

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of June 15, 2005 Meeting

1. Chair's Report – Jeff Levine, Chair

Jeff Levine called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members, invited guests, visitors, and staff introduced themselves. (See the attached attendance list.)

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes of May 11, 2005

David Ernst and Steve Olanoff said the minutes didn't include enough description of the discussion regarding the Advisory Council's communication with state transportation officials. Mr. Ernst suggested that the entire discussion be transcribed from the tape as part of these minutes. No motion was offered. The Chair stated that the minutes would be tabled until the next meeting.

3. Announcements

The Chair announced that the MPO would hold another consultation with the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) on June 30 to discuss the State Implementation Plan (SIP) transit commitment re-evaluation process. The Chair requested that Advisory Council members send him their comments on this issue.

4. Briefing on the Re-evaluation of State Implementation Plan Transit Commitments and Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) Recommendation - *Dennis DiZoglio, EOT*

Mr. DiZoglio, representing EOT and speaking as Chair of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), briefed the Advisory Council on the re-evaluation of SIP transit commitments and the EOT recommendations. Mr. DiZoglio used the PowerPoint presentation that he had previously provided the MPO in his discussion of this topic. This PowerPoint presentation is available for downloading or viewing on the MPO website at <http://www.ctps.org/bostonmpo/whatnew.htm>.

The EOT is consulting with the MPO on the EOT and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) process for reevaluating the SIP transit commitments and on EOT's recommendations regarding the SIP transit commitment projects that remain to be implemented. The MPO is reviewing those recommendations. EOT has provided the MPO with background materials on the process and on the project evaluations that were considered in developing the recommendations. These documents are also available for downloading from or viewing on the MPO website.

Mr. DiZoglio referred to the July 9, 1993, letter from then-Governor William Weld to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, which stated that the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) would be the lead agency in SIP planning.

The EOT and the MBTA have made significant progress on the SIP Commitments, investing approximately \$3 billion to complete the following projects:

- Old Colony Commuter Rail Restoration
- Commuter Rail Extension to Newburyport
- Washington Street Replacement Service (Silver Line Phase I)
- 20,000 new parking spaces
- New stations along the Worcester Commuter Rail Line
- Peak period bus service improvements that have increased capacity by 12,000 riders

Other recently completed projects include:

- Silver Line Phase II
- Modernization of Aquarium and Airport Blue Line Stations

Since these commitments were made, the Legislature created the forward-funding mechanism for the MBTA, which has made them fiscally independent. The MBTA can no longer perform projects without receiving additional outside funding to do so. The SIP transit commitments are Commonwealth commitments to be funded by the Commonwealth.

New objective criteria and the ratings contained in the 2003 MBTA Program for Mass Transportation (PMT), raised questions about the benefits of the three outstanding legal commitments, which are:

- Arborway Restoration
- Red Line-Blue Line Connector
- Green Line Extension to Medford Hillside

In light of the above, letters were exchanged during the Fall of 2004 through the Spring of 2005 between EOT and DEP that raised the possibility of reconsidering these projects.

The DEP responded that, while they accept the air quality benefits of the three remaining projects, they would entertain a re-evaluation process that was conducted jointly between them and EOT and that included a robust public participation and comment component.

The EOT responded by developing a process and timetable for the re-evaluation. Their basic criteria for the evaluation is:

- utilization
- mobility
- cost-effectiveness
- air quality
- service quality

- economic and land use impacts
- environmental justice

As part of the robust public involvement process, a series of public meetings were held as follows:

- December 14, 2004 at the State House
- February 16, 2005 in Jamaica Plain
- March 14, 2005 in Somerville

After public comments were received, the DEP approved the reevaluation process and the criteria, set an air quality goal for substitutions of 110% of the original project's air quality improvement, and established the Boston Region MPO area as the target area for possible substitutions.

The universe of projects included those that were evaluated high priority projects in the PMT and the outstanding SIP transit commitments. One consideration in the evaluation of projects was user benefits.

The following projects were considered:

- Urban Ring Phase 3
- Silver Line Phase III
- Green Line to West Medford and Union Square
- Urban Ring Phase 2
- Silver Line Phase IV to Ashmont and Mattapan
- Green Line to West Medford
- Fairmount Line Improvements
- Urban Ring Phase I
- New Commuter Rail Station at Union Square at Somerville
- Red Line/Blue Line Connector
- Blue Line to Lynn Central Square
- Arborway Restoration

In addition to user benefits, EOT also considered air quality targets, readiness of projects, and geographical equity within the region as part of their evaluation criteria.

