

Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting Summary

May 12, 2022, Meeting

9:00 AM-10:00 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Derek Krevat, 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's (MPO) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the summary of the April 28, 2022, committee meeting

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. [Draft meeting summary of April 28, 2022](#)
2. [Draft Federal Fiscal Year 2023 Universe of Proposed Studies](#)

Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 7.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Meeting Summary of April 28, 2022 – *Approval of this summary*

A motion to approve the summary of the April 28, 2022, meeting was made by Thomas Bent (Inner Core Committee/City of Somerville) and seconded by Daniel Amstutz (Town of Arlington). The motion carried.

4. Discussion: Universe of Proposed Studies for Federal Fiscal Year 2023 – *Srilekha Murthy and Sandy Johnston, MPO Staff*

S. Murthy opened the discussion by introducing the proposed Transit Modernization Program. S. Johnston discussed the origin of this proposed program, which began as part of the Community Connections Program funded in past UPWPs and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). Previously, the MPO set aside some funding to develop the Transit Modernization Program. Currently, this proposal aims to set aside money for staff time to develop this program before its anticipated launch in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2023.

D. Krevat stated that due to the amount of administrative work that goes into developing a program of this scale, providing funding before the program is scheduled to launch to ensure its success would be an ideal path forward.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) stated his support for this project and further expressed its importance and relevance to the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the TIP.

D. Amstutz asked what the impetus was for creating this program. S. Johnston replied that this program came out of the LRTP and a need to continue investments in capital investment projects in public transportation. Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) further stated that after the last LRTP was released, staff received a great deal of public comment regarding public transportation infrastructure. Additionally, the TIP has historically focused on roadway projects and this proposal was developed to carve out funding for strategic capital investments in public transportation. The need for staff time on this program before it launches is highly necessary to assist the MBTA in its own work, he said.

L. Diggins responded by agreeing that the work is necessary, but that he would like to see a full-time staff position funded to work on this program. He added that the current budget is not high enough to reflect that possibility. S. Johnston replied that budgets are projected to increase overall in FFY 2023 and the funds for discrete studies are fungible. Whether this project becomes a discrete study or a line item in the LRTP is a topic for discussion, but funds can be moved around between projects. Additionally, some of the groundwork for this project has already been integrated into funding for the Community Connections program.

D. Krevat agreed that this program seemed like a good fit for the UPWP and more conversation would be needed to select projects.

Laura Gilmore (MBTA) offered herself as a resource to continue the conversation about this program from the perspective of the MBTA.

S. Murthy then moved to introduce Project TE-1, Analyzing the Environmental Justice Impacts of Congestion Pricing, and invited Mark Abbott to speak further on this topic. M. Abbott stated that this was a staff-submitted proposal that would focus on congestion pricing theories as they affect environmental justice communities.

D. Amstutz expressed that he was happy to see congestion pricing listed in the Universe for this fiscal year, as members have expressed concern over the need for such a study in past years.

D. Krevat noted that MassDOT does not support congestion pricing and instead has suggested managed lanes as a preferred policy alternative. D. Krevat requested that staff consider carefully whether to invest in a study on a hypothetical policy rather than a more pressing, current need.

E. Bourassa stated that while he understood MassDOT's position, there should still be a study done in the event that the MPO or Commonwealth decides to move this concept forward. He stated that before the conversation moves to a policy phase, there is still a lot left to learn about the level of pricing, impacts on low income and environmental justice communities, and the real impacts on traffic; so, while congestion pricing may take time to implement, the research phase of the policy should happen sooner rather than later.

T. Bent stated that there are a lot of factors still unknown about the real impact of congestion pricing, so perhaps more information is needed before policy decisions are made.

David Koses (City of Newton) raised the issue of alternative routes into Boston, as well as the cost for residents of Boston, Chelsea, and neighboring cities to travel through the Interstate 93 tunnels or over the Tobin Bridge.

L. Diggins commented that he would prefer to have this study conducted, and he advised the committee to strongly consider this project as a matter of credibility and principle. Perhaps, he suggested, this proposal may be modified to allow for another agency or entity to conduct the study, but it should be included in the Universe in this fiscal year.

S. Johnston replied that the committee does not have to make any decisions at this time, and staff can come back with more refined proposals and scopes later in the process.

