

Memorandum for the Record
Transportation Planning and Programming Committee of the
Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

October 4, 2007 Meeting

10:00 AM –1:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

David Mohler, Chair, representing Bernard Cohen, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works (EOTPW)

Decisions

The Transportation Planning and Programming Committee voted to take the following actions:

- Approve the work program for the 2007 – 2008 HOV Monitoring on I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway
- Approve the minutes of the September 20 meeting with recommended changes

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee members, staff, and members of the public introduced themselves.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Chair's Report – David Mohler, EOTPW

A Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) meeting is scheduled for October 22 at 1:30 PM. The agenda will include discussions on the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2007 and FFY 2008 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, the FFY 2007 redistribution, and the Bridge Program.

Governor Patrick is filing legislation regarding the reorganization of the state's surface transportation agencies under one transportation authority. The Administration is working on the reorganization, with efficiencies resulting in reduced costs, prior to addressing ways to raise funds for the transportation sector. A statewide Strategic Long Range Transportation Plan will also be developed. Mary Pratt, Town of Hopkinton, requested that the Chair provide information to the MPO when information about the reorganization is available. MPOs and regional planning agencies (RPAs) in the state will be briefed when more information is available. This unified authority would not include MassPort. Gordon Feltman, Town of Bedford, expressed his concern that MassPort projects affect the surface transportation network and they should be included under the unified authority. Barbara Lucas, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), asked about the implications and role for MPOs in this proposed reorganization.

4. Subcommittee Chairs' Reports – *Barbara Lucas, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and Steve Woelfel, MassHighway*

B. Lucas reported that the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) is exploring the possibility of using a portion of the MBTA assessments paid by municipalities in the area in which CATA operates to continue the Ipswich Essex Explorer shuttle service beyond its third year.

S. Woelfel announced that a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for November 1 at 1 PM. The agenda will include a discussion about finding funds to possibly update the Route 28 study.

Members discussed the status of the Regional Household Survey. The MPO has set aside \$300,000 to hire a consultant to conduct the survey, which will gather data on individuals' travel choices and travel patterns in the region to rebuild the regional travel model. The UPWP also includes \$170,000 for hiring new staff at CTPS to work on the survey. The last survey was completed in 1991. Although there is no federal mandate to conduct the survey, it is good practice to do so.

The survey is estimated to cost about \$2.0-2.5 million to complete and this funding, beyond what the MPO has contributed, would be supplied by other transportation agencies that would benefit from the data collected in the survey. No other agencies have committed to contribute to the project to date, however, EOTPW is working to secure funding. At the last Mobility Compact meeting, EOTPW Undersecretary of Planning and Program Development Wendy Stern briefed the member agencies about the survey and the need for funding.

Members discussed whether the MPO should set a deadline for securing funding. Arnie Soolman, MPO Staff, said that he believes it would be a mistake to set a deadline because that would run the risk that some might wish to use the \$300,000 for other purposes. As a fallback position, he suggested that the \$300,000 could be used to hire a consultant to design the survey, while the actual conduct of the survey could take place after contributions from other agencies are secured.

5. Regional Transportation Advisory Council – *Steve Olanoff, Advisory Council*

The Advisory Council met on September 12. Kristina Egan, EOTPW, gave a presentation on the South Coast Rail project. The next meeting will be on October 10. Freight growth in the Port of Boston will be discussed.

6. Work Scopes

South Coast Rail – *Kristina Egan, EOTPW, and Karl Quackenbush, MPO Staff*

K. Egan gave an overview of the South Coast Rail project. The project will enhance transit access between the Greater Boston area and the south coast cities of New Bedford, Fall River, and Taunton. The Administration views the project as an opportunity to provide access to affordable housing, reduce the amount of automobiles on the highways, and revitalize the south coast's "gateway cities." The project is expected to have

economic benefits that in the long term may help to generate funding for the state's transportation sector.

The project is guided by the principles of Smart Growth and is expected to be a model for the state in terms of how to plan well for land use. A regional transfer development rights bank is being developed as a tool that can be used to preserve open space while concentrating development in appropriate locations such as around transit stations.

Last April, Governor Patrick released the report, *South Coast Rail: A Plan for Action*, which outlines the steps for moving the project forward. (Information about the project is available on-line at www.southcoastrail.com.)

