

# Draft Memorandum for the Record

## Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Unified Planning Work Program Committee Meeting Summary

### April 8, 2021 Meeting

12:15 PM–2:00 PM, Zoom Video Conferencing Platform, recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CN-jSYyE5bc>

Eric Bourassa, Acting Chair, representing the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

### Decisions

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Committee agreed to the following:

- Approve the summary of the March 4, 2021 meeting
- Approve the summary of the March 25, 2021 meeting

### Materials

Materials for this meeting included the following:

1. [Summary of the March 4, 2021 meeting](#)
2. [Summary of the March 25, 2021 meeting](#)
3. [Federal Fiscal Year \(FFY\) 2022 Universe of Proposed Studies](#)
4. [Public comments received since the March 25, 2021 meeting](#)

### Meeting Agenda and Summary of Discussion

#### 1. Introductions

E. Bourassa called the meeting to order, read the accessibility statement, and called the roll of attendees.

#### 2. Public Comments

Matthew Petersen (TransitMatters) spoke in support of FFY 2022 UPWP Universe study concept T-4, about bus electrification, and said he would be present to support any questions that came up.

Rep. Michelle Ciccolo (15<sup>th</sup> Middlesex District) noted her support for study concept T-10, *Innovative Transit Financing*, and offered to answer questions from members. Sandy

Johnston (Central Transportation Planning Staff [CTPS] UPWP Manager) noted that he had sent out her full explanation of the concept to the committee by email.

### **3. Meeting Summary of March 4, 2021—Approval of this summary**

Tom Bent (City of Somerville/Inner Core Committee) made a motion to approve the meeting summary, and Tom O'Rourke (Neponset River Regional Chamber/Town of Norwood/Three Rivers Interlocal Council) seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, with Eric Johnson (City of Framingham) abstaining.

### **4. Meeting Summary of March 25, 2021—Approval of this summary**

Tom Kadzis (City of Boston) made a motion to approve the meeting summary and T. O'Rourke seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

### **5. Continued Discussion of the Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Universe of Proposed Studies—Various MPO Staff**

S. Johnston framed this agenda item for the committee. This discussion continues the discussion begun at the UPWP Committee meeting on March 25, 2021. The goal is not to make decisions about which studies to fund, but to review study concepts and allow committee members to ask factual questions and become more familiar with the various ideas. Various staff members will talk about each study concept. After this meeting, S. Johnston will send out a survey asking committee members to rank the study concepts in order of their preference, and staff will develop a staff-recommended list of studies taking that data into account.

The discussion proceeded as follows:

Rep. Ciccolo spoke about study concept T-10. Len Diggins (Regional Transportation Advisory Council) asked if it is something that could be funded through the MPO's Community Connections program. S. Johnston responded that Community Connections is a capital investment program, whereas this is a study. Rep. Ciccolo explained that she has seen a need for stable funding for local transit programs, and that establishing these services serves a wide variety of policy goals. T. O'Rourke asked if there is any accompanying legislative activity and Rep. Ciccolo responded that there is, but there is also a need for study to generate additional data. T. Kadzis said he thought the study concept is a great idea. Betsy Harvey (CTPS Transportation Equity Program Manager) mentioned the MPO's Coordinated Public Transportation-Human Services Transportation (CPT-HST) plan as being relevant to this concept and the need to better coordinate local transit services. L. Diggins and Rep. Ciccolo discussed potential bond financing for the study, external to the MPO's federal funding.

Ariel Patterson (CTPS Transportation Planner) spoke about study concept A-1. She explained that while staff had initially conceived of this project as purchasing materials to loan to municipalities and other partners, they are now recommending that, if funded in FFY 2022, proceed as a smaller feasibility study at level of funding closer to \$20,000 to \$30,000 than the \$100,000 named in the Universe. Daniel Amstutz (Town of Arlington/At-Large Town) said he thought the feasibility study made sense, and that since the materials aren't overall that expensive, it might make sense for MPO staff to provide technical assistance to municipalities. L. Diggins and S. Johnston discussed how much the project would cost and how staff would scope it. T. Bent said he liked the idea and strongly recommended sharing information about such activities among municipalities. E. Bourassa noted a synergy between this concept and concept A-2, which is about reviewing the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) Shared and Open Streets program and similar efforts. T. Kadzis echoed T. Bent on sharing information and strategies between municipalities.

