



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

April 10, 2019, Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM–4:30 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

Tegin Teich, Chair, representing the City of Cambridge

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

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

2. Chair's Report—*Tegin Teich, City of Cambridge*

T. Teich thanked the Advisory Council members for discussing and submitting their ranking of studies for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee. The UPWP Committee met on March 28, 2019, to discuss the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff recommendation of studies, which was informed by Committee members' rankings. MPO staff explained that some studies that were ranked highly by stakeholders were not included in the staff recommendation due to staff resources. Some studies, such as a study of congestion pricing, were omitted because of ongoing studies by other agencies.

Lenard Diggins noted that UPWP stakeholders submitted notably different rankings of proposed studies. He stated that the Advisory Council's topmost ranked study had an overall ranking of seven, after averaging all other stakeholder rankings.

T. Teich encouraged members to submit comments on the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Universe of Projects.

T. Teich stated that Karl Quackenbush officially retired from his position as Executive Director of Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) in March. The co-interim Executive Directors are Annette Demchur and Scott Peterson. She stated that a group consisting of Paul Regan of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Advisory Board, Steve Woelfel of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), Eric Bourassa and Jennifer Garcia of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Vineet Gupta of the Boston Transportation Department, Denise Deschamps of the City of Beverly, and herself will review applications for the new CTPS Executive Director and narrow the pool of candidates to several finalists. The final interviews will be conducted by David Mohler of MassDOT, Marc

Draisen of MAPC, and herself. She noted that she will represent the City of Cambridge during this process, but she is still receptive to the Advisory Council's views. She added that a CTPS staff representation committee will be consulted.

3. MBTA Capital Investments—*Samantha Silverberg, Senior Director, MBTA* Samantha Silverberg gave an overview of the MBTA Capital Investment Plan (CIP) process.

In January, the MBTA examines all of its funding sources and estimates how much funding will be available over the next five years. She noted that MBTA federal funding represents slightly less than one-half of the total CIP funds, adding that Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding represents approximately \$2.3 billion of the approximately \$8 billion dollars of funding available for the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020–24 CIP. Project proposals from MBTA departments are submitted by asset owners, projects managers, and engineers who are familiar with the age and condition of the MBTA's infrastructure and fleet. Asset management and modernization/expansion are the two main drivers for proposals. *Focus40*, the long-range plan for the MBTA for the next 25 to 30 years, informs the creation of its Universe of Programs.

In February, prior to selecting individual projects, the MBTA sets initial program sizes with the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB). This facilitates strategic trade-offs based on asset condition and performance. In March, new projects are prioritized based on scoring and evaluation, and an initial project list consisting of old and new projects is developed. In April, the MBTA refines the funding sources and sequencing for the draft project list, and the updated funding sources and draft uses of funding are presented to the FMCB. In addition, the Federal program is presented to the MPO for review and approval.

The MBTA will return to the FMCB in May with a draft SFY 2020–24 CIP, and the joint MassDOT-MBTA Board will vote to release the document for public comment. A final vote to approve the CIP will be held in June.

Incorporating Transit Asset Management data and findings, as well as using *Focus40* to inform the next set of priorities for capital programming, are high priorities for the SFY 2020–24 CIP. The MBTA aims to select projects that will have the greatest impact to riders and optimize the amount of funding available.

S. Silverberg explained the structure of the CIP. She stated that the CIP is structured around priorities and programs. The CIP priorities are Reliability, Modernization, and Expansion. Reliability focuses on improving asset condition and reliability to provide day-to-day service. Modernization focuses on safety, accessibility, and updating technology rather than improving current assets. Modernization includes programs that add capacity to existing service. Modernization programs include Automated Fare Collection 2.0, known as AFC 2.0, and Red and Orange Line improvements, such as signal and infrastructure improvements.

S. Silverberg stated that Reliability and Modernization are the MBTA's top priorities. Targeted Expansion projects generally come with specific funding sources, so as not to draw funds away from state of good repair projects. Expansion projects include the Green Line Extension, rebuilding the Chelsea Commuter Rail station to align with the Silver Line, and the recently opened Blue Hill Avenue Commuter Rail station. New to the SFY 2020–24 CIP is the Expansion Project Development program, which will fund preliminary design and engineering for priorities identified in *Focus40*, such as the Red-Blue Connector, Silver Line expansion to Everett, and the Green Line Extension to Mystic Valley Parkway.

