

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Memorandum for the Record**

### **Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting**

#### **August 15, 2019 Meeting**

10:00 AM–11:52 AM, Framingham City Hall, Blumer Room, 150 Concord Street, Framingham

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 meetings of June 20, 2019, and July 18, 2019
- Endorse the Air Quality Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Release the draft Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) for a 30-day public review period

#### **Meeting Agenda**

##### **1. Host Remarks—*Mayor Dr. Yvonne M. Spicer, Erika Oliver Jerram, Deputy Director of Community and Economic Development, and Eric Johnson, City Engineer, City of Framingham***

Mayor Spicer thanked the MPO for choosing to host a board meeting in Framingham and welcomed all attendees to the city. She thanked city staff for their work in representing the community and improving transportation, including Dennis Giombetti (Chair of the Framingham City Council and former MPO representative). Mayor Spicer acknowledged that although the City of Framingham is a newly established city, it borders seven neighboring communities and serves as a hub of the MetroWest subregion. Mayor Spicer stated that the expansion of the transportation network is important to Framingham, and expressed optimism about the city's partnership with the MPO to transform transportation in the area.

E. Jerram gave an overview of Framingham's unique development pattern and transportation challenges and successes. She described the city as economically diverse with a variety of development patterns. Topography, transportation, and economic forces have shaped Framingham's growth over the past 300 years. Although Framingham is the newest city in Massachusetts, it is larger than many existing cities,

with more than 70,000 residents, 26 square miles of land area, and 250 miles of roadways. Framingham has 2,500 businesses, 50,000 jobs and more than three billion in annual payroll to workers. Two highway exits and a patchwork of transit options serve the city, including the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail, Logan Express, and private Limo Liner and Peter Pan buses. Also, the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) is a bus system that serves 16 towns in and around Framingham and has its hub in downtown Framingham. In 2007, the Local Intra-Framingham Transit (or LIFT) system transferred to the control of the newly-formed MWRTA. MWRTA provides Framingham with access to the entire region, including access to jobs, shopping, and fixed route transit like the MBTA Green Line. In 2009, a State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) project improved Franklin Street, a key gateway to downtown Framingham. In 2015, Framingham's portion of the Cochituate Rail Trail, about 1.2 miles, was completed. The 2.4 mile Natick portion is currently under construction, including a pedestrian bridge over Route 30 and a crossing at Route 9. When completed, this path will connect Framingham's historic Saxonville Mill area to jobs and shopping at the Golden Triangle and commuter rail in Natick Center. In 2016, the Concord Street project was completed, including a year of work prior to the construction of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project to upgrade underground utilities. E. Jerram stated that the Concord Street project was instrumental in demonstrating to the development community that the state and local government believe in downtown Framingham's potential.

E. Johnson gave a brief overview of MPO-funded TIP projects and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) studies in the city. Underground work on the Union Avenue project has begun, and the project will be ready to advertise for construction in the fall of 2019. Improvements to the Central/Edgell intersection are included in a current UPWP study, but have yet to advance to the TIP process. E. Johnson advocated for the state to provide additional improvements on Route 9. E. Johnson also talked about the transportation challenges that the city is facing, including congestion, last-mile connections, large numbers of reverse commuters, limited commuter parking downtown, and slow progress on the construction of rail trails.

E. Jerram provided details about the work that Framingham and Natick are undertaking in the Exit 13/Golden Triangle area. Last year, Framingham worked with Natick to undertake a visioning plan for the district that would allow for long-term transformation to meet the changing needs of suburban retail and office markets. The vision not only allows for large blocks dominated by big box stores to slowly transform but also includes better access to trails through a major wetland area and better use of the rail trail. She hopes that the next steps are to work with MassDOT on transportation solutions, including this idea of a "displaced left" at Speen Street and long-term ideas for improving Exit 13 as this could potentially be a measure to alleviate traffic congestion.

## 2. Introductions

See attendance on pages 11 and 12.

## 3. Public Comments

Tom Michelman (President, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail) thanked the MPO for their continuous effort to improve transportation in the Boston and MetroWest areas. T. Michelman provided updates on the portion of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Sudbury. The 25 percent design plans will be submitted to MassDOT later this year. T. Michelman stated that this project has had overwhelming support from the Town of Sudbury over the last 10 years. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail is expected to increase access to the commuter rail in Framingham and other amenities in town. The rail trail is not only important for the Town of Sudbury, but also important for connecting neighboring towns in the area. It will provide recreation and encourage less use of single-occupancy vehicles. T. Michelman thanked the MPO for its continuous support, especially including Phase 2B of the trail in the TIP. Phase 2C of the rail trail, which is the portion connecting to Concord, is virtually finished. T. Michelman added that the potential connection to the Cochituate Rail Trail is important and expressed interest in working with the City of Framingham in the future regarding a potential extension of the rail trail.

