



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

October 16, 2019, Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM–4:35 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 1,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

AnaCristina Fragoso, Vice Chair, representing the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES).

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

AnaCristina Fragoso called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. For attendance list, see page 5.

2. Chair's Report—A. *Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)*

A. Fragoso stated that revised project selection criteria for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are under development.

3. Review of Critical Urban Freight Corridors: Crossing Mystic River—*Bill Kuttner, Transportation Planner, MPO staff*

B. Kuttner's technical memorandum, referenced during his presentation, is available on the [MPO website](#).

B. Kuttner stated that the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN) was established to help prioritize funding toward transportation infrastructure deemed important to freight movement. The NHFN included the interstate highway system and some locally designated roadways connecting with intermodal terminals. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act contained a provision to expand the NHFN. States were asked to designate additional sections of roadway as Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFCs) or Critical Rural Freight Corridors.

MPO staff previously conducted two studies of truck freight movement: the first study in the Everett-Chelsea industrial area, and the second in the South Boston Waterfront. The studied areas were ultimately designated as CUFCs. The *Review of Critical Urban Freight Corridors: Crossing Mystic River* continues the process of studying CUFC sections.

The study corridor extends from Route 99 in the midpoint of the Mystic River to City Square in Charlestown (a map of the study corridor is available on the [MPO website](#)). The corridor connects to several industrial sites in the study area, including Boston Autoport, Lafarge Cement, Boston Sand & Gravel, and the Bunker Hill Industrial Park.

The corridor is considered critical to freight movement because it provides four types of connectivity:

- Regional connectivity: The study corridor is the most direct route to connect with I-93 either to or from Sullivan Square or City Square.
- Circumferential connectivity: The corridor is the most appropriate route for trucks traveling between locations north of the Mystic River, within the study area, or west of the study area in Somerville and Cambridge.
- Radial connectivity: The corridor may be more advantageous than I-93 for trucks travelling from Everett, Malden, Medford, and Somerville to the northern part of downtown Boston.
- Regulatory connectivity: Trucks carrying hazardous cargoes are prohibited from using the harbor tunnels or the Tobin Bridge. Although the study corridor is not the only alternative for trucks with hazardous cargo placards, it is frequently the most optimal.

B. Kuttner elaborated on regulatory connectivity. On a typical weekday, 242 placarded vehicles cross the Mystic River, accounting for approximately 10 percent of all truck traffic. Of the 242 placarded vehicles, 83 percent turn at Main Street and Maffa Way, which collect traffic to and from I-93.

Between the hours of 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM, placarded vehicles are permitted to use the Charlestown Bridge only if their primary destinations are in the City of Boston. There are no restrictions between 8:00 PM and 6:00 AM. On a typical weekday, 116 placarded vehicles cross the Charlestown Bridge. Of these trucks, approximately 57 percent are semi-trailers used to carry fuel to service stations. Approximately 75 percent of all placarded vehicles use the Charlestown Bridge during the unrestricted evening time window.

Efforts are underway to redesign key parts of the study corridor, including Sullivan Square and the Charlestown Bridge. The roadway geometry will need to accommodate large and oversized vehicles. B. Kuttner emphasized that CUFCs should be the preferred routes for truck drivers, stating that good CUFCs are useful to the greatest number of origin/destination combinations and truck types.

Discussion

Bob McGaw asked if the study corridor has reached or is approaching maximum capacity. B. Kuttner stated that although the morning and evening peak periods see heavy traffic, the memo recommends maintaining the current capacity of the corridor. He noted that trucks frequently begin their routes before the morning peak period and have less roadway competition in the mid-day period, during which truck traffic peaks.

A. Fragoso and Lenard Diggins requested clarification on the methodology for counting truck movements. B. Kuttner stated that counts were conducted from April 2019 through June 2019. Because the peak period for truck traffic does not occur during the “standard” morning or evening peak periods, counts for all times of the day were required. For some periods, total vehicle numbers were extrapolated from a partial count of the period. As an example, B. Kuttner stated that the vehicle numbers for a 24-hour period at the Charlestown Bridge were determined from counts conducted across eight days and lasting a combined total of 13 hours.

