

# Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Update Committee Minutes

## Draft Memorandum for the Record

### February 7, 2024, Meeting

1:30 PM–3:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

Tom Bent, representing the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) and Mayor Katjana Ballentyne

## Decisions

The MOU Update Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of September 20, 2023

## Meeting Agenda

### 1. Introductions

See attendance on page 6.

### 2. Public Comments

There were none.

### 3. Action Item: Approval of September 20, 2023, Meeting Minutes Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. September 20, 2023, Meeting Minutes ([pdf](#)) ([html](#))

### Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 20, 2023, was made by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) (Derek Krevat) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane). The motion carried.

### 4. Summary of Conversation with Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs)—Erin Maguire, MPO Staff

E. Maguire stated that MPO staff met with the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) and the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) on January 23, 2024, and discussed RTA representation and board member responsibilities.

E. Maguire stated that the RTAs propose the creation of a permanent seat on the MPO board to be shared by RTAs in the region. RTAs will serve on a rotational basis and act as designees for one another.

***Discussion***

B. Kane asked how long each RTA would hold the seat as the main representative.

E. Maguire stated that RTAs did not express a preference for a specific term length and are open to proposals from the committee. B. Kane proposed one year terms.

Lenard Diggins, Regional Transportation Advisory Council, expressed support for the proposal and encouraged the RTA serving as an alternate to participate in the Advisory Council.

Jen Rowe, City of Boston, asked if the committee is meant to come to a decision in this meeting. T. Bent stated that this is a starting point for the conversation before inviting RTAs to speak on the topic.

B. Kane discussed the federal recommendations to come to a decision on RTA representation.

J. Rowe discussed different forms that RTA representation could take and asked if they were discussed in conversations with the RTAs. Dave Hong, MPO Staff, suggested deferring to RTAs to answer this question.

Jim Nee, MWRTA, stated that the RTAs are interested in a direct representation model that allows for the voices of the RTAs and those they serve to be directly heard. J. Nee stated that the conversation with MPO staff covered topics that have surfaced over the last year including RTA capacity to participate in board meetings and reasonings for why RTAs should have a seat. J. Nee stated that RTA staff have been regularly attending MPO board and committee meetings. J. Nee stated that topics such as transportation equity, safety, congestion mitigation, walkability, and Vision Zero are influential on RTA operations.

L. Diggins asked how the RTAs intend to work in the best interest of RTAs in the region. J. Nee stated that in board member capacity, the RTAs would represent the best interests of the Boston region.

B. Kane stated that codifying the shared seat and terms may require conversation.

J. Rowe stated that an understanding of the current proportional population representation of the region would be beneficial to discussions and how an additional

seat may impact representation. J. Nee stated that CATA and the MWRTA combined serve a much smaller population than the MBTA, but he noted that the users served are significantly more likely to use paratransit services.

L. Diggins discussed population trends and opportunities for RTAs to support transit use as people shift away from the Inner Core due to cost constraints.

J. Rowe suggested considering a weighted voting structure to match population distribution.

## **5. Follow-Up Items—Abby Cutrumbes, MPO Staff**

A. Cutrumbes stated that staff were asked to follow up on several items from the previous MOU Update Committee meeting.

A. Cutrumbes stated that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) is a document describing an agreement between agencies, including descriptions on intention, roles, and responsibilities. The document is collaborative, nonbinding, and periodically evolving, and the development process allows for reflection, negotiation, and elaboration.

A. Cutrumbes stated that MPOs have policy influence in their regions by spotlighting issues in research and long-range planning practices. In Connecticut, MPOs are developing strategies to reduce vehicle-miles traveled by five percent by 2030. Oregon MPOs report vehicle-miles traveled in their regions annually and Portland's MPO maintains a High Injury Network data set. MPOs in California create Sustainable Communities Strategies to integrate land use and housing with transportation to move toward regional goals. Policy mechanisms that the Boston Region MPO uses to drive regional priorities include the long-range visioning of the transportation system, scoring criteria in the Transportation Improvement Program, analyses of investments with the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden policy, and the creation of a regional Vision Zero Action Plan.

