

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Draft Memorandum for the Record**

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

#### **February 3, 2022, Meeting**

10:00 AM–12:03 PM, 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 calendar year (CY) 2022 Roadway Safety Targets for the Boston Region

#### **Meeting Agenda**

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

See attendance on page 10.

##### **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 introduced a new hire, Rosemary McCarron, who is a transportation planner and data analyst in the Transit Analysis and Planning group. T. Teich reviewed open positions at CTPS and positions with recently closed application periods.

T. Teich stated that at the recent Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) meeting there was a discussion about expected increases in planning and project construction funding for MPOs in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). These increases would not be final until Congress passed a new appropriations bill.

T. Teich provided updates on recent MPO staff outreach and upcoming events and opportunities for public comment.

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

Brad Rawson (Inner Core Committee) (City of Somerville) noted that the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) recently committed to a framework for eliminating roadway fatalities. B. Rawson encouraged MPO members, when considering the allocation of new federal aid, to work in a diligent and progressive fashion to eliminate fatal and severe crashes, in addition to repairing and maintaining aging infrastructure. B. Rawson noted that Somerville has had six roadway fatalities in the last three years and expressed emotion knowing the City had not done enough to implement physical traffic calming and establish best practices in projects. B. Rawson called on municipalities and state partners to implement physical traffic calming as a core part of the MPO's safety and equity agendas for the use of new funding.

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

There were none.

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

L. Diggins stated that Kate Fichter, Assistant Secretary and Chief of Climate and Decarbonization at MassDOT, would present at the Advisory Council meeting on February 9, 2022.

#### **7. Action Item: CY 2022 Roadway Safety Targets for the Boston Region—*Michelle Scott, MPO Staff***

*Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. [Technical Memorandum RE: Federally Required CY 2022 Roadway Safety Targets](#)

M. Scott presented proposed federally required roadway safety targets for the Boston region for CY 2022. These targets are for outcome-based measures that reflect fatalities and injuries from motor vehicle collisions on all public roads. The targets are based on five-year rolling annual averages and reflect one calendar year. MassDOT and the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) coordinate to set targets and report them to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

The MPO may support the Commonwealth's targets or choose to set its own. For the past four years, the MPO has voted to support MassDOT's targets. FHWA assesses whether states are making significant progress towards achieving their targets, and FHWA has determined that Massachusetts has achieved significant progress for its 2018 and 2019 targets. To develop the CY 2022 targets the Commonwealth considered

trends, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel behavior, and policies such as its overarching goal to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries. The CY 2022 targets are shown in the table below.

<b>Massachusetts CY 2022 Safety Performance Targets</b>		
Performance Measure	CY 2022 Target (2018–22 Average) *	MA Long-Term Target
Number of Fatalities	340.00	0.00
Fatality Rate (per 100M VMT)	0.56	0.00
Number of Serious Injuries	2504.00	0.00
Serious Injury Rate (per 100M VMT)	4.11	0.00
Number of Nonmotorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries	471.00	0.00

\* This target value is expressed as a five-year rolling annual average.

CY = Calendar Year. M = Million. MA = Massachusetts. MPO = Metropolitan Planning Organization. VMT = Vehicle-Miles Traveled.

Sources: Federal Highway Administration, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and Boston Region MPO Staff.

M. Scott reviewed recent trends and progress on previous targets, including a notable spike in the data for 2016. M. Scott noted that since the Commonwealth set its CY 2022 targets in spring and summer 2021, more information became available about safety outcomes for 2021. One noteworthy finding was that draft data for 2021 show a spike in fatalities. This was the case nationally, for the Commonwealth, and for the Boston region. Factors that have contributed to this spike at the national and Commonwealth level include increased rates of people speeding and decreased seatbelt use. Initiatives under way to improve these outcomes include the development of the Commonwealth's next Strategic Highway Safety Plan, increased funding for safety in the new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and a new National Roadway Safety Strategy. M. Scott stated that MPO staff recommend the MPO vote to endorse the Commonwealth's targets to satisfy federal requirements.

**Discussion**

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town) (Town of Arlington) asked whether there is a goal year associated with the Commonwealth's long-term target of zero serious injuries and fatalities. M. Scott stated that there is no goal year for the long-term target, but the Commonwealth has set interim targets, which are described in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

L. Diggins expressed appreciation for B. Rawson's earlier comments and asked M. Scott about the cause of the spike in 2016. M. Scott stated that she did not recall specific factors that would explain the 2016 spike; but she stated that there tend to be fewer fatalities in Massachusetts than in other parts of the country, so spikes are likely less prominent here.

