State Implementation Plan Public Meeting

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and
the Massachusetts Department of Transportation

October 2, 2014 – 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM
October 6, 2014 – 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
One Winter Street
Washington Street Conference Center
Boston, MA

Attendees at October 2 Session:
Nancy Farrell, Moderator
David Mohler, Deputy Secretary for Policy, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
Nancy Seidman, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Waste Prevention, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
Stephen Woelfel, Director of Strategic Planning, MassDOT

Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Jerome Graf, DEP
Maureen Kelly, Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS)
Rafael Mares, Conservation Law Foundation (CLF)
Anne McGahan, CTPS
Sharon Webber, Director of Transportation Programs, DEP
Wig Zamore, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, Mystic View Task Force, and Somerville resident

Attendees at October 6 Session:

Nancy Farrell, Moderator
David Mohler, Deputy Secretary for Policy, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
Nancy Seidman, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Waste Prevention, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Christine Kirby, DEP
Jerome Graf, DEP
Sharon Weber, DEP
Natalie Raffol, CTPS
Fred Salvucci
John Vitagliano, Winthrop Resident
Lynn Weissman, Friends of the Community Path
Introduction

Moderator Nancy Farrell opened the annual meeting on the 2014 annual report on the State Implementation Plan (SIP). Nancy Seidman, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Waste Prevention, DEP, provided background on the overall regulatory context of the SIP and public process requirements.

This meeting addresses two documents, dated July 22, 2014, that were submitted by MassDOT to DEP: the annual update and status report on the SIP and a petition to delay the Green Line Extension project. These documents were submitted pursuant to subsection (7) and subsection (4) of 310 CMR 7.36, the Transit System Improvements regulation. Revisions to this regulation were effective December 2006. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved the revised regulation into the SIP in July 2008.

Under subsection (7) of the regulation MassDOT is required to submit an annual update and status report on all uncompleted SIP requirements and submit that report to DEP. DEP is then required to hold a public meeting and take public comments. Within 120 days of this meeting, MassDOT is required to summarize and respond to all comments. Within 60 days of MassDOT’s submission and response to comments, DEP is required to determine whether the public process requirements of the regulation have been met.

Subsection (4) of the regulation addresses project delays and requires interim emission offset measures of equal or greater air quality benefit during the delay. MassDOT has petitioned DEP to delay the Green Line Extension project beyond its required completion date of December 31, 2014. DEP is required to conduct a public review and release a finding on the petition thereafter, allowing sufficient lead time for MassDOT to implement interim offset measures.

Written testimony will be accepted until 5:00 PM on October 14, 2014. Written testimony may be sent to Sreelatha Allam, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, Room 4150, Ten Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116 or Sreelatha.Allam@state.ma.us; and Jerome Grafe, DEP, One Winter Street, Boston, MA 02018 or Jerome.Grafe@state.ma.us.

Ms. Seidman noted that DEP’s certification letter regarding MassDOT’s 2013 SIP report was issued on March 17, 2014. DEP determined that MassDOT met public process and annual reporting requirements of the regulation in 2013.

Status Report

David Mohler, Deputy Secretary for Policy, provided a summary of the status of the outstanding SIP commitments:
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Red Line - Blue Line Connector Project

MassDOT’s petition to remove the requirement to design the Red Line - Blue Line Connector project has been approved by DEP and is now being reviewed by the EPA for an amendment to the SIP.

Fairmount Line Improvement Project

MassDOT continues to provide mitigation for delays on the Fairmount Line Improvement project. A public meeting was held in September regarding the Blue Hill Avenue Station. MassDOT is moving forward on that portion of the project. The final design for the new station is expected by March 2015. Construction will begin in the fall of 2015 and it is anticipated that the station will open in 2017.

Green Line Extension Project

MassDOT has committed to fund the Community Path project as a part of the Green Line Extension project; the Community Path project is not a mitigation measure.

Phase 1 of the Green Line Extension project is now under construction. Phase 1 includes the Harvard Street Bridge in Medford and Medford Street Bridge in Somerville, as well as the demolition of a building at 21 Water Street in Cambridge. The first Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) contract was awarded to JF White/Skanska/Kiewit.

