

# **MPO Meeting Minutes**

## **Draft Memorandum for the Record**

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

**March 18, 2021 Meeting**

10:00 AM–12:40 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform

David Mohler, Chair, representing Jamey Tesler, Acting 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 meeting of February 4, 2021

## **Meeting Agenda**

### **1. Introductions**

See attendance beginning page 20

### **2. Chair's Report—David Mohler, MassDOT**

There was none.

### **3. Executive Director's Report—Tegin Teich, Executive Director, Central Transportation Planning Staff**

T. Teich noted that the discussion about the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will continue regarding three general areas: (1) cost increases and readiness updates for current federal fiscal year (FFY) 2021 TIP projects; (2) cost increases, readiness updates, and new projects for consideration for the FFYs 2022–26 TIP; and (3) the longer term, systematic policy-driven approach for how to address cost and readiness challenges that projects in the TIP often face.

She said that 135 written comments related to seven projects were received since the last MPO meeting. T. Teich shared outreach work including the ongoing focus groups for the FFY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) study, “Informing the Big Ideas Behind the MPO’s Scenario Planning Process,” occurring now through early April, and the Pilot Transit Working Group meeting on March 19, 2021.

T. Teich provided an outline of the meeting, offering discussion topics regarding current and future TIP projects processes and pointing members to materials posted to the

MPO meeting calendar. She asked board members to provide direction for a final, or close to final, scenario for staff to bring to the March 25, 2021, meeting for board approval. At that meeting, discussion will continue regarding the final programming scenario for the FFY 2022–26 TIP and presentations given on MassDOT's Capital Investment Plan development process and the Regional Transportation Authority capital planning process for Cape Ann Transportation Authority and the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority.

#### **4. Public Comments**

Aaron Clausen (Principal Planner, City of Lynn) provided an update in support of TIP project #602077 (Reconstruction on Route 129 [Lynnfield St.]) currently programmed in FFY 2022. He expressed concern that the project may be pushed to FFY 2023 and stated that the city meets with MassDOT staff weekly, particularly about right-of-way (ROW) and environmental permitting. A. Clausen expects to submit 75 percent design plans by the end of the month.

A. Clausen thanked the board for support of project #609252 (Rehabilitation of Essex Street), currently programmed in FFY 2024, and project #609246 (Reconstruction of Western Avenue [Route 107]), under consideration for funding in FFY 2026.

Roger Talkov (Resident, Town of Swampscott) advocated for project #610666 (Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott), a new project under consideration for MPO funding in the FFYs 2022–26 TIP. The proposed project will connect North Shore towns to each other as well as nearby schools and train stations and encourage bicycling and walking.

Grant Ellis (Resident, Town of Belmont) advocated for project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase I]). This project has not been programmed for funding. G. Ellis said that it is a viable and accessible transportation pathway for pedestrians and cyclists, providing linkages to several areas and trails.

Glenn Clancy (Director of Community Development, Town of Belmont) provided an update on project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase I]). He stated that the town hopes to submit 25 percent design drawings by late spring and had a productive meeting with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) who provided feedback that will be incorporated into the 25 percent design. The project has been funded through the town's \$1.4 million Community Preservation funds and a \$50,000 MassTrails grant. G. Clancy asked that the project be kept on the board's radar since they have been moving forward with the design.

Cosmo Caterino (Resident, Town of Belmont) spoke in opposition of project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase I]). He said that the Town of Belmont has sent a letter disparaging some of the letters already provided to the MPO. Belmont has had three committees evaluating the bike path locations. He discussed the disregard for the control of spending on the project and cited several public documents that discuss the details of path locations, costs, and town's involvement.

Jay Carroll (Roadway Project Manager, City of Salem) provided an update on project #610674 (Boston Street Improvements in Salem), a new project under consideration for MPO funding in the FFYs 2022–26 TIP. He stated that the city submitted its 25 percent plans last year, the ROW is still being reviewed by the state, and going through the utility coordination with MassDOT Highway District 4. J. Carroll hopes the project will be at 75 percent design by the end of 2021 and shovel ready by late 2023 or 2024. He noted he will submit a written memo with a link to the project website with a story map.

Will Paulitz (City Engineer, City of Peabody) provided an update on project #608933 (Rehabilitation of Central Street in Peabody) currently programmed in FFY 2023. W. Paulitz said the project has the full support of Peabody Mayor Ted Bettencourt and the Peabody City Council. He said the city is investing an additional \$2 million for a water main for infrastructure and National Grid is looking to upgrade gas mains along this corridor. He noted the budget has increased but there has been no scope increase and the project limits remain the same. The city is working with World Tech Engineering to revise the ROW plans for MassDOT. The design public hearing is expected to be held May 2021 and Peabody hopes to submit its 75 percent plans to MassDOT by January 2022.

Beth Suedmeyer (Environmental Planner, Town of Sudbury) provided an update on project #608164 (Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Phase 2D in Sudbury and Concord) stating that they are on track to deliver the 75 percent plans to MassDOT in April and continue to coordinate with MassDOT on environmental permitting requirements and ROW. B. Suedmeyer stated that MassDOT did not express concerns about the ability for the project to deliver in spring 2022 and asked to keep it programmed in FFY 2022.

