



Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

October 8, 2014 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

David Montgomery, Chair (Needham) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 8)

Chair's Report—*David Montgomery, Chair*

D. Montgomery recalled that the Freight Committee met prior to this meeting and asked that the Chair, W. Bonin, briefly summarize the meeting.

W. Bonin stated that the discussion at the Freight Committee centered on the MassDOT's September, 2010 statewide Freight Plan. Discussion focused on how well that plan has been received and implemented. A discussion on freight planning at the MPO level followed a presentation on the current freight study being conducted by B. Kuttner of the MPO Staff.

W. Bonin indicated that the Committee has expressed that the integration of statewide and MPO planning was of high importance, particularly to deal with issues of future freight movement stemming from growth and changes in traditional freight characteristics.

D. Montgomery introduced MPO staff member Natalie Raffol who will be working on public participation in Certification Activities at CTPS.

Election of Officers—*Steve Olanoff (Immediate Past Chair and Election Committee Chair)*

S. Olanoff introduced the candidates for Chair and Vice Chair, Mike Gowing and David Montgomery, respectively. M. Gowing and D. Montgomery stated that they intend to continue to work together as in the past. D. Montgomery will continue in a supportive role and to address the logistics that attend the quorum issue.

A motion was made and seconded to elect M. Gowing as Chair. Voting members approved M. Gowing as Chair by a unanimous vote. Following the election of Chair, a motion was made and seconded to elect D. Montgomery as Vice Chair. Voting members approved D. Montgomery as Vice Chair by a unanimous vote. In accordance with the bylaws of the Council, the new officers' official terms will begin on November 1.

Minutes - September, 2014

Minutes for the September 10, 2014 Advisory Council meeting were approved with revisions noted.

Long-Range Transportation Plan - Anne McGahan, MPO Staff

A. McGahan introduced the long-range transportation plan (LRTP) now in development at the MPO. It is called "Charting Progress to 2040". Steps in the development of the LRTP include establishing a vision for the region, plus setting goals and objectives for reaching that vision; identifying the region's transportation needs; considering strategies to advance the region's goals; and evaluating and prioritizing transportation investments.

The MPO has approved the central vision statement for public review and comment. The statement currently reads as follows:

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization envisions a transportation system that is safe, provides equitable access, excellent mobility, and varied transportation options—in support of a sustainable, healthy, livable, and economically vibrant region.

The MPO has also approved a set of goals and objectives for public comment. The goals and objectives were developed from the visions and policies in the current LRTP and from the national goals established as part of the federal transportation legislation, MAP-21. The goals and objectives categories are:

- Safety
- System Preservation
- Congestion Reduction
- Transportation Options and Healthy Modes
- GHG, Air Pollution and the Environment
- Transportation Equity
- Economic Vitality and Freight Movement.

The proposed goals and objectives will be used by the MPO in a number of ways:

- to support various aspects of the MPO's long-range planning
- to guide MPO studies

- to guide the project selection process for the LRTP and the TIP and
- to monitor, evaluate, and conduct planning in the region in the future

With respect to identifying transportation needs in the region, the last LRTP divided the MPO Region into 6 radial corridors and a Central Area. Data review and analysis of the individual corridor needs were completed at the corridor level while the overall regional transportation needs were prioritized at the regional level.

The new needs assessment will include much of the same transportation, socioeconomic and environmental information at both the corridor and regional levels, and will provide information on the radial corridors, the central area, and the Boston Business District. However, the new document will be an interactive web-based tool and will provide information about the existing condition of the various components of the transportation system; how they are used; and their projected use in the future.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan Needs Assessment application will be used to provide information to MPO members and all interested parties about the transportation needs in the region. The MPO will use it in selecting projects and programs in the new LRTP. It will also be used for tracking information for the MPO's performance-based planning and programming process. The data is available in tabular form so that it will be available to the public for use for other planning purposes.

