REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Regional Transportation Advisory Council Meeting

November 13, 2013 Meeting

3:00 PM, State Transportation Building, Conference Room 4, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA

DRAFT -- Meeting Summary

Introductions

David Montgomery, Chair (Needham) called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Members and guests attending the meeting introduced themselves. (For attendance list, see page 9)

Chair's Report–*David Montgomery, Chair*

At the November 21, 2013 MPO meeting, MPO staff presented a summary review of several program activity plans to be conducted over the next federal fiscal year, including for the Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA and the certification activities leading to the preparation of the three main documents prepared by the MPO staff, namely: the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). A schedule of work activity for Federal Fiscal Year 2014 was also presented to the MPO.

Chair Montgomery awarded a Certificate of Appreciation to Steve Olanoff honoring his service as the Chair to the Advisory Council for four years and his 19 years of service as representative of the town of Westwood on the Advisory Council.

The Chair summarized for Advisory Council members the just concluded meeting of the Program Committee which is responsible for planning the Advisory Council's activities throughout the next year and encouraged all members to share their thoughts on such activities throughout the year.

S. Olanoff reported on the status of the Freight Action Plan to the October 17, 2013 MPO meeting in Framingham noting that the Advisory Council Freight Committee was very supportive of the plan as evidenced by submission of a formal comment on the Council's behalf. The next step will be for the staff to return to the MPO with a work program detailing activity to be performed on the Freight Action Plan.

Approval of Meeting Minutes of October 9, 2013 – *David Montgomery, Chair*

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes to the October 9, 2013, meeting with two revisions. The October 9, 2013, meeting minutes were approved as revised.

Measuring Advanced Transportation Technologies Impacts on Travel Behavior – *Jane Lappin, Volpe National Transportation System Center, USDOT*

Jane Lappin discussed Advanced Traveler Information Systems (ATIS) technologies and their effect on the trip decisions of people living in congested cities. Following passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the US Government invested in information systems technology infrastructure for the improvement of knowledge about the transportation system with a goal of improving air quality, mobility and system efficiency. ATIS was a key part of that investment strategy with the expectation that a large number of people would use the system to maximize the time and convenience of their travel choices.

Deciding who should pay for ATIS infrastructural investments with an as yet unknown demand is a significant challenge. Research was funded to learn insights into these investment costs, with the expectation that the private sector would begin developing services based on economic value, while the public sector would retain network management for promoting mobility.

Focus groups around the country are used to explore ATIS and understand the needs and behavior of drivers, transit riders, carpoolers, bicyclists and pedestrians in highly congested areas. People were asked how they get around, what they carry with them, whether they consult an information source and how they deal with traffic during their trips. From these background responses, the research team developed a profile of additional questions for use in a series of cities.

The first survey attempted to assess the availability and use of ATIS technology. Households were surveyed to determine the presence of home computers, Internet access, cellphones and smartphones. By 2011, 97% of households in Seattle had access to a home computer, Internet connectivity and a cellphone. The rate of growth in smartphone use went from 9% in 2003 to 54% in 2011. In 1997, only 37% of Seattle households had Internet access. These data show that people are becoming more sophisticated and are carrying their connectivity with them.

Radio predominates as a source for traffic information, however, mobile smartphone “apps” rival radio in some metro areas. Phone calls to 511 (to access traveler information) are declining as smartphone ownership increases. There has also been a huge increase in transit information available via the Internet.

The 2003 survey responses identified the most frequent ATIS users as male, 35-44 years old, college-educated, employed, regular commuters with incomes over $75,000. More recent surveys show an increase of radio use by the older travelers and mobile apps by the younger travelers. Overall trends in ATIS acquisition corresponds to peak years for employment and child-raising. Use of mobile apps dominates as a traffic information source through age 44; radio dominates the older age cohort.

Younger men and women are roughly the same in the use of ATIS technologies as are older men and women. The income profile of information acquisition shows that higher income families own and use more traffic information technologies.

