



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

February 13, 2019, Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

AnaCristina Fragoso, Vice Chair, representing the Boston Society of Civil Engineers

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

A. Fragoso called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 7.)

2. Chair's Report—*AnaCristina Fragoso, Vice Chair*

A. Fragoso read a message from Tegin Teich, Chair.

A survey regarding the impending transit committee seat on the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will soon be released to MPO members. This survey will allow members to provide input on how the committee might be structured and how it would participate in the MPO. Its structure could affect the Advisory Council's membership, as the transit committee may include current Advisory Council members. The Federal Transit Administration has expressed interest in having direct regional transit authority (RTA) representation, which would result in a voting seat for each RTA in the Boston Region; the MPO is more inclined toward a transit committee with a rotating seat.

In addition to Karl Quackenbush's March 15 retirement, Robin Mannion, Deputy Director, CTPS, is leaving the organization on February 15. K. Quackenbush announced that Annette Demchur and Scott Peterson will be interim co-executive directors. A MPO committee will search for a new executive director. The committee currently consists of representatives from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Advisory Council, and they would like others to volunteer; ideally, these volunteers would add diversity to the committee.

Anne McGahan, Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Manager, developed a new set of funding programs for the LRTP, including Bus Priority and Park-and-Ride. The current funding programs (Major Infrastructure, Complete Streets, Intersection Improvements, Bicycle/Pedestrian, and Community Transportation/Parking) allow the MPO to rank projects

in separate groups, thus prioritizing projects within one category. Prioritizing projects within one overall list would be difficult, as the current evaluation criteria result in Major Infrastructure receiving significantly higher scores than smaller projects. A. McGahan will return to the MPO with a revised list of funding programs, which will include new funding categories and funding categories from the current LRTP.

3. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Evaluations—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

Matt Genova stated that MPO staff evaluated 24 projects for potential inclusion in the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2020–24 TIP. Twelve of these were new projects evaluated for the first time, and 12 were projects previously evaluated by MPO staff. The evaluated projects had a relatively even distribution across the four project categories: 33 percent Complete Streets, 29 percent Major Infrastructure, 25 percent Intersection Improvements, and 17 percent Bicycle/Pedestrian. The average score of the evaluated projects was 44.7 out of a possible 134; M. Genova noted that no project will score 134, as scoring covers a range of criteria that will not be applicable to all projects. Major Infrastructure projects generally score higher than other project categories, but project scores are not compared between categories; a Bicycle/Pedestrian project would be compared to other Bicycle/Pedestrian projects but not Major Infrastructure projects.

Initial evaluation results were presented at the February 7, 2019, MPO meeting. Project proponents are providing feedback on the evaluations, and scores presented at the February 21, 2019, MPO meeting will incorporate their comments. The MPO will discuss project programming for the TIP in March.

M. Genova gave an overview of the 24 evaluated projects. The [full presentation](#) is available on the MPO website.

Discussion

David Montgomery asked how many people conduct TIP evaluations. M. Genova stated that the evaluation team is comprised of eight people, including one MAPC staff member. Each person evaluates projects within scoring categories that fall into their area of expertise. The evaluation team bases their evaluation on the documentation of each project, including functional design reports and questionnaires sent in by project proponents.

D. Montgomery stated that the methodology behind the evaluations should be consistently applied from year to year, noting changes in leadership. M. Genova stated that MPO staff refer to a 42-page internal document which details the scoring process. This document was developed to standardize evaluations. D. Montgomery suggested that MPO staff develop a handout which explains the scoring process, as questions about the scoring methodology are posed during each TIP development cycle.

John McQueen asked how projects are selected for evaluation. Noting that some municipalities had several projects evaluated for the upcoming TIP, he asked if MPO staff give higher priority to projects with geographical proximity. M. Genova stated that all projects that meet a threshold of readiness are evaluated. To be evaluated, projects need to be approved by MassDOT's Project Review Committee and have sufficient documentation for proper scoring. He added that although some municipalities had multiple projects evaluated, this does not mean that all of them will be programmed in the FFYs 2020–24 TIP. The geographic distribution of projects across the Boston region is considered by the MPO during programming discussions.

