

MPO Meeting Minutes

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

September 17, 2020, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:28 AM, Virtual Meeting

Steve Woelfel, 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 August 6, 2020
- Approve the work program for Wellington Circle Study
- Endorse Amendment Three to the federal fiscal years (FFY) 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on pages 8–10.

2. Chair's Report—*Steve Woelfel, MassDOT*

There was none.

3. Executive Director's Report—*Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)*

A. Demchur provided the Executive Director's Report on behalf of T. Teich. A. Demchur thanked MPO board members for their participation in the ongoing CTPS Strategic Plan process. A. Demchur stated that MPO staff recently met with the Livable Streets Alliance regarding the revisions to the criteria used for evaluating projects for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). MPO staff also held two meetings with subregional groups—the South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP) and the South Shore Coalition (SSC)—to learn about priorities for FFY 2021 and share information about the upcoming MPO election. A. Demchur added that the next MPO meeting will feature a presentation of a non-MPO funded work program for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Green Line Corridor Transformation Study. A. Demchur stated that MPO staff would also continue the

MPO's discussion of the Major Infrastructure Program, the Community Connections Pilot Program, and the TIP criteria.

4. Public Comments

There were none.

5. Committee Chairs' Reports—*Ben Muller, MassDOT, Chair, UPWP Committee*

B. Muller stated that the UPWP Committee recommends that the MPO endorse Amendment Three to the FFY 2021 UPWP.

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

L. Diggins noted that Anne McGahan, MPO staff, presented at the last Advisory Council meeting regarding the Major Infrastructure Program policies.

7. Action Item: Approval of August 6, 2020, MPO Meeting Minutes—*Barbara Rutman, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO Calendar

1. [MPO Meeting Minutes: August 6, 2020](#)

Vote

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of August 6, 2020, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy). The motion carried.

8. Action Item: Work Scope, Wellington Circle Study—*Sanjay Kaul, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO Calendar

1. [Work Program: Wellington Circle Study](#)

S. Kaul stated that this work program describes an analysis CTPS will conduct in support of MassDOT's Wellington Circle Study. This study evolved from local and regional planning processes as part of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) permitting process for the Encore Casino, including the Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study and the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Needs Assessment. CTPS will provide project coordination and analytical support to MassDOT, its consultants, and project stakeholders. Analytical support will include producing travel demand model forecasts of multimodal travel flows in the region for existing conditions, a no-build 2040 scenario, and as many as three build alternatives.

CTPS will summarize the effects of these alternatives on travel patterns and mode choice, measuring their impacts on transit ridership, congestion, air quality, and environmental justice. This work program is funded by \$108,664 of MassDOT Casino Mitigation Funds. The projected time line for the project is 18 months.

Discussion

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town) (Town of Arlington) asked S. Kaul to clarify the project location. S. Kaul replied that he would provide members with a map.

Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee) (City of Somerville) and Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) expressed support for the study. T. Bent expressed a desire to see MPO staff incorporate the findings of previous study efforts at this location.

Vote

A motion to approve the work program for the Wellington Circle Study was made by MAPC (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (Brian Kane). The motion carried.

9. Action Item: FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment Three—*Sandy Johnston, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO Calendar

1. [FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment Three](#)
2. [FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment Three Redlined](#)

S. Johnston stated that the MPO voted to release this amendment for a 30-day public review period at the August 6, 2020, meeting. Amendment Three reflects annual fourth quarter budget reallocations and does not add or subtract from the overall budget for MPO staff. MPO staff received no public comments regarding Amendment Three. Per Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance issued earlier this year, any change of 10 percent or more to a UPWP budget line must be a formal amendment, rather than an informal adjustment. The total amount of money being reprogrammed to different projects is \$137,500.

Vote

A motion to endorse Amendment Three to the FFY 2020 UPWP was made by the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham) (Thatcher Kezer III) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane). The motion carried.

