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REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary of the May 11, 2011 Meeting

This meeting was held in Conference Room 4 of the State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA.

1. Introductions – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

Laura Wiener, Chair and representative of Arlington, called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Attendees introduced themselves (see the attached attendance list).

2. Chair's Report – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

On a very sad note, the Lexington representative to the Advisory Council, Gail Wagner, passed away unexpectedly last Saturday. L. Wiener distributed her death notice.

The MPO will continue to discuss its Memorandum of Understanding at upcoming meetings. Public outreach yielded several comments the MPO is considering. Several state legislators have raised membership as a key concern.

Project selection for the next Long-Range Transportation Plan is also coming up soon.

The Unified Planning Work Program Committee of the Advisory Council will meet next Wednesday at 2:30 PM to discuss the universe of possible studies.

3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes April 13, 2011 – *Laura Wiener, Chair*

The minutes of April 13, 2011 were unanimously approved.

4. Preparing for Positive Train Control on the MBTA's Green Line – *John Marinelli, Leo Dirrane, and Roma McKenzie-Campbell, MBTA*

J. Marinelli gave a presentation on how the MBTA is preparing to implement Positive Train Control (PTC) on the Green Line.

The Green Line runs through the oldest subway in the United States. The Central Subway is the busiest portion of the rapid transit system, with more than 200,000 passengers per day using the portion between Haymarket and Copley Stations. The Central Subway was designed for trains to operate 70 seconds apart. Trains can operate 25 seconds apart using yellow signals, which indicate that another train is just ahead.

The MBTA is studying PTC to see how it can improve safety on the system. The MBTA also wants to ensure that PTC will improve operational throughput. PTC has been recommended for the Green Line by the National Transportation Safety Board.

PTC is designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, derailments caused by excessive speed, unauthorized entrance into work zones, and the movement of a train through a track switch left in the wrong position. A PTC system determines the location and speed of trains, warns the operator of potential problems, and takes action if the operator does not respond to warnings. The brakes will automatically engage if the train operator fails to stop or slow down.

In order to prepare for PTC the MBTA has commissioned a study that will evaluate PTC alternatives. The alternatives will be evaluated on the following criteria: operational improvements or impact, cost, in-service history, system safety, effect on collision avoidance (could past accidents have been prevented with the system), suitability for current and future Green Line vehicles, infrastructure improvements needed to use each system, ability to modify and expand the system without relying on a single supplier, the ability to continue operating trains in the event of a failure or outage of the PTC system, additional operational advantages, and feasibility of implementation.

Questions

In response to members' questions, J. Marinelli, L. Dirrane, and R. McKenzie-Campbell made the following additional comments:

- Federal law mandated PTC on railroads, but did not mention rapid transit systems. Several different systems are being implemented by railroads across the country. The MBTA's system will be different than what is being implemented by freight railroads because conventional PTC would only allow 1 minute headways, which are not feasible on the Green Line. (L. Dirrane)
- PTC on the commuter rail will comply with the Federal Railroad Administration's standards. Transit is regulated by a different agency. (R. McKenzie-Campbell)
- The PTC study is due from HNTB in December 2011. The study will provide a clear cost estimate, but it might cost about \$250 million. (J. Marinelli)
- The MBTA has visited several other transit agencies to see how their systems work. The MBTA is planning to pick a system that has been proven elsewhere. (R. McKenzie-Campbell)
- The National Transportation Safety Board has asked for a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed system. (L. Dirrane)
- It would be difficult to improve capacity with PTC. (L. Dirrane)

5. Discussion of Key Issues for the Boston Region MPO Memorandum of Understanding – Laura Wiener, Chair

L. Wiener discussed key issues related to the MPO's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will be discussed at their meeting on May 12. Among the key questions are the following:

- Should the membership of the MPO be expanded?

- Should municipalities be added?
- Should each MAPC sub region have a municipal representative?
- Should regional transit authorities, legislators, business interests, or a non-profit group have a seat on the MPO?
- Should the MPO consider population, employment, and the amount of infrastructure in membership decisions?
- Should a certain number of the elected municipal members be cities and a certain number be towns?
- Should there be term limits for elected municipal members?
- Should the MPO consider geographic equity when approving all certification documents?
- Should there be requirements for advance posting of materials prior to discussions at meetings?
- Should the MPO meet quarterly outside of Boston?

Another problem not included on the list for discussion tomorrow is the issue that some cities and towns are excluded from running under the current election rules. Arlington can't run for a seat because two cities currently represent the Inner Core. There would need to be a town vacancy on the MPO, and one of the current city members from the Inner Core would need to vacate its seat.

Comments

- The MAPC Executive Board has five towns and five cities elected at large, and it works well. All municipalities on the MPO should represent the entire region. Municipal representation should not be expanded, and sub regions should not be directly represented on the MPO. (Richard Canale, MAGIC)
- Kristina Johnson presented the formal position of the City of Quincy.
 - The City of Boston has a high level of population, employment, and infrastructure. They should play a prominent role on the MPO.
 - Quincy is the third largest city in the MPO area. Quincy and the South Shore have not historically been well represented on the MPO.
 - MAPC sub-regions should not be directly represented. An increase in membership should be based solely on geography and population. For instance, the city and town with the highest population in each geographical direction should be on the MPO.
 - Advocacy groups are important, but they should engage the MPO through the Advisory Council. They should not have a seat on the MPO.
 - There should not be term limits for municipal members. It takes a long time to become acclimated with the process.
- Each sub region should each have an MPO seat. Boston should be a permanent MPO member. (Frank DeMasi, Wellesley)
- If the MPO is a working group, it should be smaller. If it is elected, it should be larger and all of towns and cities in the region should be able to identify who represents their interests. (Bob McGaw, Belmont)
- The working assumption of the MPO is that all members are there to make choices that benefit the entire region. (L. Wiener)

