



Regional Transportation Advisory Council

February 8, 2017, Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
Boston, MA

Meeting Summary

Introductions

T. Bennett, Chair (Cambridge) called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 8)

Chair's Report - T. Bennett

T. Bennett announced that the most recent MPO meeting was postponed and that there was no report.

Representation of Regional Transit Agencies on the MPO Board; Elizabeth Moore, Director of Policy and Planning, CTPS

E. Moore presented her research into background material that was triggered by the consideration of changes to representation on the MPO board. Historically, the board has been composed of state and local elected officials and transportation-related public agency officials. The new regulations explicitly call for representation on MPO boards of public transportation providers. The new members would represent agencies, municipalities, and other organizations that provide a public transportation service.

To advise on the best way to meet this request, CPTS staff performed research into other MPOs across the country and found large differences in MPO structures. The number and type of transit operators also vary across MPOs. In Massachusetts, the RTAs are the organizing agencies for transit operators.

E. Moore presented four models of the representation of transit operators in the MPO regions:

- The fractional representation model considers MPOs where some of the transit operators are on the board and committees.

- Another model showed where there is no policy board representation by the transit operators.
- A common model for MPOs uses a transit committee on the board;
- One of the MPOs studied had all transit operators represented on the board.

Currently, the MBTA has one seat on the MPO board. Cape Ann Transit Authority and Metro West Regional Transit Authority do not have representation on the MPO board. The Federal Certification Review process (December 2015) recommended that both CATA and MWRTA should be represented in some way on the board. Potential board representation is not limited to RTAs; it could include many different types of entities that receive federal funds for operating like shuttle services, transit management authorities (TMAs), and councils on aging, known as COAs.

A possible solution to the representation issue is adding one or more seats for CATA and MWRTA. Another possibility would establish a transit committee that would have one vote on the board. Another possibility would be to include rail and transit as one of the three MassDOT votes on the board.

The MPO asked staff to study the potential membership changes fully and to come back with a recommendation for proceeding. The Advisory Council should consider the implication of potential changes in its membership regarding guidelines for voting membership in the Advisory Council Bylaws.

Questions and Discussion

E. Moore stated that a vote by the MPO on how to proceed will likely take place in mid-March. (T. Bennett)

In response to a member's question on what actual problem is being solved in this process, E. Moore stated that currently transit operators have no voice on the MPO and this change brings transit voices to the table. (R. McGaw)

A member asked if this would affect funding of MPO projects. E. Moore responded that this only affects the voices at the table and that with the exception of flexed funds to transit, the funding for transit will not be affected but will include the transit element in the discussion. (M. Gowing)

E. Moore concurred with the comment from a member explaining that CATA and MWRTA already fall within the realm of the four MassDOT votes covering the transit commitment. (J. Seward)

A member commented that the RTAs feel that all transit funding goes to the MBTA and not the other RTAs. (M. Gowing)

Public Participation Plan Amendment; Jen Rowe, CTPS

J. Rowe gave a brief update on the proposed changes to shorten the MPO's comment period to 21 days. This would affect the MPO's 3C Certification Documents—the TIP, the UPWP, and the LRTP. This proposed change applies to draft documents and draft amendments to documents. MassDOT proposed these changes so that MPO planning documents throughout the Commonwealth align with their capital planning documents, primarily the Capital Investment Plan (CIP).

J. Rowe is exploring the impact of these changes on organizations and the commenting public to determine if the proposed change will have a negative effect on the public participation process. She described some of the various opportunities to comment on the certification documents and in the conduct of the MPOs business including the MPO website, and several advisory groups and citizen-based entities.

J. Rowe presented results of a three-question survey on the impacts the proposed changes would have on the respondent. The proposed amendment, to decrease the public comment period from 30 days to 21 days, would require a 45-day comment period and will be available for public comment through March 20. The MPO will potentially vote on this amendment on March 30.

Questions and Discussion

T. Bennett asked if there was a specific reason why the shortened comment period applied to all of the 3C documents instead of the TIP exclusively considering the motivating force behind MassDOT's making this change is to bring the TIP in alignment with the CIP. J. Rowe explained that there was no particular reason for selecting all three of the certification documents.

