



## Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

May 8, 2019, Meeting Minutes

3:00 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 3:05 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 8.)

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

Due to the amount of information to discuss at the meeting, T. Teich declined to give a Chair's report.

#### 3. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2019, meeting was made and seconded. The motion did not carry by a vote of six to five. Those voting against the motion expressed that, as the minutes were not posted to the MPO website prior to the meeting, they did not have sufficient time to review the document.

#### 4. Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update—*Anne McGahan, LRTP Manager, MPO Staff*

Anne McGahan stated she presented several items relating to the development of *Destination 2040*, the upcoming LRTP, at the December 2018 Advisory Council meeting. Items discussed included a [summary of recommendations](#) to address needs identified in the Needs Assessment and [proposed changes](#) to the MPO's vision, goals, and objectives.

A. McGahan gave an overview of the LRTP development timeline. MPO staff developed the Needs Assessment summary in November and the Universe of Projects in December, and the MPO came to a consensus on the vision, goals, and objectives in January. Discussion about the Universe of Programs began in February. From December through April, project proponents attended MPO meetings to discuss Major Infrastructure projects that they want included in the LRTP. Currently, the MPO is in the process of selecting projects and programs for the LRTP. MPO staff will perform transportation equity and air quality analyses

after projects are selected for inclusion in the LRTP. Following this, the MPO will vote to release the document for public review in the summer of 2019.

The baseline funding for the LRTP is the amount programmed in the Federal Fiscal Years (FFYs) 2020–24 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with a 2.2 percent increase in funding levels per year. This provides additional funding in the upcoming LRTP, as the current LRTP, *Charting Progress to 2040*, uses a 1.5 percent increase per year. The FFYs 2020–24 TIP accounts for the first five-year time band of the LRTP.

Investment programs for the LRTP were established during the development of *Charting Progress to 2040*. These programs include Major Infrastructure, which includes projects that cost over \$20 million and/or add capacity to the transportation system; Intersection Improvements, which includes projects that improve intersection operations; Complete Streets, which includes all projects that modernize roadways to improve safety and mobility, as well as provide sidewalks and upgrade signals; Bicycle Network and Pedestrian Connections, which includes projects that expand the bicycle and pedestrian network; and Community Transportation/Parking/Clean Air and Mobility, which addresses first-mile/last-mile connections and parking at commuter rail and rapid transit stations.

As part of the development of *Charting Progress to 2040*, the MPO established funding goals to serve as guidelines within the investment programs. These inform municipalities of the types of projects the MPO would like to fund. The MPO decided to spend no more than 50 percent of available funding on Major Infrastructure; 29 percent on Complete Streets; 14 percent on Intersection Improvements; five percent on Bicycle/Pedestrian; and two percent on Community Transportation.

MPO staff have proposed several new ideas for investment programs for *Destination 2040*, based on input received during development of the Needs Assessment. Proposals included maintaining the existing funding programs, adding funding to the Complete Street program for [dedicated bus lanes](#), and adding a [Transit Modernization program](#). MPO staff recommended increasing the Complete Streets funding goal to 43 percent, which matches the percentage of Complete Streets funding included in the FFYs 2020–24 TIP, and allocating two percent of funding for dedicated bus lanes. The recommended funding goal for Major Infrastructure is 30 percent. A. McGahan distributed a handout detailing [MPO staff's recommendations for funding goals](#).

Major Infrastructure projects must be included in the LRTP Universe of Projects prior to receiving TIP funding. She distributed a handout that [summarizes projects in the Universe of Projects](#). This summary includes project evaluation scores, which are based on four of the six MPO goal areas: Safety, System Preservation, Capacity Management and Mobility, and Economic Vitality. Air Quality and Equity were not used for evaluations, as many projects are conceptual and lack information needed for analysis.

For Safety, projects were evaluated on the Equivalent Property Damage Only index, which measures crash severity. In addition, points were awarded to projects that contain any of the top 200 crash locations in the Commonwealth, or if the project contains Highway Safety Improvement Program crash clusters. System Preservation criteria include pavement and bridge condition, and criteria that assess whether the project is located in a flood zone or improves the ability of the system to withstand extreme conditions. For Capacity Management and Mobility, projects were awarded points if there are MPO-identified bottleneck locations within the project area, if transit operates along the corridor, and if the project included bicycle and/or pedestrian improvements. Economic Vitality points were given to projects that provide access to a target development area, serve an area of concentrated development, or facilitate new development. A. McGahan distributed a handout that provides [scoring information for Major Infrastructure projects](#).

Four Major Infrastructure projects included in the Universe of Projects are included as “We’re Planning” projects in *Focus40*: Silver Line to Everett, Green Line to Route 16, Rail Vision Implementation, and the Red-Blue Connector. The MPO chose not to program any Major Infrastructure projects in the final ten years of *Charting Progress to 2040*, as *Focus40* had not yet been completed. The MPO can now consider whether to include transit projects in the outer years of the upcoming LRTP.