S. Johnston read a statement about study concept A-2 from Ben Muller (MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning), Chair of the UPWP Committee, who was absent from this meeting:

"This proposed project would review shared streets, healthy streets, interim plazas, and other tactical projects implemented during the pandemic. Work would be performed through interviews with MassDOT Shared Streets teams and municipal implementing partners. Work could also involve reviewing tactical urbanism guides and interim plaza guides for transferable lessons from other regions. A resulting guidebook would inform future municipal implementations, applications to ongoing shared streets programs anticipated from MassDOT and other state and regional partners, and would inform use of the infrastructure bank proposed under A-1 if also selected."

D. Amstutz noted the synergies between concepts A-1 and A-2, and suggested looking at some of MassDOT's existing reports on the Shared Streets program.

Michelle Scott (CTPS Chief Transportation Planner) spoke about study concept A-3, in particular about using relationships that staff have developed over the last several years to look further into the idea of Vision Zero. L. Diggins and M. Scott discussed how to make sure this work would not overlap with work being done at the state level.

S. Johnston spoke about concepts L-1 and L-2, which share similarities as follow-ups to existing or past MPO work, and while staff don't know yet what the exact content would be, they know there is significant stakeholder interest in pursuing the topic. E. Bourassa said he thought these are important ideas.

Annette Demchur (CTPS Director of Policy and Planning) spoke about study concept L-3. This would function like a task-order process, allowing staff to respond flexibly and quickly to issues that arise during COVID recovery, such as transit planning needs.

S. Johnston spoke about study concept L-4. He explained that there is a lot of energy around freight and logistics, and the pressures of new processes, such as e-commerce. There is also a history of freight shifting from rail to road, and possibly a policy desire to reverse that trend. The work could be scalable from one town to regionwide.

S. Johnston explained that concepts M-1 through M-3 are what the committee calls “recurring” studies, in that they occur on a regular basis, and are typically included in the UPWP without additional comment. MassDOT OTP has indicated they might support increasing the budget for these studies. L. Diggins and E. Bourassa discussed raising additional revenue for MPO staff to do studies, and agreed to put it on a future committee meeting agenda.

S. Johnston explained that Rachel Benson (Town of Wrentham) had discussed concept M-4 at the March 25, 2021, meeting. There were no further questions.

Tegin Teich (MPO Executive Director) spoke about concept M-5, covering congestion pricing. She discussed the relationship of this study concept to the Big Ideas study that is currently ongoing as part of the FFY 2021 UPWP, and framed this concept as an opportunity to look at the range of ways in which congestion pricing has been implemented in different places and understand what the impacts and opportunities might be for the Boston region. There would need to be some legwork to frame it in a way that is not redundant with other work going on in the region. L. Diggins and T. Teich briefly discussed the scalability of the study. D. Amstutz remarked that he remembered a similar concept coming up in a previous UPWP Universe, and that this version sounded less technically oriented and less complex. He also noted his support for studying congestion pricing. T. Teich affirmed that this concept is less technical and more comparison-oriented. L. Diggins asked what effect the pandemic might have on the importance of this concept. E. Bourassa mentioned that some modeling work to determine the relationship between the exact price of road travel and the desired policy effect of decongestion would be valuable. T. Teich said that that type of activity is part of CTPS’ work under the “model roadmap,” which is staff’s effort to update its modeling tools and allow for exploratory analysis of this type.

