



## Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

May 13, 2020, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:10 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Ridership Oversight Committee

### Meeting Agenda

#### 1. Introductions

Lenard Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page five.)

#### 2. Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Capital Investment Plan (CIP)—*Michelle Ho, Director of Capital Planning, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning*

Michelle Ho presented an overview of the CIP planning process at MassDOT. She said the CIP is a budget and policy document that MassDOT produces annually. M. Ho explained that the CIP covers all MassDOT and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) capital assets. She said that this CIP update addresses only fiscal year 2021 (FY21) and represents a one-year “maintenance of effort” plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

M. Ho listed some key aspects of the CIP FY21 update’s revised direction:

- Focus on continuing investments already underway and those planned to start in FY21
- The FY21 plan maintains the priorities and strategies for MassDOT/MBTA to invest first in reliability and modernization with targeted investments in increasing capacity and new transportation services
- Public review of the “maintenance of effort” CIP through six virtual regional meetings

M. Ho also mentioned some more detailed aspects of the CIP FY21 update:

- Project spending is consistent with projects programmed in the State Transportation Improvement Program
- Assumes a one-year, \$200 million Chapter 90 authorization

- Does not assume new funding sources
- Will begin process of developing full five-year plan later in 2020, when state and federal action is clearer

M. Ho discussed the present structure of the CIP process, starting with its three main priorities: reliability, modernization, and expansion. She explained that the next stage of CIP structure is programs, which are aligned by which priority they address. MassDOT staff then select the projects that best achieve the priority goals of each program. M. Ho then discussed several specific FY21 projects and explained how each fits into the CIP structure.

M. Ho discussed the scheduled opportunities for public input during four different phases of the CIP planning processes. She also mentioned three other ways the public can give input:

- Comments will be accepted through the CIP Online Comment Tool
- Comments can be emailed to [MassCIP@state.ma.us](mailto:MassCIP@state.ma.us)
- Letters can be mailed to MassDOT, Community Relations, 10 Park Plaza, Room 4160, Boston, MA 02116

### ***Discussion***

David Montgomery, Town of Needham, and M. Ho discussed how much public commentary is being received by MassDOT and whether it was shared with Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff when appropriate.

Andy Reker, City of Cambridge, and M. Ho discussed the universe of projects from which MassDOT staff select projects for the CIP.

John McQueen, WalkBoston, and M. Ho discussed how the Advisory Council is able to influence the CIP process, rather than as individuals.

L. Diggins, J. McQueen, and M. Ho discussed whether the Advisory Council could be involved earlier in MassDOT's project selection process.

### **3. Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2021–25 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager, MPO Staff***

Matt Genova presented an overview of the TIP and the timeline of how it is developed annually by MPO staff. He highlighted two updates to the TIP document this year:

- Expanded Executive Summary highlights investment decisions
- New Chapter 6 focuses on equity

M. Genova discussed the breakdowns of FFYs 2021–25 MassDOT funding and MBTA funding by program category. He listed the breakdown of the MPO's Regional Target funding by program category. M. Genova then presented the FFYs 2021–25 TIP committed funding

levels by investment program relative to the goals set by the MPO in the Long-Range Transportation Plan. He also discussed the new Regional Target projects that are funded in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP, including five new projects in the pilot round of the Community Connections program.

M. Genova discussed other key decisions made in the FFYs 2021–25 TIP:

- Cost increases covered for 31 projects
- Thirteen projects delayed to later years
- Funding split over multiple years for three projects

***Discussion***

L. Diggins and M. Genova discussed how TIP project funding decisions are made for each program category.

Franny Osman, Acton Transportation Advisory Committee, and M. Genova discussed whether the multi-year funding plans made in the TIP could be modified by the MPO in response to the COVID-19 pandemic or other unforeseen circumstances.

**4. Advisory Council Comment Letter on the FFYs 2021–25 TIP—Chris Porter, Chair, 3C Documents Committee**

Chris Porter led a discussion of the draft comment letter by the Advisory Council to the MPO regarding its draft FFYs 2021–25 TIP. He began by listing the main points of the draft letter:

- Appreciate the MPO attaining targets to increase funding of smaller projects, including 45 percent of funding to Complete Streets
- Pleased to see Community Connections program funded
- Concur with approach of funding highest-scoring project in each category
- Agree with decision not to support McGrath Highway project in FFY 2025, but reconsider in FFY 2026
- Concern about cost increases leads to questions
  - Can MPO and MassDOT incentivize better cost estimation at the beginning of the project?
  - Can efficiencies be found through value engineering of larger projects?
  - Can the MPO look for more ways to consider projects on a cost-effectiveness basis?

***Discussion***

AnaCristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, and Matt Archer, MPO staff, discussed whether projects could alternatively be scored by degree of readiness for construction. A.C. Fragoso said the MPO should consider requiring that projects be at the 75 percent design stage before municipalities submit them for consideration. She also said this

could give insight into some of the cost overrun and cost effectiveness issues now being addressed by the MPO and MassDOT.

A. Reker suggested the letter include a point about appreciation of the MPO's continued efforts to measure and address equity.

In response to comments by A.C. Fragoso and A. Reker, C. Porter added the following sentences to the draft comment letter:

- New item 3: "Appreciate continued time and effort of MPO to measure and address equity"
- New item 6d: "Consider not approving projects until after the 25% design phase to provide more cost certainty?"

A motion to empower C. Porter to formalize the comment letter for submission was made by WalkBoston (J. McQueen) and seconded by Boston Society of Civil Engineers (A.C. Fragoso). The motion carried.

## **5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements**

Lenard Diggins asked if there were any objections to publishing the audio recording of Advisory Council meetings on to the MPO web site calendar. There were no objections; however, D. Montgomery and L. Diggins discussed that the audio recordings should not be considered a replacement for the meeting minutes documents.

## **6. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made. The motion carried.

## Attendees

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<b>Member Municipalities</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
City of Cambridge	Andy Reker
Town of Needham	David Montgomery
City of Watertown	Laura Wiener

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<b>Member Citizen Advocacy Groups</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee	Lenard Diggins
CrossTown Connect	Scott Zadakis
Acton Transportation Advisory Committee	Franny Osman
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	AnaCristina Fragoso
MassBike	Chris Porter
WalkBoston	John McQueen

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<b>Agencies (Non-Voting)</b>	<b>Attendees</b>
Boston Planning and Development Agency	Joe Blankenship
MassDOT	Michelle Ho
Three Rivers Interlocal Council	Steve Olanoff

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<b>MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff</b>
Matt Archer
Barbara Rutman
Matt Genova

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**Title VI Specialist**

Boston Region MPO  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150  
Boston, MA 02116  
[civilrights@ctps.org](mailto:civilrights@ctps.org)

**By Telephone:**

857.702.3700 (voice)

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