

Administration and Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

May 5, 2022, Meeting

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

Brian Kane, Administration and Finance (A&F) Committee Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 6.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Discussion: MPO Operations Plan—*Brian Kane, A&F Committee Chair*

Brian Kane introduced the March 23, 2022, Operations Plan memo, which described a framework for developing a Boston Region MPO Operations Plan. B. Kane highlighted points mentioned in the memo, such as the MPO board election process. B. Kane suggested the committee work to make the elections process more open and democratic. B. Kane suggested that a goal would be to get more communities involved in the elections process, so that communities are more aware that they are being represented.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) stated that understanding why municipalities are not engaged is important. Some of the reasons municipalities are not engaged could be the lack the time available and the constant rotation of roles.

Ken Miller (Federal Highway Administration) stated that the MPO had voted in the past year to change the MPO board election process. K. Miller was hopeful that people would be electing their own representatives, rather than having their regional body select their representative.

B. Kane stated that it would be important to discuss members' responsibilities and roles, the agenda-setting process, as well as the length and frequency of MPO meetings. Further, processes would have to be created for hiring an executive director, as well as for sufficiently funding technology resources, and conducting reviews of the MPO board on a regular basis.

Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC]) highlighted the issues with the current information process, such as bringing projects to the MPO board within good time, while giving MPO members enough time to make decisions. E. Bourassa suggested the committee discuss the information process from an operations standpoint to understand the amount of time MPO members need to digest and understand projects.

L. Diggins asked if the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would be built from the Operations Plan. B. Kane responded that the committee was not charged with reviewing the MOU, and the committee would focus on the Operations Plan.

E. Bourassa agreed with B. Kane about having a conversation about the Operations Plan first and further stated that MAPC is working with the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) on updating the fiduciary agreement.

B. Kane suggested that the committee discuss how CTPS was funded and resourced through its various funding sources to ensure that CTPS can support the MPO in the best way possible.

L. Diggins suggested the committee find a base-level budget of resources for CTPS and then work with CTPS to understand the budgeting wants and needs of the MPO.

B. Kane stated that CTPS should go through the process of documenting what MPO staff does and how it is serving MPO board members. B. Kane further stated that he was considering bring speakers from the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) and the State to help the MPO members better understand how formula funding is divvied out.

Dennis Giombetti (MetroWest Regional Collaborative) agreed with B. Kane about getting better knowledge on how the formula funds are distributed. D. Giombetti suggested that the MPO board explore other models of operation both inside and outside the state.

L. Diggins noted that the state fiscal year (SFY) 2022-26 Strategic Plan examined MPOs around the country, and guidance on formula funds may already exist in the Long-Range Transportation Plan. L. Diggins stated that the information B. Kane requested is already in available documents that could be compiled.

B. Kane asked for the MPO staff to compile the information if it was available and share it with the committee.

E. Bourassa asked about the process for discussing the Operations Plan. E. Bourassa also asked if there would be an agenda for discussing the various topics over several meetings and how the committee would direct the MPO staff to capture and create the draft operations plan document. B. Kane responded that the committee could create an outline for the meetings by reviewing the MOU; Title 23, section 450.300, of the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR § 450.300); and feedback from federal partners.

Tegin Teich (Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff) agreed with B. Kane about starting with an outline and then working on specifics. T. Teich reminded the committee about the outline that is laid out in the March 23, 2022, Operations Plan memo, and its ability to serve as a starting outline. T. Teich stated that a helpful next step would be to identify themes and times for meetings in the coming months, which would help the MPO staff work to bring the right resources to the board.

L. Diggins reiterated the importance of the federal requirements that guide the Operations Plan, but he also stressed the importance of the MPO's goals and the need to apply those goals to the Operations Plan.

B. Kane suggested the committee work to lay out what the MPO currently does and compare that to the requirements of the organization, as well as to the goals and the objectives of the organization.