Jennifer Roberts (Vice-Chairman of the Sudbury Board of Selectmen) advocated for project #608164 (Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Phase 2D in Sudbury and Concord) and expressed appreciation for keeping it on the FFY 2022 TIP.

Sean Fitzgerald (Town Administrator, Town of Swampscott) advocated for project #610666 (Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott) stating that it promotes healthy living

and supports intermodal and pedestrian opportunities. He asked the MPO to keep projects that are ready to go in the queue.

Peter Spellios (Chair of the Swampscott Select Board) advocated for project #610666 (Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott). He noted this is the town's first TIP project and there is strong support from the town. They are currently responding to modifications to the 25 percent design plan. P. Spellios noted that cost overruns of current TIP projects could squeeze out other projects from joining the TIP list.

Beth Parent (Project Manager, Tetra Tech) provided an overview of project #611975 (Roadway Improvements on County Street Including Rehabilitation of Bridge I-01-005 in Ipswich), a new project under consideration for MPO funding in the FFYs 2022–26 TIP. The project will be a Complete Streets project that will improve the pedestrian and bicycle network, ADA accessibility, intermodal accommodations, and connections to transit. Safety improvements will be made to repair infrastructure deficiencies on the roadways, sidewalks, and County Street bridge.

Ben Cares (Planner/Project Manager, City of Chelsea) provided an update on project #608078 (Reconstruction of Broadway, from City Hall to the Revere City Line), which is currently programmed in FFY 2022. He said that they have reconciled the cost difference that coincides with its actual estimate. Despite cost increases, the project remains valuable to the city and neighboring communities. The city is moving forward in the ROW process and will complete the appraisal process review and report by early April. The city has reviewed the 75 percent design comments and are on track for putting the project out to bid in December 2021 and for submitting the 100 percent design plans to MassDOT.

B. Cares also advocated for project #611983 (Park Street and Pearl Street Reconstruction in Chelsea), a new project under consideration for MPO funding to the FFYs 2022–26 TIP. He said that it received high scores from an environmental justice, equity and functionality standpoint. Both projects are complementary to ongoing utility reconstruction in the area.

Sara Smith (Executive Board member, Friends of the Belmont Community Path) stated that Attachment A, which is posted to the meeting calendar, contains incorrect information for project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase I]). Attachment A shows information for the south route but the town approved and is in design for the north route.

Emily Teller (Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail) said that she, along with two former and two current members of the Select Board, and three community members,

are in attendance and available to answer questions about project #608164 (Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Phase 2D).

Miranda Briseño (Planner, City of Medford) advocated for Community Connections (CC) project Bluebikes Expansion in Medford and Malden. Each town aims to add three bike stations (for a total of six stations) that will increase connectivity and access to neighboring communities. She said that the City of Medford is seeking other funding opportunities for additional stations.

Sophia Galimore (Watertown Transportation Management Association) advocated for CC project Watertown Shuttle Service. She said that it will help meet the area's transportation needs and that they have secured matching funds.

## **5. Committee Chairs' Reports**

There were none.

## **6. Regional Transportation Advisory Council Report—Lenard Diggins, Chair, Regional Transportation Advisory Council**

L. Diggins said that the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Advisory Council) had a meeting on March 10, 2021, where they discussed the current and FFYs 2022–26 TIP. Advisory Council members were introduced to the preliminary universe of studies in the FFY 2022 UPWP and discussed potential policy changes.

## **7. Action Item: Approval of February 4, 2021, MPO Meeting Minutes Vote**

A motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 4, 2021, was made by the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham) (Thatcher Kezer III) and seconded by the North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn) (Tina Cassidy). The motion carried.

## **8. Discussion: FFY 2022–26 TIP Programming Scenarios and Project Scoring—Matt Genova and Sandy Johnston, MPO Staff**

*Documents posted to the MPO meeting calendar*

1. [FFYs 2022–26 TIP: Programming Scenario Guide](#)
2. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP Programming Scenario #2 \(Current MPO Practice Scenario\)](#)
3. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP Programming Scenario #3 \(Equity Scenario\)](#)
4. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP Programming Scenario #4 \(Performance Scenario\)](#)
5. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP Development Detailed Readiness and Cost Information](#)
6. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP: Descriptions of New Evaluated Projects](#)

7. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP: FFYs 2021–25 MPO-Funded TIP Project Descriptions](#)
8. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP Development Public Comments March 18, 2021](#)
9. [FFYs 2022–26 Draft TIP Development Belmont Community Path Committee Letter 080420](#)

M. Genova provided an overview of his presentation about the new projects being considered for funding this year and draft programming scenarios for the FFYs 2022–26 TIP. He referenced several files posted to the [MPO meeting calendar](#) for review. He shared two goals for the board today: (1) build consensus on an approach to creating a final draft scenario (or scenarios) to be approved at next week's MPO meeting for public review, and (2) discuss a path forward on policy changes for cost increases and other programming-related issues. He stated that this discussion may involve both short-term and long-term components, or an approach to this year's TIP as well as a path forward for future TIPs. He also shared the following questions to be considered during today's discussion:

1. Does the MPO want to continue funding all project cost changes, in line with historical practice?
2. Does the MPO want to make more funds available for new projects this year, even if it means delaying or removing other projects?
3. If the MPO wants to fund more new projects this year, with what metrics should decisions on adding or removing projects be made?