John McQueen asked if the corridor is designed to account for degradation caused by heavy vehicles. B. Kuttner stated that all roadways need a replacement cycle, and the study corridor may need a more frequent replacement cycle. The National Highway Freight Program establishes funds that can be applied to roadway resurfacing. He added that Beacham Street in Everett, which was examined in the MPO’s first CUFC study, will be repaved, though he is unsure if it will undergo full-depth reconstruction.

Schuyler Larrabee asked if the study accounted for the effect of gross vehicle weight on roadway degradation. B. Kuttner stated that the weight of trucks is less impactful than the total number of trucks on the roadway.

Andrew Reker asked about the implications of the study on intersection and roadway design. He asked if 11-foot lanes would be sufficient for trucks, or if recommend designs would be more similar interstate highways. B. Kuttner stated that given the size of the vehicles and the cross-section of the study corridor, he does not recommend 11-foot lanes. The corridor should be considered a desirable route for truck drivers, and 11-foot lanes would provide little comfort for truck drivers. He added that 12-foot lanes should be considered the minimum lane width to accommodate large vehicles.

Franny Osman asked about seasonal variations in truck movements. B. Kuttner stated that there is not a significant variation in seasonal truck movements. Although the volumes of some commercial vehicles, such as heating repair trucks, have seasonal variance, freight truck volumes are consistent throughout the year. He added that 45 percent of truck traffic in the study area is comprised of “working trucks,” which include utility vehicles and box trucks.

J. McQueen asked about the causes of congestion in the corridor. B. Kuttner expressed that trucks are not a major source of congestion, adding that cars make up the majority of regional traffic.

L. Diggins asked what actions the MPO can take to improve freight throughput. B. Kuttner stated that during project evaluations for the TIP and Long-Range Transportation Plan, MPO staff note the percent of truck traffic in each project location. If a candidate project is determined to have a potential benefit for truck traffic, it receives additional points during scoring. He added that if a project area has a high percentage of truck traffic, any improvements to the roadway will improve freight movement.

4. Advisory Council Election—*Matt Archer, Advisory Council Coordinator, MPO Staff*

M. Archer explained the voting procedures for the election. Three Advisory Council members were unable to attend the October meeting. As such, three absentee ballots were allowed. These ballots, along with the ballots cast by members present at the election, will be tallied by Anne McGahan and Kate White, MPO staff.

The possibility of candidates calling members of the Advisory Council to campaign was raised at the September 2019 Advisory Council meeting. M. Archer stated that this was ultimately not allowed due to privacy concerns regarding the sharing of personal phone numbers, as well as potentially creating a barrier to entry for future candidates.

M. Archer introduced the nominees. S. Larrabee and L. Diggins ran for the Chair position, and Scott Zadakis ran for the Vice Chair position. Candidate statements are available on the [MPO website](#).

Following the vote, M. Archer announced that with a vote of ten to six, L. Diggins will be the new Chair of the Advisory Council. S. Zadakis will be the new Vice Chair.

5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

Steve Olanoff encouraged members use “Advisory Council” instead of “RTAC” in public settings.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by S. McQueen and seconded by L. Diggins. The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities

Acton
Belmont
Cambridge
Millis
Needham
Weymouth

Representatives and Alternates

Franny Osman
Robert McGaw
Andrew Reker
Ed Chisholm
Rhain Hoyland
Owen MacDonald

Citizen Advocacy Groups

Boston Society of Architects
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)
Crosstown Connect
MassBike
MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (ROC)
MoveMassachusetts
National Corridors Initiative
WalkBoston

Attendees

Schuyler Larrabee
AnaCristina Fragoso
Scott Zadakis
Chris Porter
Lenard Diggins
Jon Seward
John Businger
John McQueen

Agencies (Non-Voting)

MassDOT Highway Division

Attendees

Laurie Steans

Other Attendees

Steve Olanoff

Affiliation

TRIC Subregion

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Archer

Bill Kuttner

Kate White

Anne McGahan

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