



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

December 11, 2019, Meeting Minutes

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

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Rider Oversight Committee

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

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

2. Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Advisory Council—*Kate Fichter, Assistant Secretary for Policy Coordination, MassDOT*

Kate Fichter stated that MassDOT released *Congestion in the Commonwealth: Report to the Governor 2019* in August. Findings of the report include:

- The peak morning period has shifted earlier. Some roads see significant volumes by 5:00 AM.
- Some roads no longer have a discernable peak period, with consistently high volumes throughout the day.

K. Fichter stated that she also works on the relationship between transportation emissions and climate change. She stated that the connection between overwhelming vehicle congestion and growing carbon emissions related to transportation indicate a need to create opportunities for people to drive less frequently, particularly in urban areas.

MassDOT has advocated for alternate modes of travel on a statewide level. K. Fichter expressed that a more targeted approach should also be used. In some communities, depending on available transportation facilities, single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips should ideally account for a small percentage of total trips. She noted that 24 percent of automobile trips in Massachusetts are under one mile, a percentage which is not sustainable. It is the

responsibility of transportation planners to ensure that members of the public have attractive, convenient, and affordable transportation options.

K. Fichter expressed a need for MassDOT to work more closely with municipalities on how new developments contribute to overall congestion in the Commonwealth, particularly facilities with high rates of trip generation. In addition, coordination is needed for changes to the roadway network, including intersection design and signal timing. Although these decisions can be made locally, they affect congestion on a regional level.

She expressed a desire to work with the Advisory Council to better coordinate transportation planning between MassDOT, municipalities, and regional planning agencies.

Discussion

David Montgomery stated that the Advisory Council's interactions with MassDOT are generally funneled through the MPO, primarily with the Office of Transportation Planning. He asked if there are opportunities for dialogue with MassDOT outside of the "traditional" channel through the MPO. K. Fichter expressed the importance of the Advisory Council, stating that it represents municipalities and advocacy groups who do not have a seat at the MPO. Municipalities have an important role in advocating for priority projects and policies, both through the MPO and directly with MassDOT. She stated that opportunities to communicate directly with MassDOT depend on the issues that members wish to discuss, and expressed interest in continuing the conversation about the relationship between the Advisory Council, the MPO, and MassDOT.

John McQueen asked if applications for the Complete Streets program could be enhanced to account for additional environmental standards. Enhancements could include mode share standards for various types of geographies, municipal fleet vehicle types, and construction materials. K. Fichter expressed support for the idea.

Laura Wiener expressed that people generally opt to drive over taking public transit due to longer trip times associated with public transit. She expressed that frequency and reliability are large barriers for some potential transit users.

L. Diggins expressed that it can be difficult to break the habit of driving. Some people may shift to public transit during warmer months, but revert to driving during colder months and inclement weather. After replacing their typical public transit trips with driving, it could be difficult for people to shift back to public transit. He suggested that restructuring fare payment could incentivize mode shift. The new payment structure could be need-based, with potentially scaling costs based on the number of transit modes used in a trip, in order to incentivize longer transit trips.

D. Montgomery expressed that municipalities are interested in development projects which increase the number of local jobs; simultaneously, municipalities are concerned that an increase in employment will lead to an increase in local traffic. These issues are frequently addressed independently of each other. He suggested that the language in state-level guidance regarding these issues could be aligned to better highlight their intrinsic link and facilitate discussion and planning on the municipal level.

J. McQueen stated that areas with high densities of employment would likely see increased congestion without the work of existing transportation management associations (TMAs), using the Longwood Medical Area and the work of the Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization (MASCO) as an example. He added that increased frequency and improved routing of TMA shuttles could facilitate mode shift among TMA partner organizations.

Jon Seward suggested that private TMA shuttles could be opened to the public; he added that shuttle services should be better integrated with other public transportation infrastructure in order to maximize ridership.

3. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Studies—*Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager, MPO Staff*

S. Johnston stated that the UPWP is an annual document which describes how the MPO will spend money allocated for MPO staff's activities in a given federal fiscal year (FFY). The document accounts for approximately \$7 million. Much of this funding goes toward the "regular" planning and analysis conducted by MPO staff, and twenty percent of these funds are allocated to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. After this money is allocated, a significant amount of the \$7 million remains, and this is allocated toward discrete studies conducted by MPO staff.

Each year, MPO staff solicits ideas for new discrete from stakeholders and members of the public. These study ideas are then brought to the UPWP Committee of the MPO, which selects a group of studies to be included in the Universe of Potential Studies. These studies are chosen by available funding, which studies align with the goals of the MPO, and which studies are feasible to conduct based on staff availability.

S. Johnston stated he will return to the Advisory Council after the Universe of Proposed Studies has been finalized. He asked the Advisory Council to provide input on which issues and areas they would like to see studied in FFY 2021.

Discussion

Franny Osman expressed interest in studying connections between regional transit authorities (RTAs), specifically those along Route 27 between Framingham and Lowell. Transportation solutions provided by RTAs are generally localized, and a study of

opportunities for better connectivity between RTAs could improve regional travel. S. Zadakis expressed support for the study idea, adding that similar studies outside of this corridor would be beneficial to the Boston region.

F. Osman suggested studying how students travel to community colleges, in order to identify potential shuttle routes.

L. Diggins asked if there is an online resource to access studies previously conducted by MPO staff. S. Johnston stated that studies conducted within the past seven years are available on the [Publications page](#) of the MPO website. He added that MPO staff are working to develop a database of all recommendations made in MPO studies since 2012.