He provided a timeline of the TIP development process, stating that the MPO is on track for the draft TIP to be released for public review in late April and for a final TIP endorsement in late May.

M. Genova stated that since the March 4, 2021, meeting, there were five notable changes in project status or costs that will shape the FFYs 2022–26 TIP programming scenarios. First, project #606226 (Reconstruction of Rutherford Avenue in Boston) has been updated to reflect the new local funding being contributed by the city as well as the project's recommendation to move to FFY 2023 based on its current readiness. Second, in response to questions raised at the last MPO meeting, and todays public comment from B. Cares, about the cost discrepancy between MPO staff's materials and materials presented by MassDOT's Highway Division regarding project #606078 (Reconstruction of Broadway from City Hall to the Revere City Line in Chelsea), all materials have been updated to reflect its current status and cost. Third, project #608007 (Corridor Improvements and Related Work on Justice Cushing Highway [Route 3A] from Beechwood Street to Henry Turner Bailey Road in Cohasset and Scituate), had a cost increase of just over \$4 million. This project is currently funded in FFY 2024 and has a

new total cost of roughly \$12 million. Fourth, MassDOT's Highway Division and the City of Lynn, have determined that project #602077 (Reconstruction on Route 129 [Lynnfield St.] in Lynn) may be eligible to stay in its current programming year FFY 2022. And finally, the Town of Watertown, has requested that funding for project #607777 (Rehabilitation of Mount Auburn St. [Route 16]) be delayed by one year until FFY 2023 due to concerns about the project's ability to make its current FFY 2022 advertisement.

M. Genova shared the written public comments received on TIP projects since the last board meeting on March 4. All public comments are posted to the [MPO meeting calendar](#). There were 135 written comments on seven current and prospective TIP projects.

- Project #607738 (Minuteman Bikeway Extension in Bedford), which is currently programmed in FFY 2023. Sarah Stanton (Town Manager, Town of Bedford) submitted a letter detailing the town's support for moving the project back into FFY 2022 and outlining the reasons that the project had a cost increase during this year's TIP cycle.
- Project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase I]). This project is being considered for funding this year. MPO staff received 123 comments on this project, all but one were in support of it. These comments come in addition to the ones made in recent meetings in opposition to the project, which have come primarily from abutters of the proposed project route near the town center. Collectively, the letters state high levels of support in the town and across the region for funding this project as soon as is feasible.
- Community Connections project to establish a Transportation Management Association (TMA) in the City of Everett. The project is being considered for CC funding and has been scored for the FFYs 2022–26 TIP. MPO staff received letters from the Everett Chamber of Commerce, the Mystic River Watershed Association, the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, and Post Office Corner, LLC. Together, these letters outline the support the project would provide to a range of transportation initiatives in the city including the operation of shuttles, enhancements to bike share and bicycle infrastructure, the use of carpool and vanpool by local workers, and education programs encouraging higher use of the existing local shared-use path system for transportation purposes. The letters request that the MPO provide funding for this project in this year's CC Program.
- Project #605168 (Intersection Improvements at Route 3A/Summer Street Rotary in Hingham) currently funded in FFY 2025. Thomas Mayo, the Hingham Town Administrator, provides an update on the project and requests that the board

consider moving it into FFY 2024. The project is a high priority for the town and is projected to be ready for advertisement before FFY 2025.

- Project #602077 (Reconstruction on Route 129 [Lynnfield St.] in Lynn), which is currently programmed in FFY 2022. This project was recommended by MassDOT for a one-year delay, but recent conversations between the city and state have made progress in addressing some issues. MPO staff received two letters, one from Thomas McGee (Mayor of Lynn) and the other from several State legislators, including Senator Brendan P. Crighton and Representatives Daniel F. Cahill, Peter Capano, Lori A. Ehrlich, and Donald Wong, requesting the project remain programmed in FFY 2022. The letters note the strong local support for the project and the many benefits it will bring to the City of Lynn, including enhanced safety for all users and increased mobility for people walking and biking.
- CC project “Salem Skipper Microtransit Service” in Salem, which is currently under consideration for funding. Patricia Zaido, on behalf of the Salem for All Ages Task Force, writes in support of the project noting the strong commitment from the City of Salem and its benefits for older adults in particular, supporting increased mobility and access to local destinations for those who may not have many other transportation alternatives.
- Project #610666 (Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott), a new project under consideration for MPO funding in the FFYs 2022–26 TIP. MPO staff received four letters of support for the project, which come in addition to the six support letters presented at the previous board meeting. Letters were submitted by State Representative Lori Ehrlich and State Senator Brendan P. Crighton, town residents Irene and Jonathan Leamon, Greg and Ellen James, and Pete and Maggie Raymond. Collectively, the letters highlight the many benefits the project will provide for the town including increased access to open space, recreation, and schools; the creation of new connections between neighbors and neighborhoods locally; and the regional mobility provided by future connections to the Marblehead Rail Trail and Northern Strand Path. Overall, the letters indicate the robust levels of support for the project across the Swampscott community.

M. Genova stated that MPO staff received numerous additional written comments within the last 48 hours, including roughly 110 additional support letters for the Belmont Community Path project. Those comments will be compiled and shared with the board at the next MPO meeting on March 25, 2021.