## 4. Chairs' Reports

There was none.

## 5. Committee Chair's Reports

There were none.

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

T. Teich reported that the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council) voted to approve its comment letter regarding the new Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), *Destination 2040*, for submittal to the MPO. The comment letter voices support for the visions and goals in *Destination 2040*, continuing to shift funds to the Complete Streets investment program, reducing funding for Major Infrastructure, and flexing funds to a new Transit Modernization program. The Advisory Council also discussed ways to support MPO staff in outreach to the public to identify projects that best meet the goals of the LRTP. The Advisory Council expressed support for the notion of not identifying specific projects in the outer time bands of the plan, as there might be changes in transportation priorities. Advisory Council members had questions regarding forecasting error in the MPO's regional travel demand model, and expressed a desire to better understand forecasting results. The Advisory Council also expressed support for a

robust scenario planning process when developing the next plan, especially in regards to the availability of funds and its impact on project selection.

### **7. Executive Director's Report—Annette Demchur, Co-Interim Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)**

A. Demchur stated that the MPO would vote to endorse *Destination 2040* at the next meeting, on August 29, 2019. A. Demchur encouraged MPO members to stay after the meeting for a tour of transportation projects in Framingham.

### **8. Approval of June 20, 2019, and July 18, 2019, MPO Meeting Minutes—Kate White and Róisín Foley, MPO Staff**

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of June 20, 2019, was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by MassDOT Highway Division (John Bechard). The motion carried.

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 18, 2019, was made by MAPC (E. Bourassa) and seconded by MassDOT Highway Division (J. Bechard). The motion carried.

#### ***Discussion***

Ken Miller (Federal Highway Administration or FHWA) reiterated his question asked on July 18, 2019, about why the Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) analysis only looked at MPO target-funded projects, stated that he confirmed that any project included in the plan must be included in the analysis and he hoped to receive a response as to whether MPO staff would adjust the analysis to include all projects in the plan, regardless of the funding source.

### **9. Air Quality Memorandum of Understanding—Bryan Pounds, MassDOT Documents posted to the MPO Calendar:**

#### **1. [Draft Air Quality Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#)**

B. Pounds provided an update on the Air Quality MOU which has not been updated since 1996. The MOU outlines the responsibilities of entities including MPOs, Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), MassDOT, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) regarding federal air quality requirements. The update does not propose new changes. It incorporates comments received via the STIP process and fulfills previous federal certification review corrective actions. The MOU was shared with all the entities mentioned above. Twelve Massachusetts MPO's have already endorsed the updated MOU. B. Pounds stated that he would bring the MOU to a meeting with RTAs in September for their endorsement.

**Vote**

A motion to endorse the Air Quality MOU was made by At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (Daniel Amstutz) and seconded by MAPC (E. Bourassa). The motion carried.

D. Amstutz asked whether there is any connection between the Air Quality MOU and the Global Warming Solutions Act.

B. Pounds replied that MassDOT is responsible for conducting air quality analyses for projects via the TIP process. The MOU also outlined the budget MassDOT gets from MassDEP to conduct carbon dioxide emissions analyses.

**10. Coordinated Public Transit—Human Services Transportation Plan—  
Betsy Harvey, MPO Staff**

***Documents posted to the MPO Calendar***

1. [Draft Coordinated Plan](#)

The Coordinated Plan is updated every four years in conjunction with the LRTP. The primary purpose of the plan is to increase coordination among transportation providers to better meet the needs of seniors and people with disabilities. The plan accomplishes this goal by identifying the transportation needs of these populations and setting regional priorities. MPO staff collected input by coordinating with key stakeholders and members of the public. The Coordinated Plan also guides agencies in the development of applications for the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Section 5310 program, the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. E. Harvey asked that the MPO vote to release the Coordinated Plan for a 30-day public review period, expected to end on September 16, 2019. The MPO will vote to endorse the final Coordinated Plan on September 26, 2019.

**Vote**

A motion to release the Coordinated Plan for a 30-day public review period was made by the City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department) (Jim Fitzgerald) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

**11. Update on MPO's Certification Review Action Plan—Annette  
Demchur, Co-Interim Executive Director, Central Transportation  
Planning Staff**

***Documents posted to the MPO Calendar***

1. [MPO Certification Review Action Plan](#)

A. Demchur presented the Action Plan that the MPO staff developed in response to the findings of the 2018 federal certification review. Through the certification review, FTA and FHWA examined the MPO process and provided comments in three topic areas: key metropolitan planning documents and processes; the cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing (3C) process; and four planning focus areas. The action plan addressed the two corrective actions—publish a complete list of obligated projects and update the air quality MOU. Three recommendations regarding the MPO organizational structure were discussed among MPO members.

