

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of February 14, 2007 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 1 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA.

1. Chair's Report and Introductions - *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

Steve Olanoff, Chair and Town of Westwood, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM.

Members, guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves. See the attached attendance list.

Steve Olanoff, Chair, made one announcement. The Northeast Passenger Transportation Association and the Federal Transit Administration are sponsoring the 2007 Northeast Passenger Transportation Conference and Exposition in Providence, Rhode Island, March 28 and 29.

S. Olanoff explained that he expressed Council members' concerns and views on Journey TO 2030, the Regional Transportation Plan (Plan) at the recent Transportation Planning and Programming Committee meeting. He made a motion to eliminate the Route 3 South to Duxbury project from the Plan and another motion to reduce funding for the Silver Line 3 project from \$1 billion to \$100 million (operating buses on surface streets and eliminating the tunnel to South Station). Both motions failed.

S. Olanoff has started the process for submitting a concept for consideration as a study in the FY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program that will soon be in development. It would be to study the conversion of some commuter rail locomotives to dual mode electric/diesel vehicles. The line to Providence is electrified for AMTRAK. The MBTA is planning to purchase 38 locomotives. The Council may also wish to promote buying Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs). One drawback is that train sets are not dedicated to any specific line, so the dual mode locomotives would not always be operating on the electrified line. However, at least some would be, sometimes, and this would improve air quality. Frank DeMasi, Town of Wellesley, added that the MBTA is planning over the next five years to spend \$120 million on 38 locomotives and cars. There would be more utility from using self-propelled rail cars, DMUs, rather than locomotives. They are used in Europe. The MBTA is also looking at providing short runs to Dorchester and Westwood and there may be private funding to help pay for DMUs for this service; a value engineering study of this approach could be useful. There are important advancements in green technologies that we should be learning about. The large cities use electrification, particularly in tunnels. The Boston Region should be studying the possibilities for electric or dual mode vehicles. Wig Zamore, member of the public, noted that CalTrains, providing commuter rail service between San Francisco and San Jose, announced that it is planning to go 100% to DMUs because they are more efficient and

are less polluting. F. DeMasi suggested that this might be an opportune time to ask the MBTA to look at this technology, since its fleet is aging.

A motion was made by F. DeMasi and seconded by S. Olanoff that the Advisory Council develop a position paper and submit a comment on the Westwood Station Environmental Impact Report asking the developer of the project fund a study of operating DMUs or electric vehicles on the line. The motion passed.

2. Announcements

There were none.

3. Briefing on the Development of Journey TO 2030, the Regional Transportation Plan of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization – *Anne McGahan, Plan Manager, Boston Region MPO Staff*

Anne McGahan distributed a summary of the tasks undertaken and planned for the development of the Plan and reviewed progress to date, step by step. (See attachment.) The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee has been meeting weekly to discuss and decide on a set of projects for inclusion in the Plan. She handed out copies of the *TRANSREPORT* insert with the list of projects under consideration and a map showing their locations. Two more projects were added, the Massport Consolidated Rental Car Facility at Logan (not capacity-adding, but needs to be in the Plan to receive federal loan funds) and Telecom City, Somerville. This project list is very similar to the last Plan. Changes include removing several projects: Wilmington/Ballardvale project has had a portion constructed which might solve the problem there; Lynnfield to Reading/Route 128 Capacity Improvements project area will be improved by the I-93/I-95 project; Framingham/Routes 9 and 126 Interchange project has had some safety improvements which may solve the problem. The Braintree Split project is a new project added to the Plan list.

The old State Implementation Plan Transit Commitments are included in the Plan and must be, since they remain the legal commitments until the substitution projects are approved by EPA. Once the substitution process is complete, the Executive Office of Transportation will ask the MPO to amend the Plan to include them as SIP commitments. The Marlborough/Hudson/I-95 Interchange project is included in the list but the Hudson/Route 85 Improvements project has been separated out.

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee is scheduled to adopt a draft Plan for public review at its meeting tomorrow. Extensive outreach all around the region is scheduled for the purpose of reviewing the Plan with members of the public and interested parties.

Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies, asked about the status of the #129 project, Wilmington/Routes I-93/129. Is it in design and if so, by which design firm. *It is not on the Transportation Improvement Program and is in the Plan's 2010 – 2020 timeframe, but I will check on other details for you.* A. McGahan

Bill Deignan, City of Cambridge asked if the evaluation criteria were fine-tuned since the last Plan and did the evaluations influence the decision-making? *The criteria were derived from the MPO's new policies and policy topic areas. Staff rated the projects based on how well the project addressed the policy and its objectives. The evaluations were one of the tools used by the members.* A. McGahan

4. Briefing on the Harvard Allston Initiative – Kathy Spiegelman, Chief Planner, Allston Development Group, Harvard University

The Allston Development Group is an entity of Harvard bringing together people at the University working exclusively on developing a master plan and framework for developing projects on the Allston property.

In January, the Group filed, with the City of Boston, a 50-year framework plan with 20 years of phased projects. While this presentation provides an overview of the plan more detailed information is available on the Web site, allston.harvard.edu.

Development and transportation are related to each other. One of Harvard's objectives in planning for the development in this area is to relate it to the need of the many institutions in the area.

A power point map showed the transportation network (roadways) serving the area. It is separated from the rest of the city by the Charles River and the Massachusetts Turnpike. There will be a significant impact on Allston. The Group is interested in making sure that the quality of life in neighboring North Allston improves.

The master plan is phased. Within the area there are sites that are not controlled by Harvard. She cited several parcels that will not be addressed in the master plan: the Genzyme site and part of the CSX easement, for example.

There are four themes for the master plan: 1) the most important things happening in research and the pursuit of knowledge demand collaboration and inter-disciplinary teaching; 2) creating a place and a campus environment; 3) environmental sustainability, use of the land and building practices using the most progressive technologies for alternative energy and respect for ecology; and 4) economic development, creating jobs and a spin-off economy.

An extensive academic planning process was undertaken as part of the master planning process for the Allston campus. The plan is evolving, but it included approximately 10 million square feet of development, constructed over 50-years.

K. Speigelman discussed the potential relocations discussed for graduate and undergraduate housing and activities and changes in use for some of the existing structures and land both on the Allston campus and the main Harvard campus. The academic programs will drive the development which will likely result in the Professional Corridor – groups of buildings for the School of Public Health and the life sciences. (Many are projecting that this campus will be the best place to be doing medical research.) Another segment of the site will be dedicated to the performing arts. Mixed use, housing and retail are included.

Easy access from the Massachusetts Turnpike will be planned.

One of the questions to be discussed in the environmental and permitting processes is likely to be, “Is this smart growth?” The community has been involved in the planning through the North Allston Strategic Framework Plan to come up with a starting point and foundation for the master planning undertaken by Harvard.

The design principles guiding the developing are:

- Borrowing the best from Cambridge – the relationship of open space and building; the pedestrian-friendly environment; the variety of buildings unified by the landscape
- Making Allston green – bringing landscaping to areas that are currently paved
- Celebrating the Charles River – the river is an asset
- Creating a variety of uses in close proximity – density and mixed use development; creating places for people-activity
- Planning for the campus and the community – a location for a public library that is also a community center
- Making connections between the campus and the Longwood Medical Area – so much of the site is dedicated to science, the links to the Medical Area should be strong to support the interaction of scientists in both area; it is dependent on a shuttle system with van-type vehicles, which will most likely be a public service

The community would like to have better access to the Red Line. Other ideas for improving bus service have been raised. Also, some thought is being given to whether there is a way to change the area’s relationship with the Charles River – Storrow Drive is a barrier to access to the river and the main Harvard campus – and lowering its grade in the vicinity of the development might solve the problem.

There are three main areas in the community benefits plan: education and lifelong learning benefits for N. Allston residents; workforce opportunities (jobs and job training); physical improvements, including some in the N. Allston neighborhood.

