

Draft Memorandum for the Record

Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

August 16, 2018, Meeting

10:00 AM–11:30 AM, State Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston

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 May 24, 2018, meeting
- Approve Amendment Two to the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Approve Amendment Six to the federal fiscal years (FFY) 2018-22 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Approve a budget adjustment to the FFY 2018 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

See attendance on page 11.

2. Public Comments

There were none.

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

There was none.

4. Committee Chairs' Reports

There were none.

5. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—*Tegin Teich, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council*

There was none.

6. Executive Director's Report—Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)

R. Mannion provided an update on the progress of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Certification Review of the MPO's planning process. MPO staff has submitted background information to FHWA and FTA and is replying to a request for additional information related air quality conformity. FHWA and FTA will conduct an on-site review on October 16, 2018, and October 17, 2018. Nelson Hoffman (FHWA) added that federal staff would be meeting with Michelle Scott of the MPO staff following the meeting on August 16, 2018.

7. Approval of May 24, 2018, MPO Meeting Minutes—Róisín Foley, MPO Staff

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of May 24, 2018, was made by the MassDOT Highway Division (John Bechard) and seconded by the South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree) (Christine Stickney). The motion carried.

8. LRTP Amendment Two—Anne McGahan, MPO Staff *Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. [Charting Progress to 2040 Amendment Two: Air Quality Conformity Determination, MassDOT and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, July 2018](#)

At the MPO meeting on July 19, 2018, the board voted to release Amendment Two to the current LRTP, *Charting Progress to 2040*, for a 21-day public review period. Amendment Two is an ozone (O₃) air quality conformity determination for the plan. The MPO was required to conduct an O₃ conformity determination as a result of a recent court ruling which found that the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not have the authority to revoke the 1997 O₃ standard without requiring nonattainment areas to continue to pursue conformity. MassDOT has decided that the MPO should move forward in case the decision stands, so that the FFYs 2019-23 TIP, with the conformity determination, is ready to be implemented on October 1, 2018. MassDOT has also decided that the MPO should do a conformity determination on the LRTP, so that any TIP amendments over the next year will be covered by an air quality conformity determination prior to the adoption of new documents in 2019. The air quality conformity determination shows that the Boston region is well within the standard.

MPO staff received one public comment regarding this amendment, an email from Elizabeth Seabury that reads as follows: "Please vote affirmatively for Amendment 2 so that we can make transportation [sic] choices that benefit us and generations to come! Thank you!"

Vote

A motion to approve Amendment Two to the LRTP was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (Paul Regan) and seconded by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (Glenn Trindade). The motion carried.

9. FFYs 2018-22 TIP, Amendment Six—Alexandra (Ali) Kleyman, MPO Staff

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. [FFYs 2018-22 TIP Draft Amendment Six TIP Tables](#)
2. [FFYs 2018-22 TIP Draft Simplified Amendment Six Table](#)

At the MPO meeting on July 19, 2018, the board voted to release Amendment Six to the FFYs 2018-22 TIP for a 21-day public review period. MPO staff did not receive any comments regarding Amendment Six. Amendment Six includes four changes to MassDOT's highway programming in the FFY 2018 element. The amendment accommodates cost changes for three MassDOT projects. Two cost changes reflect estimates that were refined during final project design. One cost change is the result of revisions to the project's scope. The fourth change is the removal of a bridge project because it needed additional design and review. Amendment Six does not affect any MPO target-funded projects.

Vote

A motion to approve Amendment Six to the FFY 2018–22 TIP was made by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (G. Trindade) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan). The motion carried.

10. FFY 2018 UPWP, Budget Adjustment—Bryan Pounds, MassDOT, and Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director, CTPS

Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar

1. [Memorandum: Proposed Revisions to Certain 3C Budgets \(FFY 2018\)](#)

Each federal fiscal year, just after the third quarter, MPO staff reviews spending patterns and requests that the MPO board vote on budget adjustments designed to accommodate those patterns. These adjustments pertain to selected 3C-funded line items and largely shift funds in the line items for the LRTP, TIP, and Transportation Equity Program. The MPO's UPWP Committee voted to recommend these changes to the MPO board at a meeting prior to the meeting on August 16, 2018. These changes are considered an administrative adjustment because they do not significantly alter the timeline or scope of any of the tasks in the programs.

