

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

August 6, 2020 Meeting

10:00 AM–11:33 AM, Zoom Conference Call

David Mohler, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary, and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the work program for Silver Line Extension Alternatives Analysis
- Approve the work program for MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) Sunday Service Feasibility Study
- Endorse Amendment Two to the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Release Amendment Three to the FFY 2020 UPWP for a 30-day public review period
- Endorse Amendment Seven to the FFYs 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on pages 10–12.

2. Chair’s Report—David Mohler, MassDOT

There was none.

3. Executive Director’s Report—Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff

T. Teich stated that an advertisement for the vacant Deputy Executive Director position for the MPO staff would be posted before the August 20, 2020, board meeting.

T. Teich reported that a well-attended meeting of the MPO’s Pilot Transit Working Group was held on July 20, 2020. The meeting focused on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)’s short- and medium-term COVID-19 policies. She added that a board member focus group was held on July 27, 2020. The meeting

focused on TIP project selection criteria and point allocation. She stated that there will be a presentation of the results of this focus group and broader public outreach at the MPO meeting on August 20, 2020. She noted that a public survey has been released for broader input on the TIP criteria. The survey will be available until August 24, 2020. MPO staff are partnering with Union Capital Boston (UCB) on the survey. UCB is a community engagement organization with a large membership and the ability to broadcast efforts through a mobile application. The survey is paired with a TIP Criteria Update Guidebook.

4. Public Comments

There were none.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council held a bonus meeting in July. The meeting featured Casey-Marie Claude, MPO staff, who discussed the Pedestrian Report Card Assessment Interactive database. The presentation was recorded and is available on YouTube. The Advisory Council will hold a casual meet-and-greet for members on August 12, 2020.

7. Action Item: Work Scope, Silver Line Extension Alternatives Analysis—Bruce Kaplan, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. [Work Program: Silver Line Extension Alternatives Analysis](#)

B. Kaplan presented a work program to support MassDOT's Silver Line Extension Alternatives Analysis project. This project builds on the work of the Lower Mystic Working Group (2016–2018) and the Everett Transit Action Plan (2015–2017). MPO staff will help MassDOT examine six possible service plans for the extension of the SL3 from Chelsea towards North Station. All of the alternatives will include service to Everett. B. Kaplan stated that MPO staff will look at various alignments, possibly including service to Kendall Square or Lechmere. MPO staff will measure the impacts on transit ridership, roadway traffic, emissions, and environmental justice. The project is projected to take one year and cost \$115,000.

Discussion

Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) expressed support for this project. J. Monty stated that Everett receives monthly proposals for large-scale housing development, and there are 2,000 housing units now in the development pipeline. Everett has scaled back parking requirements to meet housing goals and developers have complied, but are often told by lenders that they cannot build because there is not enough parking per unit. J. Monty stated that Everett cannot meet its goals for reducing vehicle dependency without improved public transit.

Jim Fitzgerald (City of Boston) (Boston Planning & Development Agency) asked whether the project would analyze the six alignments individually or together, and what the land-use assumptions will be. B. Kaplan replied that the scenarios may be tested individually or together, and that the initial land-use assumptions will be those from the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Samantha Silverberg (MBTA) noted that the MBTA's Long-Range Plan, *Focus 40*, identified Everett as one of the Inner Core communities lacking rapid transit. This project is one of the MBTA's next priorities for expansion of the MBTA network. S. Silverberg added that bus-rapid transit projects fair quite well in the [United States Department of Transportation \(USDOT\) BUILD program, formerly known as TIGER](#), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Capital Investment Grant Small Starts program. These programs could be sources of funding should these projects reach the construction stage.

L. Diggins asked why banks reject projects with limited parking space. J. Monty stated that banks want to be sure they can sell units and recoup the investment. Without mobility access, they do not see units as marketable.

Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee) (City of Somerville) expressed support for the project.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for the Silver Line Extension Alternatives Analysis was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: Work Scope, MWRTA Sunday Service Feasibility Study— Jonathan Belcher, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO calendar

1. [Work Program: MWRTA Sunday Service Feasibility Study](#)

J. Belcher stated that this work program is a \$75,000, 12-month effort funded by MWRTA. MPO staff will evaluate alternatives for potential Sunday service, as MWRTA has never operated Sunday service. MPO staff will have access to MWRTA's automatic passenger counter and passenger survey data. MPO staff will assist MWRTA in looking at possible route structures and timetables. The initial evaluation will use pre-COVID-19 ridership data. As the project progresses, additional data will become available and MPO staff can modify any initial recommendations.