- Sub regional representation would create a difficult situation because each sub region would be concerned about its parochial interests. The MPO staff did an analysis of the geographic distribution of projects, which showed that it does a good job of investing throughout the region. (R. Canale)
- A staff analysis showed that funds programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program from 2008 to 2014 were fairly well distributed throughout the region. The legislators from MetroWest that wrote a comment letter on the MOU represent an area with about 15 percent of the MPO's population and jobs, but 50 percent of the elected municipalities on the MPO (Framingham, Hopkinton, and Bedford). The Inner Core has about 50 percent of the MPO area's population. This should be considered. (Tom Kadzis, City of Boston)
- An underlying problem is that many municipalities are not interested in running for an MPO seat. There is apathy about regional planning. Paid employees of sub regions could represent a group of municipalities. (F. DeMasi)
- Sub regions should be represented. However, politics will always influence the MPO's decisions. (Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee)
- The largest cities in the region should have a vote on the MPO. (K. Johnson)
- The municipal membership should be doubled. (C. Rogers)
- Reducing the number of agency seats has not been discussed. MassDOT is opposed to adding other state agencies to the MPO. There was little discussion about the complex voting rules of the MPO. The rules should be simplified, and there should be more weight on the votes of the cities and towns. MassDOT can argue its position and seek support of municipalities. (Steve Olanoff, Westwood)
- Federal guidelines for transportation planning call for it to consider land use and economic development. A state agency that handles these issues should be added to the MPO. (F. DeMasi)
- There should be a representative on the MPO from each sub region. The representative would need to form a consensus within the sub region. (B. McGaw)
- The Advisory Council should have a vote on the MPO, and giving the Advisory Council as veto of MPO votes should also be considered. (Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers)
- The Advisory Council has more than 50 voting members. Each of the sub regions is a voting member of the Advisory Council. Most of them do not actively participate in the Advisory Council. (R. Canale)
- The Advisory Council should understand what each small town is dealing with, and the group should support them. (Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies)
- The Advisory Council thinks regionally and its membership is broad. It should have a vote on the MPO. (John McQueen, WalkBoston)
- Municipalities should have more say in how transit funds are spent. There should not be a regional transit authority seat on the Boston Region MPO. (Chris Anzuoni, Massachusetts Bus Association)

L. Wiener asked members of the Advisory Council to participate in a series of straw polls to gauge the Advisory Council's opinion on several key issues. The key decisions reached were the following:

- Most Advisory Council members do not support sub regional representation. All MPO members should represent the region as a whole.
- The Advisory Council supports increasing municipal representation. They should be elected at large.
- The Advisory Council does not support adding a legislator or a regional transit authority to the MPO.
- The Advisory Council does not support adding an advocacy group, largely due to the difficulty of determining which group would be a voting member. These entities should participate in the process through the Advisory Council.
- The Advisory Council does not support term limits for MPO members.
- The Advisory Council supports adding language requiring that all meeting materials be posted 48 hours in advance of a meeting.
- The Advisory Council does not support holding meetings outside of Boston due to the difficulty this would impose on staff.

6. Further Discussion of Advisory Council Priorities for Long Range Transportation Plan Project Selection – *Schuyler Larrabee, Plan Committee Chair*

The Advisory Council’s Plan Committee met prior to this meeting. They discussed how funds are currently allocated to various projects and investment categories. They also discussed two alternative investment strategies that have been suggested by staff. The Committee felt that Strategy 3, proposed by staff at the last MPO meeting, is the best. It would offer more flexibility in how funding is allocated by establishing several programs that would address the MPO’s goals. These programs would be similar to the current Clean Air and Mobility Program, but could fund things such as MBTA safety projects, paths, complete streets projects, and projects to improve intersections and bottlenecks.

The Committee felt that the following projects are the most important:

- Route 126/Route 135 Grade Separation – Framingham
- I-93/I-95 Interchange – Woburn
- I-93/I-95 Interchange – Canton
- Either the Bruce Freeman or Assabet River Rail Trails
- Community Path connector - Somerville
- Green Line Extension from College Ave to Route 16 – Medford and Somerville

7. Announcements

There were no announcements.

8. Committee Reports

There were no committee reports.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.

ATTACHMENT 1: Attendance List for May 11, 2011

Cities and Towns

Laura Wiener, Arlington
Tom Kadzis, Boston
Walter Bonin, Marlborough
John Gillon, Quincy
Kristina Johnson, Quincy
Frank DeMasi, Wellesley
Steve Olanoff, Westwood

Agencies

Tad Read, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Steve Rawding, MassDOT Aeronautics Division
Karen Pearson, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Richard Canale, Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC)
Louis Elisa, Seaport Advisory Council
Chan Rogers, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP)

Citizen Groups

Marvin Miller, American Council of Engineering Companies
Schuyler Larrabee, Boston Society of Architects
Malek Al-Khatib, Boston Society of Civil Engineers
David Ernst, MassBike
Chris Anzuoni, Massachusetts Bus Association
Tom Yardley, MASCO
John Businger, National Corridors Initiative
Tom O'Rourke, Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce
Marilyn Wellons, Riverside Neighborhood Association
John McQueen, WalkBoston

Guests and Visitors

Meaghan Hamill, Senator McGee's Office
Bob McGaw, Belmont
Jack Marinelli, MBTA
Roma McKenzie-Campbell, MBTA
Arnold Pinsley, Natick

MPO Staff

Walter Bennett
Mike Callahan