S. Silverberg explained the project evaluation and selection process. Within each program, new project proposals are scored and ranked using a set of uniform project selection criteria established by the Project Selection Advisory Council (PSAC). These selection criteria are used by all of MassDOT. The criteria are:

- System Preservation: Projects should contribute to a state of good repair on the transportation system.
- Mobility: Projects should provide modal options efficiently and effectively.
- Cost Effectiveness: Projects should result in benefits commensurate with costs and should be aimed at maximizing the return on the public's investment.
- Economic Impact: Projects should support strategic economic growth in the Commonwealth.
- Safety: Projects should contribute to the safety and security of people and goods in transit.
- Social Equity and Fairness: Projects should equitably distribute both benefits and burdens of investments among all communities.
- Environmental and Health Effects: Projects should maximize the potential positive health and environmental aspects of the transportation system.
- Policy Support: Projects should get credit if they support local or regional policies or plans. Projects should also get credit if they support state policies not addressed through the other criteria.

Each project selection criterion reflects multiple priorities. As an example, S. Silverberg stated that Mobility includes impacts to reliability, accessibility, customer experience, and riders. She noted that Economic Impact and Social Equity are used only for Modernization and Expansion projects.

In addition to the project selection criteria, MBTA leadership also considers project readiness, resource impacts, modal and geographic equity, and sequencing/scheduling when prioritizing projects.

Following the scoring process, proposals for new projects or additional funding for existing projects are prioritized and ranked within each investment program. Similar to the TIP, projects are compared with other projects within the same investment program. Selection is based on available funds in each program, importance of projects, and project readiness. If projects are scalable, a scaled-down version of a project may be programmed to accommodate financial constraints.

S. Silverberg distributed a [preliminary list of MBTA projects](#), which will be funded through the Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2020–24 TIP, grouped by investment program. Her presentation is available on the [MPO website](#).

Discussion

L. Diggins stated that it would be helpful to see scoring details for MBTA projects, especially for projects funded through the TIP.

L. Diggins asked how the FMCB determines the funding of MBTA programs. S. Silverberg replied that MBTA staff makes recommendations to the FMCB, and the FMCB either adopts or adjusts them. The MBTA's recommendations are primarily based on past funding and performance, but asset condition and strategic priorities are also considered.

Steve Olanoff asked what percentage of MBTA facilities are accessible, and asked how much this percentage increases per year. S. Silverberg stated that Laura Brelsford, MBTA Assistant General Manager for System-Wide Accessibility, gave an in-depth presentation on the Plan for Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI) at a recent FMCB meeting, which explained the MBTA's medium- and long-term recommendations to make the system fully accessible. (The presentation is available on the [MBTA website](#)). After the draft CIP is completed, nearly all underground rapid transit stations will be accessible, including Symphony, Hynes Convention Center, and Wollaston.

S. Olanoff asked about the service life of bi-level Kawasaki commuter rail coaches, and if these coaches would be eliminated under certain Rail Vision alternatives. S. Silverberg stated that the service life for commuter rail coaches is 39 years, adding that overhauls return the vehicles in like-new condition. She added that the Rail Vision alternatives do not entirely eliminate the need for the traditional bi-level coaches. T. Teich expressed that investments in the current MBTA system should not stop prior to major overhauls of system, such as those envisioned by Rail Vision.

David Montgomery suggested that a roadmap for implementing *Focus40* would be useful, as available resources will likely not cover the cost to implement all proposals. T. Teich asked if there is a process for how programs included in *Focus40* are advanced. S. Silverberg stated that *Focus40* programs are organized into three buckets: “We’re Doing,” which includes current investments; “We’re Planning,” which includes investment options that the MBTA plans to advance in the next 10 to 15 years; and “We’re Imagining,” which includes large, transformative investment options. Although *Focus40* includes too many programs to fund simultaneously, upcoming and future CIPs will incorporate programs from the “We’re Planning” bucket. (*Focus40* “We’re Planning” Priorities included in the draft SFY 2020–24 CIP is available on the [MBTA website](#)).

S. Olanoff stated that some projects, such as the Urban Ring and Silver Line Phase III, were advanced in design without regard to financial obstacles. He asked if consideration could be given to financial barriers for projects prior to spending money on design. S. Silverberg stated that every project proposal is subject to the same evaluation and scoring process before it is included in the CIP. The FMCB voted to approve an expansion policy, with particular regard to “mega-projects,” which states that projects will not move beyond a certain level of design without full finance plans.