The pros and cons of each project were explained, along with their attendant air quality benefits, and notation of whether they were a legal commitment or were included in the Regional Transportation Plan. The ratings for each project were presented.

After the evaluation was completed, the EOT made the following recommendations:

- Green Line Beyond Lechmere
- Fairmount Line Improvements
- 1,000 new transit parking spaces within the Boston Region MPO area

The EOT-recommended projects total \$620 million and the Statewide Transportation Plan has suggested that as much as \$770 million have been committed to the outstanding SIP Commitments transit projects. It is the intention of the administration to spend the additional funds, the \$150 million difference between the above two numbers, on increasing the number of trips and expanding parking needs for the Worcester and Fitchburg commuter rail lines; however, not as part of the SIP Commitments.

The next step in the process is the June 22, MPO-sponsored public meeting to be held in the State Transportation Building. There will be a final consultation meeting with the MPO on June 30. Please refer to the timeline in the PowerPoint presentation on the MPO website for details on milestones and decision-points in the process.

Additional information on this subject along with the PowerPoint presentation made at this meeting is available for downloading from or viewing on the Boston Region MPO website at <http://www.ctps.org/bostonmpo/whatnew.htm>.

Points and Issues Raised During Discussion:

What will the funding source be for the EOT-recommended projects? (Richard Canale) *The Commonwealth has suggested that they will fund these projects. Additionally, the Statewide Transportation Plan suggested that the Commonwealth's borrowing cap might be increased from \$1.1 billion to \$1.2 billion as a possible funding source, if other sources are not available. (Dennis DiZoglio)*

What is the completion schedule for the EOT-recommended projects? (Jim Gallagher) *The deadline is 2012 and, even though the existing commitment allows for a three-year extension of that date, as long as existing Green Line car procurement issues can be resolved, we believe that we may be able to complete the projects by 2012. (Dennis DiZoglio)*

Was there any consideration given to combining the Red Line/Blue Connector with the Blue Line Extension to Lynn and evaluating them as one project? (David Ernst) *While there was consideration given to combining the two projects, permitting concerns for going through the Rumney Marsh, for example, caused them not to be evaluated as one project. (Dennis DiZoglio)*

Can you explain user benefits defined by hours? How does the bus industry get proposals on the table to fill in some of the gaps in service on various commuter rail lines like the Worcester Line? (Herb Pence) *The SUMMITT software used for this analysis attempts to convert and total the time saved by individual system users, for example, time saved due to congestion relief. On the bus industry question, one of the proposals made in the Transportation Reform Legislation was the creation of a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Council. This might be a possible forum for discussing this issue. Another possibility would be to write a letter to the new MBTA General Manager raising this issue. (Dennis DiZoglio and Jan Okolowicz)*

How does the North Point Project at Lechmere Station tie into the EOT-recommended Green Line Beyond Lechmere Project? (Frank DeMasi) *It ties in closely. In order to extend the Green Line to West Medford and Union Square, Lechmere Station must be moved across McGrath Highway. As part of the North Point Project, per their agreement with the MBTA, Guilford and their development partner, Spaulding and Slye, have committed to do that at their cost. This is estimated to be about \$35-40 million. From a planning perspective, there is some concern at this time that the developer is not moving quickly enough. (Dennis DiZoglio)*

Has there been any consideration given to using self-propelled EMUs (electric multiple units) instead of DMUs (diesel multiple units), individual train cars with their own, built-in engines or motors which eliminate the need for separate locomotives, on the Attleboro and Fairmount Lines, for example? How about using electric trolley buses instead of the currently used dual-mode buses? What do the current Urban Ring plans show for the Charles River Railroad Bridge? (Fred Moore) *While there are presently no plans to convert to either DMU or EMU technology, the technological, Buy-America-Clause, operational, maintenance, capacity, equipment availability and compatibility, layover, dead-heading, and institutional resistance, just to name a few, are issues that would make such conversions difficult. But they are being explored. The use of the Charles River railroad bridge in the Urban Ring Project is not currently on the table, but that could change as designs are revisited and refined. (Dennis DiZoglio and Joseph Cosgrove)*

