

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

August 3, 2023, Meeting

10:00 AM–10:45 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Steve Woelfel, Chair, representing Gina Fiandaca, 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 June 1, 2023
- Approve the work program for Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service
- Waive the 21-day public review period and endorse the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023–27 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment 12

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 11.

2. Chair’s Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

S. Woelfel encouraged interested parties to register for MassDOT’s Moving Together conference.

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

T. Teich stated that Rounaq Basu started in July as the Manager of Multimodal Planning and Design.

T. Teich stated that staff participated in a Community Engagement Peer Exchange, funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and hosted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Participants included MPOs, regional planning agencies, departments of transportation, and municipalities. Takeaways included the importance of compensating community members, documenting gaps in engagement, and building relationships to be ongoing, not project based.

4. Public Comments

There were none.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

Derek Krevat, MassDOT, stated that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee will meet soon to discuss the proposed amendment to the FFY 2023 UPWP before it is brought before the board.

Jay Monty, City of Everett, stated that the Congestion Management Process Committee will meet on August 17, 2023, to discuss the Lessons from Roadway Pricing Experience study.

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

L. Diggins stated that the next meeting will occur in September 2023.

7. Action Item: Approval of June 1, 2023, MPO Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. June 1, 2023, MPO Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of June 1, 2023, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Amira Patterson). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: Work Scope: Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service—*Steven Andrews, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. Work Scope: Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

S. Andrews stated that the Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service study is expected to cost \$19,750 over two months. Flexible fixed-route service is designed to deviate from set routes to meet riders where they are. These routes are beneficial to people who have trouble traveling to fixed-route stops. Challenges experienced with flexible fixed-route service include identifying who might use the service. The work scope proposes the development of a methodology to create demand profiles for areas adjacent to or near stops. The methodology will be developed using an existing bus route.

The work will occur in three steps. In Task One, staff will connect with regional transportation authorities to identify potential low-density routes to study. In Task Two, parameters for the flexible service catchment area will be identified. In Task Three, a

description of the process and the results of the analysis will be provided in the form of a technical memorandum.

Discussion

Matthew Moran, City of Boston Transportation Department, asked if the work scope could be revised to include portions of the Inner Core in the analysis. S. Andrews stated that the purpose of the work scope is to develop a methodology for the analysis, which would then be able to be applied to bus routes, including those within the Inner Core. A less dense route is proposed to be used to develop the methodology to ensure success in the process with more simplistic examples.

L. Diggins suggested that a second phase of this study could focus on routes that coincide with areas with high demand for the MBTA's The RIDE paratransit service.

David Koses, City of Newton, asked if the study is able to provide information on people willing to use demand-response versus flexible fixed-route services. S. Andrews stated that researching demand-response versus flexible fixed-route usage would necessitate an additional phase of the study.

Vote

A motion to approve the work scope for Flexible Fixed-Route Bus Service was made by the City of Boston Transportation Department (Matthew Moran) and seconded by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: FFY 2023 UPWP Amendment Two—Srilekha Murthy, MPO Staff

This item was postponed to a future date.

10. Action Item: FFYs 2023-27 TIP Amendment 12—Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. FFYs 2023–27 TIP Amendment 12 ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe stated that the FFYs 2023–27 TIP Amendment 12 proposes the programming of FFY 2023 Community Project Funding to expand the Salem Skipper on-demand rideshare service into Beverly and Danvers. The project is budgeted for \$2,875,000.

MPO staff requested the board waive the public review period for Amendment 12 and vote to endorse the amendment. The request to waive the public review period is because the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which administers the Community

Project Funding program, closes its fiscal books before the end of the federal fiscal year and the minimum allowable duration for a public review period is 15 days, which cannot be accommodated in this timeline.

Discussion

E. Bourassa asked who will be providing the match for this project. D. Krevat stated that the municipalities of Salem, Beverly, and Danvers will be providing the local match.

Vote

A motion to waive the 21-day public review period and endorse the FFYs 2023–27 TIP Amendment 12 was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (A. Patterson). The motion carried.

11. Massachusetts Vehicle Census—Liz Williams and Michael Melencio, MassDOT Staff

L. Williams stated that the Massachusetts Vehicle Census is a first-in-the-nation dataset to allow for new analyses. The resource has been created using odometer data collected at the time of vehicle inspections. The data can help answer questions such as:

- How many vehicles are registered in a certain municipality? How many are electric?
- How does usage differ for various vehicle types?
- Where is electric vehicle infrastructure most needed?

L. Williams stated that MAPC created the first version of the vehicle census in 2014. A new Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) data management platform in 2018 increased the available data, which has been integrated within the updated version of the vehicle census.