4. FFYs 2020-24 TIP Draft Programming—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

Matt Genova stated that MPO staff evaluated 24 unprogrammed projects for funding in the FFYs 2020–24 TIP. Of these, 11 projects are proposed for funding with Regional Target funds. Six of these projects are Complete Streets projects, three are Intersection Improvement projects, and two are Bicycle/Pedestrian projects. An additional three projects are proposed for funding with MassDOT funds. He noted that no new Major Infrastructure projects were proposed for programming.

Two million dollars for the Community Transportation Program are proposed in both FFYs 2022 and 2024. This would result in four consecutive years of funding for the Community Transportation Program beginning in FFY 2021. If approved, specific projects for Community Transportation Program will be selected later.

Four previously programmed projects have moved into later TIP elements. Intersection Improvements in Beverly moved from 2019 to 2020; Rutherford Avenue in Boston moved from 2020 to 2022; Lynnfield Street in Lynn moved from 2020 to 2021; and Atlantic Avenue in Hull moved from 2021 to 2022. These projects were delayed because of readiness concerns, based on feedback from MassDOT Highway Division. Reprogramming these projects resulted in the approximately \$22 million available in FFY 2021, which is tentatively proposed to fund either MBTA Modernization or an additional highway project. M. Genova noted that

the City of Beverly voluntarily moved its project from Quarter Four of 2019 to Quarter One of 2020 to accommodate a cost increase for a different project.

Three previously programmed projects moved into earlier TIP elements. South Main Street in Bellingham moved from 2023 to 2022; Route 2A in Littleton and Ayer moved from 2023 to 2021; and Route 28/Hopkins Street in Reading moved from 2023 to 2021. The decision to move these projects forward was based on project readiness and available funding. Two new projects, Route 38 in Wilmington and Edgell Road/Central Street in Framingham, were programmed in 2023 and 2022, respectively. Other new projects were programmed in FFY 2024.

In the FFYs 2020–24 TIP, Complete Streets projects account for 43.1 percent of Target funding, while Major Infrastructure accounts for 27.1 percent. In FFY 2024, Major Infrastructure accounts for 48.8 percent of Target funding, due to the Rutherford Avenue project moving into later TIP years. The projected total cost for the project is approximately \$152 million.

Goals for programming the FFYs 2020–24 TIP included keeping projects on their original schedules, accommodating cost changes, and programming as many new projects as possible. New projects proposed for programming are demonstrated priorities for project proponents and received high scores during evaluations.

M. Genova gave an overview of the new projects programmed in the FFYs 2020–24 TIP. His presentation is available on the [MPO website](#).

Discussion

L. Diggins asked if there is a common reason why projects were moved into later years of TIP. M. Genova stated that right-of-way concerns tend to be a large factor in the decision to delay projects.

D. Montgomery asked if unprogrammed projects in the TIP Universe of Projects can be repeatedly reevaluated in future TIP cycles. M. Genova stated that three new projects programmed in the FFYs 2020–24 TIP were previously evaluated during the FFYs 2019–23 TIP development. He noted that proponents need to supply a Functional Design Report (FDR), or the equivalent level of information generally included in an FDR, for a project to be evaluated. Some projects, particularly those in the Major Infrastructure category, have remained in the Universe of Projects for more than 10 years but could still reach a level of design that would allow evaluation. He added that, in general, MPO staff tries to evaluate as many projects as possible, including previously evaluated but unprogrammed projects.

L. Diggins asked what kind of projects would be funded by the potential MBTA Modernization program in FFY 2021. M. Genova stated that projects could include facility upgrades and

PATI upgrades. S. Silverberg stated that the MBTA Modernization program is a placeholder, as there did not appear to be an appropriate highway project to use the available funds. She added that a highway project will be proposed for programming at the April 11 MPO meeting. T. Teich noted that although the available funds in FFY 2021 may be used to fund a highway project, there is still interest in having a transit category in the upcoming LRTP.

5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

No announcements were made.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by T. Teich. The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities

Cambridge
Needham
Watertown

Representatives and Alternates

Tegin Teich
David Montgomery; Rhain Hoyland
Laura Wiener

Citizen Advocacy Groups

American Council of Engineering Companies
Association for Public Transportation
Boston Society of Architects
MassBike
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)

Attendees

Fred Moselly
Barry M Steinberg
Schuyler Larrabee
David Ernst
Lenard Diggins

Agencies (Non-Voting)

Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MBTA

Attendees

Travis Pollack
Samantha Silverberg

Other Attendees

Steve Olanoff
Ed Lowney
Dee Whittlesey

Affiliation

Town of Norwood

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Genova
Matt Archer