

## APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK ON A PROPOSED MPO TRANSIT COMMITTEE

This appendix summarizes feedback collected via phone, in-person conversations, email, and at the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) June 4, 2019, outreach meeting on a proposed transit committee. Feedback has been summarized by topic area.

### *Transit Provider Interest in an MPO Transit Committee*

Nearly all transit provider representatives that staff contacted for interviews expressed some interest in participating in a committee. Several representatives noted that staff availability could affect their organization's ability to participate.

### *Provider Reasons for Interest in an MPO Transit Committee*

When conducting interviews, MPO staff asked transit providers to identify which of the types of opportunities listed below interested them about the MPO's proposed transit committee. These types are listed in order of importance to respondents, based on MPO staff's assessment.

1. Opportunities to coordinate with other transit providers
2. Opportunities to learn more about the MPO's processes, decisions, and resources for transit providers (tied with #3)
3. Opportunities to provide input on MPO decisions (tied with #2)

### *MPO Representation of Input from the Proposed Committee*

Transit providers were asked about how much the nature of the committee's representation on the MPO board, if any, might influence their decision to participate. Several transit provider representatives shared feedback on this question (comments marked with an asterisk were mentioned by multiple people).

- Committee representation is valuable, but opportunities to coordinate on transit topics with other providers are of the most interest.\*
- It is important that the outcomes of committee activities are useful.\*
- It is important to establish proper channels and a clear process to communicate information to the MPO.
- The results of committee activities need to be meaningfully conveyed to the MPO.

During the June 4, 2019 meeting, one attending member of the public mentioned that it would be valuable for an MPO transit committee to have a seat on the MPO's policy board.

### *Feedback Pertaining to the Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

A limited number of the transit provider representatives that MPO staff contacted prior to the June 4, 2019, meeting were current or relatively recent members of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council. Several of those that met this criterion noted that they appreciated the broad range of transportation-oriented topics that are discussed during Advisory Council meetings. One person mentioned that limited staff capacity affected their organization's ability to participate in the Advisory Council. Another mentioned that their organization is interested in research support, which is not provided by the Advisory Council. Several representatives mentioned that they or others in their organization might be interested in participating in a body that is more focused on transit.

### *Topics for Transit Provider/MPO Coordination and Engagement*

Some transit provider representatives noted that they have had limited interaction with the MPO or that becoming familiar with the MPO can be challenging. Transit providers expressed interest in engaging with the MPO on several topics (those noted with an asterisk were mentioned by multiple people):

- Funding availability and opportunities for transit services, or ways to increase the funding that is available\*
- Planning assistance for transit providers, including technical assistance for service planning, analysis of trends in transit demand, and communicating findings from data to customers\*
- Funding to address transportation needs (which could include access and parking improvements) in transit service areas
- Representation of transit providers beyond the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) and Regional Transit Authorities (RTA), and the transit demand they help service, in transportation planning and modeling
- Inclusion of transit interests in transportation project design
- Prioritization of transit-friendly projects

### *Topics for Coordination Among Transit Providers*

Transit provider representatives suggested a range of topics for coordination with other transit providers, as well as other people and organizations involved in transit-related issues. An MPO transit committee might include information and

coordination as part of its activities. (Topics with an asterisk were mentioned by multiple people.)

- First-mile and last-mile needs\*
- Suburban transit needs\*
- Municipal transit service needs\*
- Improved coordination with the MBTA\*
  - Connections to and from commuter rail service
  - Coordination and communication to support first-mile and last-mile shuttle service to MBTA service, including to respond quickly to MBTA service delays
  - Inter-suburban and intra-suburban bus route planning
- Coordination among transit providers (of various types) that serve a particular portion of the Boston region (such as the North Shore or MetroWest)\*
- Transit mobility needs, such as transit signal priority, snow removal, or high-occupancy vehicle lane opportunities\*
- Traffic and how it affects transit operations, particularly at identified bottleneck locations (such as near Alewife Station)\*
- Leveraging school transportation resources and opportunities to meet transit needs\*
- Street design features that affect transit operations
- Strategies to support small-scale shuttle service
- Coordination between RTAs and transportation management associations (TMA) on route planning and service changes
- Coordinating schedules and sharing information between services that may connect with one another
- Overcoming barriers between jurisdictions to better help customers get from one area to another
- Coordination among service providers operating at similar scales (such as between TMAs and large RTAs)
- Identifying short-term approaches to address planning needs
- Coordination with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, particularly on transportation maintenance and improvement projects happening on transit routes

- Coordination with human service transportation organizations
- Needs of “tweener” communities that straddle the borders of multiple RTAs, regional planning areas, or career service providers
- Use of technology (including software applications) across transit service providers
- Fare interoperability
- Transition to electric-powered buses
- Addressing liability issues common to multiple agencies

Several members of the public that attended the June 4, 2019, meeting suggested other topics, including the following:

- Opportunities for joint resource procurement
- Needs and opportunities for collaboration on garages and other facilities.

### *Suggestions for Other Participants*

When conducting outreach and planning for the June 4, 2019, meeting, MPO staff specifically reached out to representatives of (1) other RTAs operating in the MPO region besides MWRTA and CATA, (2) TMAs operating in the region, and (3) municipalities that are now operating or exploring transit service. Staff also advertised the meeting using its website, Twitter, and its email distribution list. Staff asked attendees of the June 4, 2019, meeting to identify other people or entities that should be involved in MPO transit committee discussions and activities. (Replies listed with an asterisk were mentioned by multiple people.)

- More municipalities\*
- Employers of various sizes\*
- Education providers
- Housing providers
- For-profit carriers, such as intercity buses
- Massport
- Other entities using Federal Transit Administration funds in the Boston area
- Transportation contractors, such as Keolis
- Representatives of the MBTA’s Better Bus project
- Representatives of highway agencies, depending on the discussion topic

Members of the public at the June 4, 2019, meeting also mentioned involving advocacy groups and companies developing connected and autonomous vehicles.

### *Transit Provider Feedback on Committee Meeting Scheduling and Structure*

MPO staff explained to outreach participants that the MPO's current proposal for the committee anticipates that this group would meet four to six times per year. During preliminary interviews, transit provider representatives provided feedback on meeting features that would support their attendance. (Replies listed with an asterisk were mentioned by multiple people.)

- Action-oriented meetings that make progress on addressing issues\*
- Meetings held during the workday\*
- Predictable meeting schedule\*
- Ability to access meetings via phone or internet\*
- Meetings held in the middle of the week
- Variable meeting location, with meetings not always held in Boston
- Meetings held near the beginning or end of the workday

### *Other Transit Provider Feedback*

Several people suggested piloting the committee for approximately one year to see how it progresses and what it can accomplish. One transit provider representative suggested exploring ways that the committee could serve as a pipeline for developing transportation projects. Another asked what relationship an MPO transit committee might have with the MBTA Advisory Board.

### *Other Public Feedback*

Several members of the public that attended the June 4, 2019, meeting emphasized the importance of accounting for transportation equity issues in the work of the committee. One noted that TMA-provided services are not necessarily open or transparent to the public, and that these services may be too costly for the public to use. Another mentioned that information sharing between transit providers across common platforms could provide customers with alternatives when MBTA services are disrupted. Another person suggested that an MPO transit committee could hold joint meetings with other transportation-related organizations in the region, especially if MPO staff would be presenting the same information to both groups. A member of the public who did not participate in the June 4 outreach meeting expressed support for the transit committee and said that its focus should be on expanding transit parking.