M. Genova said that 31 projects were scored for funding, with a roughly even split for projects scored for the first time and others already scored in previous years. These projects span five of the MPO's investment programs, including eight Complete Streets projects, two intersection improvement projects, two bicycle and pedestrian projects, two major infrastructure projects, and 17 CC projects.

M. Genova discussed Bicycle Network and Pedestrian Connections projects, providing detailed information and scoring.

- Project #610666 (Rail Trail Construction in Swampscott) scored a total of 62.4 points.
- Project #609204 (Community Path, Belmont Component of the Mass Central Rail Trail [Phase I]) scored a total of 59 points.

M. Genova then described the Complete Streets projects, providing detailed information and scoring.

- Project #609246 (Reconstruction of Western Avenue [Route 107] in Lynn) was the highest-scoring Complete Streets project at 71.4 points.
- Project #611983 (Park Street and Pearl Street Reconstruction in Chelsea) scored 68.9 points.
- Project #610932 (Rehabilitation of Washington Street in Brookline) scored 56.9 points.
- Project #609437 (Boston Street Improvements in Salem and Peabody) scored 54.5 points.
- Project #608954 (Reconstruction on Route 30 in Weston) scored 49.2 points.
- Project #611975 (Roadway Improvements on County Street Including Rehabilitation of Bridge I-01-005 in Ipswich) scored 45.4 points.
- Project #610545 (Main Street Reconstruction in Wakefield) scored 39.5 points.
- Project #610671 (Bridge Replacement, M-02-001 [8AM], Central Street [Route 127] Over Saw Mill Brook in Manchester-by-the-Sea) scored 34.8 points.

D. Mohler asked if the map for project #609204 is the correct one. M. Genova stated that his materials will be updated with the correct map.

M. Genova described the two intersection improvement projects seeking funding this year, providing detailed information and scoring.

- Project #608940 (Intersection Improvements Boston Post Road [Route 20] at Wellesley Street in Weston) scored 45.6 points

- Project #608955 (Intersection Improvements Squantum Street at Adams Street in Milton) scored 34.1 points.

M. Genova described the two Major Infrastructure projects, providing detailed information and scoring.

- Project #607981 (McGrath Boulevard Project in Somerville) scored 65.8 points.
- Project #605313 (Bridge Replacement, Route 27 [North Main Street] over Route 9 [Worcester Street] and Interchange Improvements in Natick) scored 56.2 points.

M. Genova turned the conversation over to S. Johnston for the CC program. S. Johnston said that there are preexisting commitments from last year's pilot round. The City of Newton Microtransit project originally requested three years of funding, covering FFYs 2021–23. The MPO agreed to fund, but not formally program, three other projects (Canton Royall Street Shuttles, 128 Business Council Alewife Wayfinding, and Regional Bluebikes Expansion) in FFY 2022 at the request of the proponents. He said that the scores presented for returning projects are based on the scoring criteria used in the pilot round, which was a 60-point scale, and are thus not directly comparable to those for new projects that are scored out of 100. The MPO has committed three years of funding to the City of Newton's project contingent on its continued air quality documentation. The MPO also agreed to commit three years of funding beginning in FFY 2022 to the Town of Canton and the Neponset Valley Transportation Management Association for a Royall Street shuttle service. The 128 Business Council and the MBTA are partnering to receive funds for the Alewife Wayfinding project. In addition, the MPO committed to providing funding to three municipalities (Arlington, Newton, and Watertown) for the regional Bluebikes expansion project. Previously, there was an additional participating municipality (the City of Chelsea) but it found an alternate arrangement for financing its share of the expansion. The overall cost of the project is the same.

S. Johnston described the new CC projects that applied for funding in or beginning in FFY 2022. He began with Medford and Malden's application to expand the Bluebikes system in those municipalities. The MBTA requested funds to build new bicycle racks and storage in numerous stations across the transit network. The Town of Wellesley requested funds to place bike racks around Wellesley Middle School. The Town of Acton has requested funding to modernize parking payment and management at town-controlled lots near the South Action commuter rail station. The MBTA has requested funding for two transit signal priority projects: one on Salem Street in Malden and the other on Main Street in Malden and Everett. Both serve multiple MBTA bus routes. The City of Salem requests funding for its "Salem Skipper Microtransit Service." The

Montachusett Regional Transit Authority requests funding for its microtransit service in a four-town area in the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination subregion. The City of Boston is requesting funds to operate an electric microtransit service in parts of the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods. The Town of Watertown and the Watertown TMA applied for funding to create a shuttle service along the Pleasant Street corridor. This project had initially applied as part of the pilot CC round but did not need CC funding as the proponents had found alternate funding, although the service did not launch due to funding issues and the pandemic affecting demand. The Town of Stow has applied for funding for a fixed-route shuttle service to the South Acton commuter rail station. The Town of Brookline, on behalf of TRIPPS (Transportation, Resources, Information, Planning and Partnership for Seniors) housed at the Brookline Senior Center, applied for funding to deliver travel training to seniors. The City of Everett has requested aid to establish a citywide TMA with potential to expand to neighboring areas as well. He noted that establishing a TMA was not previously one of the projected uses for the CC Program but the board should discuss the project regardless, and that the project has not yet passed the Commonwealth's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program consultation committee. The project proponent is aware of both items.

