

Meeting Summary: Commuter Rail Communities Coalition Meeting

March 11, 2019
CIC 50 Milk Street, Boston, MA

Purpose of Event

The purpose of this event was to continue forming this new coalition of mayors and town managers/administrators of communities in the MBTA service area.

This event was sponsored by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the 495/MetroWest Partnership, and Transportation for Massachusetts, with additional support from TransitMatters and the MBTA Advisory Board. The meeting was hosted by Transportation for Massachusetts at CIC, 50 Milk Street in Boston.

Purpose of the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition

Excerpted from the CRCC Charter, as adopted March 11, 2019

Coalition Mission Statement

The coalition's mission is to coordinate advocacy for all communities that are served by commuter rail, and to support planning efforts to transform the rail network to be a critical part of a modernized transit system for Massachusetts.

Guiding Coalition Objectives

- Foster cooperative planning efforts among commuter rail municipalities.
- Support an agenda for action and advocacy on legislative, regulatory, programmatic, and budgetary issues, transportation visioning, and improvements to our region's rail system to maintain quality of life and economic prosperity.
- Advance innovative partnerships among municipalities, MassDOT, the MBTA and Regional Transit Authorities, the Commuter Rail Operator, Regional Planning Agencies, Transportation Management Associations, business, institutions, community-based organizations, and others to advance regional mobility, job access and overall connectivity.
- Address issues related to transit-dependent populations, such as youth, seniors, people without cars, and people with disabilities.

Discussion Summary

Paul Matthews, Executive Director of the 495 MetroWest Partnership, gave opening remarks and welcomed the Coalition.

Election of Coalition Cochairs

Marc Draisen, Executive Director of MAPC, with Josh Ostroff of Transportation for Massachusetts, led the election of coalition cochairs. Marc noted that staff were not able to find a meeting date where all six

candidates were available, so Mayor Burke had a prior conflict. All six candidates, or their proxy, were allowed to make a short statement before the election. The candidates were:

- Mayor Stephanie M. Burke, Medford
- Mayor Thomas McGee, Lynn
- Mayor Yvonne Spicer, Framingham
- Kevin J. Dumas, Town Manager, Mansfield
- Michael Herbert, Town Manager, Ashland
- Sarah Stanton, Town Manager, Bedford

The election used rank choice voting. Per the governing charter, there were separate elections for mayor and town manager cochairs, and voting was open to municipal managers, administrators and mayors, or their staff in their stead if specifically directed to participate and vote. As balloting commenced, Mayor Burke's proxy, Todd Blake, announced that she was endorsing the candidacy of Mayor McGee.

Mayor Thomas McGee of Lynn and Town Manager Sarah Stanton of Bedford were elected cochairs upon the first ballot.

Coalition Charter and Priorities for Action

Copies of the revised Charter and Priorities document, revised to reflect input from the coalition at their last meeting in October 2018, were distributed. Mayor Cahill (Beverly) requested that electrification be added to the first priority; concerned that while electrification of the entire rail system will likely take decades to implement, the change should start now within the next two to three years, which is the timeline noted in the priorities list. Steve Olanoff (Planning Board member representing Westwood) expressed a concern that there is an inequity in late night service, with northside lines having service after midnight but not southside lines.

The members discussed whether electrification should be added specifically; staff explained that priority #3 on climate change and greenhouse gas reductions was intended to encompass technological changes such as rail electrification. Other members felt that electrification should be included in priority #1 as electrifying the rail network arguably is the most transformative potential change to the existing rail system, though a concern was also raised about including electrification in the first priority possibly superseding other priorities.

There was additional discussion on whether the list of priorities was too long, whether certain priorities should be highlighted as the most important for the coalition, and the relative importance of electrification over other changes to the rail system. Paul Matthews and Marc Draisen both noted that the list of priorities was not in any ranked order, and pointed out that at the October meeting, it was decided that the list would evolve as the coalition progressed in its work. They also noted that further significant revisions to the priorities list should be first considered by the coalition cochairs.

Following his earlier points, Steve Olanoff requested that late night service be included in priority #10, adding this is needed to help with people having service to get home after sporting events and to help those who do not work more traditional 9 to 5 jobs.

The motion by Mayor Cahill, subsequent to a friendly amendment to add "including electrification" to the first priority, was seconded and adopted unanimously. The motion by Steve Olanoff to include "late night service" in priority ten was seconded and adopted, with one abstention by Peter Lowitt from Devens.

The Charter document, and the revised Priorities document reflecting the proposed revisions by Mayor Cahill and Steve Olanoff, were then adopted by the coalition.

Potential Meeting Dates, Meeting Locations, and Speakers and Topics

2019 potential meeting dates for the coalition are May, September and November. The Charter states that the coalition is to meet at least quarterly. Staff will work with the newly elected coalition cochairs on dates for these three meetings and then distribute calendar notices to the coalition. Some discussion ensued on potential scheduling issues in May, including town meetings and the development of the state budget.

