

Meeting Summary:

Commuter Rail Communities Coalition Meeting

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

Purpose of Event

The purpose of this event was to bring together mayors, town managers and town administrators of communities in the MBTA service area to receive updates on the commuter rail system, and coordinate advocacy to improve the region's transit network.

Specifically, the purpose of this meeting was to review the latest results from the MBTA's Rail Vision study, discuss the Toronto MetroLinx Peer System presentation to the MBTA, and discuss the Coalition's statements on Rail Vision and transportation revenue legislation.

This event was sponsored by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the 495/MetroWest Partnership, and Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA), with additional support from TransitMatters and the MBTA Advisory Board.

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

CRCC CoChair Mayor Thomas McGee welcomed the Coalition. The Mayor noted that he and CoChair Sarah Stanton have recently had discussions with Town Managers and other Mayors on the topics of the commuter rail system and increased revenues for transportation. The timing of the CRCC is important since legislation for new bonds for transportation projects, and bills addressing new revenue for transportation,

are now being debated at the State House. The CoChairs recently spoke at the gathering of Franklin County Town Managers and are willing to talk with any group, or to Town Manager, Administrators and Mayors directly.

The Mayor also noted that the delegation from Toronto recently visited the Fiscal Management Control Board (FMCB) and spoke about their transformation of their commuter rail network.

Update on Rail Vision (Scott Hamwey, MassDOT)

Scott presented the latest findings on the Rail Vision study. There are six alternatives under consideration:

- 1: Higher Frequency Commuter Rail
- 2: Regional Rail to Key Stations (Diesel)
- 3: Regional Rail to Key Stations (Electric)
- 4: Urban Rail (Diesel)
- 5: Urban Rail (Electric)
- 6: Full Transformation (15 minute service all day to all stations)

The alternatives are projected to have ridership that are between 19,000 (alt. 1) to 225,900 (alt. 6) new daily boardings over the 2040 No-Build alternative. The transformed commuter rail service would also increase annual bus/subway trips between 9,200 (alt. 1) and 122,400 (alt. 6). The ridership figures also are dependent on the fare structure assumed and whether parking access at stations was “unconstrained”. The increased annual operating costs would be between \$130M/year (alt. 1) and \$643M/year (alt. 6). Capital costs ranged from \$1.7B to 28.9B (all figures in 2020\$). Alts 3, 4, 5 included the South Station Expansion (SSX) while alt. 6 included the North-South Rail Link (NSRL).

A copy of Scott’s presentation for October 11, 2019 can be found on the [CRCC webpage](#).

N. Freedman asked if the study could look at cost per trip, and costs per trip length. R. May asked if the study considered the recent TransitMatters report that suggested that with more modest track and operations changes, the South Station Expansion would not be needed; Scott Hamwey noted that MassDOT had looked at this but did not agree with all of the assumptions and findings. B. Forman noted that Transit Oriented Development would be one way to ensure greater access to the stations without more parking; MassDOT agrees and noted that new mobility (ride-hail, e-scooters, etc.), shuttles, and regional transit also provide access. T. Pollack asked about the equity measures; Scott noted that the study found that none of the alternatives would have a disparate impact or disproportional burden (DI/DB) on populations under the Boston MPO staff analysis.

S. Rasmussen and others expressed concern that the FMCB would vote soon on the study when the Rail Vision Advisory Committee has not yet seen all of the findings. The Rail Vision Advisory Committee will be presented the findings, and will meet with the FMCB to discuss the draft findings before any FMCB action. MassDOT stated that the FMCB vote would likely not be on a single alternative but rather to provide staff direction on where to evaluate further and proceed with more immediate next steps. [Subsequent to the meeting, on November 4 the FMCB voted on a series of resolutions on Rail Vision, which can be found on the FMCB website.]

Toronto MetroLinx Summary of Presentation to the MBTA

A delegation from Toronto met with members of the CRCC and the Rail Vision Advisory Committee on September 23. A copy of the delegation’s presentation can be found on the [CRCC webpage](#) under the October 11, 2019 meeting summary. The Toronto system is investing \$15B in commuter rail as part of a \$60B transit investment. Toronto is approximately 5 years ahead of Boston in planning and designing their rail system transformation. Coalition members who attend the meeting on the 23rd noted that the Toronto

plan includes design-build-operate alternatives that will work with the private sector, with overall service level standards and goals with invitations for the private sector to determine how best to meet them. The Toronto plan also includes a business case for each project that is evaluated at regular design milestones to see how well the proposed project is meeting the overall transit system goals and objectives.

Discussion of Coalition Statements on Rail Vision and Transportation Revenue Legislation

Coalition members were presented with a draft statement on Rail Vision and Transportation Revenue. Members revised the statement to include the need for greater job access, equitable service, reduced carbon emissions and electrification of the rail network, and for a system to serve regional and reverse commuters. Members then voted unanimously to accept the revised statement. Members were also presented with a draft statement on revenue options; this was revised and subsequently approved after the meeting and signed by the Coalition CoChairs. These statements were sent to the FMCB. Both statements can be found on the [CRCC webpage](#).

Wrap Up, Next Steps/Next Meeting

Date and location of the next Coalition meeting is to be determined. A calendar invitation will be sent later.

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

Coalition Members:

Paul Chenard, Old Colony Planning Council
Joe Collins, Town of Norwood (representing Town Manager Tony Mazzucco)
Rich Prone, Town of Duxbury (representing Town Manager Connor Read)
Austin Cyganiewicz, Town of Acton
Stephanie Danielson, Town of Easton (representing Town Manager Rene Read)
Nicole Freedman, City of Newton (representing Mayor Ruthanne Fuller)
Robin Muksian Grimm, Town Manager, Stoughton
Jamie Hellen, Town Manager, Franklin
Thatcher Keezer, City of Framingham
Peter Lowitt, Devens Enterprise Commission
John Mangiaratti, Town Manager, Acton
Rob May, Brockton (representing Mayor Moises Rodrigues)
Thomas McGee, Mayor, Lynn (CoChair)
Steve Olanoff, Westwood (representing Town Manager Michael Jaillet)
Susanne Rasmussen, Cambridge (representing City Manager DePasquale)
Yvonne Spicer, Mayor, Framingham
Sarah Stanton, Town Manager, Bedford (CoChair)
Robert Weiss, Town of Millis (representing Town Manager Michael Guzinski)

Others:

Caitlin Allen-Connelly, A Better City
Ben Forman, MassInc.
Lauren Kinsella, Senator Timilty's Office
James O'Brien, Senator Timilty's Office
Taskin Sehitoglu, HNTB

Faith Simon, Rep. Claire Cronin's office
Jim Smith, private citizen
Alana Westwater, Senator Becca Raush's Office

Staff:

Chris Dempsey, T4MA
Marc Draisen, MAPC
Raylen Dziengelewski, T4MA
Ethan Finlan, TransitMatters
Josh Ostroff, T4MA
Travis Pollack, MAPC
Jeremy Thompson, 495/MetroWest Partnership
Lizzi Weyant, MAPC

Speakers:

Scott Hamwey, MassDOT
Alexandra Markiewicz, MassDOT
Michael Muller, MBTA

Updated November 18, 2019

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