

MPO Meeting Minutes

Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

October 15, 2020, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:58 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

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

Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) agreed to the following:

- Approve the minutes of the meeting of September 3, 2020
- Approve the work program for Service Equity and Environmental Analyses for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2022 Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Service Changes
- Approve the work program for Service Equity Analysis for the Green Line Extension Service
- Approve the work program for Green Line Corridor Transformation Study
- Approve the work program for Future of the Curb, Phase 2

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on pages 11–13.

2. Chair's Report—*David Mohler, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Executive Director's Report—*Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff*

T. Teich provided an update on recent MPO staff outreach activities. MPO staff and Metropolitan Planning Area Council (MAPC) hosted the second Inner Core Committee (ICC) Transportation meeting on October 7, 2020, to discuss changes to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) evaluation criteria, and challenges and solutions for transportation in the subregion. T. Teich stated that the next ICC meetings will be on January 13, 2021, April 7, 2021, and July 14, 2021. Details will be posted on the MPO calendar.

T. Teich stated that MPO staff will host two TIP How-To sessions in October.

T. Teich provided an overview of upcoming MPO agendas. An amendment to the federal fiscal year 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (also known as UPWP) is tentatively planned to address adjustments to discrete studies. The MPO Board will be asked to approve two work scopes, one non-MPO funded scope for the Cape Rail Study and one MPO-funded scope regarding scenario planning in preparation for the next Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). There will also be a final presentation regarding the approval of the MPO's Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden policy, and there will be a presentation on the findings of a study intended to offer an alternative to trip generation analysis using the Institute of Transportation Engineers trip generation manual.

4. Public Comments

There were none.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

L. Diggins noted that Matt Genova, MPO staff, presented at the Advisory Council meeting on October 14, 2020, regarding the TIP evaluation criteria revisions. L. Diggins noted that he had been elected to another term as Chair of the Advisory Council. L. Diggins stated that the next Advisory Council meeting would be on November 4, 2020, featuring Michael Bolduc from MassDOT.

7. Action Item: Approval of September 3, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes—*Barbara Rutman, MPO Staff*

1. [MPO Meeting Minutes 09-03-2020](#)

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of September 3, 2020, was made by MAPC (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane). The motion carried.

8. Discussion: MBTA Prioritization Approach for SFY 2022 Service Changes—*Samantha Silverberg and Laurel Paget-Seekins, MBTA Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. [MBTA Forging Ahead](#)

L. Paget-Seekins gave an overview of *Forging Ahead*, the MBTA's effort to focus its operating and capital resources. Despite budget shortfalls as a result of the pandemic, frequent and reliable transit service for those who depend on the MBTA is of primary concern. She stated that the MBTA is evaluating all internal spending, assessing capital projects, reallocating a limited amount of funds from the capital budget to the operating budget, defining essential service, and determining the costs needed to run those services. L. Paget-Seekins stated that ridership has dropped significantly since the pandemic started and the MBTA needs to adapt to account for social distancing concerns, and the possibility that ridership will not return to pre-COVID-19 levels for some time. L. Paget-Seekins stated that the MBTA is opening a dialogue with riders, businesses, and other stakeholders to prioritize service and support the recovery of businesses and communities by rebuilding service as needed. She stated that the MBTA is looking at the internal budget before considering service reductions. L. Paget-Seekins described the framework the MBTA is using to define core essential services. The MBTA is considering where high proportions of transit critical populations live in order to prioritize equity in any service changes. She stated that the MBTA plans to release service packages in November, and will hold 12 virtual public meetings through December 2, 2020. Online feedback tools can be found at mbta.com/ForgingAhead.

S. Silverberg described the impact of the pandemic on the MBTA's capital planning. S. Silverberg stated that the MBTA is looking at the capital budget to see where funds can be reallocated, and a TIP amendment will be needed. S. Silverberg reviewed planned reallocations, noting a recent American Public Transportation Association policy brief showing that transit agencies across the country are dealing with budget gaps and possible service cuts, staff furloughs, and changes to ongoing or planned capital projects. S. Silverberg stated that one of the overarching principles for capital reallocation is to maintain separation of the capital and operating budgets. S. Silverberg stated that the MBTA is pursuing parallel processes to reallocate funds and seek new funding sources. The goal of seeking additional funding is to find a strategy for external financing to minimize the impact of revenue loss on the long-term capital program.

