

MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2023
Meeting Held Online through GoToMeeting.com - Hosted by the MRPC

T. Condon, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

I. Introduction

Members

Roger Hoyt, Ashburnham; Brian Doheny, Ashburnham; Jackie Doherty, Athol; Nicholas Erikson, Fitchburg; Liz Murphy, Fitchburg; Tim Kilhart, Harvard; Janet Tice, Shirley; Richard Maki, Sterling; Robert Szocik, Templeton; Veronica Kell, Townsend; Beth Faxon, Townsend; Tracy Murphy, Westminster

Ex-Officio and Organizations

Travis Condon, North Central MA Chamber of Commerce; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Bob Breger, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; George Kahale, MART; Neil Angus, Devens.

Non-Members

Amanda Reid, Lunenburg; Susan Templeton, Sen. Cronin's Office; Tom Bigelow, Green International.

Staff

Brad Harris; George Snow; Brian Doherty

II. Public Comments

There were no comments at this time.

III. Approval of January 11, 2023 Minutes

Consensus was given to accept the minutes for January 11, 2023 as presented.

IV. Montachusett Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

- Discussion on Draft LEP
- MJTC Recommendation to the Montachusett MPO

B. Harris presented to the members present a draft document known as the Montachusett Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan for the MPO. This plan was presented and discussed with the MPO at their meeting on January 18th. At that time the MPO voted to release the document for a 21-day public review and comment period. That comment period began on January 24th and will run until the close of business on February 13th. The document and any comments received will then be brought forward to the MPO at their February 15th meeting next week for formal action. The last LEP was conducted in 2019 and made use of census data from the 2015 ACS 5-year estimates. For this update, staff used data from the 2021 ACS 5-year estimates. In the 2021 data, language categories and breakdowns differ from the 2015 categories so a one to one comparison could not be conducted. The update was also part of staff work on the 2022 Title VI Annual Report that was prepared and submitted to MassDOT. B. Harris then went on to discuss various parts of the LEP with the members present.

A question was asked on how a LEP person would be notified of this document. B. Harris reviewed the various outreach efforts of the MRPC and the translation work done for individual task and study announcements, the translate option available on the MRPC website and the mass mailing lists maintained by the staff. It is hoped that through these efforts, LEP individuals will at least become aware of what we are doing and reach out to us

to request additional language assistance. We also encourage all members and guest to notify us of any group, individual or organization that we could add to our outreach lists. We also maintain in our conference rooms at the MRPC, notices of individual rights and protections in the three LEP identified languages, outside of English, for attendees to see and read.

A comment was made that in regard to the issue of the population figures for Harvard that include the Devens medical and prison facilities, that Devens is identified as a Census Designated Place and data breakdowns are available that may help with the identification of LEP populations and their locations. Mr. Angus was thanked for this information, and he then offered his assistance in compiling the data if necessary.

A question was asked if there was anything in the plan that require local communities to develop their own LEP plan. B. Harris stated that this LEP is a requirement of MPO's by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for their subrecipients. I am not aware of any requirement for local municipalities to develop such a document. However, the MRPC can discuss with anyone the mechanics behind the document and how some may go about the development of their own LEP.

Consensus was then given to recommend that the Montachusett MPO endorse the LEP as presented.

V. FFY 2024-2028 Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- Review and Discussion of Initial Project Listing
- Review of Funding Targets

B. Doherty updated members on the latest in the development of the next TIP. We have received our federal aid target figures from MassDOT. The target section of the TIP is where the MPO has the most involvement is setting project priorities for the TIP. A comparison was presented between the new target figures for FFY 2024 to 2028 and the prior TIP target figures for 2023 to 2027. While the target figures for 2024, 2025 and 2026 remain the same from the prior TIP, the figure for 2027 shows an increase of approximately \$2.4 million dollars. The new figure for 2028 remains the same as for 2027. This increase can be attributed to the last of the GANS (Grant Anticipation Notes) payments the state has been making on the accelerated bridge program. B. Doherty then reviewed with the members an initial listing of projects and their TEC scores. He stressed to the members that the MRPC is always willing to review the individual project TEC scores if there is more information made available. As the projects move forward, we can usually get a better understanding of what the total project involves thus improving their scoring.

The individual federal fiscal years were then reviewed with the projects from the FFY 2023-2027 TIP. It was also mentioned that staff will be meeting with MassDOT in what is called TIP Readiness Day when various departments in MassDOT meet with the Districts and the RPAs to review the current status of the identified projects. This helps everyone to get on the same page with each project and to also discuss any issues or concerns that may be present that may impact their anticipated advertising date and program year.

B. Harris mentioned that at the next MPO meeting, the city of Gardner will have a presentation made by their consultant on a new project that they are developing. If any other community would like to also discuss a project in more detail with the MJTC or MPO, to please let us know and we can schedule something.

A question was asked if there was a cutoff date as to when a community can come in to present a project. Staff stated that usually the best time of year would be February to April at the latest. Usually, the presentations help us in the development of TIP funding scenarios and that happens around April. So, the earlier in the year and the process the better. A follow up was asked about a project that is more in the pre-design or conceptual phase. Staff indicated that we could have a discussion at any time either with just the staff or with the MJTC. This may help a community in the development or planning of their project. Members may get some helpful input from the MJTC that will benefit the project.

