

MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING

MINUTES OF AUGUST 11, 2021

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

B. Harris called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

I. Introduction

Members

Roger Hoyt, Ashburnham; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Tim Kilhart, Harvard; Janet Tice, Shirley; Richard Maki, Sterling; Carol Hoffses, Townsend; Guy Corbosiero, Winchendon; Jessica Strunkin, Mass Development; Joshua Preville, The ARC of Opportunity.

Ex-Officio and Organizations

Paula Simmons, MassDOT District 2;

Non-Members

Staff

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

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of June 9, 2021 Minutes

A motion was made to accept the June 9, 2021 MJTC Meeting Minutes. Consensus was given to accept the minutes as presented.

IV. Election of Officers

B. Harris reviewed the slate as presented last month by the Nominating Committee: Nicolas Bosonetto, Fitchburg for Chair, Dick Kilhart, Athol for Vice Chair, and Guy Corbosiero, Winchendon for Secretary. Floor nominations were asked for, but none were made.

B. Harris then asked if there was a consensus to cast one ballot for the slate as presented. Consensus was given and the slate elected as indicated.

B. Harris then turned the meeting over to the new Vic Chair, Dick Kilhart of Athol.

V. Regional Demographic and RAISE Grant Application Updates

- *Discussion of Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for Discretionary Grants through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grants*

B. Doherty presented to the members a number of updates related to the 2020 census as well as the RAISE Grant Applications put in by the MRPC. He first reviewed initial population figures for the state by community, corresponding impacts to MA Congressional Districts and more detailed Environmental Justice figures. Reference was made to the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' (EEA) website. Environmental Justice populations are the focus of the state's EEA Environmental Justice (EJ) Policy, which establishes EJ as an integral consideration in all EEA programs. For more information, visit EEA's Environmental

Justice Web page, which includes a detailed fact sheet for the state. In addition, the 2020 EJ dataset should be used at the block group (BG) level to ensure that environmental planning and decision-making are done at the appropriate geographic scale. There is a fact sheet available titled “2020 EJ, MA EJ 2020 Municipal Statistics” in pdf form that lists municipalities with EJ BGs and statistics for these communities such as the number of EJ BGs, the EJ criteria, the percentages of the BGs classified as EJ and the population living in these EJ BGs. This helps to provide an indication of the diversity of the municipality’s EJ population and the intensity of EJ criteria found in the community. The Environmental Justice Viewer is available online to assist communities in identifying which Census 2020 block groups are classified as EJ populations

B. Harris walked members through the EEA website in order to explain how to access the site and how the data is presented.

B. Doherty then moved on to present status information to members on the Complete Streets program and what projects have been implemented in the Region over the last few years.

S. Bean provided members with an update on the *Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity* (RAISE) Grants applications submitted by the MRPC. Under Planning Grants, the MRPC submitted the following applications:

- An Environmental and Design Feasibility Study of a New Interchange to Route 2 at South Athol Road in the Town of Athol for a cost of \$500,000. This grant would allow us to hire a consultant to examine the environmental and physical impacts related to the implementation of a new interchange to Route 2. The final outcome would determine if such an interchange could be constructed based upon environmental and design requirements. If construction is found to be possible, the consultant would then move onto design initiation following federal and state guidelines and criteria. Additionally, the consultant will work with all applicable entities to initiate construction through the TIP process.
- A Montachusett Region Climate Vulnerability Assessment and Climate Change Resilience Plan with a cost request of \$500,000. This grant would allow us to hire a consultant to gather, review and update any and all Infrastructure Climate Vulnerability Assessments within the Montachusett Region. Where needed new plans would be developed. The final goal is for all MRPC communities to be at the same level in their Climate Vulnerability Assessment Plans. The second phase of this program will be the development of an individual or a regional Climate Change Resilience Plan.

A question was asked if there is any idea on how many applications were submitted to this program. S. Bean replied that we do not have any information on that. It is a nation-wide program and as of now no mention of numbers are presented on the site.