K. Miller stated that a gap-analysis review was part of the federal Certification Review process, which is a reoccurring requirement of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). From the Certification Review, the FHWA identifies concerns that also reflect concerns held by other MPO members. The FHWA has recommended that the Boston Region MPO complete the Operations Plan, but this has yet to be accomplished.

T. Teich stated that in addition to the federal perspective on the Operations Plan, the MOU has also set out certain requirements and expectations to compare in gap-analysis research with other documents.

B. Kane asked E. Bourassa for an approach to discussing the Operations Plan. E. Bourassa answered that it was important to determine the outline of the discussion and suggested the MPO staff gather draft documents for the committee to react to.

L. Diggins pointed out the need to understand what resources MPO staff can give the committee and to further understand which committee members have certain aptitudes. L. Diggins stated he was concerned about staff resources, and he emphasized the need for the committee to set reasonable expectations and timelines.

B. Kane asked the MPO staff to document what the current MPO election process is and suggested setting the topics of future discussions based upon the findings of that document. T. Teich responded that this task could be accomplished in chunks if the staff was given topics and a timeframe.

B. Kane shifted the discussion to 23 CFR § 450.300, and he compared what the legislation empowers the MPO to do versus what the MPO currently does. B. Kane further stated that the MPO should acknowledge gaps in work and work to further understand if we are meeting the spirit of the legislation.

Jonathan Church (MPO staff) stated that it would be important to define topics and complete the work for the topics in stages.

K. Miller asked if working on the Operations Plan was in the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) or the FFY 2023 UPWP. J. Church answered that it was not in the FFY 2022 UPWP, but there could be a discussion about adding it to FFY 2023 UPWP.

K. Miller stated that there was no reason this work should not be done, and that it might make sense to include the Operations Plan as an identified activity in the UPWP.

B. Kane asked if the FFY 2022 UPWP should be amended to add the funds. K. Miller stated he did not have a strong opinion one way or the other. K. Miller also stated that it has been three years since the FWHA suggested an Operations Plan be created. K. Miller further noted that another Certification Review is upcoming, and the Operations Plan is an outstanding issue; the FWHA hopes that the Operations Plan moves forward.

T. Teich highlighted that the MPO is approaching the next Certification Review process. Besides setting aside funds for the Operations Plan, another factor involved in completing this project is the need to ramp up the capacity of the Certification Activities team.

L. Diggins stated he wanted to see the Operations Plan as part of the FFY 2023 UPWP Universe of Proposed Projects and did not think the Operations Plan would be outside the bounds of the Universe. L. Diggins also suggested the committee perform additional outreach for the Operations Plan process.

E. Bourassa asked if there would be an opportunity to meet in-person to discuss this topic. B. Kane responded affirmatively.

B. Kane asked the MPO staff how to integrate the Operations Planning into the UPWP and further asked for an in-person meeting in June in the 10 Park Plaza building.

B. Kane asked MPO staff to create materials on elections. B. Kane reiterated his support for bringing in a speaker to discuss formula funding.

T. Teich stated that she thought the work assigned was doable and that the MPO staff could share a cluster of documents in advance of the next meeting, as well as create resources on the election. T. Teich stated she could facilitate bringing in a speaker to discuss formula funding. T. Teich further stated that the ability to have an in-person forum may be limited by the lack of access to the meeting rooms.

B. Kane asked when the next MPO meeting was. J. Church responded that the next MPO meeting would be on May 26, 2022.

D. Giombetti asked for homework assignments. B. Kane stated that he would send out assignments at a later time.

4. Members' Items: Reports and notices by A&F members, including regional concerns and local community issues

There were none.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:00 AM.

Attendance

Members

MBTA Advisory Board
Regional Transportation Advisory Council
MassDOT
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)

Representatives and Alternates

Brian Kane
Lenard Diggins

Eric Bourassa
Dennis Giombetti

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Hiral Gandhi
Jonathan Church

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857.702.3702 (voice)

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