M. Genova stated that MPO staff developed three new programming scenarios based on discussion at the previous MPO meeting and the goals and objectives in the current Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Each scenario is centered around a different thematic approach to making programming decisions. All scenarios reflect updated cost and readiness information; existing funding commitments to its CC and Transit Modernization programs; a continued focus on centering project readiness and cost in decision-making; a funding surplus in FFY 2022 that has been created by some project readiness issues; and funding all new FFY 2022 CC projects.

Scenario #2 reflects the general approach that the MPO board has historically followed where it maintains existing funding commitments to all projects, regardless of cost or readiness issues, for example, prioritizing them over prospective projects that may be more affordable or receive higher scores.

The approach of Scenario #3 prioritizes projects that deliver funding to communities in the region with large equity populations. This scenario would replace three currently funded projects with three prospective ones. A key advantage of this scenario is that it helps to reduce disparities in the distribution of MPO funds to equity populations. However, its key drawback is that proximity does not mean the project inherently delivers the benefits needed by the surrounding equity populations.

Scenario #4 prioritizes funding projects that address high-crash locations and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This scenario addresses the MPO's safety and climate goals more meaningfully and would result in two projects being defunded, with two new projects added to replace them. However, the main limitation to this approach is that it only considers two performance metrics, as limited data were available to do a more robust analysis in the short time between MPO meetings.

M. Genova said that there are tradeoffs to all scenarios and that the demand for project funding is higher than the amount available. He said that although the MPO has historically taken the approach of funding existing commitments first, there are many other lenses through which funding decisions can be considered. These lenses can include equity and performance goals like addressing high-crash locations or greenhouse gas emissions. These lenses can also include virtually any other aspect of the projects vying for funding, from the improvements they provide to transit operations to the extent to which they provide multimodal connections to jobs and services. These elements are all considered in the TIP project evaluation score, but this board has historically not compared scores for prospective TIP projects to scores for existing projects to make funding decisions. He said there are certainly data and time limitations that dictated what was possible to bring us to today's conversation. He stated that if there are elements of these analyses that are compelling to this board, staff could better plan in future years to bring these into the conversation earlier in the TIP cycle.

He said that the board needs to build consensus on an approach to a scenario or scenarios for next week's meeting, at which point the MPO will need to approve a draft TIP program. He also said there is room for discussion today on MPO policy changes for cost increases and other programming issues. The board should discuss whether policy changes are warranted, in the short- or long-term, for projects that see significant cost changes. The board should also discuss if there is an appetite to create fiscal room in the TIP for more new projects, and if so, by what metrics these decisions should be made.

He stated that at the next MPO meeting on March 25, 2021, the board will discuss final draft scenarios with the intention of arriving at a draft five-year plan by the end of the meeting. This plan will then be released for a 21-day public review period in late April, followed by a final endorsement vote in late May.

### ***Discussion***

Jay Monty (At-Large City [City of Everett]) asked for more background on scenarios #3 and #4, about how it was decided which projects would be removed and added, and who the proponents were for each of those projects. M. Genova said he conducted an

analysis of the cost increase problems for all projects that informed the decision-making process. The goals of scenarios #3 and #4 helped drive the decision-making about which projects to remove as well.

J. Monty asked if project proponents were notified about potential removal of their project prior to today. M. Genova said that all project proponents are kept in the loop on all MPO meetings, have received all materials, and are responsible for their involvement in the TIP process. Individual emails were not sent out to each of these towns. He also said that some of these projects are MassDOT design-led projects. M. Genova said the scenarios presented are meant to be illustrative more than specific recommendations.

David Koses (At-Large City [City of Newton]) said they need to be more conservative now when deciding to program a new project and have a complete understanding of the design costs before making a commitment to the proponent.

Daniel Amstutz (At-Large Town [Town of Arlington]) appreciated the Bedford Minuteman Bikeway Extension project remaining programmed in FFY 2022 in all scenarios and supports keeping the CC program in the TIP. He asked for clarification on CC project funding in the presented scenarios. M. Genova said that the amount of funding allocated to the program is the same in all three scenarios. The formatting in the scenario #2 table is slightly different where all new CC projects are bundled into a single line item serving as a baseline.

D. Amstutz stated his shared sentiments with J. Monty about the decision-making process to remove projects in the scenarios presented.

Brian Kane (MBTA Advisory Board) said he is not comfortable changing established policies since municipalities have played by those rules when they submitted projects for the current TIP, some using their own funds. He wants to maintain the status quo through FFY 2026. He supports scenario #2 and suggested establishing a committee to develop recommendations for the board for a policy-driven approach starting in FFY 2027.

Lenard Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) asked for additional details about the decreased cost overrun for the Chelsea project (project #608078). M. Genova replied there was a \$1.5 to \$2 million projected cost increase earlier in the TIP cycle and that the city worked with its designers to address cost overruns. L. Diggins said he does not have an understanding of why it happened, lacking confidence in this example and the extent to which it could provide insights into other cost increase issues.

L. Diggins asked S. Johnston for the CC project scores and for more information on the equity analysis used for scenario #3. He asked why the performance metrics are not updated once the projects are programmed. L. Diggins shared a suggestion from Matthew Petersen of Transit Matters regarding the MPO's involvement in the project design process.

B. Cares (City of Chelsea) noted the impact of inflation on project cost increases and detailed how the City was able to reduce the cost increase for project #608078. Cost adjustments were made based on findings by their design team about utility rehabilitation and traffic signalization estimates.

