

# **MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING**

**MINUTES OF July 13, 2022**

**Meeting Held Online through GoToMeeting.com - Hosted by the MRPC**

D. Kilhart, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

## **I. Introduction**

### **Members**

Roger Hoyt, Ashburnham; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Marc Morgan, Athol; Robert Swartz, Gardner; Tim Kilhart, Harvard; Janet Tice, Shirley; Richard Maki, Sterling; Jeff Bennett, Templeton; Veronica Kell, Townsend; Beth Faxon, Townsend

### **Ex-Officio and Organizations**

David Kline, The ARC of Opportunity; Travis Condon, North Central MA Chamber of Commerce; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3

### **Non-Members**

Brian Doheny, Ashburnham; Amanda Reid, Lunenburg; William Caldwell, Sterling; Kate Hodges, Lancaster

### **Staff**

Brad Harris; George Snow; Sheri Bean

## **II. Public Comments**

There were no comments at this time.

## **III. Approval of June 8, 2022 Minutes**

A motion was made to accept the June 8, 2022 MJTC Meeting Minutes as presented. Consensus was given to accept the minutes.

## **IV. Election of Officers**

D. Kilhart read out the nominees for office as follows: Chair – Dick Kilhart of Ayer; Vice Chair – Travis Condon of the North Central MA Chamber of Commerce; and Secretary – Robert Swartz of Gardner.

B. Harris informed the members that originally the Nominating Committee presented two nominees for the position of Secretary, Robert Swartz of Gardner, and Guy Corbosiero of Winchendon. After discussion with G. Corbosiero, he asked that his name be withdrawn. This leaves us with one nominee for each position.

D. Kilhart asked for floor nominations for any of the positions from the MJTC members. There were no floor nominations.

B. Harris indicated in the past when there was only one candidate for each position, a motion would be made to cast one ballot for the slate on behalf of the entire MJTC.

A motion was made to cast one ballot for the slate of officers as presented on behalf of the MJTC members. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

The MJTC officers for the next year are: Chair – Dick Kilhart of Ayer; Vice Chair – Travis Condon of the North Central MA Chamber of Commerce; and Secretary – Robert Swartz of Gardner

## **V. FFY 2022-2026 Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

- Discussion on Potential Adjustment & Amendment #6 to the Transit Element

B. Harris presented to the MJTC a proposed Amendment/Adjustment that will be discussed at the MPO meeting next week. MART is proposing cost changes to seven projects and the addition of one (1) project to the FFY 2022 Transit Element. These cost changes are due to bid estimates and scope changes that have either reduced or increased the original estimated figures. The added project is based upon a recent award for five (5) new paratransit vehicles for MART through the Mobility Assistance Program. The awards for this program are not made until the middle of the year and therefore must be added to the TIP at that time.

Typically, when changes are made to the TIP, we need to determine if the proposed change is a major or minor action. We define a major action in the TIP as the addition or deletion of a project or a cost change of greater than 10% plus or minus. Based on this determination, a major change would then trigger the use of the TIP Amendment process. This would require that a formal notice be made of the proposed action and that it be formally announced, published, and put out for a 21-day public review and comment period. Upon completion of the comment period, the MPO would review any comments received and decide whether to formally endorse the Amendment. If the action is considered as minor, then the TIP Adjustment procedure can be used. The Adjustment process simply requires that the MPO acknowledges the Adjustment and considers it a minor action. No formal comment period is required.

The proposed actions by MART will require a combination of these two processes. An Adjustment can be made for three (3) of the proposed project cost changes because they are less than a 10% change. The remaining four (4) project cost changes are greater than 10%, which requires a TIP Amendment. In addition, the newly added vehicle purchase project also triggers the need for a TIP Amendment. Therefore, based on this information provided, the MPO will need to release a TIP Amendment #6 for a 21-day public review and comment period. B. Harris stated that this information is being presented to the MJTC now because we previously decided that there would not be an August meeting.

A question was asked how an amendment would be published. B. Harris stated that we post the Amendment and the comment period information on the MRPC website, and we also send out a mass email to all of the individuals on our public outreach lists.

## **VI. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update**

- Vision Statement and Survey Review and Discussion

S. Bean reviewed the RTP development schedule to highlight that at this meeting we planned to discuss the Vision Statement for the RTP. The current Vision Statement from the 2020 RTP was shared with the MJTC members as well as sample statements from other RPAs plans. Staff has drafted a revision of the current statement that attempts to be shorter and more to the point but still capture the outlook we wish to see for the region. We also want to try to maintain a link to prior vision statements in order to have some continuity. We are asking members to look over the statement and to provide us with feedback on any possible changes.

A statement was made that we should restore to the statement the wording “while simultaneously promoting a sustainable, healthy, livable and environmentally sensitive region.” Economic development is mentioned but we should maintain that balance with a healthy and livable region.

It was stated that there does not need to be a final decision at this meeting. We would like anyone with comments or ideas to send them to us for review and we will come back at a future meeting with an updated statement.

A question was asked regarding the timing of this statement and the RTP. S. Bean indicated that the prior RTP was endorsed by the MPO in 2019 but identified as the 2020 RTP. This new RTP will be called the 2024 RTP but will need to be endorsed next year in 2023.

A question was asked on how to find a copy of the statement. B. Harris indicated that all of these meeting handouts can be found through the MRPC website by looking for the meeting announcement on the calendar of events.