A question was asked regarding the Fitchburg project on John Fitch Highway. It received a relatively high TEC score yet is not programmed in any particular year. What can the city do to keep the project moving forward. B. Doherty indicated that the project came onto the TIP last year and that was when it was first scored. At that time, we had a discussion with the city about what was included in the design and were then able to score it, but due to its early design status, we have not assigned it a year. That is also a major component of developing the TIP, is to have knowledge of where a project is in design. The further along a project is the easier it is to program in a particular year. If the city has any information on the project that they wish to provide us, we welcome that as it helps in the overall decision making and programming process.

VI. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update

- Goals, Objectives and Strategies Update
- Performance Measures Update

B. Doherty stated that staff is continuing to refine the goals, objectives and strategies as well as the vision statement based on the feedback we have received. That will be reflected in the draft chapters for the Goals and the Performance Measures. We will bring these updates back to the MJTC as we move forward in the RTP development. We have also started to collect the public outreach surveys that were placed at each communities library and senior center. Staff will enter those into the online program and will begin the analysis shortly.

There is a planned Transportation Forum coming up next week on February 16th that is being put on by MassDOT, CHNA9 and the MRPC. MassDOT will be discussing the statewide Long Range Transportation Plan, called Beyond Mobility, and will also be seeking feedback from those present. We will be discussing our RTP and also look for some feedback that we can incorporate. Finally, there will be a discussion on the possibility of the establishment of a Transit Management Association (TMA) that could serve various communities and provide needed transportation options. If anyone is interested in attending, they can register through our website under announcements.

VII. Contract Status Reports

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

G. Kahale mentioned that MART received funding through the Shared Streets and Spaces program for FFY 2023 of \$180,000 for the purchase of bus shelters. If any communities have a location that they wish to see have a shelter, please contact MART and we will look into it.

- MassDOT 3C

B. Harris stated that the MPO will meet next week on Wednesday February 15th at 1:00 pm. The major action will be to seek endorsement of the LEP Plan Update.

Some handouts for discussion:

From MassDOT, there is the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study announcement regarding the availability of the January 11th Public Workshop presentation and the recording for review. The announcement provides the link to the study website and a comment form to submit comments and questions. This handout is also available on the MRPC website with all of the links under Announcements.

From MassDOT is an announcement of a Virtual Design Public Hearing on February 16th at 6:00 pm where they will present designs for ADA retrofits at various locations in District 2 including in the town of Winchendon. If interested, please see this handout and the qr code or the link provided for more information.

Next, is a Transportation Open Forum announcement sponsored by MassDOT, the Health Equity Partnership of North Central Mass (CHNA 9) and the MRPC. The group will collect input about what transportation investments are most important to our communities. The feedback will inform both statewide and regional transportation plans. They will also be gauging interest in the possibility of creating a Transportation Management Association for the region. The forum is set for Thursday February 16th at 10:00 AM. Registration is required. This flyer is also available on our webpage under Announcements.

Next is a flyer for the FHWA webinar on *Preparing for Upcoming Discretionary Grant Opportunities* scheduled for today February 8th at 3:00 PM. This webinar is why we moved the MJTC start time to 1:30 PM today. Registration is required. Again, this flyer is also on our website.

A copy of a memo that we recently sent out to communities regarding a solicitation of work tasks for our next UPWP. We are asking if any community has thoughts on a possible study or task for the upcoming program year, that they contact us to discuss their ideas and to submit a formal request through their chief elected officials. Please feel free to reach out to Sheri or myself with questions, etc. We have set February 28th as the submittal date for this request.

There is a copy of a press release from the US DOT announcing awards through the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) discretionary grant program under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation. The proposal submitted by the MRPC in conjunction with MART and our communities, was selected for funding. As such, we will be receiving \$750,000 in federal funds to develop Safety Action Plan for the region. This amount will be matched with funds from MassDOT, the MRPC and MART to bring it to a total grant of \$979,500. We anticipate that this will be a 2-year study and that we will be hiring an outside consultant to complete the plan. US DOT will be working with awardees to set up all necessary agreements between the parties, so we don't expect to begin for a few months. On the handout is the official US DOT press release, the second page is the email we received announcing our award and the last pages list the other SS4A awards to Massachusetts.

Today we received a notice of an upcoming meeting for the Mass Freight Plan Advisory Committee that will be held on Thursday February 23rd at 11:00 AM. Registration is required. They are also looking for individuals that would like to volunteer to be part of a focus group on freight. If interested, you are asked to contact them. This information is also posted on the MRPC website.

VIII. Administrative Matters

- Next MJTC Meeting

B. Harris stated that the next meeting will be on Wednesday March 8, 2023 at its regular start time of 2:30 pm.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:

- 2 8 2023 Agenda
- 1 11 2023 MJTC minutes
- 4 Int Parties Draft LEP 1 20 2023
- 4 LEP DRAFT 2022 12 2022
- 5 2024 2028 Target Comparison 1 30 2023
- 5 FFY 2024 2028 TEC Scores
- 5 Project Master List 24-28
- 7 2024 UPWP Project Solicitation Memo 1 24 2023

7 District 2 ADA Flyer
7 ncma_transportation_open_forum_2_16_2023
7 Northern Tier Study Jan 11 2023 Recording Flyer
7 SS4A MJTC Release 2 8 2023
7 US DOT Webinar on Preparing for Discretionary Grant Opportunities
2023 Massachusetts Freight Plan - Flyer