

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

February 21, 2019 Meeting

9:00 AM–9:50 AM, Newton City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue,
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Bryan Pounds, Chair, representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the Meeting Summary of the December 6, 2018, meeting

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Meeting Summary of December 6, 2018, meeting
2. Draft federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020 UPWP Universe of Proposed Studies
3. UPWP Study Recommendations Tracking Database Fast Facts Sheet
4. First Quarter FFY 2019 UPWP Progress Reports

Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

Bryan Pounds (MassDOT/UPWP Committee Chair) opened the meeting and members introduced themselves.

2. Public Comments

Joshua Ostroff, Partnerships Director at Transportation for Massachusetts, gave a comment in support of Universe study proposal M-7, Congestion Pricing Sensitivity Analysis. He read a letter from Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA), which is included below as Attachment 1. Tom Bent (City of Somerville) asked which types of congestion pricing T4MA would support; J. Ostroff responded that they would support an analysis of all types, and hoped a potential study would not shy away from politically controversial topics.

3. Action Items

Meeting Summary of December 6, 2018, meeting B. Pounds asked for a motion to approve this Meeting Summary. A member made a motion and another seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Update on the UPWP Study Recommendations Tracking Database— *Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager*

Sandy Johnston (MPO Staff/UPWP Manager) pointed to a handout given to the Committee on the status of data collection on the implementation status of previous MPO recommendations. Staff have made significant progress in gaining data from municipalities since December, but a large number of municipalities—about half—remain non-responsive. A significant percentage of the recommendations that have been reported on have been implemented. Tegin Teich (Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC)/City of Cambridge) asked about the possibility of response bias in the results—whether the municipalities that respond are more likely to have implemented their recommendations. S. Johnston responded that it is not unlikely that there is some response bias, but that some municipalities that are expected to implement a high percentage of their recommendations, such as Boston, have not responded yet. Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) said he’s committed to finishing the response, but the format is proving somewhat challenging, especially the category of “not yet implemented.” A discussion ensued among S. Johnston, B. Pounds, Matt Archer (MPO staff), and other committee members about clarifying the definitions of various implementation status categories in the database. T. Bent suggested borrowing the idea of “percent complete” from construction. T. Teich warned against trying to achieve too much specificity through very exact categories. Karl Quackenbush (MPO Executive Director) pointed out that the core of the task is to measure whether a municipality had taken the MPO staff’s recommendations to heart. Ali Kleyman (Certification Activities Group Manager) pointed out that implementation status can vary dramatically across the length of one of the MPO’s long corridor studies. S. Johnston and M. Archer promised to bring back a revised set of criteria, with greater clarity, to the Committee at a future point. T. Teich suggested making check-ins with municipalities on implementation status a regularly scheduled item. K. Quackenbush noted that *that* is precisely what staff are trying to do with this effort. There was some discussion of when to provide a report to the MPO on the tracking database. B. Pounds noted that he trusts staff’s instincts on when it would no longer be possible to gain usable data from additional municipalities.

5. Introduction to the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2020 UPWP Universe of Potential Studies— *Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager*

S. Johnston gave a recap of the MPO staff's process for developing the Universe of Proposed studies—outreach to Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) subregional groups, municipalities, other stakeholder groups, and transportation equity populations, followed by internal processing and distribution of study concepts. Staff have added two categories to the Universe this year—Transportation Equity and Resilience; both topics were focus areas in the MPO's federal certification review and have been of considerable interest in recent years. S. Johnston also explained the concept of "recurring" studies—studies that occur on a regular basis, either every year or every other year. The discussion today is intended to be an initial review and an opportunity to ask questions. S. Johnston also explained the process for developing the final list of studies to be funded. T. Teich raised the question of whether RTAC would be able to review the proposed studies before the Committee was asked to fill out a survey ranking them. Staff and the Committee discussed a schedule for the Committee to fill out the survey, as well as the format of that survey.

S. Johnston explained the study concepts in the Universe, one category at a time, and committee members were able to ask questions for clarification. Eric Bourassa (MAPC) noted that he had flagged study concept L-2 as possibly having interaction with some scenario planning activities that MAPC would be conducting as part of the update process to its regional plan called MetroCommon. T. Teich wondered if study L-1, (More) Transportation Access Studies of Commercial Business Districts, made sense to fund without the MPO after seeing the results of the first Transportation Access Studies of Commercial Business Districts study, which is funded in the FFY 2019 UPWP. S. Johnston explained that study M-8 is a mash-up of different study suggestions staff had heard in outreach around the Framingham area. B. Pounds remarked that although the Committee typically leaned against funding studies for individual municipalities, this study could be of regional interest.