S. Silverberg stated that preliminary analysis shows that most of the funding in the one-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is currently committed on active contracts. The MBTA plans to advertise an additional eight construction or vehicle procurement projects before the end of the calendar year. A successful scenario will likely be a combination of deferring projects not yet started and modifying projects already underway. S. Silverberg stressed that capital planning decision making will never compromise safety. In addition to safety, maintenance, accessibility, capacity, amenities, and expansion are key considerations. There are 10 meetings scheduled through February 2021, to discuss the next steps for capital reallocation.

Discussion

B. Kane acknowledged that while this is a difficult situation, the MBTA is experiencing deeper budget issues because of its structural and cyclical deficit; COVID-19 has only contributed. B. Kane stressed that the MBTA Advisory Board has traditionally opposed flexing capital funds to operating costs but stated that given that the MBTA has ramped up its capital spending over the past five years, the MBTA Advisory Board would support a TIP amendment to avoid more draconian service reductions.

Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) acknowledged the tough situation that the MBTA is in but highlighted that a healthy transit system depends not only on those who must take transit, but also those who choose to take it. J. Monty noted that when services are reduced, it is harder to reintroduce them, and stated that it has taken 50 to 60 years to reintroduce a fraction of transit service lost in the two decades after World War II.

E. Bourassa asked what the total amount of savings the MBTA needs would be, whether all of that savings is needed for the operating deficit, and whether the MBTA is proposing capital changes that would support new or different projects that might improve the resiliency of service. For instance, moving money from a commuter rail line with low ridership to a bus corridor with high ridership. S. Silverberg stated that the most aggressive scenario would use \$460 million in Federal Section 5307 funds to support the operating budget, as soon as the TIP amendment is endorsed. The MBTA is pursuing the aggressive scenario because the goal is to put some capital commitments on pause and reallocate money to the operating budget. If ridership comes back faster than anticipated or there is additional federal funding, the MBTA would return to the MPO with another TIP amendment and resume some projects. S. Silverberg responded that the MBTA is starting to think about the next CIP process and by the spring may be able to start thinking about real shifts in capital funding. Right now, the MBTA is focused on the operating budget deficit.

Sheila Page (At-Large Town) (Town of Lexington) echoed J. Monty's thoughts on the possibility of pushing non-transit critical riders back into vehicles as a result of service cuts. S. Page asked for clarification on the funding the MBTA already has. S. Silverberg stated that in the TIP the MPO endorsed in the spring, these funds were allocated to specific capital projects. The amendment will shift much of that money to preventative maintenance.

David Koses (At-Large City) (City of Newton) expressed concern at the loss of bus service and the possibility of changes becoming permanent. D. Koses noted that some communities that might lose service are currently adding housing to address the

regional housing crises and building less parking to address climate change. The loss of transit service may undermine these goals.

Jennifer Constable (South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland) expressed the concerns about the proposal of a reduction or elimination in ferry service on behalf of the South Shore Coalition. J. Constable stated that eliminating ferry services runs counter to the objectives of the LRTP. J. Constable stated that there has been substantial work on affordable housing and transit-oriented development, and cutting off a subregion by eliminating service is very concerning. L. Paget-Seekins stated that the MBTA is using the word permanent so that the MBTA can be responsive to the needs of the region and reintroduce services where demand has changed.

L. Diggins suggested that the MBTA pursue a statewide approach and include members of the Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation Committee. L. Diggins asked how the service cuts would be impacted should any of the equity analyses show a disproportionate impact on minorities and low-income people. L. Paget-Seekins stated that two of the work programs on the agenda today address equity analysis requirements. The first addresses Title VI equity and state-level environmental analyses for major service changes. The second addresses Title VI equity analysis for the Green Line Extension project. L. Paget-Seekins stated that the MBTA would change or mitigate the proposal should a disparate impact or disproportionate burden be found. S. Silverberg added that D. Mohler's team at the MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning is working on scenario planning. This includes some of the staff who advised the Governor's Commission. D. Mohler stated this is a long-term iterative process, but in the immediate term MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) is developing three short-term post-COVID-19 scenarios for SFY 2021, 2022, and 2023 to inform the MBTA budget process. Right now, the focus is on the MBTA service area.