To date, much of the transportation discussion has focused on moving people between campuses. She provided an overview of the street network in the plan. New roads will provide access directly to and from the Turnpike. Improvements to Weeks Footbridge would be made so that it could carry a transit shuttle. The group would like to propose

less parking than is provided for in the plan, however, planners don't think travel behavior will change enough that demand is reduced. The plan proposes parking garages at the perimeter served by shuttle buses for the final leg. The performance and cultural center would have parking under the building. Planners expect the MBTA to revise its bus routes as needed, but they are also planning shuttles between the dormitories and the Cambridge campus. Two additional shuttle routes are being suggested, as well.

Bicycle lanes will parallel the street network and will also go into the campus to get close to destinations. The bicycle network is part of the open space plan. The plan does not preclude the Urban Ring.

The designs and planning are seeking to address sustainability. To help with this, buildings are being designed to maximize energy efficiency; a site for windmills is also being sought.

Points and Issues Raised During Discussion

A member pointed out that commercial vehicles are not allowed on Storrow Drive and that the shuttle service between the campus and Longwood may not be able to use it. *The master plan is proposing ideas to be discussed. K. Speigelman*

Wig Zamore, Mystic Valley Task Force and STEP, asked if someone could bring Harvard's attention the problem with buses idling for extended periods in the vicinity of the stadium and hockey rink. Massachusetts has a five-minute idling limit. He also asked if the development team had considered lowering the grade of Storrow Drive further upstream. He also asked about the environmental review process for the project. *A more extensive plan was considered and was not included in the plan due to expense and timing issues. Special processes will be developed. K. Speigelman*

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies, asked that during construction, there be a policy to use Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) companies.

Romin Kobel, APT, asked if extending the Red Line into the Allston campus were being considered. *There are not enough funds and the funding mechanism of the MBTA is flawed. There are all sorts of ideas for improvements all over the region, but there is no money. T. Kadzis, City of Boston*

Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association, said that the Urban Ring Phase 2 is proceeding. What is Harvard's position? *The plan does not preclude the Urban Ring. K. Speigelman*

A meeting attendee asked if there is a timeline for reconstructing North Harvard St. *Improvements are being planned. K. Speigelman*

F. DeMasi asked if there were any plans to connect with commuter rail lines and what the planning is to continue to support rail freight and CSX through the first 20 years of the plan. The Beacon Park Yards are important for freight distribution in the urban core and if it were to be discouraged, trucking in the area would be impacted. It would be nice to see buffers between the development and the yards so that truck operations could continue at least into the intermediate time frame. Also, do you have information on the Allston Station. The MBTA has discussed opening it up again. A short-distance service between Dorchester and Allston would be useful. *There is nothing in the current plan that counters use of the Beacon yards. Commuter rail connections were considered, but the scope of the plan did not include this idea, so that it did not imply that Harvard was prepared to commit to that. K. Speigelman; EOT is currently working with CSX and the other stakeholders to address these issues and there may be information to discuss in the near future. Allston Landing will provide for continuity for freight service. CSX, will have the essential services they need to stay in place. Their needs will change over the next several years, though. Dennis Coffey*

5. Advisory Council Committees

Lisa Lepore, P.E., Chair, of the Freight Committee announced that the next meeting will be March 14.

No other reports were made.

6. Member Items for Discussion and Other Business

None were raised.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.

Attachment:

Attendance List for February 14, 2007

ATTACHMENT: Attendance List for February 14, 2007

Cities and Towns

Tom Kadzis, Boston
Bill Deignan, Cambridge
Kristina Johnson, Quincy
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Agencies

Jim Gallather, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Matthew DeSorbo, Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission
Donna Smallwood, MassRIDES

Citizen Groups

Marilyn McNabb, Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA
Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies
Vince Dixon, Association for Public Transportation
John Gillon, Institute of Transportation Engineers
Chris Porter, MassBike
Jack Noonan, Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization, Inc.
John Businger, National Corridors Initiative
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association

Guests and Visitors

Kevin Casey
Kate Fichter, EOT Planning
Romin Koebel, APT
Steve Levine, Boston resident
Lisa Lepore, City of Somerville
Carolyn Murphy, Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge
Jane O'Hearn, MBTA Advisory Board
Mark Woodruff, Boston resident
Wig Zamore, Mystic Valley Task Force, STEP

MPO Staff

Anne McGahan
Bill Moore
Pam Wolfe