Vote

A motion to approve the budget adjustment to the FFY 2018 UPWP was made by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (G. Trindade) and seconded by the Advisory Council (T. Teich). The motion carried.

11. TIP Development and Programming at the State and Regional Levels—*John Bechard, MassDOT*

J. Bechard, Deputy Chief Engineer of Project Development, reviewed some recent changes that have been made to the MassDOT Highway Division's Project Development process. J. Bechard highlighted several highway projects that are included in the current five-year Capital Investment Plan (CIP), which has programmed over \$5.8 billion for highway projects focusing on reliability. Projects in the Boston region include the Allston Viaduct, I-495/I-90 Interchange, Commonwealth Avenue, Tobin Bridge, Chelsea Viaduct, and North Washington Street Bridge projects.

J. Bechard stated that MassDOT highly values partnerships with the engineering and design consulting industry and MPOs throughout the state. J. Bechard stressed that MassDOT leadership is committed to strengthening relationships with municipalities to create a more collaborative project development process. He acknowledged that challenges arise as projects develop, scopes widen, additional costs are incurred, and schedules lengthen. MassDOT has realized that the cumulative number of projects that are advertised for construction in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year continues to rise in a way that is financially unsustainable, and MassDOT now is adopting a different approach to project development. The Highway Division has convened an Executive Committee including representatives from across the agency in order to collaborate on improving project delivery.

J. Bechard stated that investing the time it takes to properly document project needs, to develop an appropriate scope, schedule, and estimate of work, and to produce high quality bid documents will result in projects that better address community needs and concerns, allow for an expedited bid and award process, and result in fewer claims, change orders, cost overruns and schedule delays. The goal is to eliminate the frenzy of advertisements in the fourth quarter, produce reliable cost estimates and advertisement dates, and improve efficiency from advertisement date to the issue of a notice to proceed (NTP).

To achieve these goals, the Highway Division is implementing various changes to the project delivery process.

Project Initiation

MassDOT has introduced MaPIT, a web-based application designed to help both state and municipal proponents map, create, and initiate roadway projects. MaPIT screens projects against all relevant in-house GIS resources. This application replaces a paper-based process, while increasing transparency of project development and scoring.

A risk register will be developed to identify cost and schedule risks for each project. Approval letters from the MassDOT Project Review Committee (PRC) to municipalities now note that PRC approval ends within two years if no design NTP has been issued. Projects with significant costs and/or scope changes will be sent back to the PRC for reapproval. MassDOT will be revising their standard operating procedures (SOP) to reflect these changes.

Pre-25% Project Coordination

To reduce project scope changes and design resubmissions, MassDOT is planning to better coordinate with project proponents prior to 25% design hearings. Scoping site visits with MassDOT, municipal, and consultant staff will help define project risks early that may impact utilities and right-of-way (ROW).

Design Review

To reduce project design review time and the number of reviewers, MassDOT is hiring short-term consultants to get started on reviewing projects currently scheduled for FFYs 2019–21. Other changes to the design review process include the use of master schedules and Blue Beam software. Blue Beam Software is a PDF viewer that allows for instantaneous sharing of project plans and information. Blue Beam is designed for the architecture and engineering industry and eliminates delays in plan distribution by allowing for real-time markups, more efficient reviews, and consistency between reviewers. The goal is to empower project managers to make decisions more quickly given input from all parties involved. MassDOT staff is also pursuing additional project management training, ways to improve design public hearings, and post-construction conferences to review lessons learned.

Cost Recovery and Consultant Evaluation

Since May 2016, the Cost Recovery Standing Committee has regularly met and reviewed 114 issues that had been identified by MassDOT employees for potential cost recovery. MassDOT will continue to pursue ways to hold consultants accountable.

Cost Estimating

New cost estimating guidance was issued in calendar year 2017 and will be implemented in FFY 2019. Using historical data to track cost increases for projects

during the design phase, MassDOT is recommending that proponents include specific design contingencies. For example, cost estimates for roadway reconstruction projects should include a 25% contingency.

