



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

September 14, 2022, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:15 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Rider Oversight Committee

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

L. Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 5.)

2. Federal Certification Review Public Meeting—*Leah Sirmin, Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and Cassandra Ostrander, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)*

L. Sirmin gave a short overview of the federal recertification process. The federal government is required to review and certify the transportation planning practices of metropolitan planning organizations in urbanized areas with a population of more than 200,000. FHWA and FTA jointly review the metropolitan transportation planning process at least once every four years to ensure compliance with federal requirements. The last certification review decision for the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was April 24, 2019.

L. Sirmin explained that this meeting was to give MPO board members and members of the public opportunities to provide input regarding the transportation planning and decision-making process administered by the Boston Region MPO. Comments received at this meeting, as well as those received by email or mail, will be taken into consideration and summarized in the final report. Comment submissions will close on Friday, October 14, 2022. A certification determination will be made approximately 90 days after this review.

C. Ostrander explained that the metropolitan transportation planning process is based on a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive process that informs transportation decisions, including how projects are selected and prioritized for implementation within a region. The metropolitan transportation planning process is important because it helps decide how federal dollars are allocated within the region. With limited funding, the MPO must prioritize regional needs and determine those projects that best meet performance goals and objectives and

have the most public benefit. The process lays the framework for the future transportation system.

C. Ostrander requested input from Advisory Council members and members of the public.

Discussion

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council, asked if the Federal partners would be conducting an on-site visit with MPO board members and MPO staff. C. Ostrander answered yes. Federal partners are meeting with the Boston Region MPO on September 28 and 29, 2022. Federal partners will be asking questions to MPO staff and board members. The Federal partners will further host another public meeting on October 6, 2022, to request additional public input. Federal partners will return to the MPO board to report their findings in the future.

AnaChristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, stated that she would like to see the MPO pushing to include additional sustainability and resiliency requirements to new projects funded through the MPO.

Franny Osman, Town of Acton, stated that as a person who has not been trained as a planner, it is hard to understand the full picture of funding available at the federal and state level. F. Osman noted that equity efforts had improved and the virtual meeting format has helped with meeting attendance by reducing the amount of time required to travel for MPO meetings. F. Osman highlighted Betsy Harvey's work on equity at the MPO and stated that B. Harvey has attended Advisory Council meetings to give presentations and have discussions about equity.

John McQueen, WalkBoston, stated that the Advisory Council has highlighted the need for metrics of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects after they are delivered to help the MPO and Advisory Council determine the success of funded projects. L. Sirmin asked J. McQueen to clarify if he was speaking to a project level or a programmatic level of need for capturing post-delivery project metrics. J. McQueen replied that post-delivery metrics are necessary at both levels.

David Montgomery, Town of Needham, stated that the MPO should be doing more to spur regional planning. D. Montgomery suggested that the MPO could incentivize regional planning by providing financial incentives for cooperation between municipalities. L. Diggins asked if having municipalities bring regional projects to the board would be a potential bottleneck or challenge to cooperation. D. Montgomery replied that financial incentives could provide needed incentives to cooperate on regional projects.

A. Fragoso stated her worries about private planning firms dominating regional planning projects due to their technical abilities and funding. A. Fragoso suggested that smaller

municipalities could be at risk of being shut out of the planning process due to limited resources.

F. Osman suggested the MPO could analyze the inequities of current projects and create checks to maintain equity of funding across the region.

L. Diggins suggested the MPO could help members and the public better understand the planning process, become more involved, find ways to create more opportunities for participation, and find ways to develop a larger pool of participants.

A. Fargoso suggested that it would be helpful for the Boston Region MPO to hold regional transportation meetings with other MPOs around the region.

L. Diggins suggested the MPO could work to allow more time for public feedback on the TIP, as well as publishing comments on the draft TIP to allow MPO board members to view public comments in advance of approval of the TIP. L. Diggins suggested reviewing the Federal review process and looking into performance metrics that the MPO is measured on.

