



## Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

### April 8, 2015 Meeting

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

### Draft Meeting Summary

#### Introductions

Mike Gowing, Chair (Acton) 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—*Mike Gowing, Chair*

M. Gowing stated that recent MPO meeting discussions will be covered in the today's presentation by the MPO staff.

#### Minutes

Approval of the minutes for the November and December 2014 Advisory Council meetings was postponed to a future meeting.

#### Long Range Transportation Plan Update – *Anne McGahan, LRTP Manager, and Scott Peterson, Director, Technical Services, MPO Staff*

##### PART I - Scenario Planning

A. McGahan briefly reviewed the October, 2014, presentation to the Advisory Council where she presented information on the development of the LRTP Goals and Objectives and the Needs Assessment. The Metropolitan Boston Region Handbook (*Charting Progress to 2040: Developing the Boston Region's Next LRTP*) was distributed as an aid to following the development the LRTP ([click here](#)). The latest work in the four steps involved in the development of the LRTP will be covered today. The first step, the Goals and Objectives, was finalized in March, 2015.

The second step was to conduct the Needs Assessment. The LRTP supports a web-based version of the Needs Assessment which documents the transportation system, travel characteristics and socioeconomic information in the region. This information is analyzed to produce a set of priority transportation needs in the region.

Scenario Planning is the third step involved in compiling the LRTP followed by finalizing the document.

The discussion on scenario planning began last fall with the formulation of the goals and objectives and the consideration of the MPO focus on congestion reduction or capacity management as emphasis areas. A handout was created to guide the MPO members through the process ([click here](#)). The policy objective needing clarification under both the capacity management and the mobility goal weighed the benefits of giving priority to a congestion reduction program that would involve spending on large, Major Infrastructure projects on major arterials and express highways, or spending on smaller-scale, Operations and Management-type projects and programs as a way to manage capacity.

Four LRTP scenarios that were compared in the scenario planning were discussed: The 2040 No Build Scenario – which assumes no improvements to the transportation network other than projects that are under construction, advertised, or in the first year to the TIP. This scenario is used as the base case comparison when reviewing the other scenarios.

The Current LRTP Scenario would program funds in the future in the same proportions as the previous ten years. The Operations and Management (O&M) scenario would focus on lower cost improvements such as intersection improvements and Complete Street solutions. The High Capital Investment Scenario (HC) includes a high percentage of high-cost capital improvements such as interchange and major bottleneck reconstruction.

The three scenarios were analyzed in terms of the allocation of 25 years of projected funds to five programs. A graphic presentation was distributed to explain the programs and the ways they can potentially address the MPO's goals and objectives.

S. Peterson presented information on the results and conclusions of the scenario planning. In conducting the analysis of the four scenarios a number of performance measures were used that are central to the goals of the MPO. A scenario results matrix was used to track how well the three scenarios compare along an index of values associated with the goals and visions. Comparisons represent various projected values of a given scenario based on the mix of program outcomes like high crash locations or vehicle hours traveled that are associated with a given goal.

The O&M scenario, which focused on Complete Streets and Intersection Improvement, came out the highest regarding the Safety goal area, as it addressed more high crash locations.

The O&M scenario also scored the best in the Miles of Improved Substandard Pavement measurement based, on the number of projects that were addressed in the System Presentation program goal area.

In Mobility Measures, all three scenarios tracked in the same magnitude along the Vehicle Hours and Vehicle Miles Travelled scale. The types of projects represented by the O&M Scenario resulted in the largest change in the VHT measure, but the High Cap (HC) Scenario resulted in the largest change in VMT.

Although none of the Scenarios focused on transit, O&M proposed some small transit improvements in the form of park and ride facilities and 'first-mile/last-mile' connections. The O&M and the LRTP scenarios showed some change but it was very small. The HC scenario showed a negative impact on transit.

The last measure of review under the Capacity Management/Congestion Reduction goal considered the shift in Non-Motorized trips. Although the O&M shift was small, the scenario reflected the largest change of the three scenarios. Similarly, when reviewing the performance measure for the Clean Air/Clean Communities MPO goal, the reduction in kilograms of CO<sup>2</sup> was small but it did slightly favor the HC scenario.

The Transportation Equity goal was reviewed in terms of the number of projects in Title VI areas. Projects were selected based on where they were located and the populations they served. The O&M served 180 locations compared to 53 locations under the HC scenario and 88 locations served under the LRTP scenario. The same trend occurred under the performance measures for the MPO's Economic Vitality goal of placing projects in targeted development areas for economic improvement.

