

# **MONTACHUSETT METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MMPO) MEETING**

**Minutes of November 15, 2017**

S. Woelfel representing MassDOT Secretary Stephanie Pollack called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

## **I. Introduction**

### **SIGNATORIES PRESENT**

Steve Woelfel, MassDOT; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Highway; John Telepciak, MRPC; Mohammed Khan, MART; Trevor Beauregard, Gardner; Albert Gallant, Subregion 1; Paula Bertram, Subregion 3; Noreen Piazza, Subregion 4

### **MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT**

Jeffery Hoynoski, MassDOT District 2; Nikki Tishler, MassDOT OTP; Peter Lowitt, Devens Enterprise Commission; Thatcher Kezer, Mass Development Devens; Mark Wetzel, Ayer DPW; Phil Duffy, Clinton; Alan Mayo, Templeton DPW; David Chandler, FHWA

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Brad Harris; George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty; David Fee; Glenn Eaton; George Kahale

## **II. Public Comments**

P. Lowitt asked in regards to the State Freight Plan, where is Pan Am railroad in its efforts to upgrade their locomotives to clean diesel in order to address air quality issues in the towns along its rail line. S. Woelfel stated that he was unsure if that was part of the plan but that staff will check and get back to the MPO on that question.

## **III. Approval of October 18, 2017 Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the October 18, 2017 MPO Meeting Minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and passed with A. Gallant and P. Bertram abstaining.

## **IV. Montachusett FFY 2018-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

- *Review/Response to Comments Received on Draft Amendment #1*
- *MPO Endorsement of FFY 2018-2022 TIP Amendment #1*

G. Snow referred to a series of handouts that summarized Amendment #1 for both the FFY 2018 Transit and Highway Elements of the FFY 2018-2022 TIP. The Amendment was out for a 21-day public comment period that ran from October 23<sup>rd</sup> until the close of business on November 13<sup>th</sup>. A copy of the announcement memo for the Amendment was made available to MPO members. During the comment period, we received one comment from MassDOT regarding the project number for the Highway Element project addition in Gardner for the North Central Pathway. After a check with the District, the project number was confirmed for this project to be 607347.

S. Bradbury provided a quick review and description of the project to the MPO members.

S. Bradbury also noted that the funding listing for this project should be identified as Local Funds for \$75,000 and not as State Funds.

A. Gallant asked how the Pathway would cross Route 140. S. Bradbury stated that there would be a grade separated bridge across Route 140. In response to a follow up question on the cost of the bridge, she indicated that they do not have that figure yet. This Amendment project is for the design of the crossing so until the design is completed, we will not have a construction estimate.

P. Bertram asked about the \$75,000 in Local Funds and whether the money was available. S. Bradbury indicated that those funds would be provided by the City of Gardner.

A motion was made to endorse TIP Amendment #1 based on the corrections made in response to the comments received and with the additional change in the listing for the Gardner North Central Pathway project of the \$75,000 as “Local Funds” and not as “State Funds”. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **V. Roadway Functional Classification**

- *Review of Proposed Changes in Clinton*
- *MPO Action on Proposed Changes*

B. Doherty stated that the town of Clinton expressed interest in a Functional Classification change to a portion of a roadway in the town. As stated in an October 4, 2017 letter to the MRPC, the town would like to seek to re-classify a portion of Sterling Street to better reflect its current usage and to also re-route a portion of Route 62 to follow this re-classified section of Sterling Street. This would be a more logical path for Route 62 based on its current usage through the town. Upon consultation with MassDOT District 3, it was decided to seek the classification change first and then address the issue of rerouting Route 62 separately. As such, the MRPC prepared the information necessary to seek a change in the functional classification of the identified roadway. This involved mapping of the roadway, reviewing current traffic volumes and analyzing the classification percentages of Clinton’s roadways. After compilation of the information, it now needs the approval of the MPO before it can be submitted to MassDOT for review and eventual forwarding to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for a final decision. Also included in the request to reclassify Sterling Street from a Local Road to an Urban Principal Arterial, a portion of Brook Street would be re-classified from Urban Principal Arterial to a Local Road. Both segments are comparable in size, Sterling Street 0.26 miles and Brook Street 0.36 miles, that the overall percentages of roadway functional classifications in Clinton would remain unchanged and within FHWA guidelines.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the re-classification requests for Sterling Street and Brook Street in the town of Clinton and to submit the request to MassDOT and FHWA. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **VI. Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Structure**

- *Establishment and Scheduling of Subregion Only Meetings*

S. Bean indicated that the MRPC sent out a survey to Subregion communities regarding preferred time of day and day of week for establishing a Subregion Only meeting schedule. The survey has been open since November 1<sup>st</sup> and will remain open until November 30<sup>th</sup>. After the first email notice, we received 13 responses. A reminder email went out yesterday on the 14<sup>th</sup> and this morning we had 6 additional responses. MPO members were referred to a handout that summarized survey responses as of November 13<sup>th</sup>. Responses have been received from communities in each Subregion except for Subregion 1. In addition, regarding the questions related to meeting topics, consistent responses have been “Getting projects on the TIP” and “Communications by and between Subregion communities, representatives and the MPO”. Once the survey is closed, we will tally up the results and begin to schedule these meetings.