Paul Christner (MPO Staff) then moved to discuss Project T-3, Opportunities for Bus Rapid Transit in the Boston Region. This proposal was submitted by staff and is a follow up to the ITDP project. This project will explore potential new bus rapid transit (BRT) corridors and examine impacts of BRT on environmental justice communities and economic development, among other considerations.

D. Amstutz asked how this project fits in with the MBTA's Bus Network Redesign project. P. Christner responded that this project would work in conjunction with the MBTA's existing work.

E. Bourassa asked if this project would evaluate existing bus priority corridors or examine potential new corridors. P. Christner responded that this project would mainly examine potential new ones and attempt to move beyond existing bus lanes to examining possibilities of separated rights-of-way for BRT. E. Bourassa responded stating that this project is not only interesting but also allows for staff to explore different technical and modeling skills. P. Christner replied that the use of Conveyal would be key in this project.

L. Diggins stated that he supports this project, but he would like to see a different entity pay for it.

L. Gilmore stated that if this study moves forward, she would like to ensure that it aligns with the Bus Network Redesign project. P. Christner agreed.

D. Krevat stated his support for this project, especially the use of Conveyal to examine critical services, destination types, and accessibility needs.

T. Bent emphasized the need to examine how people are getting to jobs and business districts, and where transportation access is needed.

S. Murthy then introduced the Funding Free Fares: Possibilities of Eliminating Fares with Value Capture project, and she invited P. Christner again to speak. P. Christner explained that this project aims to use the value capture methodology to assess the viability of eliminating fares on transit routes. This is a project that some regional transit authorities in the state have done as well. While this project is not taking a stance on free fares, it aims to understand alternative methods to capture potential lost revenue

from fares. MAPC has studied the concept of value capture for transportation, and this study would help build on this work. The estimated budget for this study is \$60,000.

D. Krevat asked what the purpose of the survey is. P. Christner stated that he will get back to D. Krevat offline.

D. Koses stated that this study is timely and appropriate for the entire region as the bus and transit network as a whole is facing a redesign in Boston, with elements such as cash free boardings and fare transformation playing a role as well. He would be interested to see whether this concept is being studied anywhere else and those agencies' experiences with value capture.

E. Bourassa stated that MAPC has been interested in this concept over the years, and one of the lessons they have learned through their studies is that cities and towns have already captured value from commercial, housing, and mixed-use development projects through tactics such as inclusionary zoning, among others. Studying value capture from the perspective of fare equity and transportation would be interesting, and MAPC generally supports this project.

D. Amstutz stated that as housing is placed near transit, the cost of those housing units generally become more expensive and more valuable. He wondered how affordability of housing would integrate into this study.

L. Diggins expressed his support for this study, noting that it has the potential to influence policy when questions of free fare are brought to legislators.

L. Gilmore stated that it would be helpful to have further conversations about this project and its tie ins to affordable housing and transit funding.

T. Bent stated that he would like to see more specificity in the scope, and also that this study would not be taking a position one way or another. P. Christner responded that this project would be more of a fact-finding endeavor.

Tom O'Rourke (Three Rivers Interlocal Council/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce) stated that this project description seems to imply that businesses located near public transit options would be subject to an additional tax so that users would not have to pay. P. Christner disagreed, stating that the project as it stands does not exactly say that, but is rather looking at different avenues for value capture.

L. Gilmore asked where staff are in the development process. S. Murthy replied that currently, staff are seeking the committee's input. The next step would be to integrate

this feedback into the proposed study ideas and circulate a survey to begin the process of ranking studies to be included in the final Universe.

5. Members Items

There were none.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on May 19, 2022, to continue the discussion of the Universe.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Advisory Council (Len Diggins) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville/Tom Bent). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Office of Transportation Planning)	Derek Krevat Benjamin Muller
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
Three Rivers Interlocal Council Alternate (Town of Westwood)	Steven Olanoff
City of Framingham (Metrowest Regional Collaborative)	
Southwest Advisory Planning Council (Town of Medway)	

Other Attendees Affiliation

Laura Gilmore MBTA

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning
Hiral Gandhi, Director of Operations and Finance
Marty Milkovits, Director of Modeling and Analytics
Mark Abbott, Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager
Paul Christner, Transit Analysis and Planning Group Manager
Jonathan Church, Certification Activities Group Manager
Sean Rourke, Communications and Outreach Group Manager
Srilekha Murthy, UPWP Manager
Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager
Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager
Silva Ayvazyan, Project Accountant

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