L. Dantas explained the relationship between CIP needs and the TIP target dates and how the two documents help with coordination between the MassDOT Board of Directors, the FMCB and the MPOs throughout the Commonwealth. A member had commented that the state budget is not ready until the end of June which makes budgeting development very challenging. As difficult as it is now to know what funding will be so far in advance, the truncation of a review and comment period makes meaningful input even more difficult. (M. Gowing)

A member commented that the amendment should state that the comment period is being shortened to 21 days from a previous number of days. This is lacking in the current draft amendment. The member also expressed frustration in completing the MPO's short survey on the issue as it did not do a good job of explaining its purpose or give respondents enough latitude to respond in a meaningful way. Open-ended responses might be more difficult for the surveyor to tabulate, but they are better at identifying the real concerns of the survey respondent. (S. Larrabee)

Shortening the comment period to 21 days has a negative impact on organizations that meet every 30 days because a comment period may completely bypass the meeting schedule of a group. (S. Larrabee)

A member questioned the reasoning behind this amendment. L. Dantas explained that the crunch between the draft and the final approval is based on the availability of final program allocation numbers which are released at the end of February or early March. The member suggested starting the process earlier as a means of achieving the target completion date without sacrificing time for public comment. (C. Porter)

A member commented that the change of truncating the comment period should be for this year only. There is no reason to change the comment periods for all certification documents for all future public reviews if the only scheduling issue is this year's accelerated document development schedule to align one document (TIP) to MassDOT's CIP. (M. Gowing)

A member felt that too much time is spent tweaking the process of developing the documents while the fact that funding priorities are not being addressed is a more important issue. (R. McGaw)

A member commented that truncating the public comment period has less of a significant impact on the total document development schedule than the lateness of the announcement of target funding sources from FHWA and MassDOT. (S. Olanoff)

FFYs 2018-22 TIP Schedule; Ali Kleyman, CTPS

The Universe of Projects list identifies all projects that are considered in the funding process. The projects fall into three categories: projects ready for evaluation; projects already evaluated and ready for programming; and projects that are active MassDOT projects but are not yet at a stage of being ready to evaluate. The TIP Universe tables listing projects to date are available on the MPO website ([click here](#)).

Project evaluations will be conducted through the end of February when the results will be shared with project proponents and follow-up discussion on the individual project evaluations will be addressed. The draft evaluations will be presented to the MPO on March 2 with municipal feedback to the evaluations ongoing through March 9. The First-Tier list of projects will be available on March 16, followed by the release of the Staff Recommendation of Projects. Discussion of these projects is slated for the March 30 MPO meeting with a possible continuation of discussion at the April 6 meeting. At this point, the draft TIP may be ready for an approval vote by the MPO.

The draft TIP is scheduled to be available on the MPO website by April 19, with a public review period from April 20 – May 10. The MPO will respond to comments received through the public process until May 18 and may be prepared to endorse the final document on May 25.

Key MPO meetings in the next few months will be March 16 with a discussion of First-Tier list of projects; March 30 with the discussion of the Staff Recommendation; April 6 with a discussion of the Staff Recommendation and a possible vote to release the document for public review; April 13 with the possible continuation of the April 6 meeting; and May 25 with the vote to endorse the Final FFY2018-22 TIP.

Questions and Discussion

A member's question on a specific TIP project regarding the I-90 Beacon Yard project was taken for later clarification. (M. Wellons)

FFY 2018 UPWP Schedule; Sandy Johnston, CTPS

MPO staff has conducted public outreach for the UPWP in compiling a list of potential planning studies. MPO staff review of these studies throughout the initial phase of the development process resulted in the first draft Universe of Studies submitted to the MPO's UPWP Committee on February 9. On March 16, staff will release the draft of staff recommendations to the UPWP Committee for its formal review.

It is anticipated that there will be two UPWP Committee meetings in April (6th and the 13th) to go over study ideas. The Committee will forward its recommendation to the full MPO after the second meeting in April. The full MPO is tentatively scheduled to vote to release the draft UPWP for public review on May 4th.

The draft UPWP will be released for public review on May 15 and will be available for the comment period ending near June 5th. The Advisory Council meets on May 10 and June 14 which allows enough time for the Council to comment on specific studies or the entire document. A tentative date of June 15th is set for the MPO to vote to endorse the Final FFY 2018 UPWP. An Advisory Council comment should be made sometime from mid to late May.