Emily Domanico (CTPS Transit Planner) spoke about study concept M-6. This is a continuation of previous MPO work on the Future of the Curb and would lead to a method to estimate curb space usage using data from our municipalities in areas where

different code management strategies are implemented. It would continue the effort to develop regional guidance on curb space management and yield a starting point for these metrics that we could then return to in the future and update as curb use changes. E. Bourassa mentioned MAPC's recently released research on e-commerce, which touched on the challenge of curb management.

Mark Abbott (CTPS Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager) said that his group would likely cover this suggestion to study a section of Route 28 in the Blue Hills through CTPS' Community Transportation Technical Assistance program. Steve Olanoff (Town of Westwood/TRIC subregion alternate) spoke about the importance of improved pedestrian safety in this area.

Blake Acton (CTPS Transit Planner) spoke about study concept T-1. This study concept would identify potential corridors for high-quality Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service in the Boston region. E. Bourassa mentioned that the MPO continues to engage with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to determine how to add value with this work. D. Amstutz and B. Acton discussed what the definition of BRT would be for this study.

S. Johnston explained that representatives from a coalition of community groups had discussed concept T-2 at the March 25, 2021, meeting and there is interest among staff. E. Bourassa asked if it focuses on public transit connections and not bicycle connections. S. Johnston said the concept is malleable and its scope could be expanded. S. Olanoff said that the concept is an important equity-focused project for those accessing the Blue Hills Reservation. E. Bourassa talked about its potential implementation and relation to the Community Connections program. T. Kadzis said the project may be completed using less funding than the proposed \$80,000 budget. S. Johnston agreed, stating it depends on its scalability and scope of work. Furthermore, it could incorporate walking and cycling access to the Reservation and community engagement. T. Kadzis appreciated the clarification. L. Diggins noted that not everyone likes hiking and the project may be appealing to some but not all.

S. Johnston spoke about study concept T-3. The study concept would span several years, tracking microtransit projects across the state and evaluating their relative success over time relative to factors such as land use.

S. Johnston explained that M. Petersen and others discussed concept T-4 at the last meeting. E. Bourassa said the MBTA will provide feedback on this project for later discussion.

Paul Christner (CTPS Transit Analysis and Planning Group Manager) spoke about study concept T-5. He said that the MBTA has expressed some interest in this project as well, especially around enhancing coordination with municipalities.

P. Christner also spoke about study concept T-6 that would involve research of fare policies for the MBTA and other regional transit authorities to address flexible telecommuting in a post-COVID world. In the “new normal,” people might not be commuting five days per week and might need fare products other than a monthly pass.

Brian Kane (MBTA Advisory Board), spoke about study concept T-7 that would study paratransit operations in the Boston region and ways to improve their efficiency. L. Diggins suggested incorporating equity into the study. D. Amstutz asked about transfers on paratransit services. B. Kane provided additional details about transfers and local trips.

B. Kane spoke about study concept T-8. The project would conduct a review on the cost of MBTA transit projects in Boston compared with other North American and international cities. L. Diggins asked why the MBTA doesn't study this itself, and B. Kane replied that they have no incentive to. T. Teich observed that cost overruns apply to many types of projects, not just transit-focused ones. T. Kadzis discussed high construction costs for transportation projects and the consumer price index. T. Bent said high costs can be attributed to labor costs, traffic control costs, the complexity of dealing with utilities, and environmental regulations. He also said the MBTA may have done a similar study.

B. Harvey spoke about study concept E-2. The project would look at inequities in the transportation system (roadway and transit systems) with quantitative and qualitative tools for long-range planning purposes. E. Bourassa supports the proposed project. T. Kadzis asked about its linkage to the MPO's equity scoring process. L. Diggins asked about the qualitative element of the study and associated public engagement. S. Olanoff stated that the study should have been done years ago.

S. Johnston explained that study concepts T-9 and T-10 were discussed at the March 25, 2021, meeting. There were no further questions.