Based on the goals and the scenarios evaluations, the O&M serves more of the MPO's goals than the other scenarios with more projects in more areas than other scenarios tested.

A. McGahan continued to explain the discussions at the MPO and the recommendations they are moving toward. Based on the conclusions from scenario planning, staff recommended that the MPO not adopt the objective of giving priority to an HC, congestion reduction pattern of planning and programming. The staff instead recommended adopting a revised objective: To emphasize capacity management through low-cost investments and give priority to projects that focus on lower-cost O&M-type improvements such as intersection improvements and Complete Streets solutions. This goal was adopted by the MPO.

## **DISCUSSION (PART I)**

In response to a question (D. Montgomery), A. McGahan explained that the CO<sup>2</sup> calculations for the scenarios include air quality measurements for the period after the projects are completed, not including construction impacts.

A. McGahan explained that the cost of each of the scenarios presented was the same, but the mix and the number of projects vary in each scenario (T. Read). She added that the HC and the O&M scenarios include only highway projects with the exception of transit-type projects implemented in the Community Transportation/Parking programs.

A member questioned the ability to capture the shifts to transit/non-motorized modes (T. Bennett) and was concerned about the confidence placed in the Non-Motorized Trips performance measure. S. Peterson indicated that the types of improvements included sidewalk improvements and bike lanes. C. Porter was concerned that the estimates for the non-motorized shifts were very conservative, but a full build-out of Complete Streets would easily double or triple bicycling mode share which has been observed in the past few years.

S. Peterson explained that the same tool (the regional model) was applied to all scenarios, so the magnitude of the mode shift change would be applied to the scenarios equally, and as expected, the O&M scores the best on the Non-Motorized Trips measure.

In response to a suggestion that more current non-motorized data be used (J. McQueen) as it becomes available when improvement projects are completed, A. McGahan stated that starting with the Needs Assessment, improved data collection methods in the performance-based planning approach, will enhance data availability.

S. Peterson stated that the MPO staff has a bicycle/pedestrian specialist who will be reaching out to different groups to get a better understanding of what data is being collected and what type of information might better inform the tools that are used to predict the shifts.

M. Gowing noted that the use of scenario planning represents a huge change in how the MPO programs spending; away from congestion management and towards the complete streets-type of funding. He also noted that in analyzing highway capacity there are some nice tools online.

M. Wellons felt the low numbers on mode shift might be too heavily reliant on demographic information and that long-term projections for the region depend on retaining young workers and this dynamic may have an impact on the relatively small number of non-motorized trips.

B. McGaw was concerned that O&M might be perceived as low-capital since the competing scenario is called High Capital. He did not see conceptual difference in projects like intersection improvements and interchange reconstruction other than cost.

A. McGahan explained that the distinction is based on low-cost and high-cost projects. Adding capacity involves adding a travel lane whereas intersection improvement projects are not necessarily to add capacity but rather improve the traffic flow.

S. Peterson said a UPWP study was done recently looking at locations that provided the best opportunity to do that. One of the HC scenario projects recommends the installation of an HOV lane from Somerville to Woburn on I-93. He said that another HC project is to improve Route 3 South by expanding capacity. Part of the HOV study looked at applications in other U.S. cities.

## **PART II - LRTP Finances**

There will be less funding available over the course of the LRTP; the first 20 year period of the LRTP highway funding shows a shortfall compared to the previous LRTP funding cycle. A reason for this is that a funding category called "Major Investment" funds by MassDOT was removed which would have been distributed to the MPOs as target money. The last plan allowed projected revenue growth of 3% per year, but now, the allowable growth rate for project revenue is 1.5 % per year. This halves the assumptions on available funding.

The second time-band shows a large block of uncommitted funding due to the MassDOT's decision to fund the Canton Interchange project with State funding, making more funding available for Target funding.

A. McGahan presented a slide on the proposed transit funding in comparison to the last LRTP. The projected funds available for programming transit improvements follow the similar reduction in highway funding sources.

## **DISCUSSION (PART II)**

A. McGahan described the naming of the High Capital Investment Scenario as one in which many high cost, capital improvement projects are included as opposed to the Operations and Management Scenario in which there are no high-cost capital improvement projects. (R. McGaw)

In response to a question from a member (M. Wellons), A. McGahan explained that the project inflation rate was changed to 4 percent as called for by FHWA after a review of the MassDOT project inflation experience. In response to a question from a member (J. McQueen), A. McGahan explained that the finance plan addresses state of good repair and that the MPO does not have control over the MBTA's Program for Mass Transit (PMT). The transit projects in the State of Good Repair are listed in the universe of

projects once they register in the state financial plan. The MBTA's PMT, its long-range planning document, is now being developed; so the listing of those projects is not available for this LRTP.

