



Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

January 8, 2020, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 1,
10 Park Plaza, Boston

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the Rider Oversight Committee

Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions

Lenard Diggins called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page seven.)

2. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Criteria Revision—Update and Survey Results—*Matt Genova, TIP Manager, MPO Staff*

Matt Genova stated that the primary purpose of revising the TIP scoring criteria is to reflect the updated goals, objectives, and investment programs outlined in *Destination 2040*, the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Boston Region MPO. This includes the creation of a new Transit Modernization investment program, as well as the inclusion of dedicated bus lanes and investments in resiliency infrastructure in the Complete Streets investment program. Outside of the LRTP, MPO staff want the TIP scoring criteria to reflect the practices of the MPO's partners and emerging trends in planning. The criteria should also address the needs of the Boston Region, and be clear to project proponents.

Currently, one set of criteria are applied to all project types; this can result in some project types consistently outscoring others. In the revised criteria, each project type will have its own set of criteria; goals vary between project types, and more tailored criteria will better reflect the potential benefits of proposed projects. The number of potential points awarded within each LRTP goal area will be reevaluated. As an example, M. Genova asked if Safety and System Preservation should receive the same number of points, or should the weights of these categories be adjusted to better reflect the goals of the MPO.

M. Genova gave an overview of the phases of updating the TIP criteria:

- Phase One included the initial round of public outreach, as well as work with Transportation for America regarding cost effectiveness. Additional work included research into trends and best practices in project scoring.
- Phase Two will include iterative discussions with the MPO on proposed revisions to criteria for each LRTP goal area, beginning with Clean Air and Sustainable Communities.
- Phase Three will include test-scoring of projects under the revised criteria and the solicitation of public input on the proposed changes. This will culminate in new criteria for scoring TIP projects, which will be applied to projects evaluated for potential funding the federal fiscal years (FFYs) 2022-26 TIP.

M. Genova gave an overview of the outreach accomplished during Phase One. A survey distributed to the public resulted in 462 responses. In addition, a survey was sent to TIP contacts within each of the 97 municipalities in the Boston MPO region; this resulted in 21 responses. Suggestions from these surveys include:

- Consideration of the life cycle of a given project, outside of its initial cost.
- Consideration of the effects of gentrification.
- Rewarding projects that encourage mode-shift and multi-modality, as well as projects that reduce noise pollution.
- Increased focus on land use.
- Focus on person throughput rather than vehicle throughput.

Additional suggestions received during Phase One included:

- Reducing technical language in the TIP scoring methodology, to make the document more legible.
- Rewarding projects for their degrees of improvement. M. Genova stated this would be similar to how the TIP criteria currently address air quality improvements, where greater reductions result in more points.
- Taking the local context of projects into consideration during project scoring. M. Genova stated that while he agrees with this sentiment, it is also an inherent challenge to scoring projects on a regional level. He added that this will be considered during criteria revisions.
- Increasing the emphasis on non-motorized travel

- Revising the criteria to support “transformational” projects in the Boston region. Transformational projects would include projects that greatly improve travel within the region, such as West Station and the Red-Blue Connector.

Discussion

Robert McGaw stated that previous TIP criteria were written to make TIP scoring non-political. He encouraged M. Genova to specifically address this.

Franny Osman requested clarification of how some project types outscore other project types under the current criteria. M. Genova stated that Complete Streets projects frequently outscore other project types, as they generally address most, if not all, LRTP goal areas; conversely, a rail trail project would not directly address automobile congestion.

John McQueen stated that the positive economic impacts and increased transit use resulting from dedicated bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be considered during TIP project scoring.

3. Addressing Transportation Equity through Project Scoring—*Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager, MPO Staff*

Betsy Harvey provided an overview of the current transportation equity (TE) scoring metrics in the TIP and potential revisions to TE scoring in the future. She framed her presentation with two questions:

- Should TE be integrated into other goal areas and scoring sections, as opposed to TE being a standalone subset of the criteria?
- Should TE receive larger percentage of possible points awarded during TIP scoring?

The MPO has established equity as a goal area, as detailed in the current LRTP. Although the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) do not have an equity requirement for project selection, the MPO must adhere FTA and FHWA guidance on how equity populations are identified and defined.

B. Harvey specified that in this context, “equity” does not refer to the geographic distribution of projects, but rather the distribution to populations that are protected under federal guidelines and laws. Through the FFYs 2021-25, MPO staff will define the following groups as equity populations:

- Minority populations
- Low-income households
- People with limited English proficiency
- Elderly (age 75 or older)
- People with disabilities

- Carless households

Beginning in the FFYs 2022-26 TIP cycle, MPO staff propose an adjustment to the currently defined equity populations. Under this proposal, carless households would be removed, as they are not protected under federal regulations, and youth population would be added as a protected group.

