

MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING

MINUTES OF April 14, 2021

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

N. Bosonetto called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

I. Introduction

Members

Roger Hoyt, Ashburnham; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Nicolas Bosonetto, Fitchburg; Tim Kilhart, Harvard; Matthew Brenner, Lunenburg; Janet Tice, Shirley; Richard Maki, Sterling; Guy Corbosiero, Winchendon.

Ex-Officio and Organizations

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Paula Simmons, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3.

Non-Members

Veronica Kell, Townsend; Randy Williams, Ashburnham; Makayla D'Amore, WPI; Adam Klosner, WPI; Frankie Ann Schripsema, WPI; Professor Crystal Brown, WPI; Suzanne LePage, WPI;

Staff

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

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of March 10, 2021 Minutes

A motion was made to accept the March 10, 2021 MJTC Meeting Minutes. Consensus was given to accept the minutes as presented.

IV. Intersection Analysis Project Study Presentation by WPI

- Study of Route 2A/Route 12/Route 31 Intersection in Fitchburg

S. Bean provided members with background on the presentation to be done by students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). Approximately, one year ago, we were contacted by WPI and asked if there were any possible projects that their students could do for the MRPC as part of the Senior Capstone Project. After some discussion, they decided to conduct an intersection analysis at the Route 2A/Route 12/Route 31 intersection in west Fitchburg. We assisted them with some of the traffic count data collection and then they completed the analysis, alternative development, recommendations and report compilation. They have also presented this to the Fitchburg DPW for their review. S. Bean then introduced Makayla D'Amore, Adam Klosner, and Frankie Ann Schripsema from WPI.

M. D'Amore, A. Klosner and F. Schripsema then proceed to present to the MJTC their final project on the west Fitchburg intersection. They reviewed the project goal "to develop a final design which improves upon the level of service, driver safety and pedestrian safety at the intersection." Each student took turns reviewing the data collected, the current sight distance issues, the crash analysis and history, the signal warrant analysis and the overall geometrics. They then discussed the alternatives identified and what impacts they would have on the intersection. Finally, they discussed the identified preferred alternative and its benefits to the area.

D. Krevat asked about any bicycle or pedestrian considerations in their analysis and design. M. D'Amore responded that they made note of any bicycle or pedestrian activity while collecting data. At those times they only really saw 2 to 3 pedestrians and no bicycles. However, we did take them into account in our designs because we felt that they probably have a presence just that it is much less prevalent than the traffic issues.

B. Harris asked if they had any sense or data that would show what the impact of the pandemic has had on traffic at this location. M. D'Amore and F. Schripsema indicated that it did appear that there was a slight reduction in the traffic but at the time of our data collection, volumes seemed to be coming back up. So we felt there was no need to supplement the data collection with additional counts. S. LePage from WPI also commented that unlike other projects that were conducted near Boston, the volumes at this location did not seem to be significantly affected. In the Boston area, students had to go through an exercise to factor the volumes due to the significant impacts of the pandemic.

N. Bosonetto thank the WPI students for the work they have done for the city. We are looking at the recommendations and we want to start to implement some of the short-term solutions. Then we can look towards some of the long-term solutions.

The MRPC expressed its thanks to M. D'Amore, A. Klosner and F. Schripsema for all of their efforts and work.

V. Montachusett FFY 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- *Review and Discussion of Draft Amendment #2*
- *MJTC Recommendation for MPO*

B. Harris presented to the MJTC members that at the last MPO meeting, they voted to release for a 21-day public review and comment period, draft TIP Amendment #2 to the FFY 2021-2025 TIP. This amendment removes one project, the Fitchburg-Leominster Twin Cities Rail Trail Phase II Construction, from FFY 2021 under statewide funding. At the meeting, a number of individuals commented on this proposal. It was initially thought that the project would be moved from FFY 2021 to FFY 2024. Those commenting expressed concerns over the three year delay and the impact that it would have on the re-development of the area, the local economy and the area residents. After discussion, MassDOT indicated that the Amendment would be to simply remove the project from FFY 2021 in order to make the statewide funds available elsewhere. Its future placement would be a discussion for the next TIP. So the TIP Amendment #2 simply lists the removal of this project from FFY 2021. Since its release, we have received two additional comment letters: one from the Leominster Trail Stewards and one from the Montachusett Regional trail Coalition (MRTC). Both expressed support for the need to limit any delays in its advertising.