A. McGahan explained that Performance Based Planning is starting to come together in helping to plan for competing projects with limited funds. The MPO's Federal partners have requirements for increased coordination with transit and highway agencies. The goal of aligning the review dates of the financial plans of the various agencies is being advanced.

### **PART III - UNIVERSE OF PROJECTS LIST**

A. McGahan distributed the LRTP Universe of Projects which had been distributed to the MPO at the April 2 MPO meeting. The list includes projects that are listed in the previous LRTP, *Paths to a Sustainable Region*; projects that add capacity to the system or cost more than \$20M; and projects that do not add capacity to the system and cost under \$20M.

The \$20M amount is a threshold project cost for inclusion in the plan which is recommended by federal guidance. The list was developed using the last LRTP Universe of Projects list, the current TIP Universe of Projects list, and recommendations from CTPS studies, CTPS staff, MassDOT, MPO members and the public. The list is sorted by investment type.

Projects from the Universe list will be evaluated and presented at the next MPO meeting for consideration of inclusion in the LRTP.

MPO staff will present two alternatives for consideration at the next MPO meeting. The first alternative is the continuation of the current LRTP, funding all the projects that are currently funded in region. The second alternative will be recommendations for emphasizing the lower cost O&M-type improvements based on their project evaluations.

A. McGahan distributed an LRTP Development Schedule. The revised schedule extends the final endorsement by one month. Currently, on May 28, the MPO is scheduled to vote on the recommended draft to be released for public comment on June 1 at the same time as the TIP and UPWP. The final MPO endorsement is scheduled for July 23.

### **DISCUSSION (PART III)**

A. McGahan explained the Universe list is not prioritized; rather, it represents all projects, not just those being submitted to the TIP. (D. Montgomery)

In response to a question on adding capacity (R. McGaw) A. McGahan explained that the costs reflects total project costs including right-of-way (R. McGaw)

In response to a question on next steps for the RTAC to provide input (C. Porter), A. McGahan stated that the draft set of projects will be available in the few weeks, and the Advisory Council can review the project evaluation worksheets to consider how projects were chosen.

A. McGahan explained that the shifting of the goals and objectives from the previous LRTP was not extremely large and will not result in significant changes in evaluation scores for projects that were scored in the previous plan (D. Montgomery). She stated that new evaluation scores could reorient the relative placing of projects.

C. Porter and M. Gowing recommended that the LRTP Committee meet prior to the next Advisory Council meeting to review and discuss the LRTP document and consider the next steps in composing the Advisory Council's comment letter to the MPO.

### **Old Business, New Business and Member Announcements**

J. McQueen noted that Walk Scores were determined nationally and Boston rated 3rd most walkable city, behind New York City, and San Francisco.

Acton submitted a complete streets plan that placed 6<sup>th</sup> in the country.

D. Montgomery noted that the Governor's MBTA Task Force has released its findings and is available at the Governor's website.

### **Take Away; M. Gowing, Chair**

The LRTP Committee will meet prior to the next meeting for discussing and organizing comments on the draft LRTP document. Individual Advisory Council member entity comments on the LRTP on projects of particular interest to that member entity should be sent to the MPO by the individual member entity, and it will be received in addition to the Advisory Council's comment letter.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.

## ATTENDANCE

### **Municipalities (Voting)**

Acton  
Belmont  
Cambridge  
Needham

Weymouth

Mike Gowing  
Robert McGaw  
Tegin Bennett  
David Montgomery  
Rhain Hoyland  
Owen MacDonald

### **Citizen Groups (Voting)**

AACT  
APA - Massachusetts Chapter  
MassBike  
MASCO  
National Corridors Initiative  
Riverside Neighborhood Association  
WalkBoston

Mary Ann Murray  
John (Tad) Read  
MassBike  
Paul Nelson  
John Businger  
Marilyn Wellons  
John McQueen

### **Other (Non-Voting)**

MassDOT - Aeronautics Division  
Westwood

Steve Rawding  
Steve Olanoff

### **Guests**

Susan Ringler  
John MacDougall

350MA - Transportation  
350MA

### **Staff**

Matt Archer  
David Fargen  
Maureen Kelly

Anne McGahan  
Scott Peterson