

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

May 11, 2016, Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

M. Sanborn, Vice Chair (Massachusetts Bus Association) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 6)

Minutes - April 13, 2016

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 13 meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

Member Survey - M. Sanborn

The results of the recent member survey were briefly reviewed. Most topics regarding the Advisory Council meetings are in good standing. The primary interest area related to meeting topics. Members offered many potential ideas for possible future topics.

B. Steinberg suggested that field trips include a group leader who can explain what is being seen.

Report and Discussion - Green Line Extension (GLX) Project - M. Sanborn, Vice Chair

M. Sanborn distributed information on the presentation made to the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) on Monday, May 2. He explained that the FMCB was very interested in gaining funding support from the MPO and the cities directly

adjacent to the project. He explained that the prevailing understanding at the MPO was that GLX Phase 2 was not a possibility without the successful completion of Phase 1, consequently, the support of Phase 1 with Phase 2 funding was the only path forward. There was a robust discussion of the two phases of the GLX project at the MPO and the FMCB meeting.

M. Sanborn explained that the board unanimously voted for the TIP Amendment to move funds for Phase 2 of the Green Line Extension (GLX) to Phase 1 of the project. MPO members expressed support for the continuation of Phase 2 and were pleased that the EIS/EIR study funding commitment from MassDOT was included. Several members said it was a major factor in their support of the amendment while others were not supportive of the Phase 2 component of the project. At the MPO meeting, Advisory Council Chair, T. Bennett, voted in favor of the amendment to shift funds from GLX Phase 2 to GLX Phase 1. The amendment passed unanimously by the MPO.

M. Gowing asked if Medford offered any funding to the project. M. Sanborn noted that on page 42 of the [FMCB Report](#) that Somerville and Cambridge were the only cities contributing a total of \$75M to the project.

In the current TIP, there is \$158M for the GLX Phase 2, which includes state funding. The \$32M including state funding is noted in another part of the TIP. The MPO votes on the Federal dollars only (\$152M) thus, the MPO voted to program \$190M for the “flexed” Highway dollars for the Transit project. There is an 80/20 percent federal funding match which makes the federal share \$152M. The State’s share of funding is \$38M.

R. McGaw explained that cost overruns were not contained in Phase 1 of the GLX. M. Sanborn followed up by stating that even though the vote of the MPO was unanimous, some members expressed the reservation of Phase 1 being completed on time and on budget. The vote was to keep the GLX project moving forward.

M. Gowing expressed an interest in keeping costs under control, and to find other local funding sources. M. Sanborn said that any increases in costs would need to be presented to the FMCB. L. Dantas explained that determining a finance plan for the project is an evolving piece of the funding puzzle.

J. McQueen stated that time is a big factor in rising costs of the project. M. Sanborn noted that costs will increase by \$1.6M from the start of the build schedule for each month of delay.

D. Montgomery asked if the \$73M gap in funding had to be filled before the project

gets underway. L. Dantas added that it will be several months before the federal partners will have reviewed the considerations in the financial plan. The vote by the MPO was in the form of a draft amendment soon to be back from public review. The MPO will decide to accept or change the proposals regarding federal funds. These changes will have a cascading effect on the LRTP and will require remodeling for air quality and environmental justice analyses, each of which will need MPO approval.

Members pointed out that the changes made to finance the GLX project do have an impact on the ability of communities in the MPO to fund bikeways, roadway improvements, and other smaller regional projects at the local level.

In response to a question from J. Seward, on the preferred recommendation by the MPO, M. Sanborn explained that the MPO remained in favor of GLX Phase 2 and they view the Commonwealth's commitment to environmental work as the best possible outcome to keep a path open for future funding of GLX Phase 2.

M. Wellons asked if the State could stop the GLX in mid-stream once the project is underway. M. Sanborn said that it would be up to the FTA and the administration.

S. Olanoff reiterated that the five major reasons cited in the FMCB report in which the previous project management struggled with were: staffing, consultant dependency, poor cost controls, MBTA culture of process over outcomes, and dealing with external deadlines.

Members questioned the use of the design/build procurement method for a project of this size and scope and expressed that the method, in retrospect, seemed to be a mistake.

D. Montgomery explained that regional benefit of expanding the transit system should be a reason for all the MPO members to fund projects like this. F. Osman wanted the Advisory Council to support the GLX project because of its major positive impact on the region.