Tom Bent (ICC) (City of Somerville) echoed concerns that service cuts will undermine the progress communities in the Inner Core have made in affordable housing, zoning, and bus- and bicycle-supportive infrastructure to address climate change.

J. Monty added that service reductions will affect the pace of development in these communities, particularly concerning parking at new developments.

E. Bourassa added that once a household has a car or two, they will use it. E. Bourassa stated that if our goal is to reduce vehicle-miles traveled, then the decisions being made about land use and parking are all intertwined.

Abby Swaine (United Spinal Greater Boston Chapter and Brookline Council on Disability) stated that rethinking service levels puts a lot of pressure on the MBTA's

ability to reach constituents who might be affected, which is difficult even in non-COVID-19 times. She asked how the MBTA is assessing current and potential future ridership for people with disabilities. A. Swaine stated that there needs to be a way of separating people with disabilities and the elderly, and advocated for staying the course on accessibility projects. L. Paget-Seekins stated that the MBTA is looking at data for seniors and those with disabilities on a route level, using the data from automatic fare collection and Transportation Access Pass CharlieCard usage both prior to and during the pandemic. L. Paget-Seekins added that the MBTA will also be doing outreach to the Riders' Transportation Access Group (better known as R-TAG), and other organizations.

Andrea Downs (Newton City Council) expressed alarm at possible cuts because constituents often raise concerns about transit-oriented development and requiring less parking near MBTA stops. If service is reduced, it may be harder to pursue transit-oriented development.

L. Diggins stated that if people had the ability to use transit when they wanted and where they wanted to go, the people would not rely so heavily on vehicles. L. Diggins stressed thinking about the service that is desired in the future when doing scenario planning.

A. Swaine (Environmental Protection Agency) stated that a December 2019, analysis of winter commuter rail performance identified needed investments in upgrading locomotives. The MBTA has since presented the intention to accomplish these upgrades to the Fiscal Management Control Board, which met with approval. A. Swaine expressed concern about the completion of this initiative.

D. Mohler stated that S. Silverberg and L. Paget-Seekins will present the specific capital projects planned to be paused in the context of a TIP amendment in November.

9. Action Item: Work Scope, Service Equity and Environmental Analyses for SFY 2022 MBTA Service Changes—*Steven Andrews, MPO Staff*

1. [Service Equity and Environmental Analyses for State SFY 2022 MBTA Service Changes](#)

S. Andrews presented the work program for Service Equity and Environmental Analyses for SFY 2022 MBTA Service Changes. The work will cost \$66,500, take five months to complete, and be funded by the MBTA. S. Andrews stated that due to declines in ridership and a significant budget deficit, the MBTA must plan for major service cuts starting July 1, 2021. As a recipient of federal funds, the MBTA must comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and conduct service equity analyses for major service

changes. MPO staff will work closely with the MBTA and federal partners to determine specific tools and methodologies to accomplish this task. Under the MBTA's enabling legislation, the MBTA must also complete an evaluation of potential environmental impacts to the proposed service changes. MPO staff will conduct the evaluation as part of this scope. MPO staff will work with the MBTA and other relevant partners to select the specific datasets and methodologies to address the changes due to COVID-19.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for Service Equity and Environmental Analyses for SFY 2022 MBTA Service Changes was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

10.Action Item: Work Scope, Service Equity Analysis for the Green Line Extension Service—*Steven Andrews, MPO Staff*

1. [Service Equity Analysis For the Green Line Extension Service](#)

S. Andrews presented the Service Equity Analysis for the Green Line Extension Service work scope. This project will cost \$37,000, take five months to complete, and is funded by the MBTA. The MBTA plans to open new branches of the Green Line in August and October of 2021. Federal guidance states that transit agencies must conduct a Title VI service equity analysis six months prior to the start of new service. MPO staff will work with MBTA and the Federal Transit Administration to settle on an appropriate methodology and dataset.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for Service Equity Analysis for the Green Line Extension Service was made by the ICC (City of Somerville) (T. Bent) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

11.Action Item: Work Scope, Green Line Corridor Transformation Study—*Bruce Kaplan, MPO Staff*

1. [Green Line Corridor Transformation Study](#)