S. Zadakis asked if studies in the Universe of Proposed Studies could include local studies submitted by municipalities. S. Johnston stated that while it is a possibility, such studies would likely be conducted under the [Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program](#) or the [Regional Transit Service Planning Technical Support program](#).

J. McQueen suggested a study of how signal timings at intersections are determined, as these can either contribute to or reduce congestion both locally and regionally. S. Johnston stated that specific signal timings are studied under the biannual Safety and Operations at Selected Intersections studies.

F. Osman suggested assessing the effectiveness of taxi subsidy and microtransit pilots in the region. J. McQueen stated that this study could also include the RIDE.

L. Diggins suggested a literature review of effective methods to encourage walking. In addition, he suggested developing programs to educate pedestrians on safe travel. These could include future technology, such as connected and automated vehicles (CAVs). S. Johnston stated that the interaction between CAVs and pedestrians is an area of concern and ongoing discussion. He added that MPO staff previously conducted a study of CAV technology, though developments have slowed in recent years. L. Diggins expressed that CAV technology could advance quickly as more components become standardized.

4. TIP Universe of Projects—Matt Archer, MPO Staff

Matt Archer stated that the TIP Universe of Projects consists of 68 projects, including 28 projects that are new to the Universe and nine that were previously evaluated by MPO staff. From this document, MPO staff will projects to be evaluated for potential TIP funding.

M. Archer provided an overview of the development of the Universe. MPO staff begin by including all projects that were not programmed during the previous TIP cycle. Staff then

collect information on new projects through municipal outreach. The draft document is sent to MassDOT Highway Districts and the Office of Transportation Planning for comments.

Presently, the Universe is a living document; projects may be added to the Universe, as staff continue to receive input from municipalities. M. Archer added that being in the TIP Universe does not guarantee that a project will be evaluated. Projects selected for evaluation generally have a robust amount of data and design documents; without adequate data, Staff are unable to fully evaluate a project. He estimated that 15 to 20 projects will be selected for evaluation in the current TIP cycle. Evaluations will be conducted from mid-December 2019 to mid-January 2020.

Discussion

L. Diggins asked members if they would like to provide comments on the TIP Universe or wait until projects have been evaluated. He expressed that he will provide opportunities for comments in every step of TIP development, as he wants to ensure that the Advisory Council has a meaningful impact on the process. D. Montgomery stated that questions regarding the TIP evaluation criteria could be addressed prior to scoring.

F. Osman expressed that the TIP Universe does not contain enough level of detail to provide comments. It is difficult to assess if a project should be programmed in the TIP based on the project name. L. Wiener expressed that she could only comment on projects if she was familiar with the area.

D. Montgomery stated that a document explaining how projects are added to the TIP Universe and how they are programmed in the TIP would be beneficial to municipalities. F. Osman suggested that MPO Staff could identify ways to help municipalities who do not have adequate resources to go through the TIP process. J. Seward expressed that, ideally, all projects evaluated for TIP funding should receive high scores. He suggested that municipalities with lower-scoring projects may not be aware of the TIP evaluation criteria, or are not aware of the types of projects which generally do not score well.

D. Ernst suggested that the TIP Universe could be more informative as an interactive application which displayed project details. M. Archer supported the idea, but noted that the level of detail for each project would vary, as projects in the early stages of design may have few supporting documents.

5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

L. Diggins proposed extending Advisory Council meetings to one hour and 45 minutes. D. Montgomery stated that if the meetings were extended, it would be preferable to have the meetings start earlier rather than run later. After discussion, members agreed to begin meetings at 2:30 PM.

6. Chair's Report—*Len Diggins, Rider Oversight Committee*

L. Diggins expressed enthusiasm for recent MPO meetings. The November 21, 2019, meeting included a presentation by Casey-Marie Claude on the [Pedestrian Report Card Assessment Interactive Database](#). The December 5, 2019, meeting included a presentation by Andrew Clark on [The Future of the Curb](#). He intends to invite C. Claude and A. Clark to future Advisory Council meetings.

He stated that he has been emailing Advisory Council members prior to MPO meetings to solicit questions from members to raise at the meetings. He stated that he welcomes unsolicited questions from members, adding that members should feel free to “opt-out.” He wants Advisory Council members to have a larger role in the agenda setting for meetings, and encouraged members to email him with suggestions.

D. Montgomery stated that in prior years, the Advisory Council would spend a meeting discussing potential agenda items

7. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Schuyler Larrabee and seconded by the David Montgomery. The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities

Representatives and Alternates

Acton	Franny Osman
Cambridge	Tegin Teich
Needham	David Montgomery; Rhain Hoyland
Watertown	Laura Wiener
Weymouth	Owen MacDonald

Citizen Advocacy Groups

Attendees

Association for Public Transportation	Barry M Steinberg
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers (BSCES)	AnaCristina Fragoso; Paul Moyer
CrosstownConnect	Scott Zadakis
MassBike	David Ernst
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee (ROC)	Lenard Diggins
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Other Attendees

Affiliation

Ed Lowney

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Archer
Sandy Johnston

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Title VI Specialist
Boston Region MPO
10 Park Plaza, Suite 2150
Boston, MA 02116
civilrights@ctps.org
857.702.3700 (voice)