M. Gowing felt the public appreciates the on-time and on-budget work on projects like Government Center Station Re-construction Project. He stated that transit has to be kept in the forefront rather than simply removing this project based solely on dollars. M. Sanborn stated that the positive benefits of GLX are brought up at every MPO meeting and it is being kept alive in conversation.

C. Porter indicated that the re-design of the Community Path was generally good in terms of design standards and cost savings. One issue involves connection to a separate path along McGrath Highway. Avoiding the McGrath routing is an option that should be reviewed for an alternative design.

In summation, M. Sanborn recommended that members continue to voice their comments on the project through the Advisory Council.

Report and Discussion - 3C Certification Documents Committee - C. Porter, Vice Chair

C. Porter summarized the activities of the 3C Certification Documents Committee meeting which was held on May 10. The Committee focused on comments on the TIP that members felt ought to be presented to the MPO. He explained that large projects including the GLX are programmed in the early time bands of the TIP. C. Porter indicated he had analyzed the project evaluations using this year's and last year's evaluation criteria and he noted that the projects scored closely using the previous criteria and the new criteria.

C. Porter noted that cost overruns are causing some problems in prioritizing funding. The issue was addressed at the committee and members felt that funds should be made available to the projects on hold, especially smaller projects if the larger projects are moved to outer time bands. Project cost and readiness were issues considered in the discussion.

C. Porter and M. Sanborn summarized committee discussion on how to deal with cost overruns in terms of who pays for them and how will they affect other projects on the TIP. S. Olanoff stated that in the past, the explanation for cost overruns has been very limited. He felt the MPO should be able to ask for more information and felt this should be mentioned in the comment letter. J. McQueen felt milestones and due-diligence should be more expertly executed leading to greater accountability. M. Gowing felt contracts should have cost overrun clauses built-in.

M. Sanborn felt the comment letter should acknowledge the Council's understanding of the logistical challenges of cost estimation but that within the existing processes, the problem of cost overruns be addressed. P. Nelson explained how project control often results from the things over which there are no controls. He stated that regularly occurring issues can be fixed, but a better strategy would be to consistently select the best projects based on the project evaluation criteria. He added that all projects have the potential to be significantly over-budget as well as being under-budget. This holds true for project timeliness as well. R. McGaw felt there was a need for vigilant control on cost and that contractors be held accountable.

M. Sanborn explained that the GLX project was supported by the MPO and that the FMCB was informed of that.

S. Olanoff wants to see more quantitative measures on the projects as they cycle through completion with attention to incremental cost increases. L. Dantas explained that staff has reviewed cost estimates and the relative increases during the stages of design relative to where the projects are now. This information will be presented at the next MPO meeting on May 19 when staff will also present on projects that are experiencing significant cost overruns which are having an impact on other projects in the TIP.

The 3C Committee will revise and recirculate the letter points. Members were asked to send any comments to C. Porter or to staff. C. Porter also pointed out that an MPO presentation on cost overruns / project estimation would be a good topic for a future Advisory Council meeting.

Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

D. Fargen announced that next Advisory Council meeting will be held at the Boston Public Library in the Commonwealth Salon.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:20 PM.

Attendance

Municipalities (Voting)

Acton
Belmont
Brookline
Cambridge
Marlborough
Millis

Needham
Westwood

Citizen Groups

AACT
Association for Public Transportation
Massachusetts Bus Association
MassBike
MASCO
MoveMassachusetts
National Corridors Initiative
Riverside Neighborhood Association
WalkBoston

MPO Municipalities (Non-Voting)

Boston

Agencies (Non-Voting)

MAGIC
TRIC

Guests

Ed Lowney
Christopher Blackler

Staff

Lourenço Dantas
David Fargen

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Robert McGaw
Todd Kirrane
Tegin Bennett (excused)
Walter Bonin (excused)
Ed Chisholm
David Montgomery; Rhain
Hoyland
Trevor Laubenstein

Mary Ann Murray
Barry M Steinberg
Mark Sanborn
Chris Porter
Paul Nelson
Jon Seward
John Businger
Marilyn Wellons
John McQueen

Tom Kadzis

Franny Osman
Steve Olanoff

Malden Resident
East Boston Resident

Matt Archer
Jennifer Rowe