10. TIP Project Selection Criteria—*Matt Genova, MPO Staff*

Documents posted to the MPO Calendar

1. [TIP Criteria Point Summary](#)

M. Genova presented a summary of the revision process for the TIP project evaluation criteria. M. Genova began by reviewing the content from the MPO meeting on September 3, 2020, when test scores were presented for representative projects from the Complete Streets, Intersection Improvements, and Bicycle Network and Pedestrian Connections investment programs. M. Genova reminded the MPO that the test scores did not vary greatly from scores derived from the original criteria. However, scores in the Equity goal area more fully recognized impacts on equity populations within a project area.

M. Genova then explained the steps MPO staff took to finalize the proposals for revisions to the criteria, including refining point values throughout the criteria to fit into a 100-point scale and clarifying and eliminating redundancies in the new criteria as needed. MPO staff reduced the points associated with criteria focused solely on auto improvements and eliminated criteria that awarded points for elements only tangentially associated with projects. Projects now receive more points for incorporating resiliency measures and for improving air quality in parts of the region with high concentrations of pollutants. Additional changes included the following:

- Removal of the criterion regarding the equivalent property damage only (EPDO) values for bicycle and pedestrian projects
- Adjustments to how bonus points are awarded for addressing high-crash areas
- Condensation of points for resilience measures
- Separation of transit delay into a standalone criterion and removal of the measurement of auto delay in favor of additional points for projects that address corridors with low travel-time reliability
- A focus on investments in transit assets that improve the user experience, such as bus shelters and real-time countdown signs
- Incorporating individual scoring scales for emissions reductions for each project type
- Consideration of nitrogen oxide emissions rather than particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).
- Condensation of environmental criteria into one criterion that measures a range of outcomes
- Removal of the criterion for improving road access to a targeted development site

M. Genova then reminded the MPO of the original goals set for the criteria revision process as a whole and the extent to which they were accomplished. These goals included creating criteria for the MPO's new Transit Modernization Program; more closely aligning the criteria with specific project elements; emphasizing the MPO's goals for each project type; eliminating disparities in scores across project type; and allowing for each project type to achieve point totals closer to 100 percent. M. Genova stated that the first three goals were largely completed through the criteria revision process, and that the final two goals were partially achieved. Under the original criteria, the highest scoring projects received 55-60 percent of total points. In the new system, those same projects receive 70 percent of total points because criteria that were not addressed meaningfully have been eliminated and the resulting scoring disparities caused by these criteria have been reduced.

MPO staff also originally outlined five central principles to guide this work: the new criteria must be manageable to implement; make use of the best available data and methods; create balance across investment programs; be both realistic and aspirational; and be clear to project proponents and other stakeholders. The new criteria are slightly more complex than the previous criteria, but that complexity allows the other goals to be achieved. New data is taken into account where possible, such as data used for measuring disparities in exposure to air pollution and goals outlined in municipalities' vulnerability plans, and scores are more balanced.

M. Genova concluded by detailing the next steps MPO staff will take to continue to improve the project selection process and implement the new scoring system. MPO staff will continue to work with MassDOT and the State Smart Transportation Initiative to explore the use of access-based metrics and cost-effectiveness measures. MPO staff are also working to roll out a slate of explanatory materials to ensure project proponents and the public fully understand the new scoring system.

Discussion

L. Diggins stated that the TIP How-To guide was helpful to the Advisory Council and expressed support for its revision to reflect the final new criteria.

11. Performance-based Planning Update—Michelle Scott, MPO Staff and Ben Muller, MassDOT

M. Scott stated that federal performance measures are intended to help states, MPOs, transit agencies, federal transportation agencies, and Congress understand how investments in the nation's transportation system support the achievement of national performance goals. Federally required targets are short term and function like forecasts. State DOTs must set performance goals for the state, and MPOs can decide whether to

adopt these goals or set their own for the MPO region. MPOs must consider how projects and programs help achieve targets for the region. [Chapter Four of the FFYs 2021–25 TIP](#) has information on existing state and MPO targets, and trend data for the Commonwealth, transit agencies, and the MPO, and it describes how the projects in the TIP may help achieve targets. [MassDOT's Tracker](#) summary report and online performance reporting tool describes other Commonwealth level measures, targets, and performance data.