A. Fargoso suggested that the MPO could promote intelligent design by integrating intelligent design metrics into project criteria.

F. Osman stated the importance of transportation planning and suggested that the MBTA and the Regional Transit Authorities of the MPO should be treated in the same manner to allow for more focus on low-density regions.

L. Diggins suggested that it would be helpful for the MPO to collaborate more directly with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council on other aspects of planning, such as housing planning.

J. McQueen suggested that the MPO look at its geography and consider an expansion of the region given the recent changes in population trends.

S. Olanoff stated that equity has always been a problem within transportation planning. S. Olanoff noted that environmental justice communities are represented by their municipalities, but there are no direct representatives from environmental justice communities on the MPO board.

A. Fargoso suggested having a yearly summit among MPOs in the region to coordinate projects.

L. Sirmin asked Advisory Council members what they see as the Advisory Council's role in the transportation planning process.

F. Osman stated that Advisory Council membership is highly variable and that membership is not clearly defined. F. Osman stated that the Advisory Council advises the MPO, but F.

Osman was unsure of where the Advisory Council fits into the larger picture of the MPO. F. Osman suggested that MPO staff and other groups provide effective education to the Advisory Council's membership through presentations and discussions.

D. Montgomery stated that the Advisory Council provides opportunities for members and the public to provide input on the MPO planning process. D. Montgomery stated that he was concerned with membership and lack of membership growth.

L. Diggins stated that according to the Memorandum of Understanding, the Advisory Council is responsible for outreach for the MPO. L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council should be involved in engagement activities.

3. Elections Process and Nomination Preview—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council is searching for a new Vice-chair. L. Diggins stated his intention to run for the position of Chair for an additional year.

Discussion

D. Montgomery stated that according to the Advisory Council bylaws, the elections for Chair and Vice-chair must be held in October and to allow for the start of their position in November.

L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council should acknowledge that the Advisory Council will not meet the requirements set out in the bylaws this year. L. Diggins requested that F. Osman and A. Fargo administer an elections committee to solicit nominations.

F. Osman requested Advisory Council members submit their nominations for the upcoming elections.

Vote

A motion to move the Advisory Council nominations into October and move the Advisory Council elections into November was made by the Town of Acton (Franny Osman) and seconded by WalkBoston (John McQueen). The motion passed.

4. Chair's Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

L. Diggins stated that at past meetings of the MPO Board, the Board has continued to work on the final draft of the Federal Fiscal Year 2023 Unified Planning Work Program, and that the board continued discussion on the Safe Streets for All grant application.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2022, meeting was made by the Town of Acton (Franny Osman) and seconded by WalkBoston (John McQueen). The minutes were approved.

6. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

Scott Zadakis, National Rural Transit Assistance Program, stated that he was stepping down as Vice-chair due to his recent relocation to Portland, Maine, and thanked Advisory Council members for their support during his term.

L. Diggins noted that the Advisory Council would hold future discussions surrounding the Route 9 Corridor study and how to advance projects that were highlighted in the study.

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers (AnaChristina Fragoso). The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Acton	Franny Osman
Hingham	JR Frey
Lexington	Sheila Page
Needham	David Montgomery
Weymouth	Owen MacDonald

Citizen Advocacy Groups	Attendees
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaChristina Fargoso
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Agencies (Non-Voting)	Attendees
Federal Transit Administration	Leah Sirmin
Federal Highway Administration	Cassandra Ostrander
MassDOT	Derek Krevat
MassDOT Highway Division	Benjamin Muller
	Joy Glynn
MWRTA	Tyler Terrasi
Old Colony Planning Council	Bill McNulty

Other Attendees

Affiliation

Fred Moseley

Steve Olanoff

Three Rivers Interlocal Council

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Stella Jordan

Annette Demchur

Sean Rourke

Sandy Johnston

Jonathan Church

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