B. Kaplan presented the work program for Green Line Corridor Transformation Study. B. Kaplan stated that this project is in support of MassDOT and the MBTA's ongoing Green Line Transformation work. This project is estimated to cost \$157,000, and take one year. MPO staff will use the regional travel demand model and other tools to measure the impacts of enhancements to the Green Line in both 2030 and 2040. B. Kaplan highlighted a suite of improvements that will be measured and modeled separately for each of the B, C, and E surface branches. These improvements include

stop consolidation, track realignment, increased accessibility, improved run times, and station siting. Staff will look at these individually, and then do a combined analysis. The suite of improvements may include the extension of the Green Line E branch from Heath Street to Hyde Square in Jamaica Plain. There will be an environmental justice analysis primarily focusing on the E branch extension scenario.

Discussion

B. Kane asked whether the scope would consider terminating the E branch at Brigham Circle or the creation of dedicated bus/rail right-of-way on Huntington Avenue west of Brigham Circle to Heath Street and/or Hyde Square. B. Kane stated that the MBTA should not consider extending the Green Line to Hyde Square if it will operate in mixed traffic. Doug Johnson (MassDOT) stated that a consultant team is analyzing a dedicated transit way on Huntington Avenue west of Brigham Circle. That same consulting team is studying extending the E branch from Heath Street to Hyde Square. The findings and recommendations of those analyses will be included in the modeling done by MPO staff.

Jim Fitzgerald (City of Boston) (Boston Planning & Development Agency) noted that the Green Line Extension to Hyde Square was one of the long-term recommendations of *GoBoston2030*, and stated that he hoped a protected corridor would be an option.

Franklyn P. Salimbene (Arborway Committee for Public Transit) expressed support for the extension of the Green Line to Hyde Square, noting that Hyde Square is an environmental justice area and has been designated as Boston's Latin Quarter. This extension would provide the community with the one-seat ride downtown. F. Salimbene noted that the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) has designated South Huntington Avenue as a development corridor and the 39 bus service is inadequate. F. Salimbene stated that the 39 bus has lost significant ridership since the 1990s due to congestion. F. Salimbene expressed support for the extension on behalf of the Arborway Committee for Public Transit, Mission Hill Main Streets, the Community Association of Mission Hill, the Jamaica Pond Association, and the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council. F. Salimbene stated that stakeholders look forward to the findings of the study, and to the inclusion of a proposal for a feasibility study in the Transportation Bond Bill. F. Salimbene noted that the study is also supported by State Senator Sonja Chang-Diaz and State Representative Nika Elugardo.

S. Silverberg acknowledged that it may seem like mixed messages to hear about service cuts and studies for service extensions in the same meeting. S. Silverberg stated that many planning projects were initiated months ago and remain important. A priority for the MBTA is how these projects fit into existing resources.

B. Kane asked if this work is linked to type 10 car development, noting that longer revenue vehicles would need to operate in mixed traffic and also make the turning radius at South Huntington and Huntington Avenue. B. Kane asked that the study authors also consider dispatching and storage needs. D. Johnson responded that storage capacity for Type 10 cars is out of the scope of work for MPO staff, but the Green Line Transformation Office is considering this. D. Johnson added that the impetus for looking at an exclusive transit way and extending the E-branch to Hyde Square came from the fact that the Green Line will be trying to move toward type 10 cars, and Heath Street cannot handle two type 10 cars in its current configuration. The funding for the work done by MPO staff and the other studies that MassDOT OTP is working on come from the Federal Highway Administration. These are long-term processes that were underway prior to the pandemic.

Laura Gilmore (Massachusetts Port Authority) asked what the project team will use for existing conditions; pre-COVID-19 data or some other dataset. B. Kaplan stated that MPO staff will take into account some data from *Forging Ahead* but most of the data collection was done in 2019 and earlier as part of the Green Line Transformation project. The base year will be pre-COVID-19. Marty Milkovits (MPO staff) added that MPO staff are thinking about how to advance exploratory modeling as part of scenario planning for the next LRTP.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for Green Line Corridor Transformation Study was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the ICC (City of Somerville) (T. Bent). The motion carried.

