



Committee Update

Notes from Transportation Committee Conference Call

To: NEC Transportation Committee Members

Members of the New England Council's Transportation Committee held a conference call on February 25th and discussed Committee priorities for the year. Committee Chairman Steve Silveira welcomed the Members to the conference call.

Chief among the topics discussed was the need for a reauthorization of the nation's surface transportation law (MAP21). The highway bill will expire at the end of September and Congress will have to pass new legislation to carry-out the various federal highway, bridge, auto safety, transit, etc. programs. Some discussion ensued about the likelihood of a long-term bill passing versus a short-term extension, and the certainty for project planning and financing that a long-term bill would ensure. In addition, some conversation took place on the shortfall in the highway trust fund that is expected to occur as soon as August and the impact that would have on construction projects. The general agreement from the Committee was to support a long-term highway bill and express that support in a letter to Senators and Representatives. A letter will be drafted by Council staff (Peter) for delivery prior to the New England Council's annual March event in Washington.

Members of the Committee also raised the issue of whether the Committee could be supportive of a position on public-private partnerships (P3s). Some discussion ensued on P3 activities that are currently occurring in Massachusetts as a result of MassDOT's special P3 panel, including a new Cape Cod bridge proposal and rest-stop upgrades. It was noted by Council staff that Rep. Mike Capuano is the ranking member on a special, 6-month temporary P3 panel in Congress, and that the panel will likely put together a "findings and recommendations" document around July. A recommendation was made to have Mr. Capuano speak to the Transportation Committee at the time this document is released, and Peter indicated a preliminary invitation had been discussed with Mr. Capuano's staff. Committee member John Pourbaix noted that the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) would be holding a workshop in mid-July on the topic of public-private partnerships.

Members were updated about a Committee meeting to be held in conjunction with the New England Council's annual March event in Washington, D.C. That meeting is scheduled for 11:00 a.m. in the House of Representative's Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee. At that time, Members will be briefed by Ms. Murphie Barrett, Staff Director for the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, about the subcommittee's plans for a highway bill and other transportation topics. This subcommittee is generally responsible for planning and development and construction of roads and transit facilities

and the development of national surface transportation policy. It has oversight authority over a number of agencies, including the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. A notice will be sent to Committee members about this meeting.

Besides hearing from Representative Capuano, Members of the Committee also expressed an interest in having a meeting with other members of the congressional delegation, including Ways and Means Committee members, Rep. Richard Neal and Rep. John Larson. Rep. Jim McGovern was also seen as a potential speaker.

Finally, the conference call concluded with a discussion led by Committee Chair Steve Silveira, who was asked about the Project Selection Advisory Council (PSAC) to which he and John Pourbaix have been appointed in Massachusetts. As noted in earlier emails, the PSAC is charged with “developing a uniform project selection criteria to be used in the development of a comprehensive state transportation plan.” Steve discussed the process for the PSAC and informed Members that a meeting was slated for March 13th in Worcester. Steve indicated that Members could contact him directly for additional information about the PSAC.

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