

MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING
MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 9, 2020
Meeting Held Online through GoToMeeting.com - Hosted by the MRPC

J. Wyman called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

I. Introduction

Members

Jon Wyman, Westminster; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Shaun Copeland, Ayer; Alice Livdahl, Hubbardston; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; Matthew Brenner, Lunenburg; Janet Tice, Shirley; Richard Maki, Sterling; Elizabeth Faxon, Townsend

Ex-Officio and Organizations

Laura Hanson, MassDOT District 2; Paula Simmons, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; Ann Sullivan, MassDOT District; Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Richard Liberatore, Fitchburg Airport Commission

Non-Members

Steven Tyler, Howard Stein Hudson

Staff

Brad Harris; George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty; George Kahale; Jonathan Vos

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

B. Harris provided members with a quick overview of how to access all of the handouts for the meeting.

III. Approval of July 8, 2020 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the July 8, 2020 MJTC Meeting Minutes as presented. Consensus was given to accept the minutes as presented.

IV. Community Master Plans & the Transportation Element Officers

— *Presentation by Jonathan Vos, MRPC Regional Planner*

B. Harris introduced Jonathan Vos a Regional Planner with the MRPC who works in the Community Development Department. He has put together a presentation on Master Plans and how the MRPC can assist a community with the development of such a plan:

J. Vos then proceeded to review the various elements of a Master Plan and how a community can address them and what the MRPC can do to assist. According to Mass General Laws a Master Plan is defined as a "statement.... that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality."

The law states that the plan shall be included a Goals and Policies Statement; chapters on Housing, Transportation, Economic Development, Natural Resources, Open Space, and Community Services. It should also include a Land Use Plan; and an Implementation Plan. The Plan serves as a plan for the orderly expansion of

municipal services. the community's plan of action for the next decade and the foundation for your town's zoning scheme.

J. Vos then discussed in more detail the Transportation Element of the Plan. This chapter will discuss items such as private automobiles, public transportation, bicycling, and pedestrian modes of travel. The existing conditions of the roadway system should be reviewed by looking at such data as traffic counts and crash incidents. From this data, proposals and recommendations can then be made taking into consideration other issues such as open space, an interconnected bicycle and pathway system within the Town and connections to other adjoining towns and the region.

The role of a Regional Planning Agency in the Plan development can include information such as Journey to Work data from the U.S. Census, the existing roadway system and its functional classification, traffic counts at numerous locations in the municipality, crash statistics, pavement conditions, public transit systems, and bicycle and pedestrian data.

Finally, a community should remember that a Master Plan is only as good as the commitment to implementing the Plan's recommendations.

Funding for a Master Plan was then discussed.

V. Travel by Tourism Study

– Presentation of Final Report

S. Bean shared with the members a PowerPoint presentation on the finished work program task entitled "Travel by Tourism. She stated that this study analyzed the top tourism sites throughout the region, focusing heavily on the cities of Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster. Each site examined shows the accessibility available for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. Transportation gaps were inventoried and potential future TIP eligible projects were then identified. The following activities or steps were undertaken as part of the development of this program:

- Identify top tourism sites
- Identify and analyze transportation options within ½ mile of each site
- Identify and analyze transportation gaps
- identify potential future TIP eligible projects

There were 88 sites identified regionwide. Sidewalks, bike lanes, transit bus and commuter rail infrastructure were used for the analysis. The presentation focused on the cities of Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster. Each were shown on a map with the identified tourist attractions as well as the infrastructure available. The final steps included analysis of the transportation gaps, community recommendations, TIP eligible projects and potential funding sources.

During the presentation, S. Bean lost connection and B. Harris covered the remaining slides.

Key findings included:

- Small number of existing bicycle infrastructure yet lots of potential for implementation (low cost)
- Many gaps in existing sidewalks networks
- Many communities chose locations within their town centers where there are often constraints
- Potential to incorporate connections within existing projects

A question was asked on how a community provided input to the identification of attractions for the study. S. Bean indicated that at the start we reached out to local planning boards and departments for input. We also

followed up with them as we went along. The final report will be made available online in the near future so communities can again look over what was done.

