



Memorandum for the Record

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

September 9, 2020, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:05 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Ridership 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 four.)

2. Major Infrastructure Definition—*Anne McGahan, Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Manager, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Staff*

Lenard Diggins said he invited Anne McGahan, MPO staff, because he wanted the Advisory Council to get a full understanding of the policy implications of the recent changes to the definition of a major infrastructure (MI) project at the Boston Region MPO.

Anne McGahan began by listing current issues on the MPO's MI funding program:

- Adopt a new definition for the MI program
- Identify MI projects to list in the LRTP
- Revisit MI project scoring and programming in the LRTP

A. McGahan mentioned an accompanying technical memorandum, [Policies for the Boston Region MPO's Major Infrastructure Program](#). She gave the definition previously used by the MPO of an MI project—a project that changes the capacity of the transportation network and/or costs more than \$20 million—and she said the MPO currently lists all MI projects in the LRTP. She explained that feedback from MPO board members led to the proposed redefinition of MI projects. A. McGahan also discussed the federal definition of a “regionally significant” project and how it had shaped the definitions of MI at the MPO in prior years. She explained how the federal definition of MI didn't always match the goals set by the MPO for the MI program.

A. McGahan discussed the recommendations that MPO staff put forward toward a new definition of MI projects:

- Separate MI projects from regionally significant projects for air quality analysis
- Increase cost threshold from \$20 million to \$50 million
- Roadway capital improvement projects less than \$50 million still considered MI project if roadway is classified as
 - Interstate Highway;
 - Principal Arterial Freeway and Expressway; or
 - Principal Arterial “Other” that has controlled access
- Project is MI if it extends transit networks
- Other projects added to MI program at the MPO’s discretion

New MI Definition and Impacts

A. McGahan said the new definition adopted by the MPO at its August 20, 2020, meeting includes two main categories:

- MI roadway projects
 - Capital projects on Interstate Highways and other Principal Arterial roadways
 - Projects that cost \$50 million or more
- MI transit projects
 - Capital projects that extend the rail or fixed guideway transit networks
 - Projects that cost \$50 million or more

A. McGahan explained the federal definition of the term “fixed guideway” and explained why it does not include the dedicated bus lanes in the Boston region. She then listed the higher functional classes of roadways as defined by the federal government and explained how they fit into the new MI definition. A. McGahan discussed the impacts of the new MI definitions on the MPO’s six existing investment programs and how projects are classified within it. She said the impacts will help the MPO move closer to the funding goals established in the *Destination 2040* LRTP and are in line with the MPO’s approach to giving priority to low-cost, non-major infrastructure projects.

A. McGahan summarized the MPO’s current MI project scoring policies under the old definition. She then listed the recommendations from MPO staff on revised MI project scoring and programming using the new MI definition. A. McGahan then listed items still under discussion by MPO staff with regard to the new MI definition.

Discussion

David Montgomery, Town of Needham, and A. McGahan discussed whether the cost threshold could be integrated into an annual increase rather than a single large increase from \$20 million to \$50 million.

Chris Porter, MassBike, and A. McGahan discussed why projects now considered part of the Complete Streets funding program are also listed as changing network capacity.

AnaCristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, asked whether MPO staff see and take into consideration any risk assessments. She also asked how many times a project could be considered for rescoring.

L. Diggins and A. McGahan discussed what function the scoring serves if a project will be placed in the LRTP regardless of its scores.

3. Election Committee Update—*Franny Osman, Election Committee Chair*

Franny Osman, Acton Transportation Advisory Committee, reported that the Advisory Council Election Committee had polled the voting members and had not received any nominations by email reply. She said the Election Committee had tasked Matt Archer with finding simple methods to conduct the ballot remotely and by secret ballot and to record the process and results. F. Osman said both L. Diggins, Chair, and Scott Zadakis, Vice Chair, had self-nominated to serve another term in their current offices. She called for any other nominations and said that unless others were nominated the ballot would list L. Diggins and S. Zadakis as the only candidates for Chair and Vice Chair, respectively. F. Osman said the results of the vote will be announced at the October Advisory Council meeting.

4. Chair's Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair*

Lenard Diggins said he planned to vote in favor of the MPO staff's recommended changes around MI definitions at the next MPO board meeting but could be persuaded otherwise if Advisory Council members gave compelling arguments to vote no.

L. Diggins also reported favorably on a presentation by Matt Genova, Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) Manager, MPO staff, which demonstrated how projects score differently using the new TIP scoring criteria. He said approval of the new scoring criteria will be voted on at the next MPO board meeting on October 1, 2020.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2019, meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

6. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements

There were no items.

7. Adjourn

Lenard Diggins adjourned the meeting at 4:05 PM.

Attendees

Member Municipalities	Representatives and Alternates
Town of Needham	David Montgomery

Member Citizen Advocacy Groups	Representatives and Alternates
MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee	Lenard Diggins
Acton Transportation Advisory Committee	Franny Osman
Association for Public Transportation	Barry Steinberg
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	AnaCristina Fragoso
MassBike	Chris Porter
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Agencies (Non-Voting)	Attendees
MassDOT Aeronautics Division	Steve Rawding

MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff
Matt Archer
Anne McGahan
Barbara Rutman
Michelle Scott
Matt Genova

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Title VI Specialist

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