

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Memorandum for the Record**

### **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

#### **August 19, 2021, Meeting**

10:00 AM–11:15 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

David Mohler, Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

#### **Decisions**

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

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of July 1, 2021
- Endorse the federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Release the MPO Public Outreach Plan (POP) for a 45-day public review period

#### **Meeting Agenda**

##### **1. Introductions**

See attendance on pages 7–9.

##### **2. Chair’s Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT***

There was none.

##### **3. Executive Director’s Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)***

T. Teich announced two staffing changes: Barbara Rutman, CTPS Office Manager, has retired and Kate White, Public Outreach Coordinator, would be leaving. T. Teich stated that these positions will be recruited for in the coming weeks. T. Teich also announced the success of the recent MetroWest Regional Collaborative’s Trail Summit event held on August 12, 2021.

##### **4. Public Comments**

There were none.

## **5. Committee Chairs' Reports**

Derek Shooster (MassDOT, Chair, UPWP Committee) stated that the UPWP Committee voted to recommend the MPO board vote to endorse the draft FFY 2022 UPWP. The committee met immediately prior to the MPO board meeting.

Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC]), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Cost Ad Hoc Committee Chair, stated that there would be a committee meeting after the MPO meeting.

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

L. Diggins said that the August meeting was cancelled. The Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council) will next meet on Wednesday, September 8, 2021.

## **7. Action Item: Approval of July 1, 2021, MPO Meeting Minutes—*Kate White, MPO Staff***

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 1, 2021, was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (Daniel Amstutz). The motion carried.

## **8. Action Item: FFY 2022 UPWP—*Sandy Johnston, MPO Staff*** ***Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar***

### **1. [Draft FFY 2022 UPWP](#)**

S. Johnston said that this year's UPWP programs total approximately \$5.5 million in federal funding to CTPS and MAPC, and approximately \$1.6 million for contract work. S. Johnston said that the FFY 2022 UPWP has the same organizational pattern as last year's document and noted two changes: 1) a new "MPO Resiliency Program" task listed in the Certification Requirements section, and 2) Appendix A now contains only the federally required elements (federally funded studies and those of "regional significance"). S. Johnston stated that four public comments were received on the FFY 2022 UPWP. S. Johnston requested that the MPO vote to endorse the FFY 2022 UPWP after recommendation from the UPWP Committee.

### ***Vote***

A motion to endorse the FFY 2022 UPWP was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

## **9. Formats of Future MPO Meetings—David Mohler, Chair, and Tegin Teich, CTPS Executive Director**

D. Mohler began the discussion by stating that the Commonwealth has extended its virtual meeting guidelines until April 2022. D. Mohler suggested that it would be best for the MPO to maintain virtual meetings until April 2022 as several factors are unknown. These factors include room capacities within the State Transportation Building under current public health guidelines and that setting up “hybrid” (combined in-person and virtual) meetings is challenging due to unknowns in meeting equipment and technology within the conference rooms. D. Mohler then opened the discussion to the MPO members asking them when they would like to revisit a discussion about MPO meeting format when the guidelines expire in April 2022.

### ***Discussion***

Brian Kane (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority [MBTA] Advisory Board) stated that there is an existing policy that can be adopted to continue to meet virtually and allow for remote participation as standard operating procedure.

D. Amstutz pointed out that the Town of Arlington instituted a mask mandate and advised that the MPO should be cautious as to how it proceeds. D. Amstutz asked, if the MPO were to meet in person, would there be a mask requirement at the State Transportation Building? He suggested the MPO continue doing remote meetings due to existing uncertainties.

L. Diggins is supportive of remote meetings and suggested hosting an in-person meeting/event annually. L. Diggins also pointed out the need to be aware of people who cannot participate virtually and to find a way to include persons who do not have internet access.

Tina Cassidy (North Suburban Planning Council [City of Woburn]) supports keeping MPO meetings virtual as traveling to Downtown Boston is time consuming. Also, T. Cassidy is concerned about the potential burden of running hybrid meetings, which are essentially two meetings at the same time.

Bill Conroy (City of Boston [Boston Transportation Department]) is in favor of a hybrid format at some point in time, stating that he had a positive experience with it recently.

Thatcher Kezer III (MetroWest Regional Collaborative [City of Framingham]) supports the hybrid meeting model. The City of Framingham has set up a conference room for this purpose. T. Kezer stated that it is all about having advanced technology to support it.

Jay Monty (At-Large City [City of Everett]) would like to work toward in-person meetings in some form and suggested alternating between in-person and online meetings, as he has experienced difficulties with hybrid meetings.

Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee [City of Somerville]) would also like to meet in person but would support an alternating in-person/virtual format. He is open to hybrid meetings if technology can support them.

D. Amstutz said if the board is meeting in person, everyone needs to wear a mask regardless of vaccination status. D. Amstutz also stated that his experience with hybrid meetings requires a lot of staff time so the MPO should be mindful of that.

T. Teich said the MPO should think about this in two phases: 1) how to proceed now and, 2) how to proceed when the extension ends. T. Teich wants to continue virtual meetings; however, if the board wants to go hybrid in the second phase, a future discussion is requested.

