

# **Draft Memorandum for the Record Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting**

## **November 6, 2014 Meeting**

9:05 AM to 9:50 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2&3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

## **Decisions**

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the June 19 and August 7, 2014 UPWP Committee meetings

## **Materials**

Materials for this meeting included:

- A copy of the meeting agenda
- Draft minutes for the June 19 and August 7, 2014, UPWP Committee meetings
- The FFY 2014 UPWP Fourth Quarter Spending Report and Schedule/Staff Assignment Table
- A schedule outlining MPO certification document development activities during between Fall 2014 and Summer 2015

## **Meeting Agenda**

### **1. Introductions**

Sreelatha Allam, Chair, Unified Planning Work Program Committee (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) called the meeting to order at approximately 9:05 PM. UPWP Committee members, MPO staff, and other attendees introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 9.)

## **2. FFY 2014 UPWP Fourth Quarter Status Reports**

### ***Spending Report***

Michelle Scott, MPO staff, reviewed the structure of the report. It provides information on federal fiscal year (FFY) 2014 UPWP budgets and total budgets for projects that are in the FFY 2014 UPWP, as well as those that have been carried over from FFY 2013 or otherwise added during the federal fiscal year. M. Scott reminded the members that some projects extend over multiple years. If UPWP Committee members see a project with FFY 2014 expenditures that are in excess of its FFY 2014 budget, she encouraged them to look to the far right columns of the table to see if the project is within its total budget, of which the FFY 2014 budget may be only a part,. For these projects, FFY 2014 expenditures may not have conformed to projections. She added that a new State Planning and Research (SPR) Program contract became active in April. Because of this, some projects may have multiple entries on the report: one for 2013-14, and one for 2014-15.

Tom Kadzis, City of Boston, asked what happens to unexpended amounts associated with project budgets. Robin Mannion, MPO Deputy Executive Director, explained that MPO staff bill project-related expenses to contracts. Project budgets reflect the funding authority given to the MPO staff by the client. Balances of project budgets remain within the contract; clients would have the ability to keep that money. T. Kadzis commented that he saw a possibility that MPO-funded projects that come in under budget could free up allocated funding.

Dennis Crowley, Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) noted that there was \$26,200 in the budget for the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program, and that this money had been spent out. He asked about the level of requests that the MPO had received for the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program, and whether more money would be needed for this program in future years. Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director, explained the number of requests for projects through this program has dwindled in recent years. MPO and MAPC staff has had to work hard to find candidate projects for the program. Eric Bourassa, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, noted that the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Programs projects are smaller than other UPWP studies (approximately \$10,000 or less) and that they focus on staff conducting site visits, providing advice and putting a technical memo together, as opposed to conducting a full scale study. He noted that communities may be more interested in larger scale studies.

D. Crowley noted that a project had recently been conducted in Medway at Route 109 and Trotter Drive; K. Quackenbush and E. Bourassa noted that it was likely that this project had been funded by the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program. (Follow-up research confirmed that it was a Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program project.) D. Crowley noted that the products of this study have been very useful to the Town of Medway. He asked whether there was limited advertising for the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program, or that communities were just letting the opportunity pass. K. Quackenbush and E. Bourassa agreed that the MPO could do more to publicize the program. E. Bourassa explained that he has been coordinating with CTPS Traffic Analysis and Design staff on program solicitation, and has already been forwarding information on candidate projects to MPO staff.

D. Crowley said that in the past he had supported more funding being added to this program, but if cities and towns are not requesting projects, then maybe that funding level isn't warranted. E. Bourassa said he felt that the program was well-planned for this year and that this FFY 2015 UPWP amount was not more than what was programmed in FFY 2014. K. Quackenbush said that it's possible that there has been a lull in the number of requests for this program, and reiterated that more ways to get the word out need to be explored. E. Bourassa noted that generally, to provide strong recommendations, more data collection, analysis, staff time, and money are needed, but this program started as a way for MAPC and CTPS to provide SWAT-team type advice. D. Crowley said that staff made a great presentation and suggested ideas that the Town had not previously considered, and that the Town was now moving forward with exploring various options. E. Bourassa suggested that a follow-up write-up describing action taken on study recommendations could be beneficial, and K. Quackenbush added that this could be incorporated into marketing materials.

S. Allam asked whether the planning boards in MPO communities have been contacted regarding this program. E. Bourassa noted that members of the MAPC subregions are contacted. During the last round of subregional outreach meetings, discussions have focused on the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update, but in the future programs like the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program will be discussed in detail.