A $118 million contract to purchase 24 new vehicles for the Green Line was approved in May 2014. The vehicles will be delivered in 2017 and 2018.

MassDOT is anticipating a full funding grant agreement (FFGA) by the end of this calendar year, which would secure a federal commitment to fund 50% of the project’s $1.992 billion budget through the New Starts Program. MassDOT is working now with the Federal Transit Administration to finalize the project’s finance plan and New Starts application.

MassDOT has filed a petition to delay the Green Line Extension project. MassDOT must have mitigation measures in place by December 31, 2014, the time that the service on the new line was supposed to begin. The proposed mitigation measures are to add off-peak service to bus routes #80, 88, 91, 94, and 96; purchase 142 new hybrid-electric vehicles for THE RIDE; and provide Park & Ride spaces at the Beverly and Salem garages.

Oral Testimony – October 2 Session

Rafael Mares, Senior Attorney, Conservation Law Foundation

Mr. Mares complemented MassDOT on progress made on the Green Line Extension Project, including the advancements toward securing New Starts funding and the
inclusion of the Community Path project. He also expressed that he was pleased that the fair structure piloted on the Fairmount commuter rail line has been made permanent.

Mr. Mares raised an issue regarding the interim offset measures for the Green Line Extension project. First, he noted that the fuel economy figure used to calculate the air quality benefits of the measures should have been 42 miles per gallon (mpg) (as set by the EPA), rather than 47 mpg. He expressed appreciation that those air quality benefits are being recalculated now. Secondly, he noted that providing parking spaces at the Beverly and Salem garages does not qualify as an offset under the SIP regulations because the provision of those spaces has been a contractual obligation since 2012. As such, another offset measure should be put in place, he said.

Lastly, he urged MassDOT to continue reporting on the 1,000 New Parking Spaces requirement to make clear to the public which parking spaces will be counting toward the requirement. He noted that parking spaces in the new Beverly garage are counting toward the commitment, and that a possible hotel development near Wonderland Station in Revere could reduce the number of parking spaces available for transit riders.

The Conservation Law Foundation will also be submitting written testimony.

**Wig Zamore, Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, Mystic View Task Force, Somerville resident**

Mr. Zamore gratefully acknowledged the progress made on the Green Line Extension project and the Community Path project, noting the environmental benefits that these projects will produce for the community.

He then commented on the proposed interim offset measures for the Green Line Extension project. He expressed approval of the purchase of new vehicles for THE RIDE. He also noted that the addition of bus service may only be effective in providing environmental benefits if the buses are close to full occupancy. He suggested adding off-peak service on the CT2 bus route as it provides important service to the Longwood Medical Area, particularly for people who work later shifts in the hospitals.

Another alternative, he suggested, would be to expand the Hubway bike share system with consideration of synergies with the MBTA’s transit services. He noted that the Beacon Street/Hampshire Street corridor in Somerville is a particularly busy bicycling corridor. This would also support MassDOT’s mode shift goal, he noted.

Mr. Zamore then expressed concern about the expansion of the use of diesel-fueled transit vehicles, such as diesel multiple units (DMUs), to new corridors and densely populated areas. Diesel emissions, he noted, are the primary source of black carbon in the United States. He noted that black carbon is a major pollutant of concern relative to climate change and that it is a carcinogen that causes lung cancer.
He suggested that as the MBTA replaces its old locomotives with less polluting new ones, that it give priority to deploying the new locomotives on the Fairmount commuter rail corridor, particularly because of the environmental justice areas along the corridor and because of the dense-development that is expected to occur around the new stations. The Green Line corridor should be the next in priority, he said.

Mr. Zamore complemented the MassDOT staff who have been working on the Green Line Extension project.

**Oral Testimony – October 6 Session**

*Fred Salvucci*

Mr. Salvucci appreciates the moving forward of the Green Line Extension project and applauded the current administration for advancing the project. Despite this, Mr. Salvucci expressed concern about completion estimates identified in March. Due to “slippage,” he believes more mitigation is appropriate.

