



## Draft Memorandum for the Record Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

July 8, 2020, Meeting Minutes

2:30 PM–4:10 PM, Zoom

Lenard Diggins, Chair, representing the 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 five.)

#### 2. Addressing Transportation Equity through Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Selection Criteria—*Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager, Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Staff*

Betsy Harvey, MPO staff, led a discussion about how MPO staff have been developing revised project evaluation criteria in the TIP, with a focus on evaluating equity. She began by listing the *current* evaluation weightings (maximum possible points) for each goal area set in the *Destination 2040* Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):

- Safety (30 points)
- System preservation and modernization (29)
- Capacity management and mobility (29)
- Clean air and sustainable communities (16)
- Transportation equity (12)
- Economic vitality (18)

B. Harvey explained that MPO staff are in the process of revising both the goal areas and their respective weightings to better reflect what the MPO and its members think are the most important impacts or projects to address. She said the MPO will soon start rescoring projects with the new, revised criteria and that more detailed discussions will follow about whether the new criteria need to be altered.

B. Harvey listed the populations that are currently evaluated within the equity goal area:

- Minority population
- Low-income population
- People with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Elderly population
- People with disabilities
- Carless households

B. Harvey said the MPO proposes to eliminate the “carless households” category; it would be replaced with a “youth population” category. She said another planned change is to measure low-income populations based on poverty status rather than household income. B. Harvey explained that both changes would better align with protected classes as defined under federal civil rights laws.

B. Harvey said MPO staff have revised the equity goal area stated in *Destination 2040*:

Ensure that all people receive comparable benefits from, and are not disproportionately burdened by, MPO investments, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, income, ability, or sex.

B. Harvey said the change is intended to refocus the MPO’s approach to equity on to the impacts of investments on those populations. She said MPO staff have also established several new equity objectives to prioritize:

- Prioritize MPO investments that benefit equity populations
- Minimize potential harmful environmental, health, and safety effects on MPO-funded projects for all equity populations
- Promote investments that support transportation for all ages
- Promote investments that are accessible to all regardless of ability

B. Harvey discussed the current equity scoring approach and some of its drawbacks. She then discussed the goals for the new criteria formulated by MPO staff:

- Meet federal guidance
- Help the MPO accomplish the equity goal and objectives
- Award progressively more points to projects based on the share of the equity population that would benefit
- Assess impacts to equity populations rather than proximity

B. Harvey said the MPO had conducted focus groups and a public survey to engage the public on TIP criteria updates, asking “How can the MPO best improve transportation in the region?”; she said respondents ranked “Promote more equitable transportation mobility” as

their first or second highest rated category among the MPO's goal areas. B. Harvey said these results suggested to MPO staff that the criteria for scoring projects should give more weight to the equity goal; the existing criteria give equity a maximum of 12 points out of a total maximum of 134 points. B. Harvey mentioned a technical memorandum that has more detail about the MPO's public engagement efforts regarding the project evaluation criteria revisions.

B. Harvey explained that the MPO is proposing to replace the stand-alone equity category with an overall equity multiplier, which would be calculated by identifying the share of each of the six equity populations that live within the project area and that would be affected by the project.

B. Harvey summarized the feedback she has received about the proposed revisions to how equity is weighted during the scoring process:

- Different populations benefit differently from various types of transportation improvements.
- Transportation investments have disproportionately affected some residents more than others, in particular people of color and people with low-income.

### ***Discussion***

Andy Reker, City of Cambridge; John McQueen, WalkBoston; Franny Osman, Acton Transportation Advisory Committee; and B. Harvey discussed how the MPO uses data measuring income or disability populations that is derived from the American Community Survey, which is a product of the US Census Bureau.

F. Osman and B. Harvey discussed how to better measure the people who use and benefit from a project rather than those who live nearby.

A. Reker, J. McQueen, and Matt Genova, MPO staff, discussed how the equivalent property damage only (EPDO) index is used in the MPO's safety scoring calculations.

AnaCristina Fragoso, Boston Society of Civil Engineers, J. McQueen, M. Genova, and B. Harvey discussed whether the MPO incorporates international sustainability standards in TIP scoring criteria, particularly with regard to hiring of equity populations that already reside in a project area. J. McQueen also advocated for raising the "low-income population" equity multiplier to x2 from x1 weight, which it would have in the proposed new weighting.

F. Osman; Ellen Lee, Arlington Disability Commission; and B. Harvey discussed whether transportation needs of elderly populations are adequately represented in the data gathered during the scoring process.

### **3. Chair's Report—*Lenard Diggins, Chair***

Lenard Diggins recommended a presentation about the Public Input on the TIP Criteria by Kate White, Public Outreach Coordinator on the MPO staff.

L. Diggins also discussed another topic from the last MPO board meeting: updating the definition of a major infrastructure project used in the LRTP.

### **4. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2019, meeting was made and seconded. The minutes were approved.

### **5. Old Business, New Business, and Member Announcements**

L. Diggins raised the question of whether Advisory Council members wanted to schedule a bonus meeting for later in July; he said possible topics for the bonus meeting include either the Pedestrian Report Card or Scenario Planning and Modeling. J. McQueen mentioned that walkability scores are a resource that could be combined with the Pedestrian Report Card.

A. Reker suggested a bonus meeting could focus on the selected corridor safety projects in the LRTP.

### **6. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The motion carried.

## Attendees

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**Member Municipalities****Representatives and Alternates**

City of Cambridge	Andy Reker
Town of Watertown	Laura Weiner

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**Member Citizen Advocacy Groups****Representatives and Alternates**

MBTA Ridership Oversight Committee	Lenard Diggins
Acton Transportation Advisory Committee	Franny Osman
American Council of Engineering Companies	Fred Moseley
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Boston Society of Civil Engineers	AnaCristina Fragoso
WalkBoston	John McQueen

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**Other****Attende  
es****Affiliation**

Ellen Lee	Arlington Disability Commission
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**MPO Staff/Central Transportation Planning Staff**

Matt Archer
Betsy Harvey
Matt Genova

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**Title VI Specialist**

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857.702.3700 (voice)

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