In addition, low-income households would be adjusted and redefined as low-income populations whose family annual income is at or below 200 percent of the poverty level. This would align MPO policy with federal guidance, as well as allow MPO staff to capture the number of low-income individuals rather than the number of low-income households. The threshold for poverty level is based on family size and the number of children in the children. For a single person, the threshold is approximately \$24,000, while the threshold for a family of four is approximately \$48,000. She noted that this would be a simple transition for MPO staff, based on available data.

Equity objectives were redefined in *Destination 2040* to align them with the goals of the MPO and to ensure that they are actionable. These objectives include:

- Prioritizing investments that benefit equity populations
- Minimizing potential harmful environmental and safety impacts
- Promoting investment that support transportation for all ages
- Promoting investment that are accessible to all populations regardless of ability

The current equity criteria allow for a maximum of 12 points. Project scores are calculated by determining the percent of the population that belongs to each equity population that live within one half-mile of the project area. For example, a project may receive a point if one thousand people who are seventy-five or older live in the project area and may receive another point if one thousand people with limited-English proficiency also live within the project area. However, to receive any points, a population must exceed the region's average by 28.2 percent. If the population meets this threshold, the project receives one or two points depending on the number of people.

B. Harvey described the drawbacks to the current TIP evaluation criteria. Project proponents noted that some projects did not receive points for equity despite equity populations living within the area. An analysis of TIP scores found that majority of projects receive fewer than five points for equity; however, all projects in the analysis have people from each equity population in the project area but did not receive points due to the 28.2 percent threshold.

An additional drawback of the current criteria is that they do not consider if a project will benefit equity populations in the project area. Furthermore, the criteria do not directly support the MPO's new goals and objectives.

MPO staff conducted outreach to determine which criteria are most important to the public. This consisted seven focus groups, six of which focused on equity populations, and an online survey; 112 people attended the focus groups, and 461 people responded to the survey. The input received suggests that MPO should weigh equity more than it currently does.

MPO staff recommend changing the low-income definition to be based on poverty status, adding youth to equity populations, and removing carless households as an equity population. B. Harvey reiterated the questions of whether TE should be integrated into other MPO goal areas, and whether TE should receive a larger percentage of possible points during TIP scoring.

Discussion

R. McGaw stated that project proponents could theoretically alter project designs to maximize their TE scores during project evaluation. This could lead to more urgent projects remaining unfunded. As an example, he stated that a critical bridge could be outscored by a bicycle path. B. Harvey stated that she does not anticipate proponents redesigning their projects based on the TIP evaluation criteria. She noted that there are additional factors to project selection outside of TE. M. Genova noted that the LRTP sets goals for funding based on investment program. During the evaluation period, projects are only compared with other projects within a given investment program. As such, a bridge project would not be outscored by a bicycle/pedestrian project. He added that one factor leading to bridge projects receiving lower scores is that they are generally funded with statewide dollars; as such, the MPO has placed a smaller emphasis on bridge projects.

F. Osman suggested that projects which encourage driving over transit should be weighted lower than projects which support transit. She expressed that equity populations, particularly in less urban areas, are more reliant on transit than non-equity populations. She suggested that projects could receive positive equity scores if they support non-vehicular travel. B. Harvey stated that the MPO will determine which criteria will receive additional points based on public input and discussion at the MPO, adding that the types of projects F. Osman described will likely be included. She noted that many equity populations rely on vehicles for travel.

L. Diggins stated that there should be a compelling reason for allocated different number of points for different goal areas.

C. Porter expressed support proposed concept for TE scoring, stating that it provides an opportunity to tailor the criteria for each type of project. He expressed additional support for considering the number of low-income individuals, as this would facilitate equitable project programming.

J. McQueen noted the importance of transit fare equity. He suggested that the proposed concept for TE scoring in the TIP could be applied during future deliberations about transit payment structures.

David Montgomery asked if integrating TE scoring into other goal areas could potentially deemphasize projects with the greatest benefit to equity populations. B. Harvey stated that equity scores, although integrated with the other goal areas, will be displayed independently in public documents. She added that MPO staff will conduct test scoring prior to the MPO's approval of the revised criteria.

4. Chair's Report—L. Diggins, Chair

L. Diggins encouraged members to read the [New and Emerging Metrics for Roadway Usage technical memorandum](#).

5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

L. Diggins stated that he would like Advisory Council members to give small presentations describing themselves and their organizations at future meetings. He encouraged members to volunteer, stating they can contact him directly.

6. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by the R. McGaw and seconded by D. Montgomery. The motion carried.

Attendees

Member Municipalities

Acton
Belmont
Millis
Needham
Watertown

Representatives and Alternates

Franny Osman
Robert McGaw
Ed Chisholm
David Montgomery
Laura Wiener

Citizen Advocacy Groups

American Council of Engineering Companies
Association for Public Transportation
CrosstownConnect
MassBike
MBTA Rider Oversight Committee (ROC)

Attendees

Fred Moseley
Barry Steinberg
Scott Zadakis
Chris Porter
Lenard Diggins

Other Attendees

Ed Lowney
Dee Whittlesey

Affiliation

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff

Matt Archer
Matt Genova
Betsy Harvey

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