D. Mohler said that based on all comments received, the MPO should continue to meet virtually through the end of the calendar year. In the meantime, D. Mohler asked T. Teich to have staff prepare a plan for future hybrid meetings and to discuss this with the MPO in January.

### **10. Action Item: MPO POP—*Kate White, MPO Staff***

#### **Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar**

1. [Draft Public Outreach Plan](#)
2. [Draft Public Outreach Plan Guidebook](#)

K. White introduced the MPO's updated POP, which is the strategy document to engage the public in the regional transportation planning process. MPOs are required to create public participation plans that provide structure to public engagement. The program strives to ensure that all members of the public are given the opportunity to participate, including people that have been historically excluded by the transportation system and have lacked access to the decision-making process. The POP covers all outreach activities from MPO meetings to in-person and online forums, digital communications, and pop-up outreach events.

As part of the 2019 Federal Certification Review, the MPO committed to updating its previous Public Participation Plan. As part of this update, staff wanted the new plan to reflect what was designed in virtual opportunities through MPO meetings, online forums, and outreach activities. The draft plan also describes the quantitative and qualitative ways to measure the effectiveness of public outreach. Starting in FFY 2022, MPO staff

will produce a memorandum at the end of each FFY that will describe items like the number of people reached, comments in evaluation surveys, and demographic information of people reached in online surveys and outreach events.

The new plan is paired with a POP Guidebook, which provides information on how to engage in MPO activities. The guidebook gives an overview of MPOs, the purpose, how to engage with an MPO, the MPO's functions and outreach principles, and a snapshot of the MPO's history. Just like all other MPO outreach materials, this guidebook is available in the seven most spoken languages in the region: English, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese.

MPO staff is also developing an outreach event to provide the space to ask questions, provide feedback, and learn how to engage and connect with staff. Details about this event are in development and will be broadcasted on our email list and social media in the coming weeks. Upon the MPO's vote to release the draft document today, there will be a 45-day public review and comment period. Comments may be provided by emailing [publicinfo@ctps.org](mailto:publicinfo@ctps.org) or through the MPO's feedback form.

### ***Discussion***

D. Amstutz commented that the guidebook is visually appealing, however the "Ways to Be Involved" section could be flushed out to explain how staff works with member municipalities. D. Amstutz also suggested mentioning that there is a public engagement process that leads to the furthering of project implementation. D. Amstutz also suggested adding a "give us a call" option to the POP, encouraging member municipalities to reach out to staff.

L. Diggins commented that he is looking forward to reading the year-end report on outreach and commented on the visual appeal of the circular chart on page 27. L. Diggins also requested that staff bring the Long-Range Transportation Plan public engagement process to the Advisory Council before bringing it to the MPO. Finally, L. Diggins asked for the rationale for the order of the sequence of items on page five of the guidebook and expressed appreciation for the staff's work.

Ken Miller pointed out a correction on page 11 regarding ex-officio members, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). K. Miller also pointed out that an overreliance on surveys is not always great for eliciting detailed information and may lead to bias. He suggested that when asking for demographic information, staff should add questions on how people travel to allow staff to be aware of who is responding to surveys and if their preferred mode of travel might be influencing their survey responses. K. Miller complimented the MPO's strategy of

outreach to organizations and recommended including other, nontraditional organizations, such as chambers of commerce and businesses. K. Miller also asked about the relationship of the POP to Title VI information and the complaint process. Staff agreed with this and would make sure that the connection is clear.

***Vote***

A motion to release the POP for a 45-day comment period was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

**11. Members Items**

E. Bourassa noted that there are four MPO seats up for election this year, as follows:

- One city, currently held by the City of Newton
- One town, currently held by the Town of Arlington
- One municipality from the Three Rivers Interlocal Council subregion, currently held by the Town of Norwood
- One municipality from the North Suburban Planning Council subregion, currently held by the City of Woburn

**12. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane). The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Heather Hamilton
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Bill Conroy
Federal Highway Administration	Ken Miller
Federal Transit Administration	Leah Sirmin
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
	John Bechard
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Jillian Linnell
Massachusetts Port Authority	
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Thatcher Kezer III
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Austin
	Cyganiwicz
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 (TRIC) (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Aleida Leza	Belmont resident
JR Frey	Town of Hingham
Amira Patterson	MBTA Advisory Board
Benjamin N.W. Muller	MassDOT
Eric Johnson	City of Framingham
C Senior	MassDOT
Judy Shanley	Easter Seals
Derek Krevat	MassDOT
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Gus Norrbom	MassDOT
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Jon Seward	
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Mike Garrity	MassDOT
Michaela Boneva	
Michelle Ho	MassDOT
Michael O'Keefe	
Steven Olanoff	TRIC Alternate
Jeremy Thompson	495/MetroWest Partnership

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Mark Abbott

Jonathan Church

Annette Demchur

Matt Genova

Betsy Harvey

Sandy Johnston

Marty Milkovits

Rebecca Morgan

Ariel Patterson

Gina Perille

Michelle Scott

Gina Weaver

Kate White

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**Title VI Specialist**

Boston Region MPO  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116  
[civilrights@ctps.org](mailto:civilrights@ctps.org)

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857.702.3702 (voice)

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