



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

December 14, 2016, Meeting

**3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
Boston, MA**

Meeting Summary

Introductions

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

Minutes - November 9, 2016

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 9 meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

Green Line Extension (GLX) Project Update; David Mohler, MassDOT

D. Mohler reviewed the current budget and financing status. The estimated budget for the redesigned project is \$2.3B. Additional funding commitments of \$232M have been secured from the Boston Region MPO (\$157M), the City of Somerville (\$50M) and the City of Cambridge (\$25M).

The procurement status of the project will proceed as a Design-Build (DB) contract instead of a Construction Manager General Contractor contract. Upcoming milestones include issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for construction services on December 15, 2016, followed by a Statement of Qualifications from potential DB entities due on January 26, 2017. A Draft Request for Proposal (RFP) is expected to go to a short-list of bid teams in March. In addition, an RFQ/RFP for new professional services contract to support the GLX team is being developed and will be operational prior to the review of the DB proposals.

The FTA status of the project has progressed to the point of a sign-off on the project redesign and a preliminary review of the associated budget assumptions. A new Project Management Plan will be provided to the FTA before the end of the year [2016]. The Risk Re-assessment meeting in late January with FTA and the MBTA will address project risks and assumptions prior to achieving an approved budget from the FTA.

D. Mohler summarized recent community and stakeholder outreach activities. A briefing with elected officials in November was followed by a community meeting in Somerville on December 7. The meetings covered GLX project status and also served to introduce John Dalton, the new program manager for the project.

The GLX team met with Friends of the Community Path to discuss their proposals for an extended bike path. The team also scheduled a community meeting in Medford on December 14. On December 8, the City of Somerville Board of Aldermen agreed to support the project with \$50M in funding.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

In response to a question from T. Bennett, D. Mohler explained that the makeup of the GLX project management team is intended to include John Dalton, Program Manager, and three deputy positions. He also noted that a recent allocation of earmark funds of \$5M to the GLX Project is included in the \$157M from the Boston Region MPO listed in the additional \$232M in funding commitments.

In response to a member's question on reviewing the RFQ and RFP at the same time, D. Mohler stated that the project budget needs to be in place before advancing to Final Design-Build Procurement because of the significant cost for design teams to bid on this project (M. Gowing). If the Risk Re-Assessment group identifies costs that are higher than the current \$2.3B estimate, then the project and its total cost would need to be re-evaluated.

In response to a question on the status of the Community Path, D. Mohler said the current Community Path is a re-designed, less-expensive path, with its final connection to Lechmere Station designed as 'on-road'. Friends of the Community Path (FCP) offered a re-design that did not meet certain project parameters and it was not accepted. An alternative design that conforms to GLX Project parameters may possibly be made by FCP. (J. McQueen)

In response to a member's question, D. Mohler stated that several months ago, MassDOT issued a retrospective report identifying problems associated with the project. One problem was in selecting a procurement method that had not been used before which led to some staff readiness issues. In addition, the mix between MBTA employees and consultants was imbalanced with few MBTA employees managing many consultants. This will be realigned in the new contract. (D. Montgomery)

In response to a member's question on matching local funding, D. Mohler stated that the local match for the \$2.3B GLX Project comes from the commitments from the Boston Region MPO and the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville. The FTA and the Commonwealth have committed about \$1B each. (S. Olanoff)

In response to a member's question on anticipated changes resulting from a new presidential administration, D. Mohler explained that a fully executed full-funding grant is in place with the federal government; he believes there is no reason that these contracts will not be honored. (P. Nelson)

Prioritization of Dedicated Bus Lanes; Scott Hamwey, MassDOT

Work on dedicated bus lanes is being addressed under the support of Focus40, the MBTA's long-range capital plan, previously called the PMT (Program for Mass Transit). The long range plan is updated every five years. Focus40 is putting more attention on bus mode than PMTs have in the past. Bus riders account for 30 percent of transit passengers, carrying more than any of the individual rapid transit lines and three times as many Commuter Rail riders. In spite of these numbers, bus service gets less public attention and advocacy than other transit and commuter options. Buses carry more low-income and minority population than other services which makes it a mode that MassDOT wants to focus on.

Another reason to focus on bus service is the limited funding available for major capital investments than in prior generations. With less money available to undertake large-scale projects like the GLX Project, buses will need to be a big part of improving transit services in the Boston area.

Buses require that State and municipal partners work together as the MBTA controls the operators, buses and garages while the cities and towns control most of the streets and intersections and curb and sidewalk use. A big part of the Focus40 planning process will be to work with the municipal partners in the MBTA region.

