



BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Stephanie Pollack, MassDOT Secretary and CEO and MPO Chair
Karl H. Quackenbush, Executive Director, MPO Staff

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 13, 2018
TO: Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden Working Group
FROM: Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager
RE: Summary of Second Working Group Meeting

This memo summarizes the second meeting of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Disparate Impact and Disproportionate Burden (DI/DB) Policy working group.

Date: June 5, 2018
Location: Egan Research Center, Room 306, 120 Forsyth Street,
Boston, MA 02115
Time: 5:30 PM–7:30 PM

The following stakeholders were in attendance:

- Amy Laura Cahn, Conservation Law Foundation
- Len Diggins, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Rider Oversight Committee
- Marc Ebuña, Transit Matters
- Maria Foster, TRIPPS
- Louisa Gag, LivableStreets
- Tom Kadzis, Boston Transportation Department (Boston Region MPO member representative)
- Sheryl Leary, Hessco Elder Services
- Mela Miles, Four Corners Action Coalition
- Jay Monty, City of Everett (Boston Region MPO member representative)
- Bryan Pounds, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (Boston Region MPO member representative)
- Tegin Teich, Regional Transportation Advisory Council (Boston Region MPO member representative)

The following MPO staff members were in attendance:

- Matt Archer, MPO intern
- Annette Demchur, Director of Policy and Planning

- Róisín Foley, Administrative and Communications Assistant
- Betsy Harvey, Transportation Equity Program Manager
- Ali Kleyman, Manager of Certification Activities
- Anne McGahan, Long-Range Transportation Plan Program Manager
- Scott Peterson, Director of Technical Services
- Jen Rowe, Public Participation Program Manager

The following members of the public were in attendance:

- Chris Clemens
- Tracy Litthcut, Boston Transportation Department
- Travis Pollack, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Sheri Warrington, State Senator Brendan Crighton's office

1 MEETING OVERVIEW

The meeting began with introductions. B. Harvey then reviewed the goals of the meeting, the dates and times of the subsequent working group meeting on July 17, 2018, and the public workshop on June 26, 2018, and gave a recap of the previous working group meeting.

2 WORKING GROUP DISCUSSION

Stakeholders were divided into three groups. MPO staff asked stakeholders to discuss transportation challenges and impacts that they see in the region. For each group, an MPO staff member recorded stakeholder feedback on a flipchart. After 30 minutes, a stakeholder from each group reported the challenges and impacts identified by their group. J. Rowe recorded each comment on a running list continued from the previous meeting. S. Peterson sorted each idea into one of the following three categories, which B. Harvey recorded on a flipchart:

- 1) Impacts that can be considered for measurement in the next Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), *Destination 2040*
- 2) Impacts that could be considered for measurement in the subsequent LRTP, which will be developed in five years, pending more research
- 3) Impacts for which the time frame for evaluation in the LRTP is unknown and would require significant research

All of the issues identified by stakeholders are included at the end of this memo in Table 1. The following themes were discussed:

- Access to several transportation options
- Public transit and paratransit reliability

- Access to goods and services, including shopping facilities and medical facilities
- Costs of travel, by mode
- Changes in mode shares
- Syncing schedules of different transit modes and different transit agencies (connectivity)
- Health benefits
- Transportation cost as a function of total household income
- The relationship between household income and access to transportation options
- The effects of automated vehicles and ridesharing
- The effects of displacement on transportation costs (as a function of total household income)
- Effects of climate change and resiliency

The discussion among stakeholders was very robust and MPO staff agreed to finish categorizing the issues over the next few weeks following the meeting. The second planned activity, which was to prioritize the issues, was postponed. MPO staff and stakeholders agreed that stakeholders would prioritize the issues via a survey prior to the third stakeholder working group meeting.