Mr. Salvucci praised the new The Ride vehicles, but noted that they needed to be replaced anyway. It is thus inappropriate to credit these improvements towards mitigation for delays in the Green Line Extension project. Vehicles should always be replaced early, rather than in later years, he said.

Parking spaces in Salem are also not appropriate to count towards mitigation, he said. These parking spaces are a separate project, developed in response to the agreement in 1990 between Mr. Salvucci (then state transportation secretary) and Doug Foy (then president of the Conservation Law Foundation) for various transit improvements to follow the Central Artery/Tunnel project.

One aspect of mitigation Mr. Salvucci finds appropriate is the CT4 urban bus connection between Kenmore Square, Kendall Square, Lechmere Station, and Sullivan Square. The frequency of Green Line trains to Lechmere should also be improved. A slight or great improvement in frequency and similarly frequent bus service to connect Kenmore Square, Kendall Square, and Sullivan Square would result in a substantial increase in ridership, he said. A student of Mr. Salvucci’s did a thesis project on the CT4 bus route, and with such a projected increase in ridership, Mr. Salvucci feels it has serious potential for mitigation.

Mr. Salvucci also referenced the private shuttle Easy Ride, which is commissioned by multiple Kendall Square employers, including MIT. A private shuttle could run from as far as Central Square to Lechmere, allowing a connection to the commuter rail at North Station. The CT4 bus could initially be contracted out to Easy Ride so that service would be on the ground by January 1, 2015. After an initial one to two years to get the service running and analyze the use, the service can be bid out. This option would get around the
MBTA’s constraints of limited drivers and vehicles and limited capacity to maintain the vehicles. Mr. Salvucci recommends that this option be adopted.

Mr. Salvucci then addressed the design of the Green Line Extension. He cited that MassDOT Secretary Richard Davey agreed with Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone to have the Green Line Extension designed to connect Innerbelt Road over to North Point Boulevard. This connection requires a bridge, as the Fitchburg commuter rail line is in the path. This bridge would make service at Lechmere Station and Sullivan Square more effective. Currently, Lechmere is cut off by McGrath Highway. The bridge would serve as a mitigation effort until Lechmere is relocated. Mr. Salvucci clarified that the mitigation should not just include designing the bridge, but building it as part of the Green Line Extension project. He believes that building the bridge and Green Line as one project would be most effective, as different contractors would not be in each other’s way.

Mr. Salvucci noted that community groups have suggested that the proposed extension to the Community Path be included as part of the project. He believes the project will have little air quality value, but that if this connection is not built now, it will be very difficult to build in the future. He also mentioned that two tracks are needed on Grand Junction, not just one as some in Cambridge argue. Mr. Salvucci believes constructing the path as well as two tracks in in this section now is vital, or else the opportunity will be lost.

Another comment Mr. Salvucci expressed about the Community Path is that it needs to be lowered to a 25 ft. bridge, rather than 45 ft. bridge, as only serious bikers will be able to cross at such a steep height.

Regarding the Red Line - Blue Line Connector project, Mr. Salvucci believes that it is a mistake to drop this project. He also believes the state must commit to build, not just design the project, as design does not have mitigation value. He urges that the construction bid be taken for design/build. He sees the project being integrated into the construction of Longfellow Bridge and with the Mass Eye & Ear garage. This presents an opportunity to orderly construct all projects.

Mr. Salvucci then cited several reasons as to why this connection is needed:

1. The Silver Line is at full capacity and will worsen as the Innovation District grows. Logan Airport will increasingly rely on the Blue Line. A report by Mr. Salvucci’s students showed that the Blue Line is the best way to reach the airports from all directions, except from the south on the Red Line.

2. Making East Boston one stop away from Charles Street, MGH and Kendall Square greatly increases the transit-oriented development (TOD) potential in East Boston. He cited Assembly Square as a TOD model. The connection would dramatically change the potential for development at Wonderland or Suffolk Downs.