Informed travelers are more likely to change their route based on an accident or construction delay when significant congestion is known. The most common changes people are likely to make are to their route or their departure time. Of the 42% who do consult information, 57% make no changes in travel time or mode in the presence of major delay, even in the presence of readily accessible transit alternatives.

Other considerations that affect people's use of ATIS data and its impacts on travel choices are the availability of alternate routes, the level of traffic congestion, policies and pricing and the quality and convenience of traveler information.

Good traffic and transit information is arguably a good public investment because it improves customer satisfaction, especially for transit riders. Although it may not increase mode shift in the moment, as new people enter the region, and as young people enter into employment using ATIS data, it is more likely that they will stay.

Discussion:

Several members expressed their interest in the likelihood of travelers changing their travel routes, particularly considering the constraints on availability of alternative routes and access to "last mile" and other trip-end programs. (DeMasi, Yardley).

J. Lappin emphasized that trip changes are based on a person's evaluation of available options. Changing routes might not be an alternative; many people just like to have the knowledge of the moment, or information on what they can expect ahead. When incorporating all of the information, drivers make changes to adjust their trips based on the trip requirements. Research reveals that if anyone has ever previously taken transit on a trip, they are more likely to make a mode shift from auto to transit when ATIS data suggests doing so, but if they have never taken a transit trip, they are less likely of ever making a shift to transit. She also agreed that constrained parking and last-mile issues make it very difficult to shift modes.

Other members expressed concern about the low level of mode shift to transit. (McQueen, Ernst).

J. Lappin added that we tend to be modally bound and that it takes a significant event to change trip mode. It does make sense to address the issue of making rational tradeoffs; if sitting still is going to get you there faster than making a route change, then you will not change.

Several members expressed interest in how travelers use innovative technology and tools such as smart phones and mobile apps to get travel information including transit and next-bus/train information. (Montgomery, McQueen, McGaw).

J. Lappin replied that there is not yet a huge use of active direction device services. More likely, people are looking to find out what is happening to cause congestion (e.g. weather, lane-closure, accident) when deciding to change their trip or to continue on the same route. J. Lappin confirmed that the data show young people use mobile apps for transit, that they feel better about their choice to take transit and that everyone has more technology options available now than in 2003 when the original survey was conducted.

A member asked if there were surveys conducted on use characteristics among people with disabilities and how they might use the technology. He also asked if higher income levels among travel information users might be because they have higher managerial positions, suggesting that they might be under less time pressure. (D. Ernst).

J. Lappin noted that a separate study was conducted specifically focused on people with physical mobility challenges. That data is not represented in the current presentation. She also noted that some people use traveler information just to gauge their time and use it more effectively.

A member noted that all the study locations were conducted in cities with milder climates and wondered if that would affect study outcomes. (M. Gowing).

J. Lappin said that typically, local people categorize “bad” weather as being relevant to their own locality. They behave differently in adverse conditions as determined locally. The conditions can include many climatic variables.

Several questions on logistics and survey methods were posed and answered. (Businger, Osman, Fisher, Gowing)

Rehabilitation of Callahan Tunnel Project – *John Romano, Massachusetts Department of Transportation*

John Romano, introduced Neil Boudreau, the Massachusetts State Traffic Engineer, and Eliza Partington, MassDOT, as members of the rehabilitation project team. The project is scheduled to last from December 27, 2013 to March 12, 2014, a total of 75 days. J. Romano explained that a non-accelerated construction project would have taken over a year and a half.

N. Boudreau explained that quick fixes to the tunnel are not viable solutions to the long-term maintenance problems the tunnel is now facing. The entire travel deck of the tunnel is in need of total replacement. He explained the traffic operations to be used in the construction process; full deck and cast-in-place gutter sections will be installed; wall panels will be installed as a routine nighttime maintenance activity.

The project was scheduled to include ongoing work activities and to minimize the impact on local traffic, including airport seasonal demands. Scheduled transit station improvements at Government Center were delayed to prevent the projects from overlapping.