3 PRESENTATION SUMMARY

B. Harvey then gave a presentation on data and analytical considerations for selecting impacts to assess for disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens potentially caused by the program of projects in the LRTP. These projects are major infrastructure projects—which increase capacity in the transportation system and/or cost at least \$20 million—that would be funded by the MPO and/or other transportation agencies in the region, such as the MBTA and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), or municipalities. Key points that were discussed included the following:

- The MPO develops metrics to assess the LRTP program of projects for disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens.
- A metric is a standardized, measurable method for evaluating impacts. Whether a metric can be developed to assess transportation impacts depends on the data and methodological tools that are available. Data must be used to measure the impacts of a group of projects, as opposed to individual projects, and analytical tools must be available for projecting the impacts of projects over a 20-year period.
- The MPO uses a regional travel demand model to project the impacts of the LRTP program of projects in a future year, which for *Destination 2040*

would be 2040. The impacts on the region-wide minority or low-income population (protected population) are compared to the impacts on the region-wide non-minority or non-low-income population (comparison population). These data are used to evaluate the program of projects for disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens.

- The MPO runs two model scenarios to assess the impacts of the LRTP program of projects on the region-wide protected and comparison populations. The no-build scenario is a future scenario—projecting to 2040 for the next LRTP, *Destination 2040*—that assumes projected growth in population and employment and assumes that the LRTP program of projects is not built. The build scenario is another future scenario—also projecting to 2040—that assumes projected growth in population and employment and assumes that the LRTP program of projects is built. The model outputs are used to evaluate disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens for each metric.
- To assess metrics for disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens, the percentage change is calculated for no-build and build scenarios for the protected population and for the comparison population. The percentage change for the protected population is then divided by the percentage change for the comparison population. The result is compared to the DI/DB threshold to determine if there is a disparate impact or disproportionate burden.

4 STAKEHOLDER QUESTIONS AND FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

After the presentation stakeholders had the opportunity to ask questions.

A.L. Cahn asked whether it is acceptable to set a threshold that allows a disparity and, if so, why is it acceptable to have a disparity. B. Harvey answered that the threshold will set the very outer bounds of what disparity is acceptable to the MPO. If it is set too low, it may be difficult for the MPO to meet its other obligations and goals, such as those relating to safety or system preservation.

A.L. Cahn also asked if the DI/DB policy will guard against minority or low-income populations receiving disproportionately more of a benefit than nonminority or non-low-income populations. B. Harvey responded no.

B. Pounds asked whether it matters, in the context of the DI/DB policy, if the minority or low-income populations ultimately would be affected the same as nonminority or non-low-income populations if the LRTP program of projects is built. B. Harvey replied that the DI/DB policy only considers the impact of building the program of projects relative to not building the program of projects.

A. Demchur said that the policy looks at the effects of the program of projects

that the MPO is currently programming, not the existing conditions. The MPO determines whether the impacts of the program of projects itself are potentially discriminatory against minority or low-income populations.

L. Diggins said that when the MPO releases the draft LRTP program of projects there may be a perception from the public that no changes are possible and that members of the public cannot affect what actually gets programmed. He asked whether the MPO will use the DI/DB analysis to help select the program of projects in the LRTP. A. Demchur replied that the DI/DB analysis will examine the impacts of the program of projects after they are selected. L. Diggins asked how the projects in the LRTP are selected. A. Demchur answered that project selection is based on criteria derived from the MPO's goals and objectives.

B. Pounds asked whether the MPO might be able to use the DI/DB analysis as an evaluation factor for selecting projects. L. Diggins said it would be good to know what the results of the DI/DB analysis would have been if other projects from the LRTP *Universe of Projects* had been selected for inclusion in the program of projects. He said more people from the public might be engaged if the public could see the DI/DB results for several different build scenarios. B. Pounds said that MassDOT is trying to increase stakeholder engagement so that when MassDOT selects projects they are getting public input. He added that MassDOT does receive public feedback after projects are selected and that MassDOT is trying to include public participation as a factor in project selection criteria.

A. McGahan noted that transportation equity is part of the MPO's project selection criteria because it is one of the MPO's goals. A. Demchur said that if disparities are found after the DI/DB policy is applied to the LRTP program of projects, the MPO will address them going forward.