VI. Contract Status Reports

a. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) & Regional Transit Authority (RTA)

G. Kahale informed the members that work continues on the Depot Square pedestrian plaza in Ayer. Most of the work has been completed except landscaping, which should be completed within the next few weeks, Design of the bathroom facility and the waiting shelter is underway and MART anticipates the completion of the project by the end of the year. A grand opening will occur once everything is completed. Work is also being done to improve parking at the Shirley Commuter Rail Station.

J. Wyman asked if there were any projects coming up. G. Kahale indicated that the Shirley Station improvements will be very involved.

b. MassDOT 3C

S. Bradbury gave a brief presentation on the Shared Streets & Spaces Grant Program. On June 10th, MassDOT released the Shared Streets & Spaces grant program, a municipal grant program focused on quick-build projects that can bring meaningful benefits to communities as they recover from COVID-19. The pandemic has placed a premium on the need for expanded outdoor spaces for people walking, bicycling, and using bus transit, as well as the need for dining and commerce to relocate outdoors. The program provides \$5,000 to \$300,000 grants to quickly launch or expand improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street and off-street parking in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce in communities. The program runs through September 29th and has an original budget of \$5 million. S. Bradbury lost her connection and A. Sullivan continued with the presentation.

Some examples of Eligible Project include:

- Shared Streets and Spaces - Support for increased rates of walking and/or biking by increasing safety and enabling greater physical separation on re-imagined sidewalks, streets, and parking and/or travel lanes
- Outdoor Dining and Commerce - Safe and functional environments for curbside or sidewalk retail, dining, and civic programming
- Better Buses - Better facilities for bus transportation
- Safe Routes to School - Creating safer routes and spaces for children and parents to walk or bicycle to school (and childcare and programs for children and youth), and for safe drop-off and pickup
- Innovation - Any other project types that reimagine and repurpose streets, sidewalks, curbs, and parking areas for safer walking, biking, retail, dining, and/or other civic purposes will be considered

B. Harris also added that the program overview sheet is listed in the handouts folder on the MRPC website. S. Bradbury added that there have been 5 projects funded within the Montachusett Region. They are Gardner – adding outdoor dining & commerce space; Fitchburg – shared streets space in the Riverfront Park area; Serling on Boutelle Street – Safe Routes to School improvements & outdoor dining options in the town center; and Shirley – Safe Routes to School shared use project from the Middle School to the Ayer/Devens town line.

J. Wyman asked if the projects have been awarded as they've been submitted. A. Sullivan indicated that yes, they were. They're also paid up front so it's not a reimbursement process.

B. Harris stated that yesterday the MRPC met with students from WPI to discuss a project that they will be working on for us as part of their senior program. This will be ongoing throughout the program year. There are

also two articles listed in the handout folder – an article from the Sentinel & Enterprise regarding the Water Street bridge in Fitchburg and the other is a press release from the City of Fitchburg regarding the Franklin Road safety improvements through the Safe Routes to School Signs & Lines program.

VII. Administrative Matters

- Next MJTC Meeting

B. Harris stated that in the past the MJTC has normally not met in October unless there was a pressing matter. He also specified that at the MPO meeting next week MART will be giving a presentation and indicated that in October they might be needing a TIP amendment which would mean that they would look for endorsement in November. We typically use the MJTC meeting as an opportunity for public comment. Our November meeting is currently scheduled for 11/11 which falls on Veterans Day. A discussion took place and it was decided to hold the next MJTC meeting the day before on 11/10 at 2:30pm.

The members reached consensus to cancel the October MJTC meeting and to meet next in November on Tuesday November 10th at 2:30pm.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:

- 9 9 20 Agenda
- 7 8 2020 MJTC minutes
- Master Plan - Transportation Overview
- MJTC 9_9 Tourism Update
- Shared Streets and Spaces Program
- Shared Streets Overview 8.31.20
- Fitchburg DPW Release 7 22 2020
- Fitchburg Sentinel Article
- 2020 Meeting Calendar