Michelle Scott (MPO Staff) said that staff used all available information for the performance scenario (scenario #4) and that staff did not have the updated data that they would like to do a more robust analysis in the short term. She said that when staff produce the performance analysis chapter of the TIP, the analysis is typically done after the MPO selects projects. At that time, staff check in with MassDOT project managers to collect updated information.

Thatcher Kezer (MetroWest Regional Collaborative [City of Framingham]) said these scenarios fall into quantitative and qualitative categories. Quantitative is maximizing the dollars that we have to get projects done and the qualitative is meeting those objectives, specifically the equity and environmental objectives in some scenarios. He said the MPO's overall goal should be trying to maximize the dollars and that the board has to get as many projects through the pipeline as possible. He includes the municipal dollars in the calculation. If the MPO is able to maximize the quantitative approach, the use of dollars for projects, this gives more opportunity to achieve the qualitative side of it, the equity and environmental objectives. If the MPO goes in the other direction, the board may try to maximize those qualitative aspects but leave dollars on the table and have fewer projects done and therefore fewer projects that address the MPO's equity and environmental goals. T. Kezer prefers scenario #2 and agrees it is important to evaluate new projects using its qualitative aspects as the priorities but try to maximize the dollars first.

Tom O'Rourke (Three Rivers Interlocal Council [Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce]) agreed with T. Kezer and B. Kane. He said the MPO needs to be careful about making changes in the rules at this stage in the game out of fairness to projects that have funds committed to them.

Eric Bourassa (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) supports a discussion after this TIP cycle to talk about a policy on cost overruns, which should include a public comment

period. He asked if the Rutherford Avenue project (project #606226) is getting pushed back. M. Genova replied that the MassDOT Highway Division currently recommends it will not be ready for 2022 advertisement and needs to be moved to FFY 2023. E. Bourassa asked if scenario #2 be used as the status quo leaving a \$19 million gap in FFY 2022. M. Genova responded that scenario #2 is effectively the MPO's new baseline that will be the foundation for making decisions at the March 25, 2021, MPO meeting.

D. Mohler asked if that funding gap is solely attributable to the delay of Rutherford Avenue project by one year. M. Genova said there are five projects currently programmed in FFY 2022 that are not shown as programmed in FFY 2022 in scenario #2. He stated that it may be possible to move one of those projects, the Lynnfield Street project (#602077), back into FFY 2022. He said it sounds like the other four projects that are shown as delayed until 2023 are not going to be ready for 2022. M. Genova clarified that scenario #2 also shows the Minuteman Bikeway project in Bedford (#607738) moved up one year to 2022 to fill some of the gap left in 2022 because of readiness issues with other projects.

E. Bourassa asked if the possible additional local funds from the City of Boston, which were discussed at the previous MPO meeting, were added to the Rutherford Avenue project (#606226). M. Genova responded that the scenarios show the total cost of the project to the MPO reduced by \$25 million, reflecting the addition of the local funding.

Tom Bent (Inner Core Committee [City of Somerville]) agreed that the MPO needs to follow through on its existing commitments to projects and that a policy or process needs to be set up before adding or removing projects. Once the board gets through this TIP process, the MPO will have a fuller understanding of the cost increase issue and will be better able to adjust MPO policy in response. T. Bent supports scenario #2.

E. Bourassa said that he disagrees with B. Kane's earlier point about implementing a new cost overrun policy starting in FFY 2026. Cities and towns will be made aware of new policies so projects programmed before FFY 2026 may be affected and may need to be reevaluated.

Matthew Petersen (Transit Matters) said he believes a robust and transparent process for the approval of cost changes would be extremely beneficial for both project proponents and the MPO. Regarding the Chelsea project's cost decrease, he said it is unclear to him, as a member of the public, why any member of the MPO should have any lack of information about the causes of cost increase or decrease. He stated this

contributed to a lack of transparency in this process and there should be a better way to evaluate project risks so the MPO can make informed decisions about project funding.

D. Mohler asked M. Genova to describe programming scenario #2. M. Genova said that all currently programmed projects remain funded. Anything in the current five-year plan will be in the next five-year plan, minus the projects that are going to advertisement. There is now an approximately \$19.5 million gap in FFY 2022. The MPO may have an opportunity to move one project back into 2022, but there would still be an approximately \$13 million gap in the first year of the TIP. This leaves approximately \$19 million remaining unprogrammed in the outer years of the TIP, primarily in FFY 2026. M. Genova asked the board to provide guidance on whether they would like to see any new projects funded with those outer year funds or if the board would prefer to leave these funds open and uncommitted.

B. Kane asked how much funding is set aside for the Transit Modernization program. M. Genova said there is \$5.5 million per year dedicated to the program, beginning in FFY 2025, as agreed upon by the board in the most recent LRTP. Scenario #3 shows the program in an earlier year as an option for allocating available surplus funding to a transit project or projects. B. Kane suggested using the approximately \$13 million potentially available in FFY 2022 for the MBTA to help cities and towns.