Discussion

L. Diggins asked whether the MBTA has good elasticity data on the frequency of service. J. Belcher replied there are some assumptions that are used given that the frequency of service for MWRTA is generally 60–70 minute headways for both weekend and weekday service. J. Belcher stated that the National Transit Database has data on Sunday ridership from agencies across the country, so MPO staff can compare with other small systems in the northeast and Massachusetts.

Sheila Page (At-Large Town) (Town of Lexington) noted that there is currently no Sunday service through the Lexpress bus program, and that Lexington, Natick, Bedford, and Arlington have no Sunday service going towards the Burlington Mall.

Thatcher Kezer III (MetroWest Regional Collaborative) (City of Framingham) noted that there are over 1,000 new housing units planned for downtown Framingham, and a new Bay State Community College campus. These developments will bring a lot of riders looking for public transit to the area.

Vote

A motion to approve the work scope for MWRTA Sunday Service was made by the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham) (T. Kezer) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment Two—Sandy Johnston, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO calendar

1. [FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment Two](#)
2. [FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment Two Public Comment and Response](#)

S. Johnston stated that the MPO voted to release this amendment for a 30-day public review period at the meeting on June 25, 2020. The amendment removes a \$60,000 study entitled *Transit Mitigation for New Development Sites* from the UPWP, and inserts two \$30,000 studies—one on Vision Zero and one on trip generation rates—in its place.

The MPO has already seen the scopes for both new studies. At the UPWP meeting prior to the MPO board, the UPWP Committee voted to recommend Amendment Two for endorsement.

S. Johnston stated that MPO staff received one comment regarding this amendment. Marilyn Wellons from Cambridge asked MPO staff to research licensing for people using bikes as part of the Vision Zero study. M. Wellons received a reply from S. Johnston developed in collaboration with other staff. MPO staff committed to tackling these issues in the study and provided some background on the issue. MPO staff are proceeding from the understanding that other Vision Zero cities and the Vision Zero Network (in a recent statement) have acknowledged the limitations of punitive enforcement, and have prioritized educational and infrastructural strategies rather than regulatory or license-based strategies to achieve safety for all roadway users most effectively. This is particularly important in the context of the complicated history between enforcement and people of color.

Vote

A motion to endorse Amendment Two to the FFY 2020 UPWP was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

10. Action Item: FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment Three—Sandy Johnston, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO calendar

[UPWP Amendment Three Revisions](#)

S. Johnston presented Amendment Three to the FFY 2020 UPWP for the MPO's review. He stated that MPO staff have traditionally presented a number of reallocations between task lines within the UPWP budget to the MPO at or near the beginning of the fourth quarter of a given fiscal year. Per Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance issued earlier this year, any change of 10 percent or more to a UPWP budget line must now be submitted as a formal amendment. Amendment Three moves \$137,500 between budget items within the FFY 2020 UPWP, but is overall net neutral. At the meeting prior to the MPO board, the UPWP Committee voted to recommend that the board release it for public review. The public review period commences August 7, 2020, with endorsement expected at the September 17, 2020, MPO meeting.

Vote

A motion to release Amendment Three to the FFY 2020 UPWP for a 30-day public review period was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

11. Action Item: FFYs 2020-24 TIP Amendment Seven—*Matt Genova, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO calendar

1. [FFYs 2020-24 TIP Amendment Seven Simplified](#)

M. Genova presented Amendment Seven to the FFYs 2020–24 TIP. Amendment Seven includes one project: the awarding of a Mobility for All grant from the FTA to MWRTA. This grant will support MWRTA in exploring a new demand-response accessibility model. This service will expand access to transportation for seniors and people with disabilities by supporting strategic partnerships with mobility agencies. The FTA Mobility for All grant is for \$300,000, with \$75,000 in matching funds from the state. The project is proposed to be amended into FFY 2021. The MPO released Amendment Seven for a 21-day public review period on July 16, 2020. The comment period ended on August 5, 2020, and yielded no comments.