Is it possible to bring the MBTA, Sierra Club, Fred Salvucci, and others involved in this SIP process as well as in the individual projects contained therein, together at one time so that all of the answers and discussions can be heard at once in order to be able to make an informed decision? (Steve Olanoff and Jeremy Marin) *While this approach may appear to be a good idea, people can sometimes come away being less than well informed. We believe that the decision to proceed with the Silver Line, as opposed to replacing light rail to Washington Street, has been made and that discussing other options at this time would be counter-productive. (Dennis DiZoglio) This would be a good topic for a future meeting. (Jeff Levine)*

Is this information on the MPO Website? (Richard Canale) *Yes, along with other information, including a narrative, plus the PowerPoint presentation made here, are all available on the MPO Website at <http://www.ctps.org/bostonmpo/whatnew.htm>. (Dennis DiZoglio)*

5. Advisory Council Committees

Freight - *Domenic D'Eramo & Frank DeMasi - Co-Chairs*

Mr. DeMasi attended a recent I-95 Corridor Coalition meeting and suggested that a speaker from that organization be invited to talk about freight initiatives at a future Advisory Council meeting. The Chair suggested that Mr. DeMasi speak with Bill Moore, CTPS, about setting this up. The Freight Committee will not meet during the summer.

Their next meeting will be at 1 PM on Wednesday, September 14, 2005 in the MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150, 10 Park Plaza, Boston.

Regional Transportation Plan (Plan) - *Sherri Walker and Caroline Connor, Co-Chairs*

There was no activity to report.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – *Jeff Levine*

There was no activity to report.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

Mr. Olanoff described the three items that are currently recommended by the Transportation Planning and Programming Subcommittee for the Draft FY 2006 UPWP for a total of \$161,100. They are as follows:

- A study of the Rt. 2/Alewife/Brooke Parkway for \$58,000
- Route 24/I-93 Interchange Study for \$67,000
- MBTA Transit Signal Priority Demonstration Project for \$36,100

Membership - *Steve Olanoff, Chair*

There was no activity to report.

Nominating - *Richard Canale, Chair*

A nominating committee will be formed by and a report given at the July meeting.

Programming – *Richard Canale, Chair*

There was a general consensus to reconsider the proposed July agenda. Various possible agendas and speakers for future meetings were discussed, including:

- A panel discussion among those with opposing viewpoints on the SIP Commitments
- A discussion with the Arborway Committee
- Jeremy Marin of the Sierra Club

The Programming Committee will meet during the week of June 20-27 to discuss this. There was no general consensus and no motion was made.

Regional Equity - *Chair to be announced.*

No activity to report.

6. Member Items for Discussion

In discussions following the presentation on the SIP transit commitments, some members expressed additional opinions.

Fred Moore felt that the fact that certain projects were not considered as substitutions for the SIP Commitments does not mean that those projects are without merit and that the Arborway Restoration Project should be reconsidered at least considering its historical connections with streetcars

Steve Olanoff, Richard Canale, and Fred Moore were concerned about whether the airport was a destination for Roxbury residents.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM.

Attachments:

1. Attendance, June 15, 2005

CTPS/WAM/wam

ATTACHMENT 1

Attendance - June 15, 2005

Cities and Towns

Boston: Tom Kadzis

Marlborough: Walter Bonin

Needham: John Marr

Wellesley: Frank DeMasi

Westwood: Steven Olanoff, Advisory Council Vice Chair, UPWP & Membership
Committees Chair

Weymouth: George Bezkoravainy

Agencies

Department of Elder Affairs: Emmet Schmarson

Division of Energy Resources: David Rand

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA): David Cash

Executive Office of Transportation (EOT): Dennis DiZoglio

Inner Core (ICC): Jeff Levine

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA): Stephen Woelfel and Joseph
Cosgrove

MassRIDES: Donna Smallwood

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC): Jim Gallagher

MetroWest Growth Management Committee: John Stasik

Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC): Richard Canale

Other MPOs (Ex-Officio Members of the Advisory Council)

Old Colony*: Jed Cornock

* Also Ex-Officio Members of the Boston Region MPO

Citizen Groups

Association for Commuter Transportation: Caroline Connor, Regional Transportation
Plan (Plan) Committee Co-Chair

Association for Public Transportation: Fred R. Moore

Boston Society of Architects: Mickey Krockmalnic

Boston Society of Civil Engineers Section American Society of Civil Engineers: Nick
Rubino

MassBike: David Ernst

New England Bus Transportation Association (NEBTA): Herb Pence

Sierra Club: Jeremy Marin

Visitors

Jan Okolowicz - PB

Robert Sturgis

Staff (CTPS)

Pam Wolfe

Anne McGahan

Jared Fijalkowski

Bill Moore