To-date, the coalition meetings have rotated between Boston and an alternative location outside of Boston in a community with commuter rail service. Staff will send out a list of potential meeting topics and possible speakers. Coalition members will be requested to review the list (once distributed) and provide their input. Furthermore, if member municipalities are willing to host a coalition meeting, please let staff know.

Rail Vision Update -- Scott Hamwey, MassDOT Transit Planning

Scott Hamwey provided an update on the Rail Vision planning process. A copy of the presentation can be found on the CRCC webpage [here](#).

Scott discussed the seven rail service models under development and to be evaluated in Rail Vision. The modeling will include an evaluation with “unconstrained” parking, to see the potential for how many riders might want to access a station. The Rail Vision will also consider the effects of implementing a different fare structure in at least one alternative. Larger changes in the zonal fare structure will not be evaluated in Rail Vision, but staff will coordinate with the MBTA’s new automatic fare collection and fare structure study underway.

Scott shared that they are engaged in active outreach on the project, both by holding an Open House, and by conducting briefings for the 495/MetroWest Partnership, Brockton, and Cambridge, and subject to availability, the team was willing to conduct other briefings.

A question was raised as to what will be the next steps after Rail Vision and the recommendations. Scott noted that the final recommendations will be used to help form the MBTA’s capital improvement plan and help shape the next rail operating contract. The next contract may include a long-term concession, which would include capital improvements by the concessioner. Other discussion points included the possibility of federal funding and the need to evaluate parking appropriately, not at either extreme.

Marc Draisen asked if the study will include the latest land use plans in MAPC’s new MetroCommon regional plan update, and if the modeling in Rail Vision will include development proposed in Mass Builds. Scott responded that they are coordinating with MAPC staff on both of these components.

Other Business

Chris Dempsey, Director at Transportation for Massachusetts, thanked all involved on the T4MA, MAPC, and Partnership staff for their work putting together the meeting, as well as Marc Draisen and Paul Matthews for their leadership establishing the coalition. He thanked all in attendance for their engagement with the coalition, and noted that this coalition is to help all members advocate for their communities.

Cochair Mayor McGee thanked everyone for their participation, noting that the group can be a strong and important voice on commuter rail issues. He pointed out that opening the coalition to all Massachusetts municipalities in the MBTA service area was needed, because the coalition needs to hear from all of the communities that depend on commuter rail, including those who need first and last mile connections.

Dr. Tracy Corley from MassINC stated that her organization is studying transit-oriented development in Gateway Cities and that she will be reaching out to the members to host TOD events in their communities.

Wrap Up, Next Steps/Next Meeting

- The next meeting is intended to be held in May or June, location to be determined. A calendar invitation will be sent later.
- Members should review the adopted [Charter](#) and [Priorities](#) documents on the [CRCC webpage](#).

Attendees (based upon the sign-in sheets at the meeting):

Coalition Members and others:

Todd Blake, Town Engineer, Medford (representing Mayor Burke)
Michael Cahill, Mayor, Beverly
Tracy Corley, MassINC
Kevin Dumas, Town Manager, Mansfield
Jamie Errickson, Natick (representing Town Administrator Malone)
Nicole Freedman, Newton Director of Transportation Planning (representing Mayor Fuller)
Jamie Hellen, Assistant Town Administrator for Franklin (representing Town Administrator Nutting)
Michael Herbert, Town Manager, Ashland
Yvonne Spicer, Mayor, Framingham
Thatcher Kezer, Chief Operating Officer, City of Framingham
Sujatha Krishnan, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
Joseph Laydon, Town Planner, Grafton (representing Town Manager McInerney)
Peter Lowitt, Director, Devens Enterprise Commission
John Mangiaratti, Town Manager, Acton
Rob May, Director of Planning and Economic Development (representing Mayor Carpenter)
Thomas McGee, Mayor, City of Lynn
Robin Muksian, Town Manager, Stoughton
Steve Olanoff, Planning Board Member, Westwood (representing Town Manager Jailet)
Janet Pierce, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
Susanne Rasmussen, Cambridge Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning (representing City Manager DePasquale)
Claire Reynolds, Southborough EDC (representing Town Manager Purple)
Jake Sanders, City of Worcester (for City Manager Augustus)
Lucas Santos, Congressman Seth Moulton
Sarah Stanton, Town Manager, Bedford

Staff:

Chris Dempsey, T4MA
Marc Draisen, MAPC
Raylen Dziengelawski, T4MA
Matthew Falkenstein, MBTA Advisory Board
Ethan Finlan, TransitMatters
Paul Matthews, 495/MetroWest Partnership
Liam Monahan, 495/MetroWest Partnership
Josh Ostroff, T4MA
Travis Pollack, MAPC

*Commuter Rail Communities Coalition Meeting Summary
March 11, 2019*

Speakers:

Scott Hamwey, MassDOT
Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT
Michael Muller, MBTA
Kristine Wickham, VHB

Updated March 21, 2019

Please email Travis Pollack (tpollack@mapc.org) for changes or corrections to this document.