R. Hoyt asked what were the issues that are causing the delay in its advertisement. B. Harris and S. Bradbury responded that there are issues on the final layout, the Nashua River crossing, the potential impact to a new MBTA signal tower, utility and environmental or hazardous materials in the area. S. Bradbury also indicated that when the 25% designs are available, MassDOT will have a better idea on these issues.

Discussion continued regarding the potential issues and the lack of information as to what needs to be determined.

Based on the lack of information available to the board on these issues, the MJTC is unable to provide a recommendation to the MPO at this time. This decision is made with the understanding that the MPO will be provided more information from MassDOT at their meeting next week.

VI. Montachusett FFY 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- *Review and Discussion of Draft Document*
- *MJTC Recommendation for MPO*

B. Doherty presented the latest information regarding the development of the FFY 2022-2026 TIP. At the last MJTC meeting, we reviewed some potential funding scenarios and recommended that the MPO consider option #2 for the development of the full draft TIP. At that MPO meeting, there was a long review and discussion of a new, third option. This Option #3 helps to maintain some of the priorities and commitments from prior TIPs. B. Doherty then proceeded to review the new target funding option as well as statewide and transit projects for the TIP.

R. Hoyt asked about the status of the Route 101 south project in Ashburnham. B. Doherty stated that the option developed by the MPO, keeps this project within FFY 2025 as it is currently listed in the FFY 2021-2025 TIP. Unless after the 25% design submittal there is a significant change in the scope, design costs should remain relatively stable. Construction costs will obviously be an issue moving forward as material costs grow.

It was the consensus of the MJTC to recommend to the MPO that the full draft FFY 2022-2026 TIP based on funding option #3 be released for a 21 day public review and comment period.

VII. Montachusett FFY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

- *Review and Discussion of Draft Document*
- *MJTC Recommendation for MPO*

S. Bean presented to the members the latest information on the development of the draft FFY 2022 UPWP. After last month's meeting, staff compiled the final write ups for all of the tasks included in the draft UPWP. In addition, budgets for each task were completed. S. Bean then reviewed the Title VI and Environmental Justice analysis conducted for the UPWP. Several of the local request tasks were also reviewed in greater detail.

N. Bosonetto asked about Clinton as part of the equity analysis. S. Bean indicated that as a result of this analysis, we will work to expand our outreach to Clinton as well as other communities seem to be lacking in work tasks. G. Kahale also mentioned that Clinton has been involved in some work related to new transit services with Fitchburg and Leominster. So although we don't have a task solely contained within the town's borders, they have been involved in a multiple community project.

It was the consensus of the MJTC to recommend to the MPO that the full draft FFY 2022 UPWP be released for a 21 day public review and comment period.

VIII. Contract Status Reports

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

G. Kahale mentioned that for the Ayer project, they are working on final phase which is still under design. Hopefully, that will be done by June and then construction could be completed by the end of the year. As mentioned previously, a new service called commuter shuttle between Fitchburg, Leominster, Clinton and Worcester is under way. Also, a new service that is doing well is Saturday service in Athol that started last month. Finally, MART is considering re-instituting all shuttle service that was terminated temporarily due to COVID later this month.

- MassDOT 3C

B. Harris stated that they have one traffic intern coming onboard in the near future, but we are still looking for a second individual. If you know of anyone looking for a spring summer position, please direct them to our website for complete information. Staff is continuing work on some crash analysis for the Route 12 Corridor Profile in Fitchburg. We also participated in a Steering Committee meeting for the John Fitch Highway – A Climate Resilient Corridor study being conducted for the city of Fitchburg. At the last meeting, some alternative

designs were reviewed and discussed. Hopefully, this work will result in some projects that can be incorporated into the TIP.

S. Bean then provided the members with some target dates for public outreach site visits for the walkability studies being conducted in Sterling and Townsend. In Townsend, we are looking at May 1st at 10:00 am with a rain date of Sunday May 2nd. In Sterling, we are looking at Monday May 3rd at 5:00 pm start time and a rain date of May 4th.

IX. Administrative Matters

- *Next MJTC Meeting*

The next meeting will be on Wednesday May 12th at 2:30pm. One agenda item will be the selection of a Nominating Committee.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:

- 4 14 21 Agenda
- 3 10 2021 MJTC minutes
- 4_14 MJTC Presentation Handout (1)
- 5 FFY 2021 Highway Amendment #2 Summary
- 5 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #2
- 5 TIP Amend 2 Comment Ltrs
- 6 Highway Draft 2022-2026 4 7 21
- 6 TRANSIT DRAFT FFY 2022 2026 4 5 2021
- 7 UPWP Handout