M. Scott reminded members that in FFY 2014, funding for the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program had been reduced as part of the August 2014 UPWP budget adjustment, as demand for projects had been low and funding was needed for other MPO activities. E. Bourassa noted that MAPC had just finished a

commuter rail station parking utilization study in Littleton and used the license plates to see where people are coming from. This information has been used to generate a variety of recommendations, including on potential shuttle bus service and off-site parking, which are being discussed with the MBTA. M. Scott reminded the group that the FFY 2014 Fourth Quarter spending report only reflects CTPS dollars, but MAPC also contributes money to this Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program. The budget for this program in FFY 2015 is approximately \$69,000, which is close to what was programmed in FFY 2014.

S. Allam asked how many projects could be conducted with the amount of money in the program at the end of FFY 2014 (\$26,200 in CTPS funding plus an additional \$30,000 amount in MAPC funding). E. Bourassa said this depends on the project scopes. K. Quackenbush added that early Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program projects had cost around \$5,000, but the costs for individual projects has increased over time. He added that marketing efforts could focus on bringing this project back to its roots.

#### ***Schedule/Staff Assignment Table***

M. Scott reviewed the structure of the report, which describes projects that CTPS staff expects to work on between October and December 2014. For listed projects, it provides information on the project budget, expenditures to date, the project schedule for the next twelve months (including any recent adjustments), and the expected number of days of staff time that will be spent across CTPS groups. She mentioned several report highlights:

- Recently completed projects include the FTA Formula Funding Grant Review (agency-funded) project, the Central Artery/Tunnel Project Backcasting (agency-funded) project, and the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority Technical Assistance (MPO-funded) project.
- Workscopes for several MPO-funded projects that were programmed in the FFY 2015 UPWP are expected to be presented this quarter. These include the Priority Corridors for LRTP Needs Assessment – FFY 2015, Addressing Safety, Mobility, and Access on Subregional Priority Roadways – FFY 2015, Bicycle Network Gaps: Feasibility Evaluations, Fairmount Line Station Access Analysis, Low Cost Improvements to Freeway Bottlenecks, Title VI Service Equity Analysis, and Safety Analysis at Intersections Near MAGIC Schools projects.

- This quarter, work scopes for several non-MPO-funded projects are expected to be presented, including the Foxborough JARC Grant Feasibility Study, Strategic Surveying and Cape Flyer projects, and the next installment of a Massport Technical Assistance contract.
- Two new people are expected to be hired in the Traffic Analysis and Design Group, and the report reflects the recent hire in the Certification Activities Group.

Steve Olanoff, Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC) asked about the status of the hiring process for new staff in the Traffic Analysis and Design Group. K. Quackenbush explained that the two positions include a general planner (to replace Mark Abbott, who is now the Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager), and a bicycle and pedestrian planner. MPO staff is in the process of recruiting and interviewing for these positions, and has made an offer to a candidate for one of them. MPO staff is also seeking an additional staff person for the Transportation Systems Analysis Group, as one of the people in that group has filled the group manager position, but MPO staff does not expect to hire anyone in that group this quarter. MPO staff is also actively recruiting for a staff person in the Transit Service Planning Group, also not expected this quarter.

S. Olanoff asked whether MPO staff expects to be able to bring new hires in the Traffic Analysis Design group quickly up to speed to be able to work on projects. K. Quackenbush explained that the staff time estimates for the new hires (which are assumptions made as of the end of the fourth quarter of FFY 2014) account for when they are expected to participate in projects.

K. Quackenbush added that the hiring process to replace staff can be difficult, especially when CTPS competes against other organizations that can pay more, but said that he is confident that the Traffic Analysis and Design group's general planner position will be filled soon. CTPS also has several candidates for the bicycle and pedestrian planner position. S. Olanoff asks how recruitment tends to go, and whether good, interested applicants get better offers elsewhere. K. Quackenbush explained that this does happen, but that CTPS gets good people and CTPS is particularly good at attracting applicants at the entry level. While CTPS may be less competitive when hiring staff with more experience, the organization offers good benefits, and applicants like the working environment and the type of work.

### 3. FFY 2016 UPWP Development Process

M. Scott described the structure of the Certification Documents Schedule, which describes LRTP, TIP and UPWP development activities that will occur between Fall 2014 and Summer 2015. She explained that this year is an unusual one in that the MPO will be developing the update to the next LRTP in addition to the TIP and UPWP.