A. Fragoso noted that the Rehabilitation on Route 16 in Milford received a negative score for Clean Air/Sustainable Communities. Matt Archer stated that projects which increase greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions can receive a negative score in Clean Air. He added that projects can lose one point for increasing CO₂ emissions by less than 100 tons annually and can lose an additional point for increasing volatile organic compound, nitrous oxide, and carbon monoxide emissions by less than 250 kilograms. As such, projects can increase GHG emissions to a minor degree, but still receive a negative score in Clean Air.

Michael Garrity asked if any project which increases capacity receives a negative Clean Air score. M. Archer stated that although this is often the case, other project aspects, such as the additional of new sidewalk miles, can offset the negative points. M. Genova noted that while a project may receive a negative score in Clean Air, it could still score well in other evaluation categories.

Chris Porter noted that certain percentages of the \$2 billion of available funding in the LRTP is allocated to each project category. However, the total cost of all Bicycle/Pedestrian and Intersection Improvement projects evaluated for the FFYs 2020–24 TIP is significantly lower than the total cost of Complete Streets and Major Infrastructure projects. He asked if it would be difficult to reach the funding goals set by the LRTP if there is an insufficient number of Bicycle/Pedestrian and Intersection Improvement projects. M. Genova stated that due to their high costs, the MPO will most likely program only one Major Infrastructure project within a TIP cycle while programming multiple new projects from other project categories.

Schuyler Larrabee asked how much funding will be available to fund new projects in the FFYs 2020–24 TIP. M. Genova stated that there is approximately \$100 million in regional target funds in each year of the TIP. Projects programmed in previous years, including projects that span multiple years of the TIP, already account for some of this funding. The MPO will consider the available funding in each TIP element and make programming decisions accordingly.

Lenard Diggins asked when the TIP scoring criteria will be re-evaluated. M. Genova stated that the TIP scoring criteria will be re-evaluated after the new LRTP is endorsed. The MPO will revise the criteria to better reflect the priorities set by the LRTP.

4. MPO Public Participation Plan Revisions—*Matt Archer, Specialist Planner, MPO Staff*

M. Archer stated that one of the proposed changes to the Public Participation Plan is shortening the TIP public comment period from 30 days to 21 days. In 2017, the TIP public comment period was shortened to 21 days to help align the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) with the Capital Investment Program (CIP). A 30-day public comment period was used the following year. While the Boston Region MPO meets twice a month, other MPOs in the state only meet once a month; a 21-day comment period allows these MPOs to release documents for public review and endorse them at the following month's meeting.

MPO staff feel that a 21-day comment period would have potential benefits. For example, a 21-day comment period would give MPO members one week to review the public comments prior to endorsing the document, as opposed to the comments being walked into the meeting. Although the formal comment period would be shorter, MPO staff have made efforts to invite public comments throughout TIP development. Comment letters received during TIP development, as well as oral comments made during MPO meetings, are now included in the TIP document.

M. Archer noted that a 21-day public comment period could be an issue for the Advisory Council. Depending on when the TIP document or amendment is released, there is a possibility that the Advisory Council meetings will fall outside of the public comment period. He suggested that if this were to occur, the Advisory Council could hold a meeting out of its normal schedule.

Bryan Pounds explained that the STIP comprises of all federal aid highway and transit projects in the state; the STIP accounts for approximately \$8.5 billion of the CIP, which itself accounts for approximately \$17 billion. In prior years, the STIP and CIP were not developed in the same cycle. Because the STIP was previously completed before the CIP, some projects included in the STIP were not included in the CIP. MassDOT moved the CIP process earlier in the year to align the documents. As part of this, the comment periods for these documents also needed to align.

The Boston Region MPO releases their TIP in early April, while other MPOs release their TIPs in late April. The early April release is needed because the Boston Region MPO has maintained the 30-day public comment period. Approving the 21-day comment period would allow the MPO to release the TIP in late April, adding two weeks for deliberation. B. Pounds

added that because TIP programming discussions begin in late March, releasing the TIP in early April would give MPO staff little time to develop the full TIP document.