L. Diggins asked about the definition of nonmotorized crashes. M. Scott stated that nonmotorized serious injuries and fatalities only refer to serious injuries and fatalities to people walking and biking where a motor vehicle is involved. It would not cover, for example, two bicyclists hitting one another or a car crashing into a building.

Ken Miller (FHWA) emphasized the dramatic increase in fatalities in 2021 and noted that the governor has refiled a primary seatbelt law. He added that Massachusetts has one of the lowest seatbelt usage rates in the country.

#### ***Vote***

A motion to approve the CY 2022 Roadway Safety Targets for the Boston Region was made by L. Diggins (Advisory Council) and seconded by Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council). The motion carried.

### **8. Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2023–27 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Financials and Project Scoring Process—*Matt Genova, MPO Staff***

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

1. [FFYs 2023-27 Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\) - Projects to Score for MPO Funding](#)
2. [Public Comments Received as of January 27, 2022](#)

M. Genova reviewed the development timeline, project evaluation process, recent public comments, and available funding for the FFYs 2023–27 TIP. M. Genova stated that he would provide a readiness update on all currently funded projects at the meeting on February 17, 2022, and evaluation scores for prospective new projects at the meeting on March 3, 2022. The MPO would spend March developing a new five-year funding plan to release for public comment in late April and endorse in late May.

M. Genova reported that MPO staff were in the process of evaluating 25 prospective projects for this TIP cycle, nine for the first time. Sixteen of these projects were evaluated last year but not funded due to cost constraints. The projects are distributed across the MPO's investment programs: 11 Community Connections, eight Complete Streets, and two projects each for Intersection Improvements, Bicycle Network and

Pedestrian Connections, and Major Infrastructure. These projects will primarily be considered for funding in the final year of the TIP, FFY 2027. However, due to the BIL, there will be new funding throughout each year of the new TIP.

M. Genova reviewed current TIP funding relative to the goals for funding distribution in the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan. In the FFYs 2022–26 TIP, the MPO was slightly under the goals for Complete Streets and Intersection Improvements and over for Bicycle and Pedestrian and Major Infrastructure projects. The MPO is on target for the Community Connections program. Because it is a relatively new investment program, there are only two years of funding in the current TIP for Transit Modernization. As that program continues to develop, the discrepancy between the goal and the actual funding level will continue to decrease. No Transit Modernization funds are yet allocated to specific projects. Roughly four percent of the MPO's funding remains unallocated, which partially accounts for the underfunding of other investment programs.

M. Genova stated that due to the BIL, the MPO would see approximately \$20 million in new funding in each fiscal year beginning in FFY 2023. With the closeout of Grant Anticipation Note (GAN) repayment for MassDOT's Accelerated Bridge Program in 2026, there is an overall increase in funding in FFY 2027. Combining the new BIL funds with the unallocated funds from the current TIP, there is approximately \$233.5 million in funding to be allocated this TIP cycle. The board will have to address any cost or schedule changes for projects currently funded in FFYs 2022–26 before allocating funds in future years.

M. Genova reviewed previous funding commitments that will impact the MPO's allocation of new funds. The MPO's practice has been to retain some funding in support of Community Connections and Transit Modernization to allocate to new projects in future TIP cycles. The board also has a commitment to the Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue in Boston (#606226), an LRTP project currently funded in FFYs 2023–26. At the end of TIP programming discussions last spring, it was anticipated that a fifth and final year of funding for this project would be allocated in FFY 2027.

M. Genova also noted the MPO's new cost increase policies, which require a 25 percent design submission for the funding of new projects in the TIP and that require project proponents to explain significant cost increases to the board at MPO meetings.

### ***Discussion***

Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) asked whether the total amount of funding requested by newly proposed projects was less than in previous years due to the new

requirement for 25 percent design submissions. M. Genova stated that the dollar amount is roughly the same due to the queue of projects that have been waiting for MPO funding for several TIP cycles. M. Genova stated that it is possible that some municipalities have heard that cost increases are preventing the MPO from funding new projects and have held off on proposing new projects.

D. Amstutz asked whether all of the projects being evaluated for the first time this year are Community Connections projects. M. Genova stated that this is correct. D. Amstutz noted that some of the previously evaluated projects are not at the 25 percent design submission level. M. Genova stated that the MPO will hear more detail on how close prospective projects are to the 25 percent design milestone, adding that it is up to the board to decide how flexible to be on adhering to the new cost increase policy in year one.