There was significant discussion on study concept M-7, Congestion Pricing Sensitivity Analysis. B. Pounds noted that as a result of the Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation, MassDOT and MAPC are working on a congestion study. As such, it is MassDOT's position that it would be premature for MPO staff to spend their time on a congestion pricing study while the joint congestion study is still ongoing. E. Bourassa noted that he had initially proposed the study concept before the Commission's report came out. E. Bourassa feels that there has been a lot of heated discussion around the concept of congestion pricing without a lot of research or analysis, and he is interested in the question of what the pricing structure would have to look like to actually modify

behavior. Likewise, he feels that the MPO's Travel Demand Model is the right tool for this work. Also, E. Bourassa stated that since the work would be funded in the FFY 2020 UPWP, the study could in fact follow the initial conclusions of the congestion study. Nicole Freedman (City of Newton) said that she thinks the study is critical and that you cannot study congestion without pricing, because pricing is the biggest lever for behavior change. B. Pounds responded that it is all about the steps being in the right order, but that there might be an opportunity to re-frame the study concept, and he has discussed that with E. Bourassa. From MassDOT's perspective, they need to see results from the first stage of the study before proceeding to the second. K. Quackenbush agreed with E. Bourassa's comment about heated discussions of congestion pricing and felt that there *is* a need for more analytical process. He suggested that while the MPO's four-step model would be decent at the work, the Activity-Based Model (ABM) that staff are developing might be able to do a much better job at analyzing the responses of different market segments to pricing. However, the timeline for having the ABM up and running is uncertain, and there may be a need to wait to conduct the analysis. Scott Peterson (Director of Technical Services) noted that there would also be a need to calibrate inputs correctly, but the ABM would definitely be a superior tool. T. Teich asked if there was a timeline for conducting the MassDOT/MAPC congestion study. B. Pounds responded that there is not. T. Teich argued that the region is already behind in conducting a pricing analysis and putting it off further would not be prudent. B. Pounds noted that without certainty as to the timeline of the congestion study, there might be a need to reframe the study concept. T. Teich then asked if the UPWP was the right place to house this study, given the scale of resources potentially required.

S. Johnston then walked the Committee through the Active Transportation, Land Use, Environment, and Economy, and Roadway/Multimodal Mobility sections of the Universe. With little time remaining, B. Pounds suggested explaining the remaining studies very quickly, and potentially meeting on March 7, 2019, to finish the discussion. Annette Demchur explained study concept T-1 and S. Johnston explained the remaining study concepts in the Transit, Transportation Equity, Resilience, and Other categories of the Universe.

6. Members Items

K. Quackenbush handed out quarterly reports on the UPWP for First Quarter FFY 2019.

7. Next Meeting

B. Pounds said he believed the Committee needed more time to discuss the Universe, and that the Committee was not ready to complete the ranking survey. There was general agreement to hold another meeting on March 7, 2019 in addition to the already

planned meeting on March 21, 2019. In response to questions from several committee members, staff agreed to give rough budget estimates for studies at the meeting on the 7th.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by an MPO Member and seconded by another Member. The motion carried unanimously.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
City of Boston Transportation Department (BTD)	Tom Kadzis
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)	Eric Bourassa
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDot)	Bryan Pounds
Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC)	Tegin Teich
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
City of Newton	Nicole Freedman

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Karl Quackenbush, MPO Executive Director
Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services
Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning
Ali Kleyman, Certification Activities Group Manager
Mark Abbott, Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager
Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager
Matt Archer, Specialist Planner

Other

Joshua Ostroff, Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA)

Attachment 1: Public Comment from Joshua Ostroff, Transportation for Massachusetts

Good morning, I am Josh Ostroff, the Partnerships Director at Transportation for Massachusetts, a statewide coalition of more than 70 organizations dedicated to improving our transportation system. We focus on climate, equity and economic opportunity in all communities.

We support the proposed study titled "Congestion Pricing Sensitivity Analysis" in the Universe of Potential Studies.

As you know, in December 2018 the Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation published an authoritative report that laid out scenarios for the year 2040, with long-term recommendations accompanied by near term steps. One of the future scenarios painted was gridlock, which as forecasting goes, is a safe call.

Of the Commission's 18 recommendations, the third is to "Work with multiple stakeholders to better manage today's traffic congestion – and the congestion challenges of the future."

The report – which uses the term congestion 54 times, in case anyone is keeping score – makes clear that we can't build our way out of congestion; we must manage it, in concert with additional transit capacity. The report also suggests that one effect of technology, such as AVs, may be to actually make congestion worse.

One of the short-term steps suggested is...

"MassDOT should consider various congestion pricing strategies that compel changes in default transportation behaviors on corridors that are or could be served by transit and/or new mobility options. In order to provide an economic market signal, MassDOT should consider and pilot congestion-pricing strategies."

To put this in a current context, congestion pricing, or smarter tolling, is used in some fashion in 9 of the top 10 US metro areas, with Greater Boston being the only one that doesn't. And just last week, we learned that Boston has the worst rush-hour traffic of any region in the country according to the INRIX Global Traffic Scorecard. Whatever the methods by which we measure or forecast congestion, it is urgent that we address this topic.

We fully recognize that this is a politically sensitive area. A fact-based congestion pricing study from CTPS will be a valuable resource for the decision-makers who, must

resolve our congestion crisis in the context of improvements to the entire transportation network, including public transit.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and for your consideration.