The goal of building dedicated bus lanes is to develop an improvement program that could be applied across the system yet does not experience the drawbacks of the modified bus rapid transit (BRT) projects already in place. Examples of BRT lines include the Washington Street Silver Line service in Boston; the Transit-way Tunnel in the Seaport; the proposed Urban Ring; 28X; the Essex Street Bus Lane; and the Silver Line Gateway which is now underway in Chelsea. Recurring problems with these BRTs include on-street capacity, high construction costs, and limited land availability for expansion.

Early on in Focus40, the MBTA partnered with CTPS to develop a system based on three steps. The team first identified high transit demand corridors where there is high ridership already. Second, they looked where there were high rates of delay and traffic congestion.

Third, they identified places where 25 to 50 percent of the people on a roadway are already using buses.

A map depicting high ridership shows where there are more than 1,500 bus passengers per day in at least one direction. Looking at roadway segments (on which several routes may operate) not simply single bus routes, the team discovered that high demand routes are well distributed throughout the region.

The next step of the process identified road segments with congestion related delays. CTPS used travel time data to measure passenger hours of delay per mile compared to 'free-flow' times, if there were no congestion or delay. As an example, a bus traveling a corridor at 18 MPH takes 3.3 minutes to travel one mile. If the bus were traveling at a free-flow speed of 30 MPH, it would take 2 minutes to travel one mile. The 18 MPH speed represents a rate of delay of 1.3 minutes per mile compared to free-flow. The number of passengers on the bus on the trip then calculates out to average weekday passenger delay. The results are mapped with the outliers showing where the problem congestion is the greatest. Some of the serious areas experience delays from 60 passenger hours per mile (PHPM) up to over 200 PHPM.

Areas that show great congestion include Massachusetts Avenue from Central Square to Boston University Hospital; Ruggles Station to Dudley Station; Warren Street to Grove Hall; Huntington Avenue beyond the trolley reservation out to South Huntington; and Washington Street in Roslindale.

The final stage of the process was to review where the percent of people on the roadway that are in buses is high relative to other modes. This required amassing much local traffic volume data so the effort was focused on those areas where significant delays already existed. S. Hamwey noted that those corridors which experienced greater than 25 percent of people on buses show great opportunities for implementing bus priority lanes.

This analysis was used during the North Washington Street Bridge expansion project to include an inbound bus lane. In addition, street parking between the bridge and Haymarket Station was restricted by the City of Boston to facilitate inbound bus movement. Bus lanes along the entire Route 99 Corridor in Everett were recommended along with other BRT investments over the long term.

Other potential improvements currently being considered include the mile-long stretch of Washington Street from Roslindale Square to Forest Hills which was identified by the City of Boston through its Go Boston planning process; and the City of Cambridge is reviewing Massachusetts Avenue to search ways of making it a more bike and transit-friendly corridor.

S. Hamwey hopes to see that transit corridor congestion reduction becomes a standard design consideration when making improvements to roadways along transit corridors in the future.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

In response to a member's question, S. Hamwey gave a brief history of the 28X BRT project. The MBTA Route 28 is one of the five highest ridership lines on the system and it connects several key neighborhood squares. The project failed to garner sufficient public support to be implemented, although the project had the support of many transit advocate groups as well as support from the MPO and the Advisory Council. The project would have been funded with ARRA funds made available in 2009 had it proceeded. (J. Businger)

S. Hamwey agreed with a member's comment on the support that municipalities bring to many transit corridor improvements. Information developed in the analysis of this project is available to municipalities interested in advancing transit corridor improvements. (D. Montgomery)

T. Bennett affirmed the utility of these studies in identifying transit corridors stating that they help to focus on where to make improvements. The studies can help bring projects to light that might otherwise have been overlooked. She said that at the municipal scale, some smaller corridors which might be good targets for improvement might go unnoticed.

C. Porter noted that on streets with limited right-of-way, there is competition for lanes among the different modes. He asked if all modes are being accommodated, particularly on major corridors like Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge and Boston. S. Hamwey stated that the bicycle advocacy community has been successful in advocating for their cause and may be helpful working with transit advocates in encouraging a better transit outcome where the two groups have shared interests.

S. Hamwey agreed with the suggestion of making incremental changes at the most congested sections along corridors instead of the entire route all at once. (S. Olanoff)

A member asked how data shows that separating buses from a travel lane is preferred to simply increasing bus ridership. S. Hamwey explained that data used to model improving traffic flow show several things: a reduction in absolute travel time savings both in minutes and percentages; reliability of the schedule with less variability in times; and improved information for locating stops. One of the major benefits of keeping buses out of the general travel lane is that both the traffic and the buses experienced faster or more reliable travel times. (T. Laubenstein)

A member asked about the magnitude of projected improvement in increased average speed and reduction in trip times, and the prevalence of traffic signal preemption as an improvement measure. S. Hamwey explained that providing dedicated bus lanes is a way to achieve relatively low-cost improvements including signal preemption. Signal

preemption is another reason to work collaboratively in implementing these improvements. (J. Seward)

S. Hamwey stated that there are limited resources for increased fleet deployment in response to a member's question about doubling the number of bus runs versus assigning a lane. (F. Osman)

S. Hamwey explained that dedicated bus lanes were not considered along major highway corridors like Route 128 as the study focused on areas where the three criteria of existing riders, congestion, and large ridership share were present. (F. Osman)

J. McQueen pointed out that in 2012 Priority Bus Routes were classified and mapped and he asked if these routes were part of the current routes studied. S. Hamwey said that in cases where there was high ridership, which was virtually all of the Priority Bus Routes, and highly congested routes there was overlapping.