Melisa Tintocalis (North Suburban Planning Council) (Town of Burlington) asked for more information on the specifics of the evaluation criteria and whether there is information on what proponents have done to bring their projects to the 25 percent design stage. M. Genova stated that he would provide more details on the scoring criteria and project design status at the meeting on March 3, 2022.

K. Miller noted that there will also be increased funding for FFY 2022, which will depend on a continuing resolution from Congress. K. Miller stated that he had heard there may be changes to the City of Boston's approach to the design for the Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue and requested an update. D. Mohler stated that MassDOT and MPO staff would provide more information following MassDOT's annual project readiness days, which would take place the following week.

## **9. Transit Working Group Pilot Findings—Michelle Scott, MPO Staff Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar**

### **1. [Technical Memorandum RE: Transit Working Group Pilot Findings](#)**

M. Scott reviewed the pilot phase of the MPO's Transit Working Group (TWG). The MPO approved a pilot of the TWG in November 2019 out of an awareness of need for more coordination among the Boston region's transit providers. At that time, the MPO was also considering options for expanding transit provider representation on the MPO board—specifically for the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) and Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA). MPO staff conducted outreach with transit providers during the summer of 2019 about whether they would participate in a transit working group and what might motivate them to do so. Staff found that potential participants seemed most interested in connecting with one another.

The first TWG meeting was held in person in January 2020. The pilot was designed without a formal leadership structure. Staff organized and facilitated meetings. The group engaged a range of providers (the MBTA, regional transit authorities [RTAs], transportation management associations [TMAs], municipalities, and human services transportation providers), as well as organizations, agencies, and people involved in transit. Since the pandemic began and meetings shifted to Zoom, attendance has consistently been higher than anticipated. The group hosted several meetings with topics specific to the pandemic, including MBTA service planning and grant opportunities to support transit. Other meeting topics included regional rail transformation and the implications of federal transportation legislation for transit.

MPO staff used the meetings to provide updates on transit-related MPO studies, technical assistance offerings, and developments in MPO funding such as the Community Connections program. Recognizing that the general meetings were good for one-way communication but were not generating participant-to-participant dialogue, staff began hosting coffee chats in May 2021. These are hour-long small group discussions about transit-related topics that have cultivated more dialogue.

Overall, 232 people in total have attended at least one TWG event between January 30, 2020, and December 1, 2021. Attendees from municipalities made up approximately 19 percent of total TWG participants. When combined, attendees from the MBTA, RTAs, TMAs, and human service transportation organizations made up approximately 31 percent of Transit Working Group participants. Approximately 57 percent of TWG participants attended one meeting or coffee chat. Another 19 percent attended two events, and the remaining 24 percent attended three or more events. This shows consistent repeat attendance at TWG events.

MPO staff collected feedback about individual TWG events through post-event surveys and a post-pilot focus group and survey. Participants said that they found the events informative and appreciated the coffee chats for focused discussion and sharing experiences. Responses indicate that there are still coordination needs to be met, and an interest in more actively working towards solutions to the problems transit providers face. Staff developed their own impressions of the pilot. They found that the TWG is helpful in informing MPO planning work and is a valuable venue for sharing MPO research and resources with others. They also found that the TWG's flexible structure allows participants to join in activities and discussion to the extent that works for them, and may help reduce barriers to participation. This brings diversity that strengthens discussions.

Staff did not receive feedback from the focus group or surveys indicating that transit providers who have participated in the TWG are interested in direct representation on the MPO board. Transit providers seem to be more interested in information about funding or technical assistance and opportunities to connect and work together to solve shared issues. This reflection is distinct from representation interest expressed by MWRTA and CATA, instead capturing feedback from the range of providers that have participated in the pilot.

For the remainder of FFY 2022, MPO staff intend to generally maintain the TWG in its current format—hosting quarterly full-group meetings, one or two coffee chats per month, and other events as opportunities arise (such as the January 2022 microtransit forum co-sponsored with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC] and the MBTA Advisory Board). Staff proposes to maintain this structure for the foreseeable future, while continuing to collect feedback about the TWG from participants, and to report to the MPO. Staff will also explore options for incorporating more action-oriented work into the TWG. M Scott noted that these options might be constrained by the resources available to the TWG and the MPO's role as a funding and planning agency, rather than an implementing one.