The first recommendation related to MPO organizational structure is to develop an operations plan for the MPO. Specific guidance provided in the review was to

1. Clarify roles and responsibilities among MPO members and staff (particularly among CTPS, MAPC, and MassDOT) pertaining to collaboration, communication, work assignments, and products;
2. Provide further clarification on the roles of the Chair and Vice-Chair;
3. Define officer roles for subcommittees; and
4. Identify other necessary actions to support an effective 3C process and facilitate MPO operations as the regional forum for transportation decision making.

A. Demchur proposed to work with the MPO to determine the best approach to develop this plan. The approach would include some level of participation from the MPO, MPO staff assistance, and/or some level of external expertise, such as a plan consultant.

### ***Discussion***

E. Bourassa stated that it would be very helpful to hire a consultant to put together an operational plan and link the plan to the certification review goals. E. Bourassa added that a subcommittee to provide guidance could also be helpful.

Laura Gilmore (Massachusetts Port Authority) asked for clarification on whether the operation plan is for external constituents or specifically for MPO members.

K. Miller replied that it could be for both audiences, internally and externally. The certification review indicated that the MPO has never had an operational plan, and cited a need for a more defined plan to show how information flows between the state and the MPO.

Rick Reed (Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination) (Town of Bedford) asked if FTA and FHWA have made this comment to other MPOs. It could be valuable to look at other MPOs' experiences in complying with this corrective action.

T. Teich stated that the Advisory Council would like to be involved in this process of creating a plan, and she supports reviewing other MPOs' experiences and involving MPO members in the discussion.

Bill Conroy (City of Boston) (Boston Transportation Department) agreed with other members and expressed support for a subcommittee to work with consultants.

S. Woelfel stated that the next step would be figuring out the availability of funds in the budget to continue this process.

The second recommendation related to MPO organizational structure is to review voting procedures for board seats. The federal reviewers expressed the need to engage all communities in the region, and that the voting procedures should result in effective representation. A. Demchur proposed that the MPO should work with the Vice-Chair and MBTA Advisory Board to review voting procedures. A. Demchur proposed adding this discussion as a future agenda item.

### ***Discussion***

E. Bourassa stated that he generally receives positive sentiments from municipalities in terms of voting procedures. While recent elections are usually uncontested, he stated that he always encourages municipalities that voice interest in running. However, he acknowledged that it is important to explore ways to promote MPO membership and encourage communities to get involved.

Paul Regan (MBTA Advisory Board) agreed, adding that the MPO could provide more information to communities about the election process.

T. Teich stated that this discussion is just one piece of a larger discussion in regards to making the MPO more accessible to the public, adding that there should be more discussion on the broader topic of the MPO process and its engagement with the public.

K. Miller stated that it might make sense for only municipalities in particular subregions to vote for subregional representatives, instead of all municipalities in the region.

E. Bourassa responded that this is a valuable agenda item to have for future discussions.

The third recommendation related to MPO organizational structure is to broaden information and training opportunities for board members about current best practices in transportation planning. MPO staff is very interested in providing the MPO with engaging material.

***Discussion***

L. Gilmore stated that it is important for MPO members to learn about other MPOs' processes and best practices, and she expressed support for peer exchanges with other MPOs.

T. Bent suggested that participating in conferences and seminars could be valuable.

Sheila Page (At-Large Town) (Town of Lexington) stated that she appreciated the presentation from the City of Framingham at this meeting and added that it could be valuable to have more presentations like this in the future.

D. Amstutz stated that tours of TIP projects sites are important for MPO members to understand project impacts on communities, adding that maps and other visuals are helpful when discussing projects.

T. Bent suggested reinstating "TIP days," where municipalities present updates to provide members with a better understanding of projects.

T. Teich agreed with other member comments and added that it is sometimes unclear how tools like the regional travel demand model are being used in the process of evaluating projects in the TIP. She added that it would be helpful for MPO staff to provide more information on these tools.

The remaining recommendations include refining the TIP project selection process to be mode neutral, developing thresholds for individual DI/DB metrics, addressing resiliency in LRTP and TIP selection criteria, and seeking other opportunities to emphasize resiliency in planning and programming.

***Discussion***

K. Miller stated that he was not sure how it would be possible to create mode neutral TIP criteria.

T. Teich added that the goals of the LRTP are clearly defined but are not mode neutral, stating that the current criteria might be biased toward specific types of projects, which makes it difficult for other projects to score well. For instance, bicycle and pedestrian improvements are generally ranked lower as they do not meet a lot of the evaluation criteria in terms of safety. However, these projects are scored against other bicycle and pedestrian projects, so setting specific criteria for bicycle and pedestrian projects might be worth considering.