The UPWP is not as closely tied to the MassDOT CIP as the TIP so there is some flexibility in the endorsement date. The likely schedule to date has two key MPO meetings regarding the UPWP. May 4th will be the presentation of the draft UPWP and its vote to release for public comment and June 16th where the vote to endorse the final UPWP will take place.

MPO staff will work closely with the Advisory Council in developing the UPWP. The Advisory Council sits on the UPWP Committee which affords ample opportunity to comment.

Questions and Discussion

One member commented on the inappropriateness of reducing public comment period by a third in light of the schedule development for the UPWP being offered here. He noted that approximately ten years ago an effort was made to cut public comment by about half

and felt that it was as bad an idea then as it is now. Comments should be encouraged to come from not just transportation professionals but also from ordinary citizens who should be encouraged to participate. (J. Seward)

One member commented that receipt of the funding allocation is the critical factor in programming TIP projects and UPWP planning studies and activities but it does not show up on the chart or the calendar. L. Dantas indicated that funding assumptions are based on when they have been received historically. Financial numbers for the TIP program should be available very soon. (S. Olanoff)

One member noted that the UPWP and LRTP comment periods are not directly aligned with the MassDOT CIP path and suggested the 21 day comment period was not appropriate for those documents. (M. Gowing)

3C Documents Committee; C. Porter, Committee Chair

C. Porter recommended that the Committee meets before the March 8 Advisory Council meeting to review the TIP project evaluation numbers. He suggested that discussing the specific planning studies on the UPWP should be done at the same meeting. T. Bennett proposed assigning some time at the meeting for the UPWP.

Questions and Discussion

T. Bennett felt the committee might need to meet in March and April to focus on the TIP. The draft UPWP letter could be done after that.

T. Bennett presented a list of the various topics that have been covered at Advisory Council meetings over the last year which might lend themselves well to further study and possible inclusion in a future UPWP funded study. Six different general topic areas were noted:

- New Measures – include topics on transportation relating to the quality of life (clean air, congestion mitigation); bicycle gaps, demand and levels of service; roadway users; and the economic development impacts of transit.
- Parking – include topics on transportation relating to the utilization and optimization of parking assets; tradeoffs with other spaces; inventories; and the availability of parking for electric vehicles (EVs) both on and off-street.
- Transit – include topics on transportation relating to economic impacts; winter effects on cycling and transit; First Mile/Last Mile activities; sustainability of power infrastructure; dynamic pricing; the impacts of transit priority measures (infrastructure, signal priority).
- Freight – include a topic on transportation relating to truck queueing outside the MPO.
- Related to 3C Process and Projects – include topics on transportation relating to the progression of UPWP studies and whether they achieve construction or implementation; incentives to bring in construction projects on time; costs and the use of metrics involved in determining the accuracy of highway project bids.

- Technology – include topics on transportation relating to solar-powered electric vehicle (EV) charging stations; and energy grid and energy infrastructure planning to facilitate EV cars and buses.

Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

M. Gowing noted that individuals can comment to the MPO directly as well as the formal Advisory Council process through the Chair.

Minutes - January 11, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 11 meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved with three members abstaining.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 4:20 PM.

Attendance

Municipalities - Voting

Acton
Belmont
Cambridge
Millis

Citizen Advocacy Groups

American Council of Engineering
Companies
Association for Public Transportation
Boston Society of Architects
CrosstownConnect
MassBike
MoveMassachusetts
National Corridors Initiative
Riverside Neighborhood Association
WalkBoston

Municipalities Non-Voting

Boston

Agencies Non-Voting

MassDOT - Aeronautics Division
TRIC

Guests

Ed Lowney

Staff

Lourenço Dantas
Elizabeth Moore
David Fargen
Ali Kleyman
Ethan Ebinger

Attendee

Mike Gowing
Robert McGaw
Tegin Bennett
Ed Chisholm

Fred Moseley
Barry M Steinberg
Schuyler Larrabee
Scott Zadakis
Chris Porter
Jon Seward
John Businger
Marilyn Wellons
John McQueen

Tom Kadzis

Steve Rawding
Steve Olanoff

Malden Resident

Sandy Johnston
Roisin Foley
Jen Rowe
Matt Archer