B. Harris indicated that, as stated, after the reminder email, we received six more responses that are not reflected on the handout and that two communities from Subregion 1 were part of the six; so we have heard from all Subregions at this point.

## **VII. Updates**

### **- MassDOT Highway Division**

S. Bradbury indicated that for the Gardner Matthews Street Project a Notice to Proceed was issued in August to P. J. Albert. In Hubbardston, the Route 68 project had a bid opening on August 31<sup>st</sup> with P.J. Keating as the apparent low bidder. The Fitchburg/Leominster/Lunenburg Summer Street project was advertised in August and the bids should be opened in mid-December. The Gardner/Leominster/Sterling Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) project at three locations had a design public hearing on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

P. Bertram asked if there was an update on the Chase Road project. S. Bradbury indicated that it was advertised in July and the bids are due to be opened this week.

J. Hoynoski stated that Royalston Stockwell Road bridge project over Lawrence Brook bids are due to be opened January 17<sup>th</sup>. Winchendon North Royalston Road over Tarbell Brook was awarded to Northern Construction and is awaiting a Notice to Proceed. Winchendon resurfacing on Route 12 was just awarded and a pre-construction meeting is scheduled for November 21<sup>st</sup>. The Royalston bridge project on North Fitzwilliam Road over Lawrence Brook is at 25% and a design public hearing was held on November 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **- Transit**

M. Khan stated that they have a number of items going on but primarily work is focusing on Ayer and the development of a parking facility and depot improvements. The existing depot is ready for demolition and we recently received some good news that we do not have to go through the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for any hazardous material. The parking facility will be for about 200 cars on two stories.

The Devens service set up to bring workers to and from the Fitchburg/Leominster area is seeing increases in ridership to about 90 to 100 on a weekly basis. T. Kezer indicated how critical this service is to a number of industries in Devens. As they continue to expand, having this access helps them maintain their operations in the region and the state. He thanked MART for their efforts.

G. Kahale mentioned in Ayer, MART is proposing a pedestrian plaza at the station where the building to be removed is located. The design is at approximately 80% with 100% hopefully by mid-December. The MRPC conducted a ridership survey last week at Wachusett Station in Fitchburg and it shows over 120 riders per day taking the train. The sidewalk project along Authority Drive to connect Wachusett Station to Route 31 will also hopefully be starting soon. Finally, the MRPC has begun work on an update to the Coordinated Services Transit Plan Update.

### **- Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)**

B. Harris indicated that the MJTC will not be meeting in December, therefore the next MJTC meeting will be held on January 10, 2018 at 6:30 pm. We are looking at holding the meeting offsite and will be reaching out to a couple of communities to see if they are willing to host. Clinton and Lancaster have offered to host around March/April 2018. Staff will be attending a meeting of the Route 2 Safety Improvement Task Force tomorrow night November 16<sup>th</sup> at the Town of Erving Senior Center. This will be the first meeting in a number of years and it will focus on the current situation related to any

remaining projects, the role of the Task Force and future efforts. Staff attended the second session of the Transportation Leadership Academy held at Clark University in Worcester. The Academy focuses on issues related to improving the decision-making process and is being held over a six-month time frame. B. Harris referred members to a handout on the draft Massachusetts Freight Plan and its public comment period. The handout provided links to the plan as well as how to submit comments. Finally, the MJTC reviewed a schedule for the development of the next TIP for FFY 2019 – 2023. An endorsed TIP is needed by May 2018, so the schedule is designed to meet this goal.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Eaton indicated that the MRPC is currently in a re-build mode and have hired a new Regional Planner. The MRPC will also have a special meeting tonight to discuss the hiring of an additional regional planner for the Commission. One of the new planners has experience in traffic counting so we may look to have them work on the 3C contract in the future and will seek MassDOT approval beforehand.

## **VIII. Administrative Matters**

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B. Harris indicated that the next MPO meeting is scheduled for Wednesday December 20<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM here in the MRPC offices. Currently, there are no pressing matters but one item that will come up at the next meeting will be the acceptance of state safety performance measures and the state will provide some further information at that time.

N. Tishler briefly provided the MPO with some background on the process for adopting or accepting the state safety performance measures and what the MPO will need to do over the next couple of meetings. Additionally, the state produces a document called Tracker that provides information on the state's efforts to meet certain goals. The latest Tracker should be online within the week. She also indicated that the state is required to report to feds on the Performance Measures. MPO's do not need to report on any quantitative data related to the measures but is responsible for qualitative information to reinforce what the targets are in the performance measures.

The MPO decided to keep the next meeting for December 20<sup>th</sup> and if there are any changes notices will go out beforehand.

## **IX. Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

### **DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING**

MPO 11 15 2017 Agenda  
10 18 17 MPO Minutes  
Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #1  
FFY 2018 Amendment #1 Summary 10 18 2017  
FFY 2018 Amendment #1 Comments  
Clinton Proposed FC Change 11 15 2017  
Subregion Meeting Survey Results 11 13 2017  
MassDOT Freight Plan Notice