M. Miles said that the MPO has to engage minority and low-income communities to find out their needs, so that the analysis of impacts for disparate impacts and disproportionate burdens addresses those needs. She also said that as transportation agencies develop projects they need to engage more with minority and low-income communities from the start of the process so that projects reflect the needs of those communities. E. Harvey responded that projects in the LRTP program of projects are still at the conceptual stage. She also said that the DI/DB policy will be applied to the final program of projects in the upcoming LRTP, *Destination 2040*, but that the MPO will consider other approaches in the future.

A. McGahan said that as part of developing the LRTP, the MPO puts together a *Universe of Projects*—the list that the program of projects is chosen from—that is released for public review. Because the LRTP is a 20-year plan, some projects still have not gone through public review. The LRTP is updated every four years,

which allows the MPO to review each project in light of the latest planning assumptions.

M. Miles said that the MPO should try to engage the public in a way that is less technical and makes the public excited to participate in the outreach for the LRTP.

5 PUBLIC COMMENT

T. Litthcut commented that transportation, and especially the topic of disparate impact, can be very confusing to people who are not involved in transportation planning. He recommended that MPO staff simplify the language used to talk about the DI/DB policy, especially at the upcoming public workshop on June 26. He also stated that MPO staff should be prepared to hear tough questions at the public workshop. He recommended that the MPO meet with the Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association and other neighborhood organizations prior to the public workshop to discuss what will be presented at the public workshop and to help MPO staff be prepared for feedback they may hear there.

Table 1
Transportation Challenges or Impacts Identified by Stakeholders

Access	Land Use-Transportation Relationship	Affordability	Health	Safety	Infrastructure	Economic	Mobility	New Transportation Technologies	Demographics	Political	Integration of Transit	Other
Access to goods and services	Housing-transit connections	Places where there are not options—too expensive	Ability to exercise	Safety and air quality benefits of transit	Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in Boston	Relationship between economic development and job growth and transportation	Mobility for elderly	Transportation as a service (such as ridesharing)	Aging infrastructure and population	Political will	Integration of transit services	Impact on entire system—essential to everything
Access to jobs and medical appointments	Land cost near different types of transportation—transit vs. highway	Impact of rising transportation costs on people with lack of transportation choices; tradeoffs, such as transportation vs. food or medical expenses	Exponential rise of zero-emission vehicles	Unsafe for active transportation	Dedicated bus lanes	Lack of revenue generation	Mobility and lack of connections between towns	Disruptive technologies	Lack of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and sensitivity	Big Dig hangover	Integration of transit services does not necessarily exist in certain areas	Lack of proactive transportation planning
Options in different modes for different needs	Land use reinforces transit-oriented development	Cost of living and transportation	Health impacts of non-electric modes	Safe design of bicycle facilities	Commuter rail	Higher-income communities have time and money to advocate	Lack of option to not have car	Automated vehicles	Migrations in and out of cities	Lack of support for transportation in legislature	Integration of schedules between providers	Reliability of public transit and paratransit
Transit = freedom of travel and access to recreation and services	Prioritizing parking over other modes	Affordability: its impact on transportation access	Culture of cars; cars are responsible for 40% of emissions		Modernization of transit		Impact of congestion on transit	Ridesharing	Unknown and unpredictable shifts in population	Implementation does not always reflect what the public wants or needs		Transit usually works well in bad weather
Reverse commuting	Lack of transit in growth areas	Lack of money relative to rising costs					Reduce travel in single occupancy vehicles (SOVs)	Partnerships with transportation network companies (TNCs) and private companies to improve accessibility	Not all qualify for paratransit who need it			Legibility and person-focused wayfinding
Accessing recreation via transit	Creation of density	Relative affordability of transit					Lack of transit access in some areas	Rise of TNCs impact older adults who rely on taxis				Climate change impacts and resiliency
Barriers to access transportation for people with mobility issues	Land development patterns	Bike-share memberships for low-income people					Communities underserved by transit (such as seniors, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and people of color) and new economic areas	Inaccessibility or legibility of new technologies and modes				
							Rising vehicle-miles traveled (from freight and SOVs)					
							Traffic					
							Focus on multi-modality					
							Private industry (such as healthcare and employers) providing transportation options					