Bidding for the project included building in incentive/dis-incentive clauses to encourage the most timely project completion date. In order to establish baseline data points, readings for noise, vibration and dust mitigation concerns were made.

The Callahan Tunnel carries 30,000 vehicles per day. AM peak traffic volume is below the capacity of the tunnel, but PM peak is more congested. Area-wide model runs by CTPS established origin and destination information on the tunnel users. This information helped to plan detour routes employed during construction. Bypass routes and eliminating bottlenecks in conjunction with signage and guidance techniques will be used. When needed, a police detail will be made available.

Improving mode shift to transit will be encouraged by deployment of an extra Blue Line train until 1 AM and one extra Silver Line bus per day. Logan Express will also adjust their bus schedules to meet changing demands.

E. Partington explained that tools and trip information will be available for travelers and that travelers should plan ahead, use web resources and be prepared for some delays. MassDOT has partnered with MassRides to get route disruption information to large businesses. An ongoing goal will be to disseminate clear information for people who need it. All logical communications tools will be used in the effort.

As part of an inter-agency effort, Massport will be conducting a mobile messaging campaign in addition to increased signage, an updated fact sheet and an enhanced website information campaign. Finishing touches on detour maps are now being completed.

The public can set up an email notification account by contacting callihan.tunnel@state.ma.us. This web page is the hub of all the information on tunnel communication and has tools and links for trip planning.

The MBTA will post new maps and schedules for any affected bus routes.

Discussion:

J. McQueen suggested that Massport could encourage the diversion of some airport traffic by encouraging the use of other regional airports like Worcester and Manchester.

F. DeMasi expressed a concern that trucks exiting onto diversionary routes will change the mix of vehicles using the roads and this will lead to a different dynamic with regards to traffic. He asked if the Haul Road will be open to general traffic and if existing rail alternatives might be developed.

N. Boudreau expressed that MassDOT has volume counts showing that there is already a mix of car and truck traffic on the Haul Road. MassDOT has been meeting regularly with the Mass Motorists Association keeping them informed concerning the project.

J. Businger noted that there is limited airport access for people coming from Brookline and Newton. He was reassured by N. Boudreau that there were several options available to those drivers. Storrow Drive access will connect to the Ted Williams Tunnel via the Allston Interchange and I-90 or continuing to I-93 and taking the South Boston/Ted Williams Tunnel exits.

R. McGaw suggested that the airport directional sign incorporate directionality into its graphic design. N. Boudreau stated that the new airport symbol is already being used.

Members' Announcements:

The Association for Public Transportation's Annual Benefit will be held Tuesday, November 19, at 7 PM at The Downtown Harvard Club. All are invited to attend.

Committee Reports: none.

Old Business: none.

New Business: none.

Adjourn:

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded at 4:40 PM. The motion passed, unanimously.

Attendance:

Agencies (Voting)

Executive Office of Elder Affairs	Ralph Edwards
EOHHS	Theodora Fisher
MassRides	Catherine Paquette

Agencies (* MPO & other non-voting)

MassDOT*	John Romano
MAGIC*	Franny Osman
FHWA*	Jane Lappin

Municipalities (Voting)

Acton	Mike Gowing
Belmont	Robert McGaw
Cambridge	Cleo Stoughton
Needham	David Montgomery
Wellesley	Frank DeMasi
Westwood	Steve Olanoff

Municipalities (Non-voting MPO Members)

Boston	Tom Kadzis

Citizen Groups

AACT	Mary Ann Murray
Association for Public Transportation	Barry Steinberg & Rick Arena
Boston Society of Architects	Schuyler Larrabee
Massachusetts Bus Association	Chris Anzuoni
MassBike	David Ernst
MASCO	Tom Yardley
MoveMassachusetts	Jon Seward
National Corridors Initiative	John Businger
Riverside Neighborhood Association	Marilyn Wellons
WalkBoston	John McQueen

Guests

Ed Lowney, Malden resident

Staff

Pam Wolfe, Manager, Certification Activities	David Fargen
Sean Pfalzer	Matt Archer