EOTPW is planning to hold approximately 18 public meetings next year. A commuter rail task force, coordinated by the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), is being formed that will explore secondary growth impacts and ways to control sprawl around the new stations and in the served municipalities.

The environmental review process is beginning. Approximately a dozen state and federal agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, will be involved in the joint Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) / National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. A corridor plan for the region will be developed. CTPS will assist in the environmental review process by evaluating projected ridership levels and air quality impacts/benefits for alternatives under consideration. The permitting stage of the project is scheduled to begin in January 2010.

Initially, all options (up to approximately 20) for the project will be on the table including use of three possible rail lines, adding bus service, and the no-build scenario. The process for narrowing down the alternatives to a handful for more detailed study will begin this month. Thereafter, CTPS will conduct its analysis.

The estimated cost of the project is \$1.4 billion, which does not include the costs for expanding South Station or acquiring right-of-way from CSX. (*Subsequent checking found that the \$1.4 billion does include attributable costs for South Station expansion.*) So far, \$17 million in funding has been committed.

During a discussion period, members raised the following points:

- When evaluating alternatives, the full cost of the alternatives should be considered.
- Concerning the expansion of South Station, the search for the location of the new layover facility should take into account the MBTA's long-term needs. (D. Mohler noted that the new facility will meet the future needs of the MBTA. K. Egan added that the South Station expansion is a separate project being managed by Tom Cahir, EOTPW.)
- There should be an estimate of the eminent domain takings for the South Station expansion.

- The alternatives should consider electrification of the rail line and a review of the costs, in terms of air quality, of not electrifying the line. (K. Egan stated that she would add this option to those under consideration.)

K. Quackenbush spoke in further detail about CTPS's South Coast Rail work program. CTPS will provide travel-forecasting assistance to the project. CTPS will conduct a spreadsheet-based analysis of the alternatives and then model those that have been selected for closer analysis. Air quality and environmental justice analyses will be performed. CTPS will model up to three land use scenarios. The work program will cost \$300,000 at the most. D. Mohler stated that EOTPW will fund the work program out of non-federal funds.

SRPEDD will provide land use and other data for use in CTPS's work since the project extends beyond the MPO region into SRPEDD's district. SRPEDD will be supplying data for the base year and forecast year.

During a discussion period, members voiced the following concerns and comments:

- Concern was expressed about which agency would be defining the land use for the project. The opinion was voiced that SRPEDD should be responsible for the land use scenario that is used. (D. Mohler said that for one of the land use scenarios, the MetroFuture land use adopted by the MPO would provide the land use for the communities in the Boston Region MPO area and that SRPEDD would provide the land use for the others. For the other two scenarios to be explored, EOTPW would like to have flexibility in their development.)
- SRPEDD's role should be more clearly defined.
- Transit Oriented Development and 40R aspects of the project would have to be approved at town meetings, which could potentially delay the project.
- Consideration should be given to the air quality impacts that would result from the building of new roads to the new stations and developments.
- A question was raised about whether the number of model runs CTPS has planned this year for the South Coast Rail would interfere with the model runs for the Green Line project and negatively-impact its schedule. (K. Quackenbush stated that CTPS has the capacity to conduct all the planned model runs. Once the model set is built, the runs are not time-consuming. Also, detail can be added. Both A. Soolman and K. Quackenbush assured members that the Green Line work is of equal importance as the South Coast Rail work.)
- Concern was raised that project proponents have the capability to fashion land use inputs and project design decisions to maximize the project's feasibility. SRPEDD should provide the land use scenarios.
- Concern was expressed about the potential impacts of project alternatives that would displace rail freight traffic and thereby result in more trucks on the highways. No studies on the impacts of reduced rail capacity for the movement of freight have been planned yet. CTPS's modeling work will include truck traffic on highways; however, CTPS does not have the capability to conduct inter-city freight mode analysis.

- K. Egan should be invited to the Committee's October 18 meeting to answer other questions prior to the vote on the work program.

