

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting Summary

October 19, 2017 Meeting

9:15 AM to 9:45 AM, State Transportation Building—10 Park Plaza, Central
Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) Conference Room, Boston, MA

Bryan Pounds, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Progress reports for 4th quarter federal fiscal year (FFY) 2017

Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

Bryan Pounds (MassDOT), Chair of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:15 AM. UPWP Committee members and MPO staff introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 5.)

2. Presentation of Progress Reports for 4th Quarter FFY 2017

Karl Quackenbush (CTPS Executive Director) and Robin Mannion (CTPS Deputy Executive Director) presented the UPWP progress reports covering the fourth quarter of FFY 2017 (period of July–September 2017). K. Quackenbush drew the committee's attention to a cluster of projects showing the need for a time extension to complete the work. B. Pounds confirmed that the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) had previously approved UPWP budget modifications to these projects; K. Quackenbush explained that figures in the table shown in bold had been approved for modification.

Dennis Crowley (Southwest Advisory Planning Committee [SWAP]/Town of Medway) asked about the disposition of funds that had not been spent from 3C contracts, following up on a question from a previous meeting. K. Quackenbush explained that with few exceptions, the funds become unavailable to the MPO [after the end of that contract year; 3C planning funds are issued via annual contracts]; occasionally, MassDOT will allow the MPO to extend a contract in time to allow certain direct-cost

expenditures that had previously been budgeted. A discussion ensued. D. Crowley asked how much money had not been spent, and whether there was any ability to change the situation [allowing for use of those funds for other projects]. K. Quackenbush replied that staff had compiled the data and sent it [to committee members]. He explained that many of the funds that go unspent occur because of staff departures during the year. Thus, it would be difficult to take on additional tasks to use the leftover funds, even if allowed by MassDOT, because staff resources are allocated to other efforts. R. Mannion explained that projects, but not funds, carry over into the new fiscal year. D. Crowley expressed that having unspent planning funds is not good. There was some discussion of the exact disposition of unused funds.

R. Mannion presented the second progress report. She drew the committee's attention to a chart illustrating the percentage of overall budget expended, and indicated that some money had been put aside in FFY 2017 for consultant assistance, but not spent; taking that into consideration, the overall percentage spent of MPO project funds was 97%, which is typical share. R. Mannion showed that staff strive to gain one-third of work from non-MPO sources, and such had been carried out successfully this year.

Tegin Teich Bennett (Advisory Council/City of Cambridge) asked what the aspirational and realistic percentages of budget spent were. R. Mannion and K. Quackenbush responded that this year's percentages—in the low to mid 90s—were fairly typical, and the numbers were, in fact, a little higher, up to 97%, when certain direct costs were factored in. David Koses (City of Newton) asked about the Safe Routes to School project, noting that it is scheduled to be winding down but half of the budget remains. K. Quackenbush replied that the project, though originally scheduled to end with FFY 2017, had been modified to extend a few months into FFY 2018. D. Crowley asked about the Community Transportation Technical Assistance program. Mark Abbott (Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager, CTPS) said that the program is currently involved with a few small local projects in several municipalities. D. Crowley noted that the entire budget had not been spent and wondered whether there was much demand for the program. M. Abbott explained that CTPS is increasing outreach, but the program had been hampered by lack of staff during this fiscal year. R. Mannion noted that Jen Rowe (Public Participation Manager) has a new flyer about CTPS technical assistance, and M. Abbott explained that there also would be outreach to Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) municipal contacts. D. Koses asked what the product of the technical assistance to MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) would be; Annette Demchur (Director of Policy and Planning) replied that the product would be a memo, which she would provide to D. Koses.

3. Discussion on UPWP Budget Modifications

K. Quackenbush explained that at a recent UPWP Committee meeting, someone—likely D. Crowley—suggested that the MPO grant authority to staff to make budget modifications under a certain amount. K. Quackenbush explained that while in general presenting the third quarter budget amendments is not a problem, it would be helpful to have this authority in one specific scenario, if there was a need for modifications after the beginning of the fourth quarter. Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC]) asked what the dollar amount would be. R. Mannion suggested defining the limit as a percentage rather than a number. E. Bourassa and B. Pounds agreed that they think the federal regulations define a percentage, and agreed that the staff request is reasonable. K. Quackenbush committed to making a report on transfers to the MPO if staff is granted the authority to make transfers. B. Pounds said he would confirm what the federal regulations state. D. Crowley asked when staff would need to receive authority to make such transfers. K. Quackenbush said it would not be an issue until fall 2018. B. Pounds committed to researching the exact specifications regarding transfers from federal requirements.

4. Discussion of Corridor Selection for Recurring UPWP Studies

M. Abbott explained that for the past five to six years staff has been conducting “recurring” corridor studies as part of the UPWP work. Because of the UPWP development calendar, study corridor selection happens in the fall, resulting in missing the preferred fall data collection period. Staff proposes to initiate the selection process in the fiscal year preceding the fall season, so that data collection can occur in those key months.

There was discussion of the benefits of changing the study location selection period. D. Koses asked why staff didn’t like to collect data in the winter. There was some discussion about drawbacks of winter data collection, including lower traffic volumes; fragile equipment; effects of weather on travel habits; and other elements. There was discussion about how the budgeting for these studies would work to account for study location selection in one FFY and data collection and analysis in the following FFY. T. Bennett noted that a modified timeline would allow for more public outreach and engagement. Steve Olanoff (Three Rivers Interlocal Council [TRIC]/Town of Westwood) noted that changing things this year would likely require a small modification to the FFY 2018 UPWP. There was general agreement that changing the timing of location selection is a positive development, although some details remain to be worked out.

5. Update on UPWP Study Recommendations Tracking Database

At the suggestion of the Chair, members agreed to put this item off to the next meeting due to lack of available meeting time.

6. Member Items

There were none.

7. Next Meeting

None has been scheduled at this time.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded by another member. The motion carried unanimously.

Attendance

Organization	Name
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Bryan Pounds
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Tegin Teich Bennett
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Three Rivers Interlocal Council	Steve Olanoff

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director
Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning
Mark Abbott, Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager
Lourenço Dantas, Certification Activities Group Manager
Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager
Jen Rowe, Public Participation Process Manager