Vote

A motion to endorse Amendment Seven to the FFYs 2020–24 TIP was made by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

12. Discussion: Successful Shuttles—Bradley Putnam, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO calendar

1. [Operating a Successful Community Shuttle Program: A Guidebook](#)

B. Putnam presented a guidebook to operating a successful shuttle program in the Boston region. MPO staff conducted this work in response to feedback from stakeholders who wanted information on how to develop and operate a successful community shuttle program, including both first- and last-mile connections and workforce transportation solutions. MPO staff defined community shuttles as services that have fixed or flexible routes but are not deemed fully demand responsive. Community shuttles are open to the public but may prioritize specific populations, such as seniors or people with disabilities. The shuttles provide local circulation in municipalities with otherwise infrequent or limited fixed-route bus or rail transit service, or first- and last-mile connections to existing fixed-route bus or rail service, and may serve various trip purposes, including commuting, shopping, or traveling to a medical

appointment. Staff interviewed municipal shuttle providers in Bedford, Brookline, Burlington, Lexington, and Scituate, and the Charles River, North Shore, 128 Business Council, and CrossTown Connect Transportation Management Associations. Staff also interviewed the staff of the Mission Hill Link service, MassMobility, and the MassDOT Rail and Transit Division. The guidebook discusses the major themes of successful shuttle services in the region including goal development, service design, performance measurement, funding, branding and marketing, and coordination.

13. Discussion: TIP Project Selection Criteria—Initial Proposed Economic Vitality Criteria Revisions—Matt Genova, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO calendar

1. [TIP Criteria Revision: Economic Vitality](#)
2. [TIP Criteria Guidebook](#)

M. Genova began the discussion of the revisions to the TIP Economic Vitality criteria by discussing the objectives outlined in the MPO's LRTP, *Destination 2040*, for this goal area. The objectives of the Economic Vitality goal area are to

- respond to the mobility needs of the workforce population;
- minimize the burden of housing and transportation costs for residents in the region;
- prioritize transportation investments that serve residential, commercial, and logistics targeted development sites and "Priority Places" identified in MBTA's *Focus 40* plan; and
- prioritize transportation investments that support development consistent with the compact growth strategies of the regional transportation plan.

M. Genova then presented feedback on this goal area from MPO members and other key stakeholders, which included several themes. MPO members felt that economic vitality describes a transportation system that allows everyone to participate fully in the economy, provides access to affordable housing, and helps municipalities build vibrant tax bases. The Advisory Council stressed the intersection of economic vitality with congestion, quality of life, and affordable housing. Transportation for America recommended that the MPO simplify and focus the criteria, and explore a more robust measure of accessibility to jobs and services. M. Genova noted that although MPO staff plan to continue advancing work to explore destination access tools in the coming months, these tools would not be implemented through the ongoing criteria revision process due to current limitations in accessing this software.

M. Genova then summarized the updates to the Economic Vitality criteria, which include a new criterion that measures increased access to affordable housing opportunities,

updated criteria that measure the extent to which projects serve targeted development sites, support compact growth, and leverage other non-TIP investments, and the removal of the redundant criterion, “Provides multimodal access to an activity center.”

M. Genova discussed the updates to the “Targeted Development Site” criterion, which clarify how points are awarded for projects that create new bicycle and pedestrian access. Also proposed are updates to the geographic locations eligible for points, including adding MBTA Priority Places and Federal Opportunity Zones. Consideration of regionally significant priority development areas were removed, as these are no longer an active policy initiative.

M. Genova then outlined updates to the “Provides for Development Consistent with MAPC’s regional plan” criterion, which include removing points for certain types of zoning as the previous criterion already awards points for serving areas where future development will happen. MPO staff proposed to remove the points for serving an area with a Main street(s) organization or business improvement district. Overall, these changes promote a more focused and simplified criterion that centers around connecting people with existing densities of jobs, housing, and services.

Updates to the “Leverages Other Investments” criterion allow projects to score bonus points if project proponents conduct robust community engagement on a project prior to seeking funding through the TIP. This could involve a pilot project or other dedicated community engagement efforts. M. Genova noted that the intention of this addition is to mitigate cost changes after a project is programmed, as project proponents should have a better sense of community desires before seeking TIP funds.

M. Genova stated that, unlike the other goal areas, Economic Vitality does not look at project design or the immediate impacts of the project on the transportation system. Using the equity overlay approach proposed for other goal areas does not make sense because the goal is to reward projects for connecting equity populations with jobs and services, not reward projects in places where equity populations already live adjacent to jobs and services. MPO staff propose an Economic Vitality-specific equity criterion that evaluates transportation improvements near affordable housing. This would be done by comparing the percent of housing units within the project area that are eligible for inclusion in a municipality’s Subsidized Housing Inventory with the share of 40B-eligible housing in the region. The higher the share of affordable housing in the project area, the more points it would get.