Green Line Extension – *Steve Woelfel, EOTPW, and Karl Quackenbush, MPO Staff*
S. Woelfel, Project Manager, stated that following EOTPW's submittal of an expanded Environmental Notification Form (ENF), EOTPW received on December 1, 2006, a Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Unit Certificate (MEPA). With EOTPW's decision to seek federal New Starts funding, the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) required by MEPA will be expanded to include the federal NEPA process. Since the main line of the proposed Green Line Extension will use an existing right-of-way, an Environmental Assessment for this is being explored. The studies will also support the application for federal New Starts funding. Discussions with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are underway to provide for meeting all New Starts requirements. An advisory group is being formed which will include the Cities of Cambridge, Medford, and Somerville, and MAPC.

K. Quackenbush stated that CTPS will provide travel-modeling support, which will include air quality and environmental justice analyses. This work will also support the project's New Starts application. The approximately one-year work program will cost \$100,000.

S. Woelfel explained that the MEPA certificate asked that a number of options be examined, including possible commuter rail connections, different locations for a maintenance facility, and the extension to Union Square.

In response to members' questions, D. Mohler explained that CTPS' work is a necessary part of the scheduled 18-month state and federal environmental review process. Some members requested that they be provided with the project timeline again. (Two timelines – showing the project schedules with 2014 and 2016 end dates – were distributed at the August 16 meeting.)

D. Mohler also stated that the Administration is committed to fully funding the project with state bond funds (not MBTA funds) if the New Starts application fails. (He and S. Woelfel added that they believe the project to be a strong candidate for New Starts funding.) The project is a top priority for the Administration, which will have two New Starts applications in the pipeline – the EOTPW-managed Green Line Extension and the MBTA-managed Silver Line, Phase 3. They believe both can be New Starts funded.

Ellin Reisner, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, raised the issue that the right-of-way near the NorthPoint development has not yet been secured by the state for the Green Line project. The developers of NorthPoint are engaged in a lawsuit and are selling their assets, which raises questions about what will happen with the agreement one developer has with the MBTA concerning the redevelopment of the Green Line's Lechmere Station. EOTPW is monitoring the situation. Joe Cosgrove, MBTA, noted that the MBTA owns the right-of-way, though Guilford Transportation Industries Inc. has

rights over part of the NorthPoint property. D. Mohler said that EOTPW will not let these issues delay the Green Line project.

Wig Zamore, Mystic View Task Force/Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, suggested that if the state does not meet the project's 2014 deadline that work on the Orange Line Assembly Square Station be accelerated as mitigation. This would reduce traffic on I-93, he stated.

Jim Gallagher, MAPC, stated that he would make an effort to provide CTPS staff with data for the mid-point year of 2015 for the model inputs.

7. MetroWest Regional Transit Authority – Ed Carr, Administrator, MWRTA

Ed Carr and John Stasik, Member, of the newly formed MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) came before the MPO to talk about MWRTA's purpose and needs. MWRTA was formed to address the lack of transit (aside from the LIFT and other bus service) in the MetroWest area of the region. They informed the Committee that the MWRTA is in need of planning funds since it is not yet in the pipeline for receiving federal funds. They requested that the MPO provide funds for staff to conduct a needs assessment and service planning in the smaller communities around Natick and Framingham. They have data on their existing services that can be useful in planning improvements for those services, but for their whole area, they need inputs on needs. Without MPO funding for this work, MWRTA will have to tap into its operating funds.

Mary Pratt, Town of Hopkinton, suggested the MWRTA member towns understand their needs and that the MWRTA might ask them directly.

Members asked if any needs assessments had been done previously. Several reports were mentioned, but none focused on needs.

On behalf of the Committee, B. Lucas and G. Feltman expressed their desire to see the RTA succeed and their belief that it is the responsibility of the MPO to help the RTA become successful. G. Feltman noted that MWRTA should submit a defined work scope for proposed planning projects and include a summary of the RTA's goals, needs, and estimated budget. D. Mohler noted that the money to conduct the study would come from the MPO's Section 5303 funding, currently allocated in the UPWP to other work. The MBTA meets with all the RTAs to divide the Section 5307 capital funds and the MWRTA will be included in these discussions in the future. Both categories of funding for the MWRTA need to be programmed by the MPO.

The RTA representatives were advised to work with CTPS Transit Service Planning staff and MAPC to develop their scope of work.

