

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Draft Memorandum for the Record**

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

#### **October 19, 2023, Meeting**

10:00 AM–11:40 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

David Mohler, Chair, representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Acting 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 August 17, 2023
- Endorse the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan
- Release the Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2024–28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment One for its 21-day public review period

### **Meeting Agenda**

#### **1. Introductions**

See attendance on page 10.

#### **2. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT***

D. Mohler stated that the new TIP subcommittee—the TIP Process, Engagement, and Readiness Committee—has been formed. The members are as follows:

- Jen Rowe, City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department), Chair
- John Alessi, Town of Arlington
- John Bechard, MassDOT
- Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council)
- Dennis Giombetti, MetroWest Regional Collaborative, City of Framingham
- Kristen Guichard, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination, Town of Acton
- Rob King, Town of Brookline
- Derek Krevat, MassDOT
- Brad Rawson, Inner Core Committee, City of Somerville

The first meeting of the committee will follow the conclusion of this MPO board meeting, at 1:00 PM.

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

T. Teich stated that Kyle Casiglio will be joining the Multimodal Planning and Design team as a Transportation Planner in November to support the work of the bicycle and pedestrian program. T. Teich discussed two newly posted job advertisements.

T. Teich stated that MPO staff have been participating in subregional group meetings, hosted by the MAPC, to discuss the TIP and other transportation priorities. Upcoming in-person engagement events include the Mattapan Square Farmers Market on Saturday, October 21, and Open Streets Somerville on Sunday, October 22.

There will be two Information Sessions on the TIP application process for municipalities interested in initiating or advancing projects in the TIP on Thursday, November 2, and Thursday, November 9.

### **4. Public Comments**

There were none.

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

D. Krevat stated that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee will meet on October 26 to discuss an adjustment to the FFY 2024 UPWP.

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

L. Diggins stated that the October 11 Advisory Council meeting included a presentation on the Needs Assessment StoryMaps and an update on the Performance-Based Policy and Planning Dashboard. L. Diggins stated that the Advisory Council held its annual election and he has been elected as chair for a fifth term, uncontested.

### **7. Action Item: Approval of August 17, 2023, MPO Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar**

1. August 17 Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

#### ***Vote***

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 17, 2023, was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (BTD) (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

## **8. Action Item: Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP)—*Betsy Harvey, MPO Staff***

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

1. CPT-HSTP ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

B. Harvey stated that the draft CPT-HSTP was released for a 15-day public review period on October 6, 2023. The primary purpose of the plan is to guide applicants in the development of applications for the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5310 program, Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, also known as the Community Transit Grant Program. Applications must address a need identified in the CPT-HSTP.

### ***Vote***

A motion to endorse the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

## **9. Action Item: FFYs 2024-28 TIP Amendment One—*Ethan Lapointe, MPO Staff***

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

1. FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment One ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe stated that the FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment One proposes the following:

- Programming of Boston's FFY 2022 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Implementation Grant for \$9,000,000 to implement safety countermeasures to address speeding and pedestrian hazards at nine intersections throughout Boston
- Reprogramming of three Border to Boston Trail Design Earmarks (Peabody, Salem, and Marblehead) onto the FFYs 2024–28 TIP, as they were not executed before the end of FFY 2023
- Cost increase for one Statewide Highway Project: Project #609058: Gloucester, Peabody—Guide and Traffic Sign Replacement on Route 128 from \$1,714,693 to \$2,298,603 to reflect the final design cost
- Addition of three projects from the FFYs 2023–27 State TIP (STIP) into the FFYs 2024–28 TIP for project readiness:
  - Project #609254: Lynn—Intersection Improvements at Two Intersections on Broadway, with an advertisement date of December 30, 2023
  - Project #608762: Boston–Cambridge—Bridge Preservation of B-16-246=C-01-029, Eliot Street over the Charles River

- Project #609058: Gloucester–Peabody—Guide and Traffic Sign Replacement on Route 128

The public review period will commence on October 23, 2023, and conclude on November 13.

### ***Discussion***

J. Rowe expressed gratitude to MPO and MassDOT staff for assistance with the SS4A grant and shared the location of intersections included in the SS4A implementation grant: Stuart Street and Tremont Street, Kneeland Street and Washington Street, Dorchester Avenue and Boston Street, Seaver Street and Walnut Avenue, Blue Hill Avenue and Columbia Road, Blue Hill Avenue and American Legion Highway, Claybourne Street and Tonawanda Street, and Brent Street and Wainwright Street.

### ***Vote***

A motion to release the FFYs 2024–28 TIP Amendment One for a 21-day public review period was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the Town of Arlington (J. Alessi). The motion carried.