At the MPO meeting on August 20, 2020, M. Genova will lead a discussion about the allocation of points across goal areas and project types. In September, staff will

continue to refine the scoring system and show test scoring examples. MPO staff have launched a second round of public outreach including focus groups and a survey. MPO staff will present the results of this outreach in September. The goal is to present a final draft of the new criteria by the start of the new FFY in October.

Discussion

L. Diggins noted that often there is push back from existing residents when new transit is added due to the fear of displacement. L. Diggins asked whether simplifying the criteria could be further addressed. M. Genova stated that MPO staff worked with Transportation for America on a year-long technical assistance project through the State Smart Transit Initiative. Transportation for America suggested that MPO staff simplify the criteria by focusing on the key objectives in each goal area. M. Genova stated that this was done where possible, but staff also wanted to appropriately measure aspects of projects that were not captured before. He noted that MPO staff will continue fine tuning the initial criteria proposals before getting to the finished product.

T. Bent asked whether staff have considered allocating additional points for projects that receive mitigation funds from developers. M. Genova stated that this would be considered under the “Leveraging Other Investments” criterion. If the project receives grant funds or municipal support to offset TIP costs, this would also be considered.

14. Members’ Items

Ken Miller (FHWA) stated that FHWA has forwarded the state’s request for an \$85 million redistribution to headquarters and expects to receive a response by the end of August. D. Mohler clarified that K. Miller refers to the process by which, when states cannot spend all of the federal highway funding, these funds are redistributed among states that could spend more funding via an application process. D. Mohler stated that MassDOT generally assumes at the beginning of a TIP cycle that the Commonwealth will recapture at least \$50 million. That \$50 million is currently programmed in the TIP. If the state does not receive this funding, projects would have to be removed from the TIP. If the state is successful up to \$85 million, projects would have to be added to the TIP to use that funding.

15. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by At-Large Town (Town of Lexington) (Sheila Page) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members

Representatives and Alternates

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| At-Large City (City of Everett) | Jay Monty |
| At-Large City (City of Newton) | David Koses |
| At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) | Daniel Amstutz |
| At-Large Town (Town of Lexington) | Sheila Page |
| City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency) | Jim Fitzgerald |
| City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department) | Tom Kadzis |
| Federal Highway Administration | Ken Miller |
| Federal Transit Administration | |
| Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) | Tom Bent |
| Massachusetts Department of Transportation | David Mohler |
| MassDOT Highway Division | John Bechard |
| | John Romano |
| Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) | Samantha Silverberg |
| Massachusetts Port Authority | |
| MBTA Advisory Board | |
| Metropolitan Area Planning Council | Eric Bourassa |
| MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham) | Thatcher Kezer III |
| Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton) | |
| North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly) | Darlene Wynne |
| North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) | Tina Cassidy |
| Regional Transportation Advisory Council | Lenard Diggins |
| South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland) | Jennifer Constable |
| South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) | |
| Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce) | Tom O'Rourke |

| Other Attendees | Affiliation |
|------------------------|---|
| Ben Muller | MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) |
| Aileen O'Rourke | Northeast Transit Planning and Management Corporation |
| Andrew Clark | Greater Portland Council of Governments |
| Bryan Pounds | MassDOT OTP |
| Constance Raphael | MassDOT Highway Division District 4 |
| Doug Johnson | MassDOT OTP |
| Elizabeth Torres | |
| Emily VanDewoestine | MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) |
| Jennifer Gelinis | Town of Burlington |
| Joy Glynn | MWRTA |
| Maddie McGlinchey | |
| Richard Merson | Town of Needham |
| Steve Olanoff | Three Rivers Interlocal Council Alternate |
| Tom Mikus | Rockport Green Community Task Force |
| Bill Conroy | Boston Transportation Department |
| Scott Zadakis | Advisory Council/TransAction Associates |

**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning
Staff**

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Mark Abbott
Matt Archer
Jonathan Belcher
Paul Christner
Jonathan Church
Annette Demchur
Róisín Foley
Hiral Gandhi
Matt Genova
Betsy Harvey
Sandy Johnston
Bruce Kaplan
Anne McGahan
Marty Milkovits
Ariel Patterson
Scott Peterson
Bradley Putnam
Barbara Rutman
Michelle Scott
Kate White

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Title VI Specialist
Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116
civilrights@ctps.org
857.702.3700 (voice)