Performance Measures

Proposed performance measures for MassDOT project delivery include transitioning to a three-quarter advertisement schedule for federally aided projects over the course of the next three years in order to eliminate the frenzy of advertisement in the fourth quarter. Project managers will also be tracking the number of days between the originally scheduled advertisement date and actual advertisement date, with the goal of advertising within 30 days of the originally scheduled date.

Discussion

P. Regan asked whether MassDOT has specific metrics for deciding when a project should be referred back to the PRC. J. Bechard replied that the SOP is vague on this matter, and staff will be working with MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning to set specific triggers related to scope change.

Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee) (City of Somerville) asked who the point person will be for pre-design meetings. J. Bechard replied that the MassDOT project manager will be the lead.

Dennis Giombetti (MetroWest Regional Collaborative) (City of Framingham) thanked J. Bechard and MassDOT staff for their work on this effort.

T. Tegin echoed D. Giombetti's thanks and asked what the reaction from other MPOs has been. J. Bechard replied that he presented to the Transportation Manager's Group, which includes MPO staff from across the state, but has not visited each MPO individually.

12. Discussion of Review Period for Certification Documents—*Robin Mannion, Deputy Executive Director, CTPS*

In January 2017, MassDOT proposed shortening the standard 30-day public comment period for certification documents and amendments to certification documents to 21 days in order to synchronize the approval of the TIP, State TIP, and CIP. Given concerns raised by some organizations and municipalities, the board amended the MPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP) to institute this change for the remainder of FFY 2018 only, with the intention to take up the issue again in the future. If the board were to vote to permanently change the public review period to 21 days, the PPP would need to be amended again. Amendments to the PPP require a 45-day public review period. The

current PPP states that the board may shorten the public comment period, but 30 days is the standard. R. Mannion stated that MPO staff hopes to present any changes to the public comment periods in the PPP in the context of a general update to the plan and, at a future meeting, ask the board to vote to release the amended PPP with these changes for a 45-day public comment period.

Discussion

D. Mohler stated that MassDOT's position is that the standard public comment period for TIP-related actions should be 21 days.

T. Teich requested a formal proposal to make this change so that the board can discuss whether to make this change for all certification documents or just the TIP.

G. Trindade stated that if other MPOs use a 21-day period, so should the Boston Region MPO.

13. Rail Vision Update—*Scott Hamwey, MassDOT*

Rail Vision is a two-year project to evaluate ways to leverage the MBTA's extensive commuter rail network to best meet the transportation and economic growth needs of the region. The objectives of the project are to match service with the growing and changing needs of the region, enhance economic vitality, improve the passenger experience, help the Commonwealth achieve its climate change resiliency targets, and maximize return on investment. To achieve these aims, MassDOT has convened a Rail Vision Advisory Committee including elected officials, advocacy groups, the business community, and public and private sector agencies.

Rail Vision will not be financially constrained, but must be implementable. Rail Vision will evaluate the possibilities of new technologies, fleets, and full electrification of the system. The plan will evaluate tradeoffs and alternatives, while focusing primarily on the existing system. Rail Vision will be coordinated with fare policy and parking efforts, but the Rail Vision Advisory Committee will not lead discussions about those efforts, and will assume the current management and oversight structure of the MBTA. Rail Vision is still in the early phases, but will need to finish by the end of 2019 in order to coincide with the procurement process for the next operating contract. The contract with the current operator, Keolis, ends in 2022.

Rail Vision is guided by key questions related to the purpose of MBTA rail service. Should MBTA rail service reduce highway congestion, auto emissions, and vehicle-miles traveled by focusing on long-distance trips? Should it provide service to communities in the Inner Core that operates more like rapid transit? Should it enable access to jobs by focusing on reverse commutes? Should it support economic

development in Gateway Cities and urban areas outside the Inner Core by focusing schedules and service levels on needs of those communities? Many stakeholders view the purpose of the commuter rail differently, and those competing ideas will be weighed in the final Rail Vision.