M. Melencio demonstrated the online dashboard, found at <https://geodot-homepage-massdot.hub.arcgis.com/pages/massvehiclecensus>.

M. Melencio stated that the dashboard was developed from the vehicle excise tax, RMV active vehicle registrations, and vehicle inspections. Information is available at the statewide, municipal, and MPO levels, along with vehicle registration details and vehicle-miles traveled (VMT) details. These are the key performance indicators featured in the dashboard:

- Total Daily Vehicle Count
- Percent of Total Count Zero-Emission or Hybrid

- Daily VMT
- Percent Daily VMT Zero-Emission or Hybrid
- Average Mileage per Day
- Average Mileage per Day Zero-Emission or Hybrid

Discussion

E. Bourassa asked if the dashboard will be kept up to date. L. Williams stated that the next steps are to add vehicle characteristics and data on school buses to the dashboard, followed by a granular analysis of trends at the census block level. Plans are to update the dashboard on a quarterly basis.

Allison Patton, Health Effects Institute, asked if historical data can be accessed in the dashboard. L. Williams stated that the datasets go back to 2020.

M. Moran stated that census or zip code level data would be very useful to the City of Boston. L. Williams stated that zip code data is available for download on the website and could potentially be added on the aggregate level.

12. Update on Certification Review Action Plan—Tegin Teich, Executive Director

T. Teich stated that the Action Plan is a document submitted quarterly to the FHWA and FTA on progress made on recommendations and corrective actions from the 2022 federal certification review final report. T. Teich proposed bringing updates of the Action Plan to the board on an annual basis, at a minimum.

T. Teich stated that findings with no required action include determinations of consistency and commendations, while findings with action needed include corrective actions and recommendations.

One corrective action was identified in the 2022 certification review. The corrective action required documentation of the process for sharing information to develop the annual list of obligated projects in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The corrective action is substantially complete. On June 15, board members voted to include relevant language in an updated MOU, which will be signed by September 30, 2023.

Recommendations that have been addressed include considering implementing a timeframe by which information is sent to board members for review prior to an action going to vote and updating the MPO's Title VI web page to reflect the most recent Title VI report.

The recommendation to establish a regular schedule for northern and southern regional coordination meetings has been placed on hold. This will be established after the Manager of MPO Activities has been hired by the agency.

Progress towards recommendations can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Certification Review Action Plan Updates

Category	Recommendation	Updates
Organizational Structure	<p>Update the 2011 MOU to include the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover necessities but allow for detail in Operations Plan Establish how to represent the interest of regional transit authorities (RTAs) Establish and adhere to a review cycle for the MOU 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ad hoc committee to develop and recommend a process, anticipated to be presented to MPO board in November 2023
Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for opportunities to identify and advance local and regional projects to fund with target funds Review completed MPO studies, conduct regional gap analyses, utilize the Congestion Management Process, and leverage MassDOT information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Operations Plan established a TIP processes, engagement, and readiness committee In the future, staff will explore how to expand technical assistance
Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore innovative ways to fund projects, ensuring target funds are being used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board approved a \$4 million pilot project design program in FFY 2025 Future: MPO will explore the practice of carrying over unprogrammed balances

Category	Recommendation	Updates
Public Outreach and Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to strengthen variety of engagement activities including considering the needs of the target audience such as work schedules, childcare, and digital literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building relationships with community-based organizations and stakeholders, attended nine in-person events Pilot for compensation for public participation Holding hybrid MPO board meetings
Civil Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When new census data is released, assess the MPO's Limited English Proficiency approach to ensure it is meeting the needs of current populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new Language Assistance Plan is targeted to be complete in December 2023.
Nonmotorized Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update or develop a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan or needs assessment to complement statewide plans for Boston region needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are working on a first draft of a regional bicycle facility gap analysis
Environmental Mitigation, Consultation, and Resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ways to engage federal and state environmental resource agencies and stakeholders for input into the next Long-Range Transportation Plan and regular input into corridor studies and planning documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assigned funding for a discrete study on environmental engagement Coordinated with Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality, Charles River Watershed Association, and MassDOT

Category	Recommendation	Updates
Performance-Based Planning and Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the interactive performance dashboard and incorporate federal performance measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing and updating interactive applications on MPO website, assessing data and personnel needs relative to hosting options, targeted for September 30, 2025
Performance-Based Planning and Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out before-and-after studies for all projects on the TIP, including MassDOT-, MBTA-, and RTA-selected projects along with projects funded with regional target funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update: 2020 TIP Before-and-After study is projected to be complete later in 2023 Future: Need to explore options for additional funding sources and partnership to assess additional projects

Discussion

E. Bourassa stated his appreciation for the Action Plan update.

L. Diggins stated that the Regional Transportation Advisory Council would be interested in updates on the TIP before-and-after studies.