A statement was made that there should be some reference to an expansion and refinement of the multimodal transportation system. It should be part of the RTP to try to expand the existing systems for all users and into areas where there may be a need.

S. Bean then reviewed the draft of a public survey on transportation issues. This draft is based on a past survey in order to maintain a link and to allow us to see how opinions may have changed since the last RTP. In addition, we have added some questions regarding pre and post pandemic travel. She then proceeded to review the survey questions. If any members have any suggestions for revisions to the survey, please let us know before the next meeting.

T. Condon offered the assistance of the North Central MA Chamber of Commerce for distribution of the survey.

## **VII. Safe Streets for All Grant Program**

### **– Review of Grant Program Requirements**

B. Harris reviewed the requirements and application process for the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) federal grant program with the MJTC members. He indicated that the MRPC is looking to submit an application for the development of a Safety Action Plan for the region. The successful development of an Action Plan will allow various entities, including cities and towns, to apply for implementation grants in future years of the program. Approximately \$1 billion is available in this year's program. He indicated that staff would survey our communities to determine who might be interested in being part of this application or who may be applying on their own. We will then be putting the application together online as required. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is available on the MRPC website for interested individuals to download.

D. Kilhart stated that the survey will answer the question of if there were any communities with an Action Plan. Also, in his opinion, a community may have a better chance of receiving funding as part of a regional application that includes 22 communities.

A question was asked related to potential increases in heavy truck traffic in the region and in particular their impacts to the small streets and neighborhoods that make up a majority of the region. B. Harris indicated that that would be a discussion to have with a consultant that would be hired if the application is successful. It is a legitimate point to address in the plan and should be brought up when the to be determined consultant reaches out to talk with our communities.

D. Kilhart stated that an issue that the communities need address is how to make up that required 20% match for the grant. Some of the smaller communities may be pressed to fulfil that need.

B. Harris then reviewed with the members information related to another federal grant program titled "Reconnecting American Communities" (RCA). The NOFO for this program is also on the MRPC website for any interested party. The program seeks to fund "projects that reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity, including mobility, access, or economic development." This program has an October 13<sup>th</sup> application deadline. Funds are available for the development of a planning grant that addresses this issue in a community. There are also

capital improvement funds that can be applied for. As with other grants, there is a 20% local match that needs to be met. We urge our communities to look this program over as there may be a project that meets the requirements that can possibly be funded. We are available to assist in the process if asked.

### **VIII. Contract Status Reports**

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Regional Transit Authority (RTA)

B. Harris stated that there is nothing new to report on the transit side. Staff is still working on the ADA bus stop review project for the Gardner fixed route system.

- MassDOT 3C

B. Harris stated the next MPO will be next week on June 20<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm. The major action item will be the discussion of the proposed FFY 2022 TIP Amendment #6.

We hope to have a consultant onboard by next week to assist us with the traffic count program. We have a draft contract over to them for their review.

Three handouts for discussion:

First from MassDOT for the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study newsletter from June. There will be a virtual Public Information Meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. At the meeting, the study team will share an overview of the study's background, review the existing conditions analysis, and garner feedback on issues and opportunities along the corridor. Further information on this meeting as well as how to register can be found on the handout as well as on the MRPC website under Announcements.

The second and third handouts are both related to a MA DEP grant program. The first is an announcement newsletter and the second is an Application Guidance and Grant Requirements guide. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced a new funding opportunity for private, public, and non-profit entities to replace eligible diesel vehicles and equipment with zero emission technologies. Through the federal Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) program, Massachusetts is conducting a competitive electric-only Solicitation with an application deadline of 5 PM **August 24, 2022**. This is an early replacement program designed to accelerate the retirement of less efficient and more polluting diesel vehicles and equipment. Eligible diesel vehicles, engines and equipment include, but are not limited to School Buses, Transit Buses, Medium-duty or heavy-duty trucks, and Non-road engines, equipment, or vehicles. MassDEP has approximately \$1.88 million available for this new program and it is open to any entity, public or private, with an eligible vehicle, engine, or equipment to replace. Equipment eligibility is based on criteria listed in the 2021 DERA Guide.

A quick reminder to those here to return their appropriate MEMBER Appointment forms from BoS or Mayors and Planning Boards. Notices went out in early June, please check with appropriate personnel.

The next scheduled MJTC Meeting is scheduled for September 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 pm. A question for the MJTC is whether to meet on August 10<sup>th</sup> due to TIP Amendment #6 discussed earlier. If this is not an issue, the next meeting will be on September 14<sup>th</sup>, followed by meetings on November 9<sup>th</sup> and January 11, 2023.

After discussion by the members present, it was decided that an August meeting would not be needed.

### **IX. Administrative Matters**

- Next MJTC Meeting

B. Harris stated that the next meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2022 at 2:30 pm.

**X. Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

**DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:**

- 7 13 2022 Agenda
- 6 8 2022 MJTC minutes
- 4 7 13 2022 MJTC Ballot
- 5 Summary Adjustment Amendment #6 7 20 2022
- 6 RTP Draft Development Schedule
- 6 RTP Draft Survey
- 6 RTP Visioning Session
- 7 RCA Press Release 6 30 2022
- 7 Reconnecting Grant NOFO Highlighted 7 13 2022
- 7 SS4A FAQs 7 13 2022
- 8 MassDEP DERA Guidance and Grant Requirements 2022
- 8 MassDEP Emission Reduction Program 2022
- 8 Northern Tier June Newsletter