Various service and investment ideas will be evaluated and combined to create up to eight service alternatives that consider the following:

1. New vehicle technology
2. System electrification
3. High-level platforms
4. Station placement
5. Double and triple tracking
6. Facility needs
7. Changes in frequency
8. More express service
9. Span of service
10. Skip stop
11. Transfer hubs
12. Operational feasibility
13. Order of magnitude operating and capital costs

Ideas will go through several rounds of evaluation, using qualitative methods and ridership and operations models. Evaluation tools will include the following:

1. Regional Dynamic Model (RDM): a strategic simulation tool illustrating how an urban area evolves over time based on predicted changes (and corresponding responses) in transportation infrastructure, land use, population, and employment
2. Attune: a scheduling tool that assesses the operational feasibility of any given scenario and provides key statistics (e.g. vehicles miles) for the operating cost model
3. Operating Cost Model: an Excel-based tool that calculates cost implications of service alternatives, including incremental impacts of each service alternative on cost elements

Discussion

D. Giombetti commented that the process of producing the Rail Vision seems long.

S. Hamwey replied that given the scale of the commuter rail system and the interest in this issue, MassDOT felt the need to conduct a process that would allow input from as many stakeholders as possible.

D. Mohler added that Rail Vision may become a transformative document for the system given the number of possible alternatives for future service and the breadth of stakeholders it impacts.

S. Hamwey noted that full electrification of the system is something many people think should be done, but that there will be pushback.

Mike Muller, Assistant Executive Director for Commuter Rail at MBTA, added that electrification would require the installation of about 400 miles of catenary wire and tree cutting along the ROW, and present issues concerning service cancellation in the event of snow and the evolution of technology in the time it takes to electrify the system.

M. Muller added that MBTA staff is not anti-electrification; the operational benefits make it very attractive, but the questions remain.

S. Hamwey added that given the number of issues at play, the Rail Vision process builds in a lot of time in 2019 to have a regional conversation about the proposed alternatives.

T. Tegin asked about the tools mentioned. S. Hamwey stated that Attune has been presented internally to railroad operations staff. The interesting aspect of the RDM is the connection with land use, which will allow the project team to understand possible future growth and produce alternatives that speak to the different futures explored in MassDOT's *Focus40* and the MPO's LRTP processes.

Jay Monty (At-Large City) (City of Everett) asked whether the team has surveyed models from other agencies. S. Hamwey replied that the Rail Vision team began the process by reviewing systems across the country and the world. The MBTA system is notable in that it is a geographically expansive system. Regional Rail in Philadelphia serves a similar number of customers, but in a system that is a third the size geographically.

Laura Gilmore (Massachusetts Port Authority) asked about the evaluation criteria for the alternatives. S. Hamwey replied that concepts have been developed internally and will be shared in the coming months.

14.Members Items

Rick Reed (Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination) (Town of Bedford) announced that he would be retiring as Bedford's Town Manager on August 17, but he will remain as the MPO representative with the permission of the Board of Selectmen.

D. Mohler reminded R. Reed to speak with MassDOT staff in the coming months regarding a possible TIP amendment related to a funding request from the Middlesex 3 Transportation Management Association.

15. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway) (G. Trindade) and seconded by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan). The motion carried.

Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Jennifer Raitt
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Dave Kucharsky
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Federal Highway Administration	Nelson Hoffman
Federal Transit Administration	
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	Eric Waaramaa
Massachusetts Port Authority	Laura Gilmore
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Sarah Kurpiel
	Lee
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Dennis Giombetti
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Rick Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Aaron Clausen
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Tina Cassidy
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Tegin Teich
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	Christine
	Stickney
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Glenn Trindade
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees Affiliation

Eric Newman	Wavetronix
Steve Olanoff	Three Rivers Interlocal Council alternate
Mary Dennesen	
Adam Groves	PTV Group
Erin Reed	Massachusetts Safe Routes to School
Amy Sullivan	FHWA
Jennifer Brown	FHWA
Victoria Mier	MassDOT Press Office
Jim Bellingham	

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Robin Mannion
Anne McGahan
Scott Peterson
Jen Rowe
Michelle Scott