12.Action Item: Work Scope, Future of the Curb, Phase 2—Paul Christner, MPO Staff

1. [Future of the Curb, Phase 2](#)

P. Christner stated that this project will cost \$60,000, take approximately 11 months, and is MPO-funded. This study builds off the 2019 Future of the Curb study. MPO staff will research best practices for managing curb space and conduct outreach to municipal staff and other relevant officials in the Boston region. MPO staff will also review curb usage changes implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including projects funded by MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program. MPO staff will then produce a guidebook for municipalities interested in planning and implementing curb management strategies.

Discussion

L. Gilmore stated that the study should consider changing curb usage for deliveries. P. Christner stated that this will be taken into consideration.

L. Diggins asked how MPO staff plan to structure outreach to municipalities. P. Christner replied that MPO staff will work to create an outreach plan.

D. Koses expressed support for the project and suggested looking at combined uses, such as deliveries zones that are also parking at different times of day, or bicycle/bus lanes. P. Christner replied that staff would consider this.

J. Fitzgerald expressed support for the project, especially with the increase in last-mile delivery.

J. Monty stated that one of the big differentiating factors is governance and suggested that MPO staff consider this.

Tom O'Rourke (Three Rivers Interlocal Council) (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce) asked if the study will include outdoor dining and whether there would be any outreach to businesses. P. Christner responded that outdoor dining would definitely be considered.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for Future of the Curb, Phase 2 was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the At-Large City (City of Everett) (J. Monty). The motion carried.

13. Members Items

L. Diggins announced that Scott Zadakis had been reelected as Vice-Chair of the Advisory Council.

S. Page announced that this would be her last meeting as an MPO member as Lexington has decided to step down.

D. Mohler stated that the next MPO meeting would be November 5, 2020.

14. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA (S. Silverberg) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Sheila Page
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)	David Mohler
	John Bechard
MassDOT Highway Division	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Samantha
	Silverberg
Massachusetts Port Authority	Laura Gilmore
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Thatcher Kezer III
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Darlene Wynne
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Jennifer Constable
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC) (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Abby Swaine	United Spinal Greater Boston Chapter/Brookline Council on Disability Environmental Protection Agency
Ali Kleyman	City of Somerville
Andy Reker	City of Cambridge
Angela Servello	
Anthony Thomas	MBTA
Artie Bonney	
Ben Muller	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (OTP)
Andreae Downs	Newton City Council
Cheryll-Ann Senior	MassDOT Highway District 5
Christian Milneil	Streetsblog Mass
Constance Raphael	MassDOT Highway
Eric Waaramaa	MBTA
Erika Oliver Jerram	City of Framingham
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Doug Johnson	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Franklyn Salimbene	Arborway Committee for Public Transit
Jillian Linnell	MBTA
Joe Blankenship	Boston Planning & Development Agency
Johannes Epke	Conservation Law Foundation
Josh Klingenstein	
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Julie DeMauro	City of Revere
Kristina Johnson	
Laurel Paget- Seekins	MBTA
Mary Ann O'Hara	
Michelle Ho	MassDOT OTP
Owen Macdonald	Hingham
Peter Falk	MBTA
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT Highway District 3
Sonja Boet- Whitaker	MBTA
Steve Olanoff	TRIC Alternate

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Todd Kirrane	Town of Brookline
Tony Sousa	City of Everett

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Steven Andrews

Matt Archer

Paul Christner

Jonathan Church

Annette Demchur

Róisín Foley

Hiral Gandhi

Matt Genova

Betsy Harvey

Sandy Johnston

Bruce Kaplan

Anne McGahan

Marty Milkovits

Ariel Patterson

Scott Peterson

Bradley Putnam

Barbara Rutman

Michelle Scott

Kate White

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The Boston Region MPO also complies with the Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law, M.G.L. c 272 sections 92a, 98, 98a, which prohibits making any distinction, discrimination, or restriction in admission to, or treatment in a place of public accommodation based on race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or ancestry. Likewise, the Boston Region MPO complies with the Governor's Executive Order 526, section 4, which requires that all programs, activities, and services provided, performed, licensed, chartered, funded, regulated, or contracted for by the state shall be conducted without unlawful discrimination based on race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans), or background.

A complaint form and additional information can be obtained by contacting the MPO or at http://www.bostonmpo.org/mpo_non_discrimination. To request this information in a different language or in an accessible format, please contact

Title VI Specialist
Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116
civilrights@ctps.org
857.702.3700 (voice)