VI. Northern Tier Rail Study

– Discussion Related to Initial Study Meeting

B. Harris presented to the members information related to a new long-range study known as the *Norther Tier Passenger Rail Study*. This included a presentation put together by MassDOT on the study. The Massachusetts Legislature has directed MassDOT to conduct a study of the feasibility of passenger rail service from Boston to Greenfield and North Adams along the corridor known as the Northern Tier, and to determine the speed, frequency, and reliability necessary for it to be a competitive option for travel along the corridor. On July 13th MA Senator Joanne Comerford hosted an online Kickoff Meeting for the Study. In attendance were stakeholders from across the region as well as representatives from MassDOT’s Office Transportation Planning. The purpose of the study is to examine and evaluate the costs and economic opportunities related to establishing rail service between the cities of North Adams and Greenfield and the cities of Greenfield and Boston. This will include: projected capital costs; projected operating costs and revenue estimates; projected ridership levels; an estimate of the environmental impact and benefits; an analysis of community impact and benefits; the potential sources and availability of federal, state, local and private sector funding; and the resulting economic, employment,

social and cultural benefits to the region and the Commonwealth. Public engagement will be a major aspect of the study with meetings held throughout the Corridor. As further information is developed, we will keep the MJTC up to date.

VII. Future MJTC Meeting Format Discussion

– New MRPC Public Meeting Procedures & MJTC Application

B. Harris updated the members of some new procedures put into place by the MRPC for the conduct of various public meetings, including the MJTC. He referred members to a handout that stated the following:

- All, potential meeting attendees and staff must register in advance of MRPC public meetings in order to receive an online meeting link. This applies to MRPC meetings held online and “hybrid” (meetings held online and in-person). As part of meeting announcements, meeting attendees will receive information on how to register for the particular meeting. Once registered, an email will be sent that will provide attendees with a link to the online meeting that will be held through either GoToMeeting or Zoom. Those individuals that wish to attend the meeting in person do not need to register for the meeting but simply show up at the identified time, date and location for the particular meeting.

This hybrid option will be in effect beginning with our next MJTC meeting, so members will have the choice of attending in person here at our offices or online through a provided meeting link.

VIII. Contract Status Reports

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

B. Harris mentioned that for those who are unaware, George Kahale has been laid off as Transit Project Director. I will be attempting to take on this role for the future. As for the FTA and RTA status, we are maintaining close contact with MART in order to continue to provide planning services. MART has added the community of Barre to their service area; shuttle services are beginning to come back online and the Ayer Station project continues to move forward.

- MassDOT 3C

B. Harris stated the following:

- As mentioned before, Staff is back in the office. The MRPC Executive Director is continuing to monitor information and recommendations in case a change is needed. Any changes will be posted to the MRPC website.
- The MPO met last month on July 21st and approved an Adjustment to the FFY 2021 Element of the FFY 2021-2025 Montachusett TIP. This adjustment is based on reduced cost changes to two Federal Aid Target projects.

	Project #	Community	Description	Fund Source	FROM	TO	Change	Percent
1	608888	Gardner	RECLAMATION AND RELATED WORK ON PEARSON BOULEVARD	STBG	\$1,264,648	\$832,346	-\$432,302	-34.18%
2	608548	Winchendon	IMPROVEMENTS & RELATED WORK ON CENTRAL STREET (ROUTE 202), FROM FRONT STREET TO MAPLE ST.	STBG	\$4,508,785	\$4,102,216	-\$406,569	-9.02%

- The Montachusett MPO meeting scheduled for this month on August 18th has been canceled. The next regularly scheduled MPO meeting is Wednesday September 15th at 1:00 pm.
- MRPC staff met with Congresswoman Lori Trahan in Ashburnham on Tues August 3rd. Cong. Trahan has identified the Route 101 South project in Ashburnham and the Rt 31/Turnpike Rd project in Ashby to receive \$1 million in federal funds in the new Transportation & Infrastructure bill. This was an opportunity for her to see the project locations and discuss their importance to the communities.

IX. Administrative Matters

- *Next MJTC Meeting*

B. Harris mentioned that in the past in the fall, the MJTC has gone to every other month schedule. The question for the members present is to whether to meet in September and November or October and December. This is with the caveat that if an important item comes up we can set up a meeting in any of those months.

After discussion, the MJTC decided to not meet in September and November and to meet in October and December. Therefore, the next meeting will be on Wednesday October 13th at 2:30pm.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:

8 11 21 Agenda
 6 9 2021 MJTC minutes
 4 MJTC Ballot 2021
 5 MA 2020 Environmental Justice Populations MRPC Region
 5 Montachusett Region Complete St Projects 8 4 2021
 5 RAISE App Descriptions
 5 State Population 2020 to 1910
 5 State Rep Apportionment-2020-tableC1
 6 Northern Tier Rail Study Info
 6 NorthernTier_4.23.21
 7 Meeting Procedures 8 11 2021
 DRAFT FFY 2021 Highway Adjustment #1 Summary