## **10. Transit Transformation Program—*Ethan Lapointe and Logan Casey, MPO Staff***

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

1. Transit Transformation Scorecard ([pdf](#))
2. Transit Transformation Memo ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

E. Lapointe presented the details of the final Transit Transformation investment program, as outlined in a work scope initiated in FFY 2023. The presentation was inclusive of adjustments made from feedback on scoring criteria and project types at a September 2023 board meeting.

Adjustments made to scoring criteria included a revision to the Resilience section, where the emphasis was changed from extreme heat to extreme temperature events. These changes will be reflected in other investment programs. In addition, in the Access and Connectivity section, an equity multiplier was added to pedestrian connections.

E. Lapointe reviewed project types that board members would likely encounter and indicated the proponents of those types of projects:

- Regional Transit Authority (RTA)
  - Bus transit hub improvements
  - Operational facility expansion and repair

- Intelligent Transportation Systems
- Low-/no-emission vehicle transition, including supportive infrastructure and possible larger contracts with options for smaller RTAs
- MBTA
  - Station accessibility improvements
    - ADA accessibility and compliance
    - Improved pedestrian and micromobility connections
  - Foundational investments for improving service frequencies
    - Better headways and electrification
  - Bus transit station and stop upgrades
  - Signage and wayfinding
- Municipal
  - Bus lane implementation
  - Transit Signal Priority projects
  - Transit improvements in other programs
  - Wayfinding signage

E. Lapointe stated that between FFYs 2021–25, the MPO programmed approximately \$115 million for transit capital projects in the previous Transit Modernization program. In the Transit Transformation program, there are two classes of projects to consider in future scenarios: a set-aside pool and large capital. For most TIP years, the set-aside pool will total \$6.5 million and accommodate near-term projects costing between \$250,000 and \$4 million. In FFY 2025, however, the pool will be constrained to \$2.5 million, which constricts opportunities for projects that cost more the \$2.5 million. Large capital projects will be projects that cost more than \$4 million, such as those that the MPO has historically supported. These projects will be scored alongside other projects in the program, but would likely be funded in later years, if funding is available.

### ***Discussion***

L. Diggins asked for further clarification of project types under “foundational investments for service frequencies,” which was referred to as a “no regrets” investment type.

E. Lapointe stated that the “no regrets” phrase originated from the FFYs 2023–27 TIP, where the MBTA’s Rail Transformation Early Action Items proposed foundational improvements for further work to be done along a corridor. Examples include track alignment and signal replacement.

Melisa Tintocalis, North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington), asked how the FFY 2025 Project Design Pilot fits in with the TIP application period, which opens on November 1. E. Lapointe stated that the Project Design Pilot does not apply to the

Transit Transformation program. All other investment program applications will also open on November 1.

### **11. Annual Meeting Planning: Federal Funding Topic—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director***

T. Teich requested that board members provide guidance on points of interest relating to federal funding, a topic which will be included at the Annual Meeting on November 30. Previously, board members had requested information about how federal funding flows from federal legislation to MPOs and the decisions that are made in between.

T. Teich stated that pages 21 through 59 of the FFYs 2024–28 STIP includes an overview of federal funding categories and MassDOT program areas. Potential ideas for the agenda items include a summary and discussion of funding programs in the STIP, national level policy intent relating to program development, perspectives on various approaches to manage federal funding flows, and a deep dive into MassDOT and MPO project prioritization.

#### ***Discussion***

E. Bourassa asked if a discussion about programs in the STIP would be like one given during the annual development of the TIP. T. Teich confirmed and stated that it would likely be presented by MassDOT staff. E. Bourassa stated that general baseline information related to the topic would be beneficial.

L. Diggins advocated for a discussion on MassDOT and MPO project prioritization since the secretary of transportation will be in attendance.

D. Giombetti expressed interest in overall funding flows and the approaches that other MPOs take. J. Rowe agreed with D. Giombetti and spoke of the benefits of a high-level presentation on MPOs and their regional approach. Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) suggested partnering with the Association of MPOs (AMPO) to provide a greater picture of the role of MPOs nationally.

M. Tintocalis asked if there are best practices on MPO activities to optimize funding and prioritize appropriate projects.

T. Teich stated that AMPO's Annual Conference had numerous conversations about federal policy and its impact on MPOs, which could be adapted for the Annual Meeting. At future meetings, the MPO could partner with MassDOT to provide more in-depth conversations on topics of interest.