M. Scott described various aspects of the relationship between the LRTP and UPWP:

- First, the vision, goals, and objectives that are established as part of the LRTP get carried through all MPO activities, including the UPWP. For example, the FFY 2015 UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects included information about the ways that proposed projects would advance the visions and policies of the LRTP. This development cycle, the MPO will be looking at both the visions and policies of the existing plan—*Paths to a Sustainable Region*—as well as the visions, goals, and objectives that are being developed for the LRTP update.
- Second, the LRTP will lay the groundwork for the MPO's performance-based planning practice, which is required by MAP-21, the federal transportation authorization act. The UPWP will continue to play an important role in ensuring that the MPO has the right information for monitoring the MPO's performance on achieving its goals.
- Third, the adopted LRTP will describe the approach that the MPO will use to invest in the region's transportation system over the next 25 years. The UPWP will support studies to advance the types of transportation investments the MPO seeks to make, in order to help the MPO achieve the targets established in the performance-based planning process.

M. Scott explained that the MPO is at the outset of the FFY 2016 UPWP Development process. MPO staff has almost completed its first round of subregional outreach meetings. While the discussions at these meetings pertain mostly to the LRTP, the TIP and the UPWP are also discussed. The last meeting will be held this evening in the Minuteman Advisory Group for Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) subregion. At the MPO meeting later this morning, MPO staff will describe some of the feedback they received, including reactions to the proposed LRTP visions, goals, and objectives and information on transportation needs. Examples of needs include problem corridor and intersection locations, the availability of transit service in suburban communities, and issues related to reverse commuting. M. Scott explained that this outreach information is a good resource for developing the UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects.

To develop the FFY 2016 UPWP Universe of Proposed New projects MPO staff is also looking back at past project proposals, public comments, and other information. In early calendar 2015, MPO staff will present a draft Universe to the committee for discussion. Discussion of the Universe will continue into March, and when MPO staff receives the budget information for the FFY 2016 UPWP. The densest concentration of UPWP Committee meetings will likely occur in March and April.

#### **4. Action Item: Approval of Minutes from UPWP Committee Meetings**

This item, initially agenda item 2, was moved until later in the meeting when more UPWP Committee members were present.

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 19, 2014 UPWP Committee meeting was made by E. Bourassa and seconded by S. Olanoff. The motion carried.

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 7, 2014 UPWP Committee meeting was made by E. Bourassa and seconded by Tom Bent, Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville). The motion carried.

#### **5. Member Items**

S. Allam asked about the status of the MPO's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. M. Scott explained that this activity is supported in the Transportation Equity/Environmental Justice Program within the UPWP. She said that Alicia Wilson of the MPO staff had been working on this plan. K. Quackenbush explained that he had checked in with Alicia on the status of the plan recently; MPO staff is working towards getting the plan out, but he was unsure of the specific timing. S. Allam noted that MassDOT has requested that all MPOs have a 30-day public review and comment period for the draft plan.

E. Bourassa suggested that if any members of the UPWP Committee have study ideas, that they send them to M. Scott in advance of the next UPWP Committee meeting, to avoid a rush in later phases of the UPWP development cycle.

S. Allam suggested that there be outreach to communities regarding the Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program. S. Olanoff suggested that that a list of the various programs for which communities can suggest topics or locations be sent out to MPO region communities. K. Quackenbush agreed that this is a good idea; while MPO staff does not seek requests for all programs in the UPWP, staff does need suggestions for some. Studies conducted as part of these smaller scale programs could also be explored in more detail as part of larger UPWP studies. S. Olanoff also

suggested that staff provide information on the amount of money available in each program and on the likelihood of applicants getting a project, in order to help them make decisions about what programs to pursue. K. Quackenbush noted that any proactivity from communities on particular study locations and topics is welcomed, as MPO staff seeks locations for study where recommendations are likely to be implemented.

M. Scott mentioned that MPO staff will be conducting TIP and UPWP Development Sessions. At these events, MPO staff gives brief presentations on the TIP and UPWP, and then talk with attendees about TIP projects or study ideas of interest. MPO staff also brings information about the Community Transportation Technical Assistance and Livable Community Workshop programs to these meetings. At the sessions, MPO staff talks with attendees about their ideas, and suggests the types of programs that might be best for them to pursue. S. Olanoff emphasized the importance of making these events interesting and making the discussions less technical.

## **6. Next Meeting**

M. Scott explained that the next meeting will cover the next set of quarterly reports and the draft UPWP Universe of Proposed New Projects. This meeting will likely take place in late January or early February.

## **7. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by E. Bourassa and seconded by S. Olanoff. The motion carried.



## Attendance

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### Members

### Representatives and Alternates

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At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
City of Boston (Boston Redevelopment Authority)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Sreelatha Allam
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Southwest Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Dennis Crowley
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/NVCC)	Steve Olanoff

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### Other Attendees Affiliation

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Arthur Strang	Cambridge resident
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### MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

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Karl Quackenbush, Executive Director  
Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director  
Michelle Scott

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