The MPO will choose Major Infrastructure projects to include in the LRTP by the end of May.

### *Discussion*

Franny Osman asked about the LRTP’s potential role in Rail Vision. A. McGahan stated that the MPO can choose to flex some of its highway funding to transit, and Rail Vision projects could potentially be included in the LRTP. She noted that MPO funding could not cover the total costs of transit Major Infrastructure projects, though it could fund aspects of the projects, such as increased parking at commuter rail stations. T. Teich stated that, similar to the Green Line Extension, the MPO could fund a portion of the costs of transit Major Infrastructure projects.

F. Osman asked why the Community Transportation program has a low funding goal (two percent). A. McGahan stated that the program is in an early stage. A Unified Planning Work Program study of the program recently concluded, and TIP funding for the program will begin in FFY 2021. She noted that the funding goals are intended to demonstrate to project proponents that funding is available for certain type of projects.

Lenard Diggins asked if the Sumner Tunnel improvement project was added to the Universe of Projects during project evaluations. T. Teich stated that the Sumner Tunnel project was recently added to the FFYs 2020–24 TIP. The project needs to be included in the LRTP in order to receive TIP funding.

L. Diggins asked if the Sumner Tunnel project should be listed as a municipal priority.

A. McGahan stated that the MPO received no municipal feedback on the project.

T. Teich stated that the MPO has discussed some lower-scoring projects which seem to add capacity without meeting the majority of the MPO's goals. These projects are often framed as addressing safety concerns. She expressed that there are options to improve safety without adding capacity for highway vehicles. She stated that part of the Advisory Council's role is to emphasize the importance of funding projects which align with the goals of the MPO.

A. McGahan noted the upcoming LRTP will allocate 20 percent less funding to Major Infrastructure than the current LRTP, but the Needs Assessment identified the need for projects that address highway transportation. T. Teich stated that the reduced funding goal for Major Infrastructure will hopefully encourage project proponents to explore cost-effective strategies for addressing issues without adding capacity.

F. Osman stated that most of the projects in the Universe of Projects appear to be local projects. She asked why regional projects, such as the North-South Rail Link (NSRL), are not included. A. McGahan stated that projects like the NSRL could be funded through the Transit Modernization program. She added that projects like the Canton interchange improvements will have a regional effect.

Ana Cristina Fragoso asked if the funding goal for the dedicated bus lanes program (two percent) should be increased. A. McGahan stated that the MPO could potentially increase the funding goal, but noted that the program is new. She added that although MPO staff conducted a study of [potential priority bus lane locations](#), municipalities need to bring projects to the MPO before they can be programmed.

## 5. FFYs 2020-24 TIP—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

Matt Genova stated that the draft FFYs 2020–24 TIP was released for public comment at the April 25 MPO meeting. The 21-day public comment period runs from May 1 to May 21.

M. Genova stated that a new [interactive TIP database](#) will be released shortly. The database is map-oriented and designed to help individuals navigate through TIP projects. It displays the geography of TIP projects along with project data, including detailed scoring information. He noted that the database will be improved over time and encouraged the Advisory Council to provide feedback upon its initial release.

At the time of M. Genova's April Advisory Council presentation, a question remained as to whether approximately \$22 million available in the FFY 2021 TIP annual element would be allocated toward MBTA Modernization or an additional highway project. In a subsequent meeting, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) presented the Sumner Tunnel project to the MPO, and the MPO voted to allocate those funds to the project. Regional Target funding represents approximately one-fifth of \$126 million total cost.

Additional funds have been allocated to fund the remainder of the cost, including state funds and federal earmarks. The project will be funded over three years.

*Discussion*

A. Fragoso asked why some projects at the 25 percent design stage have been reprogrammed to later TIP elements, while other projects at 25 percent design have been reprogrammed to earlier TIP elements. M. Genova stated that all projects classified as being at 25 percent are not necessarily at the same level of design. Some have advanced closer to 75 percent design, while others remain closer to 25 percent design or require resubmittal of the 25 percent design plans. He noted that although a project may move into a different TIP element, the actual time difference may not be a full calendar year.

Jon Seward asked why the Reconstruction of Union Street (Route 139) in Holbrook had nearly quadrupled in cost. M. Genova stated that as projects advance in design and scopes are clarified and expanded, associated costs can increase. He expressed that he shares concerns regarding cost increases, noting that the MPO has recently discussed if the TIP should accommodate cost increases without questioning cost effectiveness.