A member asked about dealing with bus "platooning" and spreading out existing service. S. Hamwey said the problem could be addressed through operations control but some corridors preclude the ability to run express buses due to congestion. He said there are several tools that could be used to improve travel times including automated fare collection enhancements which will do much to improve trip times. (B. Steinberg)

P. Nelson noted that one of the roles of the Advisory Council is to advise what work items might be included in the UPWP and asked if there might be a follow-on study to the one presented today. S. Hamwey suggested that signal prioritization and signal timing study along selected corridors would be a prospective planning study.

3C Document Development Schedule; Ali Kleyman, CTPS

A. Kleyman explained that every year the MPO allocates over \$500,000 to work on new discrete studies that should take one federal fiscal year to complete. Currently, MPO staff is assembling ideas for new studies that will form the universe of studies. A. Kleyman handed out a brainstorming and discussion guide for formulating ideas for new planning studies to be considered in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

A. Kleyman asked members to send her any planning study ideas by the end of January. The study ideas that are submitted will be discussed by staff internally and with the MPO's UPWP Committee as all new planning studies are considered. The UPWP Committee will meet in mid-February to discuss a universe of projects and in March the studies will be prioritized and ranked. In April the Staff Recommendation for preferred studies will be presented to the MPO and the draft document will then be distributed for public review in June. The document will be prepared for the MPO's endorsement in early to mid-July.

The TIP is on an accelerated schedule this year to try to align it with the development of the MassDOT Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Project evaluations will occur in February resulting in a first-tier list of projects. The staff recommendation will be made in late March and a draft TIP will be released for public review near the end of April. The document is scheduled to be endorsed by the MPO on June 1.

T. Bennett encouraged members to review the handout on brainstorming for proposing planning studies for consideration in the UPWP. A. Kleyman expects the Draft Universe of Planning Projects to be available early on for the Advisory Council's 3C Documents Committee to review.

A. Kleyman said that outreach activities for the TIP and UPWP are underway at the MAPC sub-regional meetings. Topics proposed for planning studies include first-mile/last-mile transportation, community transportation, parking, bicycle planning and autonomous vehicles. As part of the long-range plan, the MPO has set up investment programs to focus on investments in each of the goal areas to ensure that MPO goals are being met. As an example, there will be about \$2M available each year in the TIP for projects that focus on the community transportation, parking and clean air. A. Kleyman explained that finding UPWP planning studies in those targeted program goal areas may facilitate the development of actual projects in the TIP in the next few years.

Chair's Report - T. Bennett

T. Bennett announced that the 3C Document Committee will be forming to handle the upcoming rush of activity associated with the TIP and UPWP development. She encouraged members to consider taking part in this vital committee.

CTPS has hired a new UPWP manager, who will start in mid-January. Also, CTPS recently hired Róisín Foley, who will work as Communications Coordinator.

Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

The FMCB voted to purchase new cars on the Red and Orange lines. (T. Bennett)

T. Laubenstein expressed concern about Commuter Rail schedule changes and the impacts the changes have on mode choice and parking availability.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Attendance

Municipalities - Voting

Acton
Belmont
Cambridge
Marlborough
Millis
Needham
Westwood
Weymouth

Mike Gowing
Robert McGaw
Tegin Bennett
Walter Bonin
Ed Chisholm
David Montgomery
Trevor Laubenstein
Owen MacDonald

Citizen Advocacy Groups - Voting

American Council of Engineering Companies
Association for Public Transportation
Boston Society of Architects
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition
MassBike
MASCO
MoveMassachusetts
National Corridors Initiative
Riverside Neighborhood Association
WalkBoston

Fred Moseley
Barry M Steinberg
Schuyler Larrabee
Jenna Bernabe
Chris Porter
Paul Nelson
Jon Seward
John Businger
Marilyn Wellons
John McQueen

Agencies - Voting

MassRides

Gary St. Fleur

Municipalities Non-Voting

MAGIC
TRIC

Franny Osman
Steve Olanoff

Agencies Non-Voting

MassDOT - Agency

David Mohler; Scott Hamwey

Guests

CrossTown Connect
East Boston Resident

Scott Zadakis
Christopher Blackler

Staff

Lourenço Dantas
Ali Kleyman
Jen Rowe

David Fargen
Matt Archer