The LRTP Needs Assessment tool will hold the majority of the data; however other existing MPO applications will also provide information on transportation needs:

- Congestion Management Process Application
- Livability Application
- All-Hazards Planning Application
- Vehicle Miles Traveled and Emissions Data Browser

The MPO staff is developing an LRTP Needs Assessment Application tool. A. McGahan gave an online preview of the Needs Assessment Application tool which identified maps and tables available.

Once the vision and policies and goals are established and the Needs Assessment is completed, the MPO can then begin discussions on how to meet the region's needs and by addressing the goals and objectives. To help in this decision-making process, in November the MPO will begin the 3rd phase of the LRTP development – the so-called “scenario planning” phase.

Scenario planning is an analytical tool that looks at different transportation investments for the region showing the value of different scenarios. Examples of possible scenarios are:

- State of Good Repair Scenario—using the majority of funding for maintenance and modernization of the existing transportation system
- Programmed Focus Scenario—allotting certain types of funding to programs without specifically listing projects – such as an intersection program, a complete streets program or safety program
- Strong Transit, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Scenario—to encourage mode shifts
- Greenhouse Gas Reduction Scenario—looking at alternative transportation to reduce GHG emissions

Different packages of projects and programs will be compared through a uniform set of indicators and using various planning tools like the MPO's travel demand model, its land use model, Cubeland, and TREDIS, its economic development tool.

The MPO will seek public interaction and feedback on the results of the scenario planning process which will help the MPO in selecting a recommended set of investments.

Once that is completed, the MPO will move into the final phase of the LRTP development – selecting programs and projects for the recommended LRTP. Some examples of the different potential investment programs the MPO might consider for the recommended LRTP include:

- A complete streets investment strategy – emphasizing system preservation, congestion reduction, and healthy modes.
- A transit investment strategy – emphasizing congestion reduction, transportation options, GHG and air pollutant reduction, and transportation equity.
- A bicycle and pedestrian investment strategy – emphasizing transportation options and healthy modes, and GHG and air pollutant reduction.
- A bottleneck relief investment strategy – emphasizing congestion reduction, air pollution reduction, and economic vitality and freight movement.
- A safety investment strategy – emphasizing safety.

A. McGahan distributed the schedule for the development of the LRTP showing the various LRTP activities, the central vision and the goals and objectives. The MPO is currently asking for the Advisory Council's input on this information. MPO staff will inform the Advisory Council when the Needs Assessment information is ready for review. The remaining schedule is presented through June 2015 when the LRTP is scheduled for adoption.

DISCUSSION:

J. Businger asked that “equitable access” be changed to “equitable and affordable access”. He urged the use of the word “rail” instead of “transit” where applicable as he feels “transit” leads people to think only in terms of inner-city transit rather than inter-city passenger rail.

A. McGahan explained that external travel origins and destinations are included in the modeling which includes people who travel into and out of the MPO region for work or residence. (J. McQueen)

A. McGahan stated that the comment period for input on the Goals and Objectives request for public input is focused on November 14. Discussion and comments on Scenario Planning will happen between late January and March. Financial data is expected to become available in March. This should allow ample time to review and comment on the topic. (C. Porter)

In response to a question from D. D’Eramo pertaining to circumferential corridors, A. McGahan stated that data and analysis will be presented in a chapter on travel characteristics which presents written information on circumferential corridors.

In response to D. D’Eramo’s question on the lack of a category specifically dedicated to freight in the goals and objectives, A. McGahan indicated that one of the LRTP goals is economic development and freight movement and that the Needs Assessment provides information on truck trip density, truck generators and information on rail operators.

P. Nelson asked that the plan look at other centers of employment such as clusters in the suburban areas and not just corridors that center in the Core Area, particularly when reviewing transit oriented development investments, and impacts on mode share. A. McGahan stated that the district-to-district travel data includes auto, transit, bike and pedestrian traffic.

In response to a question from T. Bennett on the varying level of detail emphasis throughout goals and objectives discussion, A. McGahan explained the levels of detail of performance based planning and indicated that such detail may vary in determining performance measures, depending on the target.

The MPO is seeking input on Goals and Objectives before November 14. Advisory Council members can offer individual comments or their comments can be made at the MPO meeting through the Advisory Council Chair.