3. The Blue Line connection can be used as mitigation for the delays in the Green Line Extension project. The connector will relieve transfer congestion between Government Center and Park Street.
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4. The Blue Line is the only line operating below capacity, meaning it is the only one that stands to receive better ridership in the near term if it is properly connected. This is the best opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Mr. Salvucci then discussed the greater implications of air quality, referencing agreements made during the Central Artery/Tunnel project. He believes that with new congestion caused by the development of the Innovation District, more measures for analyzing air quality must be used, not simply vehicle miles travelled (VMT) or vehicle hours travelled.

Mr. Salvucci will also submit written comments.

John Vitagliano – Winthrop Resident

Mr. Vitagliano supports the Red Line - Blue Line Connector project and opposes the Green Line Extension project. He first expressed concern regarding the official notice of the hearing, stating that there should have been a reference to the proposed removal of the Red Line/Blue Line Connector project in the notice. He believes more people from the community would have come to the meeting if they were aware this project was being discussed.

Mr. Vitagliano’s main argument was that the Red Line – Blue Line Connector would open up the Cambridge job market to residents of the North Shore. Without this connector many residents have to take automobiles to reach these jobs. The connector would result in a regional benefit, opening up Boston and Cambridge to the communities whose residents now commute along Route 1, by making transit more attractive. Mr. Vitagliano also agrees with Mr. Salvucci that the connector would decongest transfer traffic at Park Street.

Mr. Vitagliano expressed concern that not completing the connector would lead to questions about the state’s credibility. The connector was originally proposed as part of mitigation for the Central Artery/Tunnel as a way to transform the transportation network for Massachusetts, and following through with MassDOT’s recommendation may make the public look negatively upon the future public commitments to transportation.

Mr. Vitagliono will also submit written comments.

Lynn Weismann -- Friends of the Community Path

Ms. Weismann’s first comment was regarding the meeting notice, which was posted online. She only found the notice as a scanned PDF, which made it difficult to forward and to copy and paste from. She also did not find it on the website, only as a stand-alone link. This could partially account for the low attendance at the meeting, she said.
Ms. Weismann also provided a comment on the process, stating her belief that the October 14th deadline for comments was not long enough.

Ms. Weismann is concerned about the parking lots in Salem and Beverly as counting toward mitigation for delays in the Green Line Extension project, as those parking spaces would have been built regardless. The spaces also do not benefit Somerville, which has the most air quality impacts during this mitigation period. She also believes the hybrid vehicles for The Ride were going to be purchased anyway, just at a later date.

Ms. Weismann suggested increasing bus service to Assembly Square, mentioning that MBTA bus route 90 does not run very often. Service should cater to peak hours and shopping hours.

Regarding the Red Line – Blue Line Connector project, Ms. Weismann proposed constructing a tunnel that could serve as a walkway with room left for train service. This would alleviate cost concerns by eliminating the need to buy new trains in the immediate future.

Ms. Weismann believes that mitigation efforts should be increased now that the final completion date for the Green Line Extension is in the summer of 2021. She is excited about the Community Path, but afraid that the new administration may not be committed to constructing it. Ms. Weismann proposed codifying the path as a mitigation project. She noted that the path would be a permanent project, which may be more desirable for mitigation than temporary projects. The path also crosses through environmental justice neighborhoods and is connected to 11 other paths, resulting in 48 miles of contiguous path network. This provides regional connectivity through some of the densest areas of Massachusetts.

An MAPC study from June 2013 estimates 3 million trips per year on the Community Path as well as significant reductions in VMT and carbon dioxide emissions, the equivalent of moving 50,052 cars of the road. Ms. Weismann believes Somerville needs off-road pathways, as it has the most square miles of roadway than any other community. The path is vital to providing a place away from particulates for people walking and biking.

Ms. Weismann is also interested in the creation of a spur from the Community Path into the Twin Cities Plaza area. The spur could potentially connect to the Grand Junction trail. The Twin Cities area currently lacks connection to the Community Path as residents of East Cambridge and Somerville have to go to Lechmere or up and across McGrath Highway to Washington Street. Creating this connection could be mitigation for the delays in the Green Line Extension project and in the future promote mode shift by creating a continuous path. Ms. Weismann would also like to see the path connect to the refrigerator building in this section.

Friends of the Community Path will be submitting written comments.