D. Amstutz asked for more information on funding the Sumner Tunnel project (project #606476) and the bridge replacement project in Woburn (project #604996) in FFY 2021. M. Genova said the scenario tables reflect MassDOT's initial recommendations based on the readiness days' conversations in mid-February. It was carried forward but it is possible that the status may have changed. John Bechard (Massachusetts Department of Transportation) said they were looking at a couple different scenarios for Sumner Tunnel and that project is out for letters of interest for a design build project. It is ready and the project will be bid on, after MassDOT is able to determine a technical team. MassDOT will be advertising the project this fiscal year. J. Bechard stated that the project was flagged as high risk because MassDOT was trying to assess a closure of the tunnel in line with the work that needs to be completed which was unknown during the readiness days in February. J. Bechard said the Woburn project is still at high risk since there are some items the city and MassDOT are working through with Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. There are some changes in the design, some geotechnical work on the bridge, but MassDOT still feels it is deliverable in FFY 2021.

T. Bent suggested allocating any potentially available funding to the McGrath Boulevard project (project #607981) now that MassDOT is advancing the design.

E. Bourassa supports leaving the remaining funds unprogrammed and developing a policy on cost overruns before the board starts programming more projects in FFY 2026. He said the MPO should focus on how to fill the near-term funding gap in FFY 2022. He said the board should focus on finding projects that are ready to go into that near-term spot, including considering projects from the MBTA and MassDOT.

Tom Kadzis (City of Boston [Boston Transportation Department]) said he did not feel that leaving an amount of money aside is realistic going forward as a permanent solution to the cost increases because of the incredible political pressure that would be brought upon the MPO board to allocate those funds. T. Kadzis said this might be a good idea for the short term but that it does not address the cost increase issue faced by the board in the long term.

Rich Benevento suggested project readiness be an important component of the policy discussion on cost overruns, noting that the longer a project remains on the TIP, the more costs increase.

E. Teller said she is impressed by the equity aspect of project considerations, noting that the people who are affected by the MPO's decisions may not be able to attend MPO meetings and advocate for what they need. This is increasingly important to consider.

D. Amstutz supports T. Bent's comments on the McGrath Boulevard project. D. Amstutz said that moving the project to FFY 2026 and having a policy around the cost changes or readiness are not necessarily in conflict.

J. Monty agrees with D. Amstutz's comment about maintaining the board's commitment to the McGrath Boulevard project. If there is available funding in FFY 2022, he does not oppose allocating it to that project. Regarding new policy changes, he would err on the side of starting with projects in FFY 2026. The root of these cost overruns goes back to project initiation and cost assumptions made at the very beginning.

L. Diggins asked about programming the multi-year McGrath Boulevard project in FFY 2026. D. Mohler said he does not know how many fiscal years the project will take. It is a \$100 to \$150 million project. Its cost is not going to be only \$13 million one year and \$20 million next year, for example. L. Diggins said if the MPO programs a new project in FFY 2026 and available funding in that year is reduced to zero, then any cost overruns are potentially going to put FFY 2026 into the negative. He is very hesitant to program anything new in FFY 2026.

D. Mohler asked if Rutherford Ave is the only project in the LRTP in the 2025–29 period that has not been funded yet, and inquired specifically about the status of the Western Avenue project in Lynn (project #609246). M. Genova said that the Lynn project was originally a Major Infrastructure project but it has fallen out of the MPO's definition since the board changed the way it categorized projects in the fall. D. Mohler asked if it was still in the LRTP as adopted. M. Genova confirmed that there is a commitment in the LRTP to that project and the Route 9 and 27 project in Natick (project #605313). D. Mohler emphasized that there are other projects, such as the Lynn project and the Natick project, to which the MPO has made a commitment to and have not yet been funded.

D. Mohler said there is currently a \$19 million gap in FFY 2022, but that the City of Lynn said today that their project could be ready. MassDOT has said they are not 100 percent sure about the project's status, but they are not necessarily opposed to moving it to FFY 2022 and consider it high risk for now. He inquired about the cost of this project. M. Genova said it is roughly \$6.5 million. D. Mohler responded that it reduces the gap in FFY 2022 to roughly \$13 million and makes a \$6 million gap in FFY 2023. M. Genova confirmed that is correct.

D. Mohler further emphasized that this scenario would also have a \$13 to \$14 million gap in FFY 2026. He stated that the MPO needs to figure out whether any projects that have been submitted for consideration could be programmed in those years. A scenario should be brought forth next week to show whether the MBTA wants to try to bring a different project forward, whether MassDOT wants to try to bring a different project, or whether the MPO is just going to leave that money unprogrammed.

D. Mohler asked whether scenario #2 assumes all CC projects will be funded. M. Genova replied yes. D. Mohler requested more discussion on those projects as he is not completely convinced that he would vote for all those being fully funded.

Ken Miller (Federal Highway Administration) asked for clarification on the CC program having additional funding added to it in its second year. He suggested that, rather than just adding more projects, one possibility could be for MassDOT to use more of the MPO's Regional Target money in FFY 2022 for the Sumner Tunnel and then for the state to pay the MPO back in a subsequent year, allowing for additional funding flexibility.

D. Mohler asked those who are interested in joining the proposed TIP policy subcommittee to contact him and Tegin.

B. Kane asked D. Mohler to summarize the board's current standing and next steps. D. Mohler said there was a general sense to proceed with scenario #2. There is additional new information today about the Lynn project to stay in FFY 2022. He asked M. Genova to make this change for the presentation at the next meeting. The scenario will keep all the CC projects as they are for now. It will still show a gap in FFY 2022 of about \$13 million, another gap in FFY 2023 of about \$6 million, and a final gap in FFY 2026 of about \$13 or \$14 million. The MPO will need to decide if they want to fill those gaps and, if so, what type of projects might best do that. Then, the board will vote on a draft TIP while also having a more detailed conversation on the CC projects to get a better handle on what the benefits are for approaching the programming of these projects in different ways.