### ***Discussion***

K. Miller stated that the original impetus for forming a transit committee was to address the recommendation from the MPO's 2015 federal certification review that the MPO should "Work cooperatively with Metrowest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) and Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) to ensure that they are represented on the BRMPO board in a way that is satisfactory to all parties and satisfies the MAP-21 requirement for transit representation on MPO boards." K. Miller asked that M. Scott clarify whether MWRTA and CATA participate in the working group or find it valuable.

M. Scott stated that when the MPO created the pilot TWG, MWRTA staff in particular had indicated that it would not be a satisfactory response to their requests for representation on the board. However, the MPO decided that there was value in pursuing the group independent of the issue of representation. M. Scott stated that, initially, MPO staff did not see participation from MWRTA and CATA but that has changed in recent months, particularly with the introduction of the coffee chats. This participation has not been tied to the broader representation issue. Sandy Johnston (MPO staff) added that representatives of all of the RTAs that operate in the region have attended the coffee chats and larger TWG meetings, particularly in events about the issue of closing gaps in service. He added that staff have not heard demands from the stakeholders in the TWG for representation on the MPO board.



L. Diggins asked why MWRTA felt that this pilot was not satisfactory. D. Mohler stated that MWRTA's desire was to be made a voting member of the MPO. L. Diggins stated that while it seems there is no desire from the stakeholders in the TWG to have a seat on the MPO board, it would be positive to have more transit representation on the board and the pilot did not promote that concept due to its unstructured nature. L. Diggins advocated for continuing to provide staff with the resources to create a structure for the TWG that would promote the idea of representation in the form of a seat on the board.

M. Scott explained that staff pursued an unstructured pilot so as not to put the burden of organizing and facilitating events on participating transit providers, given that in the beginning it was unclear who might consistently participate. She added that MPO staff were concerned that having a formal membership for the TWG might preclude members of the Advisory Council from participating in both groups. (*Note: The Regional Transportation Advisory Council ["Advisory Council"] is an independent body that brings public viewpoints and advice on transportation planning to the Boston Region MPO. It is comprised of voting and non-voting member entities representing municipalities, agencies, advocacy groups, and other organizations. More information about the Advisory Council is available at [bostonmpo.org/rtac](https://bostonmpo.org/rtac).)* S. Johnston stated that staff would certainly include the Advisory Council in discussions about the future of the TWG, introducing structure, or board representation, but he stated that participants seem satisfied with their current level of involvement and for staff to bear the burden of meeting logistics.

L. Diggins asked whether capping the number of participants who could attend the coffee chats has resulted in anyone being unable to participate. M. Scott stated that it was rare that staff were unable to accommodate everyone who wanted to attend a coffee chat. S. Johnston added that for coffee chat admittance priority was given to transit providers.

## **10. Members Items**

There were none.

## **11. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by E. Bourassa (MAPC) and seconded by L. Diggins (Advisory Council). 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)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Heather Hamilton
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	James Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	William Conroy
Federal Highway Administration	Kenneth Miller
Federal Transit Administration	Leah Sirmin
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Thomas Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Brad Rawson
MassDOT Highway Division	David Mohler
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	John Romano
Massachusetts Port Authority	Jillian Linnell
MBTA Advisory Board	Sarah Lee
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Amira Patterson
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Eric Bourassa
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Erika Oliver Jerram
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington)	Melisa Tintocalis
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Jennifer Constable
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Tom O'Rourke
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Steven Olanoff

<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Joe Collins	
Marian Neutra	Sherborn Select Board
Paul Cobuzzi	
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Ben Muller	MassDOT
Sandra Saint-Surin	FHWA
Derek Krevat	MassDOT
Garrett Brann	
Aleida Leza	Belmont resident
Owen MacDonald	Town of Weymouth
Cassandra Ostrander	FHWA
Colette Aufranc	Wellesley Select Board
Michelle Ho	MassDOT
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT
Todd Blake	City of Medford
Bonnie Friedman	
Jon Seward	
Jon Rockwell	TEC Inc.
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Joy Glynn	MWRTA
Rich Benevento	WorldTech Engineering

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Annette Demchur

Róisín Foley

Hiral Gandhi

Matt Genova

Betsy Harvey

Sandy Johnston

Heyne Kim

Rosemary McCarron

Anne McGahan

Rebecca Morgan

Srilekha Murthy

Gina Perille

Sean Rourke

Michelle Scott

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**Title VI Specialist**

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