A. Cutrumbes discussed RTA representation and shared findings from a conversation with the Baltimore MPO. At this MPO, transit operator representatives are elected by RTAs in the region to serve a two-year term. This has led to better data sharing and increased coordination with and between RTAs.

A. Cutrumbes discussed a 2015 Salem State University study that investigated board representation by relative population, using 2010 census data. Overall findings showed an inverse relationship between regional population and board representation, with Inner Core communities being underrepresented compared to the remaining

subregions. E. Maguire noted that the study discussed concerns about how as representation of Inner Core communities decreases, transit investments tend to decrease concurrently. E. Maguire discussed the relevance of these findings in the context of adding RTAs to the board.

### ***Discussion***

B. Kane requested that population estimates from the 2020 census be shared for the region and asked how the board has programmed funding to the subregions in practice.

J. Rowe stated that the Salem State University study indicated that with Boston's two seats, the proportional representation of the city's population is relatively aligned with the ideal representation ratio outlined in the study.

B. Kane discussed the dynamics of the board, noted that it has been successful in considering regional issues, and asked staff how many votes have been nonunanimous in recent years.

JR Frey, Town of Hingham, discussed the impact that roadway investments can have on transit services, noting that these investments can improve roadways and bus stops.

## **6. Discussion: Staff-Led MOU Document Updates—*Erin Maguire, MPO Staff***

E. Maguire stated that a redline version of the MOU updates discussed today was shared with committee members prior to the meeting. Topics addressed include clarified voting rules, updated language on demographic and geographic equity, establishing a level of detail to incorporate text in the Operation Plan, establishing a new review cycle and process, and editorial revisions throughout the document.

E. Maguire stated that the proposed language clarifies which items classify as certification documents and require a two-thirds majority to pass. All other votes will require a quorum of members and must pass with a simple majority.

E. Maguire stated that the proposed language on demographic and geographic equity has been updated to better reflect current MPO practices, including the use of the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden policy to identify future transportation inequities.

L. Diggins expressed concern with the geographic equity language and suggested that this sentiment be reflected in the TIP scoring criteria.

J. Rowe stated that the committee should ensure that descriptive language is consistent throughout the MOU.

B. Kane asked how the 97 municipalities in the region were selected to form the MPO. Annette Demchur, MPO staff, stated that municipalities in the region are determined from federal requirements and the urbanized and metropolitan area definitions.

E. Maguire stated that staff propose moving parts of Section 4 of the MOU related to the Transportation Improvement Program to the Operations Plan to allow for an appropriate amount of detail to be established and for more regular updates. L. Diggins and T. Bent expressed support for this.

E. Maguire stated that staff propose establishing a four-year review cycle of the MOU, following the completion of a federal certification review. L. Diggins expressed support for this recommendation and suggested reviewing the MOU a year after the federal certification review.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council, discussed language in the MOU outlining in-person meeting requirements and encouraged the MPO to host in-person meetings throughout the subregions. L. Diggins encouraged the MPO to continue to offer hybrid opportunities for participation in meetings. T. Bent discussed logistics related to planning in-person meetings.

B. Kane suggested moving the section into the Operations Plan.

## **7. Work Planning—*Dave Hong, MPO Staff***

D. Hong reviewed upcoming committee activities. D. Hong stated that the RTA conversation will continue in the next meeting. T. Bent stated that once the committee reaches a conclusion on RTA representation, the topic will be brought to the full board.

## **8. Members' Items**

There were none.

## **9. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the City of Boston (J. Rowe) and seconded by the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (L. Diggins). The motion carried.

## Attendance

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<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	Derek Krevat John Romano
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Mike Sandman
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Jen Rowe
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
JR Frey	Town of Hingham
Alessia Hughes	MBTA
Sandy Johnston	MBTA
Chris Klem	MassDOT
Jim Nee	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA)
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council
Lauren Palazuelos	
Amy Sutherland	Town of Bellingham
Tyler Terassi	MWRTA
Felicia Webb	Cape Ann Transportation Authority
Dave Zwolinski	

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### **MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director  
Abby Cutrumbes  
Annette Demchur  
Dave Hong  
Stella Jordan  
Erin Maguire

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