8. Action Items

2007 – 2008 HOV Monitoring on I-93 North and Southeast Expressway – Karl Quackenbush, MPO Staff

K. Quackenbush addressed questions that were raised at the previous Committee meeting about the work program for the 2007 – 2008 HOV Monitoring on I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway. (CTPS conducts this work annually for MassHighway as required by the Department of Environmental Protection.)

He noted the following:

- Staff is gathering data to update the assumptions used to determine bus occupancy.
- A trend analysis is being conducted under the Mobility Management System and will be available next month.
- Staff discussed with the client the idea of having other entities (such as Smart Traveler) conduct travel time runs, however, the client does not consider any of the proposed options reliable enough at this point.

A motion to approve the work program for the 2007 – 2008 HOV Monitoring on I-93 North and the Southeast Expressway was made by Thomas Kadzis, City of Boston, and seconded by S. Woelfel. The motion passed with six members voting yes. G. Feltman and M. Pratt voted no. David Koses, City of Newton, abstained.

Meeting Minutes – Pam Wolfe, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 20 meeting – with changes recommended by G. Feltman to page 2 and 9, and by B. Lucas to page 10 – was made by S. Woelfel, and seconded by M. Pratt. The motion passed unanimously.

M. Pratt and B. Lucas stated that they communicated with Mayor Nancy Stevens of Marlborough about the minutes of the September 6 meeting and that Mayor Stevens had a different understanding of what the MPO was communicating to the City of Marlborough than was reflected in the minutes. B. Lucas stated that the MPO has to do a better job of making sure invited speakers understand what is being conveyed to them.

9. Members' Items

S. Woelfel announced that a MEPA hearing on the Red-Blue Line Connector project will be held on October 17 at 100 Cambridge Street, Boston. Details will be sent via email.

Shirin Karanfiloglu, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, will provide a schedule for public hearings on the proposed toll increases for distribution to members.

L. Duncan announced that the City of Salem is installing three bicycle racks acquired through the MPO's Regional Bike Parking Program. While initially the City had a difficult time finding a contractor to install the racks at a reasonable bid, now a better contractor has been found. B. Lucas announced that MAPC has requested that

communities participating in the Program submit before and after photos of the locations where racks are installed.

G. Feltman stated that he was disturbed that MassPort is not participating in the Governor's surface transportation planning group. He noted that some of MassPort's cargo operations are shifting from Logan Airport to Hanscom Field and this shift could result in a significant amount of truck traffic being added to roads in Bedford or to Route 2A (Battle Road).

On behalf of J. Cosgrove, John Hersey, MPO staff, announced that the MBTA is inviting members of the Committee and the Advisory Council to ride the Greenbush commuter rail line in a pre-revenue service test run on the afternoon of October 17.

B. Lucas announced that, on October 23, MAPC will be holding a Policy Summit regarding the implementation of MetroFuture. (See announcement at <http://metrofuture.org/meetings.asp>.)

10. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by B. Lucas, and seconded by S. Woelfel. The motion passed unanimously.

Transportation Planning and Programming Committee Meeting Attendance
Thursday, October 4, 2007, 10:00 AM

Member Agencies

EOTPW
City of Boston
City of Newton
City of Salem
City of Somerville
MassHighway
MAPC

MassPike
MBTA
Advisory Council

Town of Bedford
Town of Hopkinton

Representatives and Alternates

David Mohler, Chair
Thomas Kadzis
David Koses
Lynn Duncan
Thomas Bent
Steve Woelfel
Barbara Lucas
Jim Gallagher
Shirin Karanfiloglu
Joe Cosgrove
Steve Olanoff
Frank DeMasi
Gordon Feltman
Mary Pratt

MPO Staff/CTPS

John Hersey
Maureen Kelly
Hayes Morrison
Scott Peterson
Karl Quackenbush
Arnie Soolman
Pam Wolfe

Other Attendees

Ed Carr, MetroWest RTA
Kristina Egan, EOT
Barbara McKenzie, MBTA
Ellin Reisner, Somerville Transportation Equity
Partnership
John Stasik, MetroWest RTA
Wig Zamore, Mystic View Task Force/Somerville
Transportation Equity Partnership