

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

March 3, 2022 Meeting

9:00-10:00 AM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform. Recording available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfOA7Q0Nf3U&list=PLT37eeNGYpCEjKeOqXHI FkpgpCcxErWo-&index=20>.

Derek Krevat, Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, Secretary of Transportation and Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. Summary of the October 21, 2021, meeting

Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

1. Introductions

D. Krevat introduced the meeting, read the guidelines and accessibility statement, and called the roll.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

3. Meeting Summary of October 21, 2021—*Approval of this summary*

D. Krevat stated that this meeting summary had already been approved at the November 18, 2021, meeting, and moved on to the next agenda item.

4. Agenda Item: Review of the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023 Development Schedule—*Sandy Johnston, MPO Staff, and Srilekha Murthy, MPO Staff*

S. Murthy reviewed the development schedule for the FFY 2023 UPWP, clarifying the meeting dates from March 2022 onwards, and noting that any changes will be reflected on the website. David Koses (City of Newton) asked whether potential study idea generation had been completed or if staff would continue to generate project ideas. S. Johnston replied that the public facing survey had closed and public outreach activities had been completed. D. Koses asked about a study idea that had been submitted via

email regarding parking policies across communities in the region. S. Murthy agreed to follow up. Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council [MAPC]) stated that MAPC is holding a meeting on March 7, 2022, to discuss the development of lab space and related parking concerns. Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council [Advisory Council]) asked whether a great number of good ideas were received. S. Johnston replied that that was the case. D. Koses stated that the study suggestion he had submitted was to create a database of municipal parking policies across communities to share best practices. S. Johnston replied that between the MAPC study and the UPWP, questions about parking will be addressed in the Universe. D. Koses inquired about any overlap between these potential studies and the next phase of the Future of the Curb study.

Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee/City of Somerville) asked whether the study to which D. Koses is referring would include municipal parking lots, meters in business districts, or other factors affecting parking as they relate to small business development.

5. Agenda Item: Proposed Changes to UPWP Budgeting Process—S. Johnston and S. Murthy, MPO Staff

S. Johnston and S. Murthy presented a proposal to reorganize budget categories for the FFY 2023 UPWP. In the past, the committee has expressed a desire to help make the budgeting methods used in the UPWP more responsive to changes that the document undergoes during its lifecycle. The key change is to consolidate certain UPWP tasks into larger categories that would be the authoritative budget for reporting and amendment purposes. The goal is to not require an amendment for moving money between tasks under a larger budget category, while still providing estimated budgets and reports on tasks.

S. Johnston explained that the reason for proposing this change is because the UPWP budget is set approximately 18 months before work on the tasks begin, meaning that by the time work begins on a given task, needs and resources may have changed, yet the budget does not. Thus, this proposal gives staff some leeway to freely transfer funds between tasks under one category to allow for a dynamic rebalancing of resources throughout the year. Furthermore, the current process of requiring an amendment for a budget change of more than 25 percent of the current project cost is slow, requiring staff to draft an amendment, present it to the UPWP Committee and the MPO Board, then release for a 21-day public comment period, before sending it to the Federal Highway Administration for review. Especially for time-sensitive tasks, this process can mean weeks, if not months, of staff time that is not being put to use to further a project. Furthermore, due to uncertainties as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as increased funding from the forthcoming Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, there will be a

need to hire and reallocate staff resources, in addition to new reporting requirements for staff work. However, staff still await guidance on some of these new rules. S. Johnson concluded by asking for committee members' opinions on exploring this proposal and for their support in taking this idea to the MPO's federal partners.

D. Krevat asked what other MPOs have similar kinds of budgeting systems. He also discussed the federal requirement for UPWP amendments, which is to have the MPO board vote on the amendment and send a revised UPWP to the Federal Highway Administration. He clarified that there is no federally required comment period for UPWP amendments. D. Krevat suggested that the Committee continue to review amendments and changes to the budget but align the amendment policy more with federal requirements.

S. Johnston replied that there are two potential options: one is to amend the FFY 2022 UPWP and Public Outreach Plan, and the other is to adopt this policy going forward. S. Murthy discussed the budgeting system of other MPOs, highlighting the UPWP of the Mid-America Regional Council (Kansas Cities—Missouri and Kansas) as an example of an MPO that presents budgets by category and by policy emphasis area, demonstrating flexibility in moving around resources under a given category.

Daniel Amstutz (Town of Arlington) stated that he is generally supportive of proposals that reduce the administrative burden on staff and asked what the guidelines for informing the MPO Board would be with regards as to how much money could be moved between tasks. S. Johnston replied that that question is something staff is looking to the Committee for guidance on.

E. Bourassa stated that he is supportive of this proposal, especially given that staff can have some flexibility to tweak budgets as needs and resources change over the year.

T. Teich (MPO Staff) stated that the goal is to reduce staff burden while maintaining transparency about how work is going, and this proposal would allow for more meaningful conversations about the work brought before the Committee and contribute to a fruitful dialogue between staff and the Committee.

T. Bent expressed his support for this proposal, as it will allow for more time to discuss the issues that are truly pressing.

L. Diggins asked whether these changes would go before the MPO's Administration and Finance (A&F) Committee. Hiral Gandhi (MPO staff) replied that, currently, project budgets do not go before that committee. However, it does have a schedule of operations where quarterly budget changes are presented. T. Teich responded that the

A&F Committee's budget processes and that of the UPWP are two different conversations, but staff are open to a conversation on whether the current reporting structure makes sense for the UPWP Committee.

D. Amstutz stated that he would be interested in discussing major changes in budgets, not necessarily minor dollar amounts, and that some kind of threshold of reporting should be established.

D. Krevat stated that more detailed review might be necessary before this proposal is brought to the Federal Highway Administration. S. Johnston replied that staff are working on a memo outlining the research in greater depth and will be sending it to Massachusetts Department of Transportation shortly.

6. Members Items

There were none.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 31, 2022, at 9:00 AM.

8. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by E. Bourassa (MAPC) and seconded by T. Bent (Inner Core Committee/City of Somerville). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Office of Transportation Planning)	Derek Krevat
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
Three Rivers Interlocal Council alternate (Town of Westwood)	Steve Olanoff

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Tegin Teich, Executive Director
Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning
Hiral Gandhi, Director of Operations and Finance
Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager
Srilekha Murthy, UPWP Manager

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