Public Participation Plan - Pam Wolfe, Manager, Certification Activities

P. Wolfe explained that the public review process of the Public Participation Plan (P3) is coming to a close and that she will discuss some of the history of the plan update and seeks input and ideas on what ought to be included in the plan. The plan is being updated to meet current best practices and standards and to comply with current Federal regulations and requirements.

The P3 Update process began in the spring of 2013 through a public survey that was circulated after the MPO approved the update process. The MPO then researched best practices and Title VI-related provisions. Findings included the discovery that people liked getting information through the MPOinfo email list; **TRANSREPORT**, and public meetings and also liked to submit comments and take surveys through the website. A need for more use of social media and an improved MPO website were two areas of improvement most often suggested.

Key results of the survey of other MPOs revealed the use forums and focus groups similar to the Community Transportation Forum held by the Advisory Council in September. Other interesting ideas and areas of special emphasis included increased use of press releases, Twitter and RSS feeds, taking more surveys, encouraging a process for pre-meeting, public commenting capability and audio recording of public comments.

Recommendations for improvements can be summarized in the areas of making the most of current resources, using contemporary formats for communication, and breaking down barriers to participation.

Ways to make the most of current resources include converting the website news flashes to press releases, seeking the help of public libraries and developing a pre-meeting commenting capability.

Ways to use contemporary formats for communication include creating a Web-based P3; prepare P3 as modules for quicker communication; and using more graphics and graphic design elements in communication materials.

P. Wolfe displayed a graphic developed by staff showing the MPO planning cycle on a concentric-circles calendar and the steps the MPO takes in preparing and organizing its ongoing planning program areas.

Breaking down barriers to participation includes translating more documents; using MPO VI analysis in meeting planning; and consulting with local leaders on language needs and cultural issues.

The different ways the P3 advances the MPO guidelines for public participation include use of clear communications; more graphics; talking to more community leaders; advertising on the website; expanded use of translations; a multi-pronged approach to gathering information; and a continued aim to be contemporary.

DISCUSSION:

D. Montgomery explained that he had previously reviewed the document regarding the role of the Advisory Council, and had offered particular input on the section of the report that pertained to the Advisory Council.

M. Gowing felt a blog might be a good addition to outreach activities.

T. Kadzis wondered if libraries preferred electronic to paper copies of outreach media.

P. Wolfe stated that the electronic version is more efficient and most libraries are electronically modern, but the MPO recognizes that not everyone uses a computer. More outreach to the print media and local access stations will reach many people. M. Gowing also suggested streaming meetings live to connect to people who do not have cable TV.

S. Olanoff felt the representation of the Regional Transportation Advisory Council slice on the planning cycle depicted in the concentric-rings calendar should be called “public input” and that it should be a larger slice.

**Member Take-Away Points; Old Business, New Business,
Member Announcements**

M. Gowing stated that a Transportation Seminar was held recently at Devens with three RTAs present to talk about the Fitchburg Line Corridor. A total of 60 attendees were present, including many legislators from the region.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 4:29 PM.

ATTENDANCE

Agencies (* MPO & other non-voting)

MassRides

Attendee

Catherine Paquette

Municipalities (Voting)

Acton

Cambridge

Canton

Marlborough

Millis

Needham

Quincy

Weymouth

Mike Gowing

Tegin Bennett

William Friel

Walter Bonin

Dom D'Eramo

David Montgomery

Susan C. Kasim

Owen MacDonald

Municipalities (non-Voting) *MPO Member

Boston*

Westwood

Tom Kadzis

Steve Olanoff

Citizen Groups

AACT

Boston Society of Architects

Massachusetts Bus Association

MassBike

MASCO

National Corridors Initiative

Riverside Neighborhood Association

WalkBoston

Mary Ann Murray

Schuyler Larrabee

Mark Sanborn

Chris Porter

Paul Nelson

John Businger

Marilyn Wellons

John McQueen

Guests

Cleo Stoughton

Ed Lowney

Cambridge

Malden Resident

Staff

Pam Wolfe

Anne McGahan

Natalie Raffol

David Fargen