## **12. Policy Discussion: Letters of Support for Federal Discretionary Grants—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director***

T. Teich stated that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has increased the number of federal discretionary grant opportunities. Occasionally, the MPO is asked to write a letter of support for certain discretionary grants. T. Teich stated that it would be helpful for the board to establish a policy or process for how staff should work with the board when requests come. This would also provide an opportunity to proactively communicate what expectations the MPO has before writing a letter of support.

### ***Discussion***

D. Giombetti spoke in support of developing a policy on writing letters of support.

Jim Fitzgerald, City of Boston (Boston Planning and Development Agency), stated that it would be beneficial to know the basic information about a project, similar to the model MassDOT has adopted for letters of support from the secretary of transportation.

Ali Kleyman, MBTA, stated that the MBTA asks project proponents for draft narratives to ensure that the proposed project is aligned with the MBTA's goals.

L. Diggins stated that the board should determine under what circumstances the MPO would not provide a letter of support, and he asked how many letters the MPO is expecting. T. Teich stated that the number is uncertain, but one expected outcome of proactively sharing expectations for letters of support would be an increased number of interested project proponents. T. Teich requested that the established process be as streamlined as possible, such as a form letter.

T. Bent asked if it would be appropriate to delegate the decision to produce a letter in time sensitive situations to the chair and vice chair.

David Koses, City of Newton, suggested delegating the decision to the chair and vice chair. Should there be uncertainty if the MPO should support the project, then they could bring it to the full board for deliberation.

Robert King, Town of Burlington, spoke in support of establishing standardized language for the letters.

Sarah Lee, Massachusetts Port Authority, suggested including text that the MPOs support assumes broader support from other relevant stakeholders.

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT produces standardized letters overviewing what is being supported, the benefits of the project, unique factors about the project, and a conclusion reaffirming support.

D. Giombetti suggested including the process in the Operations Plan.

Seth Gabois, Conservation Law Foundation, asked if there will be an expedited process for projects included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan and encouraged clear guidelines for municipalities and other project proponents to follow when requesting a letter of support.

Chris Dilorio, South Shore Coalition (Town of Hull), asked if the MPO would provide letters of support for grants and programs that are not federally funded, such as MassWorks grants. D. Mohler stated that the initial scope of discussion was centered on federal discretionary grants, as they are required to be programmed in MPO documents.

J. Rowe voiced support for the idea of delegating responsibility of letters of support to the chair and vice chair of the MPO and having them bring the proposal to the full board if there is uncertainty if a project should be supported. J. Rowe stated that all proponents would need to provide a summary of the project. Completed letters of support would then be shared at the next board meeting. E. Bourassa clarified that the chair and vice chair can approve letters of support. If they are unclear if the project aligns with the MPO's goals, it would then be brought to the full board for deliberation.

D. Giombetti requested that the policy be written clearly for future reference.

#### ***Vote***

A motion to delegate the authority to write letters in support of applications for federal discretionary grants and the discretion to defer the decision to the full MPO board was made by the City of Boston (BTD) (J. Rowe) and seconded by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

### **13. Members' Items**

J. Rowe announced that she will be serving as the primary designee for the BTD as a regional planner and that the position is a continuation of the Mayor Wu's goals to move forward in close coordination with municipal, regional, and state partners.

E. Bourassa stated that municipal representation ballots have been sent to all municipalities for the 2023 MPO Board elections.

#### **14. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the City of Boston (BTD) (J. Rowe). The motion carried.

## Attendance

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty Eric Molinar
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)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jen Rowe
Federal Highway Administration	Kenneth Miller
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent Brad Rawson
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler John Bechard
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Ali Kleyman
Massachusetts Port Authority	Sarah Lee
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane 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)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (Town of Burlington)	Melisa Tintocalis
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Hull)	Chris Dilorio
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke Steve Olanoff

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Rich Benevento	
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT
Miranda Briseño	MassDOT
	Central Massachusetts Regional Planning
Tyler Distefano	Council
Daniela Espinosa	BPDA
Seth Gadbois	Conservation Law Foundation
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
Morgan Griffiths	
Anil Gurcan	
Matthew Hayes	
Sandy Johnston	MBTA
Chris Klem	MassDOT
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Raissah Kouame	
Constance Mellis	CMRPC
Benjamin Muller	MassDOT
Jim Nee	MWRTA
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Michelle Scott	MassDOT
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT
Derek Shooster	MassDOT
Tyler Terrasi	MWRTA
Andrew Wang	MassDOT

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Logan Casey

Annette Demchur

Betsy Harvey

Stella Jordan

Ethan Lapointe

Erin Maguire

Marty Milkovits

Rebecca Morgan

Srilekha Murthy

Gina Perille

Sean Rourke

Sam Taylor

Judy Taylor

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