your telephone information system. Not everyone has a computer to look up schedules and maps.
- Will there be opportunities for joint development and are the BRA and Metropolitan Area Planning Councils involved?

Advisory Council Committees

Nick Rubino, Chair, Regional Transportation Plan Committee, scheduled an update from CTPS on the upcoming schedule for development of the Plan. There will be another meeting in the near future. June and July will be an important time for the Council to provide input and comment. The Draft Plan is scheduled for circulation for public comment at the end of June.

Anne McGahan said that timely development of the Plan this year will allow the MPO to coordinate the Plan and TIP. She reminded members that the last full Plan was adopted in January 2001 with a Plan Update in March 2002. Significant public outreach was conducted for these documents and extensive work done on policies, environmental justice, land use, and projects. The current Plan will build on this work. She discussed the schedule for development of the Plan, the Universe of Projects for highway projects, and the Universe of Projects for transit (as developed through the PMT process.) Members should review the materials and comment on whether there are projects that should be included in either of the universes.

Between now and the spring, when the Council and other members of the public will be asked to review various elements of the Plan, the MPO will be developing the No-Build

and Build Scenarios and conducting the Environmental Justice analysis. The MPO is scheduled to approve the Plan in mid-August.

Member Items and Announcements

Bob Sturgis commented that the UPWP Committee is working to sort out projects that will address all forms of mobility. They are interested in learning more about non-MBTA publicly available types of transportation.

Fred Moore noted that he placed a handout on the meeting materials table discussing highway expansion and safety issues. He commented that he feels that often when a project is designed for safety it does not facilitate pedestrians and bicycles, does not serve the community, and does not advance the region's goals of smart growth and transit oriented development.

Tom Lenthall commented that the MBTA is planning transit service between South Station and Logan Airport and federal law requires that existing bus carriers must be involved in planning for the service. The carriers may like to operate the service.

Other Business/Adjourn

No other business was raised. The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 PM.

**Regional Transportation Advisory Council Attendance
January 8, 2003**

Cities and Towns

Arlington, Alan McClennen, Jr.
Boston, Jim McCarthy
Cambridge, Bill Deignan
Millis, Joe Begaa
Needham, John Marr
Somerville, Jeff Levine
Wayland, Marcy Crowley
Westwood, Steve Olanoff
Weymouth, Andy Sumanadasa

Agencies

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Joe Cosgrove
Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission, Denise Garcia
MetroWest Growth Management Committee, Phil Hodge
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination, Richard Canale
South Shore Coalition, Jeff Lewis

Citizen Groups

American Council of Engineering Companies, Marvin Miller and Jim Fisher
Association for Public Transportation, Fred Moore and Romin Koebel
Boston Society of Architects, Robert Sturgis
Boston Society of Civil Engineers, Nick Rubino
Caravan for Commuters, Donna Smallwood and Ron Slangen
Massachusetts Audubon Society, Heidi Roddis Ricci
MassBike, Ted Hamann
New England Bus Transportation Association, Thomas Lenthall
Walk Boston, Malcom Davis

Visitors

Ed Lowney, Malden
Cheryl Ravalli, AACT
Herbert Pence, Gulbankian Bus
Wig Zamore, Mystic View Task Force

Staff

Sean Daly, CTPS
Patricia Davis, CTPS
Anne McGahan, CTPS
Pam Wolfe, CTPS