Steven Andrews (CTPS Senior Transportation Analyst) spoke about study concept E-1, “Transportation User Costs Over Time.” The study would explore how trip costs have changed for different groups of people over time, with a specific focus on equity. E. Bourassa asked for clarification on the project's aim. S. Andrews stated the transportation user costs would focus on all government-imposed fees, not specifically gas prices. D. Amstutz asked if the project will explain the increasing costs for bus

riders and not drivers due to the stagnant state and federal gas tax rates, and S. Andrews replied that that type of question is what animates this project.

Anne McGahan (CTPS Chief Transportation Planner) spoke about study concept R-1. It would establish a program to address resiliency in the transportation sector and support regional collaboration. L. Diggins asked if the project could be combined with study concept M-8, "Work Zone Impacts." M. Abbott said the project would be more in line with study concept R-2 ("Network Resilience, Importance, and Sustainability").

M. Abbott spoke about study concept R-2. It would leverage the travel demand model and mapping tools to identify what roadways in the region are susceptible to climate change and their associated impacts. E. Bourassa asked if any state agencies are conducting this work. M. Abbott said that MassDOT is working on coastal and inland flooding models. S. Johnston said that the FFY 2021 UPWP study to update the All-Hazards Planning Application tool may form the basis of the proposed project.

S. Johnston spoke about study concept O-1, a recurring study for staff-generated research and technical assistance projects.

E. Bourassa asked about next steps and determining the amount of available funds. S. Johnston said staff will review the project list and send a survey, asking committee members to rank their top choices. He will develop a staff-recommended list of studies with firmer budget estimates and survey results for the May 6 UPWP committee meeting. E. Bourassa asked whether the committee needs to make a final recommendation by then. S. Johnston and A. Demchur stated that the budget estimates may be ready by mid-June if not sooner.

## **6. Members Items**

There were none.

## **7. Next Meeting**

E. Bourassa suggested the next meeting be held after the MPO board meeting (upon approval from chairperson B. Muller). L. Diggins suggested an alternate meeting time. E. Bourassa reminded members to respond to the upcoming survey.

## **8. Adjourn**

L. Diggins made a motion to adjourn the meeting and T. Bent seconded the motion. Without objection, the meeting was adjourned.

## Attendance

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<b>Members</b>	<b>Representatives and Alternates</b>
Metropolitan Area Planning Council	Eric Bourassa
Regional Transportation Advisory Council	Lenard Diggins
At-Large Town (Town of Arlington)	Daniel Amstutz
City of Boston (Boston Transportation Department)	Tom Kadzis
Inner Core Committee (City of Somerville)	Tom Bent
Three Rivers Interlocal Council (Town of Norwood/Neponset Valley Chamber of Commerce)	Tom O'Rourke
Three Rivers Interlocal Council alternate (Town of Westwood)	Steve Olanoff
City of Framingham (Metrowest Regional Collaborative)	Eric Johnson

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<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Michelle Ciccolo	State Representative, 15 <sup>th</sup> Middlesex District
Matthew Petersen	TransitMatters
Brian Kane	MBTA Advisory Board, MPO Member
Josh Klingenstein	MBTA
Mason Heilman	Aide to Rep. Ciccolo

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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

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Tegin Teich, Executive Director

Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning

Hiral Gandhi, Director of Operations and Finance

Mark Abbott, Traffic Analysis and Design Group Manager

Paul Christner, Transit Planning and Analysis Group Manager

Jonathan Church, Manager of MPO Activities

Sandy Johnston, UPWP Manager

Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager

Kate White, Public Outreach Coordinator

Róisín Foley, Administrative and Communications Assistant

Blake Acton, Transit Planner

Emily Domanico, Transit Planner

Ariel Patterson, Transportation Planner

Anne McGahan, Senior Transportation Planner

Michelle Scott, Chief Transportation Planner

Matt Genova, Transportation Improvement Program Manager

Matt Archer, Transportation Planner

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