**6. Advisory Council Commenter Letter on the FFYs 2020-24 TIP—*T. Teich, Chair***

T. Teich gave an overview of the [draft Advisory Council comment letter](#) on the FFYs 2020–24 TIP.

*Discussion*

John McQueen suggested adding an example of a project that received negative scores in certain evaluation categories to item three. T. Teich stated that including an example project could be interpreted as negative comment on the project, but item three could include specific references to Air Quality and Equity, the categories in which projects can receive negative scores. She added that this item is not suggesting specific changes to TIP evaluation methodology.

The Advisory Council discussed several ways the MPO could handle projects that receive negative scores in Air Quality or Equity. Noting that negative scores generally have little impact on the overall score of the project, T. Teich suggested that if two projects receive the same overall score, the project that receives a negative score in Air Quality could be ranked lower than the other. Other suggestions included increasing the number of points deducted from a project's overall score if it increases emissions.

M. Genova stated that if a project creates a disproportionate burden, it receives a score of negative 10 in Equity. He added that the MPO will discuss revisions to TIP criteria following the approval of the LRTP.

J. Seward suggested that item three should emphasize that the Advisory Council does not want any project programmed if it receives a negative score. He stated that this policy would allow project proponents to adjust project designs prior to submitting them for evaluation.

T. Teich suggested including a line that encourages MPO staff to help proponents understand how a negative score affects their project.

J. McQueen suggested replacing “vulnerable populations” with “Environmental Justice populations” in item six.

L. Diggins suggested removing the phrase “not just any project that is proposed and ready” from item seven.

T. Teich stated that item eight expresses concern with how the Sumner Tunnel project was added to the TIP. She stated that the project was not evaluated and scored by MPO staff, nor is the project included in the current LRTP. In addition, there was insufficient information to assess the value of partially funding the project with Regional Target dollars, and MassDOT did not explain how the remaining \$104 million of the project cost will be funded. Although the available \$22 million was initially proposed for MBTA Modernization, the MBTA informed the MPO that the MBTA needed to allocate its other sources of capital funding rather than take additional funding. As a result, the MPO was essentially given one option to use the \$22 million available in FFY 2021, as no other highway projects were proposed. She noted that if all of the project information was available, the MPO still may have funded the Sumner Tunnel project. She emphasized that the TIP evaluation process demonstrates to the MPO that projects are regionally important, ready to be funded, and rank highly among evaluated projects. The Sumner Tunnel project was not subject to this process.

T. Teich stated that although many MPO members expressed dissatisfaction with how the project was presented to the MPO, members voted to include it in the TIP. She noted that she abstained from the vote due to the lack of information. She added that the Advisory Council agreed to a 21-day public comment period because of extensive discussion of the projects prior to the public comment period, but the Sumner Tunnel project was presented to the MPO two weeks prior to the MPO’s vote to release the draft TIP. As the Sumner Tunnel project had not been discussed for the majority of the TIP development cycle, item eight, in part, asks MPO staff to publicize this change to the TIP.

Laura Wiener stated that although she witnessed similar situations occur at the MPO, it is unusual that an evaluated project was not selected to fill the funding gap. She noted that finding a suitable project to fill the \$22 million gap is challenging, and she expressed an understanding of MassDOT’s perspective. T. Teich stated that item eight stresses the importance of the TIP process. She acknowledged that it may have been difficult to present more thorough details of the project, but noted that MassDOT was unable to provide clear answers to many questions posed by MPO members.

L. Wiener asked if MassDOT staff went through the list of evaluated projects prior to proposing the Sumner Tunnel project. T. Tegin stated that they did. She noted that item seven, which suggests that the MPO have a larger queue of ready-to-go municipally prioritized projects, and item eight encourage the MPO to avoid these last-minute situations.

A motion to approve the letter with the discussed changes to items three, six, and seven was made by J. Seward and seconded by F. Osman. The motion carried with one abstention.

### **7. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements**

F. Osman announced that Greater Acton Adaptive Bike Coalition will have a demonstration of adaptive bikes on May 19.

### **8. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by T. Teich and seconded by the A. Fragoso. The motion carried.

## Attendees

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### Member Municipalities

Acton  
Cambridge  
Watertown

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### Representatives and Alternates

Franny Osman  
Tegin Teich  
Laura Wiener

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### Citizen Advocacy Groups

American Council of Engineering Companies  
Association for Public Transportation  
Boston Society of Architects  
Boston Society of Civil Engineers  
CrossTown Connect  
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee  
MoveMassachusetts  
WalkBoston

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### Attendees

Fred Moselley  
Barry M Steinberg  
Schuyler Larrabee  
Ana Cristina Fragoso  
Scott Zadakis  
Lenard Diggins  
Jon Seward  
John McQueen

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### Other Attendees

Ed Lowney

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### Affiliation

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### MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Anne McGahan  
Matt Genova  
Matt Archer