D. Amstutz agreed with T. Teich's points.

**12. TIP Project Evaluation Criteria Revisions—Matt Genova, MPO Staff**

M. Genova proposed three frameworks for revising TIP criteria in advance of developing the federal fiscal years 2021–25 TIP. The purpose of revising the TIP criteria is to better reflect the updated goals, objectives, and investment programs in *Destination 2040*, to keep pace with prevailing needs in the Boston region, maintain alignment with data and methodologies used by state and federal partners, better incorporate performance-based planning and programming into the TIP process, adopt best practices from peer MPOs and regional planning agencies, and to implement MPO feedback.

Feedback received on existing criteria and the three possible frameworks for revising criteria are included below.

1. Need for cost-effective metrics
2. Concerns over criteria favoring certain investment programs
3. Continue to emphasize quantitative criteria
4. Desire to more heavily weight negative scores
5. Need to directly address resiliency
6. Add health metrics to criteria
7. Reduce emphasis of criteria on auto-centric project elements
8. Consideration of bike/pedestrian signals
9. Reconsider use of equivalent property damage only (or EPDO) index for safety to properly consider bike/pedestrian accidents
10. Reduce numbers of criteria to make priorities clearer
11. Use access to jobs and nonwork necessities as an economic vitality measure

<b>Framework #1: Complete Reimagination</b>	<b>Framework #2: Hybrid Approach</b>	<b>Framework #3: Marginal Adjustment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distinct criteria for each LRTP investment program</li> <li>- Significant updates to existing criteria</li> <li>- Changes to scoring weights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Universal criteria for all LRTP investment programs, except Transit Modernization</li> <li>- Updates to existing criteria; addition of resilience and bus lane criteria</li> <li>- Updates to scoring weights, if desired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue using universal criteria for all LRTP investment programs</li> <li>- Limited additions to existing criteria to incorporate transit, resilience, and bus lanes</li> <li>- Changes to scoring weights, if desired</li> </ul>

M. Genova proposed the adoption of Framework #1 and opened the floor for discussion.

### ***Discussion***

E. Bourassa expressed support for Framework #1 and creating more specific criteria for certain projects. He added that it is important to pay attention to the geographical distribution of funds and have a policy in place to determine whether a project is still a priority if the cost increases by a certain percentage.

T. Teich expressed support for Framework #1 and asked if it is built on best practices from other MPOs. T. Teich also asked whether revising the TIP criteria would impact MassDOT's project selection advisory committee criteria, given that the current criteria closely mirrors the MassDOT criteria.

S. Woelfel replied that in terms of revising criteria, MassDOT has similar processes and direction as the MPO.

L. Gilmore expressed concern about how to address projects that could fall into multiple investment programs. She expressed interest in understanding the implications for different modes at future meetings.

K. Miller commented that it could be helpful to think about benchmarking when measuring cost-effectiveness of projects. For example, comparing the cost and the value provided to construct one mile of bike lane between project A and project B.

T. Bent expressed concern that the proposed timeline for completing the criteria revision process before scoring projects for the 2021–2025 TIP is very ambitious.

### **13. Member's Items**

D. Amstutz asked whether there were any updates on the hiring of a new Executive Director for the MPO staff. S. Woelfel replied that updates will be provided in September.

S. Woelfel informed members that registration for MassDOT's Annual Moving Together Conference is now open.

### **14. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the MBTA Advisory Board (P. Regan) and seconded by At-Large Town (Town of Arlington) (D. Amstutz). The motion carried.

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## Attendance

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<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
At-Large City (City of Everett)	
At-Large City (City of Newton)	
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 (MassDOT)	Steve Woelfel
	Bryan Pounds
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
	John Romano
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	
Massachusetts Port Authority	Laura Gilmore
MBTA Advisory Board	Paul Regan
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)	Eric Bourassa
	Thatcher Kezer
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	III
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Bedford)	Rick Reed
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Tegin Teich
South Shore Coalition (Town of Braintree)	
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Erika Oliver Jerram	City of Framingham
Eric Johnson	City of Framingham
Tom Michelman	Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
Sara Scully	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Ed Cann	MetroWest Regional Transit Authority
Bill Conroy	City of Boston
Austin Cyaniewicz	Town of Acton
Len Simon	Town of Sudbury
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Steve Olanoff	TRIC Alternate
Jeremy Thompson	495/MetroWest Partnership
Imai Aiu	Town of Weston
Leah Robins	MetroWest Regional Collaborative
Todd Baldwin	Town of Saugus
Bill Sedewitz	City of Framingham
Yvonne M. Spicer	City of Framingham

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Annette Demchur, Co-Interim Executive Director  
Róisín Foley  
Judy Fung  
Hiral Gandhi  
Matt Genova  
Betsy Harvey  
Kathy Jacob  
Sandy Johnston  
Alexandra (Ali) Kleyman  
Anne McGahan  
Michelle Scott  
Kate White

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