The 21-day public comment period would also benefit TIP amendments, as there would be less time between releasing an amendment for public review and submitting the changes to the Federal Highway Administration. This would also help projects to maintain their advertisement dates.

Discussion

L. Diggins asked if initiating the TIP development process earlier in the year would allow the 30-day public comment period to be maintained. He added that providing comments during TIP develop may be of greater importance than commenting during the public comment period, adding that the solicitation of feedback during development should be formalized. B. Pounds agreed with the importance of receiving feedback during TIP development, noting efforts by MPO staff to solicit feedback prior to the public comment period. He noted that TIP development has been moved forward two months; the TIP is now endorsed in May, but prior to 2017, it was endorsed in July or August.

C. Porter stated that the Advisory Council will not have a normally scheduled meeting during the public comment period if the TIP is released for public review on April 11. Although the Advisory Council can discuss project selection at the March meeting, they would not be able to endorse a comment letter after the release of the TIP. He added that the Advisory Council could hold a meeting outside of its normal schedule to help facilitate the process. B. Pounds stated that it generally takes three meetings in March and three meetings in April for the MPO to release the TIP for public review; if this schedule holds true in 2019, the TIP will be released in late April.

L. Diggins expressed concern that a shortened public comment period could reduce the total number of submitted public comments. Although comments can be made during development, the general public may be more inclined to comment after programming has been finalized. B. Pounds stated that the number of comments received in 2018, during a 30-day public comment period, was not higher than the total of comments received in 2017.

S. Larrabee asked if the majority of public comments are received toward the end of the public comment period. B. Pounds stated that most comments are received at the end of both 30-day and 21-day public comment periods.

J. McQueen asked how project readiness is considered during TIP development. B. Pounds stated that MassDOT holds "Project Readiness Days," during which the Office of Transportation Planning, the Highway Division, and staff from all MPOs in the state discuss every project programmed in the STIP. MPO staff then bring this information back to the MPOs for consideration during TIP programming discussions. In addition, MPO staff

communicate with the Highway Division and project proponents outside of TIP development to stay aware of readiness issues.

5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

D. Montgomery announced that the MBTA is holding a number of public meetings for the Better Bus Project, which proposed a number of changes to existing bus routes. The dates can be found on the MBTA website. L. Diggins stated that the Better Bus Project website lists which routes have proposed changes and details the changes for each route.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by S. Larrabee and seconded by D. Montgomery. The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Acton	
Belmont	
Beverly	
Boston	
Braintree	
Brookline	
Cambridge	
Canton	
Everett	
Framingham	
Lexington	
Marlborough	
Millis	
Needham	David Montgomery; Rhain Hoyland
Newton	
Quincy	
Somerville	
Watertown	Laura Wiener
Wellesley	
Westwood	
Weymouth	

Citizen Advocacy Groups	Attendees
Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA	
American Council of Engineering Companies	
American Planning Assoc/Mass Chapter	
Association for Commuter Transportation	
Association for Public Transportation	Barry M Steinberg
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaCristina Fragoso; Paul Moyer
Construction Industries of Massachusetts	
CrosstownConnect	Scott Zadakis
Eastern Massachusetts Freight Rail Coalition	
Institute of Transportation Engineers	
Massachusetts Bar Association	
Massachusetts Motor Transportation Assoc	
MassBike	Chris Porter
MassCommute	
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
Medical Academic and Scientific Comm Assoc	
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
National Corridors Initiative	John Businger
Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce	
Riverside Neighborhood Association	
Route 128 Business Council	
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Agencies	Attendees
Department of Conservation and Recreation	
Department of Elder Affairs	
Division of Energy Resources	
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs	
Joint Legislative Transportation Committee	
MassRides	

Agencies (Non-Voting)

Attendees

Boston Planning and Development Agency
MassDOT
MassDOT Aeronautics
MassDOT Highway Division
Massachusetts Port Authority
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MBTA
MBTA Advisory Board
United States Environmental Protection Agency

Michael Garrity

Other Attendees

Affiliation

Greg Thompson
Sarah Leung

MBTA
City of Boston

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Archer
Matt Genova