B. Kane asked how D. Mohler intended to handle the gap for FFY 2022. D. Mohler said that presumably communities or the MBTA will present their case for their project's readiness to use those funds. Alternatively, the MPO might decide to leave the \$13 million unprogrammed in the coming fiscal year.

B. Kane asked for consideration of changing the way that we vote, as a roll-call vote can be time-consuming. Per the Governor's March 12, 2020, guidance on the provisions of the Open Meeting Law on holding meetings during the COVID-19 state of emergency, any, or all, public body members participating in a meeting remotely must take all votes by roll call.

## **9. Members Items**

There were none.

## **10. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Eric Bourassa) and seconded by the Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville) (Tom Bent). The motion carried.

## Attendance

Members	Representatives and Alternates
At-Large City (City of Everett)	Jay Monty
At-Large City (City of Newton)	David Koses
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
At-Large Town (Town of Brookline)	Heather Hamilton
At-Large Town (Town of Lexington)	Todd Kirrane
City of Boston (Boston Planning & Development Agency)	Jim Fitzgerald
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Bill Conroy
Federal Highway Administration	Tom Kadzis
Federal Transit Administration	Ken Miller
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Massachusetts Department of Transportation	David Mohler
MassDOT Highway Division	John Bechard
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)	John Romano
Massachusetts Port Authority	Jillian Linnell
MBTA Advisory Board	Brian Kane
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
MetroWest Regional Collaborative (City of Framingham)	Thatcher Kezer III
Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (Town of Acton)	Austin
North Shore Task Force (City of Beverly)	Cyganiiewicz
North Suburban Planning Council (City of Woburn)	Darlene Wynne
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Tina Cassidy
South Shore Coalition (Town of Rockland)	Lenard Diggins
South West Advisory Planning Committee (Town of Medway)	Jennifer
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Constable
	Peter Pelletier
	Tom O'Rourke

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Aaron Clausen	City of Lynn
Aleida Leza	Belmont Resident
Ali Kleyman	City of Somerville
Andrew J. Hall	City of Lynn
Ben Cares	City of Chelsea
Benjamin N.W. Muller	MassDOT
Beth Parent	TetraTech
Beth Suedmeyer	Town of Sudbury
Bonnie Friedman	
Brad Rawson	City of Somerville
Bruno Fisher (Bruno)	
Charlie Russo	Town of Sudbury Select Board
Constance Raphael	MassDOT
Cosmo Caterino	Belmont Resident
David Kucharsky	City of Salem
Emily Teller	Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
Eric Johnson	City of Framingham
Frank Tramontozzi	City of Quincy
Glen Clancy	Director of Community Development, Town of Belmont
Glenn Pransky	
Grant Ellis	Belmont Resident
Jaime Garmendia	
Jay Carroll	City of Salem
Jay Flynn	
Jeanette Rebecchi	Town of Bedford
Jennifer Roberts	Vice-Chairman of the Sudbury Board of Selectmen
Johannes Epke	Conservation Law Foundation
John Gonzalez	DHK Inc.
Jon Rockwell	TEC Inc.
Jon Thibault	Senator Crighton
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Joy Glynn	MWRTA
JR Frey	Town of Hingham
Julia Wallerce	Institute for Transportation & Development Policy
Laura VanderHart	
Laura Wiener	Town of Watertown
Leanne Fierro	
Len Simon	Former Select Board Member, Town of Sudbury

Other Attendees	Affiliation
Marzie Galazka	Town of Swampscott
Matthew Petersen	TransitMatters
Maura Carroll	
Michelle Ho	MassDOT
Miranda Briseño	City of Medford
Nick Lapointe	Fuss & O'Neill Inc.
Owen MacDonald	Town of Weymouth
Pat Brown	
Paul Cobuzzi	Belmont Resident
Paula Doucette	
Peter Spellios	Chair of the Swampscott Select Board
Prachi Vakharia	
Rachel Benson	Town of Wrentham
Rich Benevento	WorldTech Engineering
Rick C	
Roger Talkov	Swampscott Resident
Rohini Vishwanathan	
Roy Epstein	
Russ Leino	
Sara Smith	Friends of the Belmont Community Path
Sarah Bradbury	MassDOT
Schuyler Larrabee	DCAM
Sean Fitzgerald	Town of Swampscott
Sheila Page	Town of Lexington
Sophia Galimore	Watertown TMA
Steven Olanoff	TRIC Alternate
Tammy Zamoyski	HBSS Connect Corp
Terry Snyder	Town of Sudbury
Todd Baldwin	Town of Saugus
Todd Blake	City of Medford
Tony O	
Trish Domigan	
Valerie Gingrich	Town of Wilmington
Will Paulitz	City of Peabody

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Betsy Harvey

Gina Perille

Róisín Foley

Matt Genova

Sandy Johnston

Anne McGahan

Ariel Patterson

Barbara Rutman

Michelle Scott

Kate White

Marty Milkovits

Jonathan Church

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