Kenneth Miller, FHWA, emphasized the necessity to improve the pipeline of projects to fund in near-years in the TIP and a desire for firm project recommendations to arise from agency studies.

13. MPO Elections Process—Eric Bourassa, MAPC, and Brian Kane, MBTA Advisory Board

E. Bourassa stated that 12 seats on the MPO board are for cities and towns. Four seats are up for election each year to carry out three-year terms. This year, the following seats are up for election:

- South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP) subregion
- North Shore Planning Council (North Shore) subregion
- At-Large Town seat
- At-Large City seat

E. Bourassa stated that only municipalities within a subregion are eligible to vote for their respective subregional representative. The nomination process requires three nominations. For subregional seats, the nominations must come from municipalities within the subregion. Nominations are due on Monday, October 2, 2023. All election proceedings will be electronic. The chief executive official (CEO) of each municipality must submit any nominations.

If any of the open seats are competitive, a candidate forum will be hosted in early October.

Electronic election ballots will be sent to municipal CEOs around October 16, 2023, and voting will be live until the MAPC Fall Council Meeting, scheduled for Thursday, October 26, 2023. At the council meeting, the election results will be announced.

14. Discussion of the Annual Meeting—Tegin Teich, Executive Director

T. Teich stated that the Annual Meeting, described in the Operations Plan, is intended to be within 30 days of the new members' terms. This year, it is proposed to occur as the second meeting in November. The Operations Plan states that the secretary of transportation shall be invited to preside over the meeting and address the board as the chair, the vice chair will be elected by majority vote, designees and alternates will be introduced, and the slate of committee members will be approved. The meeting will be a hybrid event, and members are encouraged to attend in person.

15. Discussion of Hybrid Meetings—Tegin Teich, Executive Director

T. Teich asked board members for feedback on their experiences from the June 15, 2023, hybrid meeting, including areas for improvement.

Staff are proposing three to four hybrid meetings annually. Proposed hybrid meetings for FFY 2024 are the Annual Meeting in November, TIP-related meetings in late winter and spring, and meetings for review and discussion of the UPWP and Long-Range Transportation Plan, when applicable, in June.

Discussion

L. Diggins expressed support for the continuation of hybrid meetings.

J. Monty shared a concern that the regular return of hybrid meetings could reduce the in-person turnout for meetings.

Thomas O'Rourke, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood), spoke in support of hybrid meetings.

Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville), spoke of the benefits of personal connections that are made possible from in-person events.

Amira Patterson, MBTA Advisory Board, spoke in support of hybrid meetings and mentioned audio issues that impacted virtual participation on June 15.

16. Members' Items

There were none.

17. Adjourn

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

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	John Alessi
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Robert King
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Joe Blankenship
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Matthew Moran
Federal Highway Administration	Kenneth Miller
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel
	John Bechard
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Jillian Linnell
Massachusetts Port Authority	Sarah Lee
MBTA Advisory Board	Amira Patterson
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Kristen Guichard
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Jared Contrada (non-voting)
North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington)	
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Hull)	
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Peter Pelletier
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke Steve Olanoff

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Regina Aris	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Richard Bilski	
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT
Miranda Briseño	MassDOT
Ana Celerier	MassDOT
JR Frey	Hingham
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
Sandy Johnston	MBTA
Renee Kessler	Cambridge Health Alliance
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Raissah Kouame	MassDOT
Derek Krevat	MassDOT
Michael Melencio	MassDOT
Benjamin Muller	MassDOT
Jim Nee	MWRTA
Joaquin Osio-Norgaard	MassDOT-MBTA
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Allison Patton	Health Effects Institute
Michelle Scott	MassDOT
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Tyler Terrasi	MWRTA
George Thiel	
Emily V. (last name not provided)	
Julia Wallerice	MAPC
Andrew Wang	MassDOT
Liz Williams	MassDOT

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Steven Andrews

Rounaq Basu

Logan Casey

Annette Demchur

Hiral Gandhi

Betsy Harvey

Ryan Hicks

Stella Jordan

Marnie Kopec

Ethan Lapointe

Erin Maguire

Rose McCarron

Rebecca Morgan

Gina Perille

Sarah Philbrick

Judy Taylor

Sam Taylor

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Title VI Specialist

Boston Region MPO
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By Telephone:

857.702.3700 (voice)

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