In 2018, the MPO board voted to support MassDOT's four-year targets for several federal performance measures. MassDOT has reviewed the two-year progress on the four-year targets to determine if any adjustments are needed. MassDOT is proposing to update the target for non-single occupancy vehicle (non-SOV) travel in the Boston Urbanized Area (UZA). This target is based on five-year American Community Survey (ACS) estimates and reflects the expected 2017–21 estimate. The MPO will have to decide whether to support this change. B. Muller stated that MassDOT is proposing to revise the percent of non-SOV travel target because the percent of non-SOV travel is increasing faster than anticipated and is expected to rise due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposal is to update the target from 35.1 percent to 35.8 percent.

M. Scott stated that MPO and MassDOT staff would present the updated non-SOV travel target for a formal vote at a future meeting. Later in the fall and winter, the MPO will also discuss targets relating to Transit Safety, Transit Assessment Management, and Roadway Safety.

Discussion

D. Amstutz expressed support for the target change and asked whether the new target was realistic given the decline of transit ridership during the pandemic and potentially into the future. He asked whether telecommuting and use of other modes were expected to offset depressed ridership. B. Muller stated that current data shows numbers are rising more quickly than expected and added that MassDOT wanted to use a data-driven approach when revising the target. Bryan Pounds (MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning) added that MassDOT expects that telecommuting will offset depressed transit ridership in the near term. He added that MassDOT and the MPO will be setting new targets starting in 2022 and will have new information to work with at that point.

M. Scott stated that there is no risk to the MPO, the Commonwealth, or other participating agencies by increasing the target, especially given that the UZA is showing progress in this area. She added that the performance measure is tracked using a five-

year rolling average, and the 2017–21 average would still be accruing the positive performance gains from years prior to the pandemic.

J. Monty expressed support for the target change and noted that there is an accountability component for MassDOT in setting this target. J. Monty asked if telecommuting is included as a mode. B. Muller replied that data on telecommuting is captured within the percentage of non-SOV travel.

L. Diggins asked how programs in the LRTP contribute to the setting of targets. B. Muller explained that when setting or adjusting a target, MassDOT looks at currently available data and considers the changes in travel by various modes. M. Scott added that, in the near term, it is important to examine trends and patterns in larger data sets. The MPO is also looking at the features of programmed projects and using TIP project scoring criteria to estimate how they might contribute to reaching these targets as part of the MPO's larger goals for the region. She noted the MPO's Community Connections Program is one example of how the MPO may help to increase non-SOV travel in the region. L. Diggins noted that TIP Before-and-After Studies are another way to inform the process.

Ken Miller (FHWA) noted that the targets are based on journey-to-work data and commuting is only about a third of overall travel. He added that transit and other non-SOV modes may comprise a higher percentage of journey-to-work travel than for other types of travel.

S. Woelfel stated that this target will likely be presented for a vote at a meeting in October, and he asked members to reach out to M. Scott or B. Muller with any questions.

12. Members Items

There were none.

13. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (B. Kane). 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)	Daniel Amstutz
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	Ken Miller
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	Steve Woelfel
MassDOT Highway Division	Marie Rose
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	John Romano
	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)	Tina Cassidy
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 (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Ben Muller	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Ben Cares	City of Chelsea
Bryan Pounds	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Constance Raphael	MassDOT Highway Division 4
Elizabeth Torres	Boston Planning & Development Agency
Eric Papetti	Federal Transit Administration
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Jeanette Rebecchi	Town of Bedford
Joy Glynn	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Justin Howard	Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
Kristen Guichard	Town of Acton
Makaela Niles	MassDOT
Michelle Ho	MassDOT
Owen Macdonald	Town of Weymouth
Pat Brown	Sudbury resident
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT Highway Division
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council
Todd Kirrane	Town of Brookline
Kristina Johnson	Town of Hudson

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Mark Abbott

Matt Archer

Jonathan Church

Annette Demchur

Róisín Foley

Hiral Gandhi

Matt Genova

Betsy Harvey

Sandy Johnston

Sanjay Kaul

Anne McGahan

Marty Milkovits

Ariel Patterson

Scott Peterson

Michelle Scott

Kate White

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