

MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING
MINUTES OF May 11, 2022
Meeting Held Online through GoToMeeting.com - Hosted by the MRPC

B. Harris acted as Chair for this meeting and called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

I. Introduction

Members

Robert Swartz, Gardner; Tim Kilhart, Harvard; Janet Tice, Shirley; Richard Maki, Sterling; Veronica Kell, Townsend; Elizabeth Faxon, Townsend; Brian Croteau, Winchendon; George Kahale, MART; Jasmin Farinacci, Lancaster

Ex-Officio and Organizations

David Kline, The ARC of Opportunity; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3

Non-Members

Brian Doheny, Ashburnham; Carolyn Sellars, Public

Staff

Brad Harris; George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty

II. Public Comments

There were no comments at this time.

III. Approval of April 13, 2022 Minutes

A motion was made to accept the April 13, 2022 MJTC Meeting Minutes as presented. Consensus was given to accept the minutes.

IV. Selection of Nominating Committee

B. Harris indicated to the members that we are at that time of the year where we need to begin the selection process for the officers of the MJTC. The first step is the appointing of a Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee role will be to meet prior to the next meeting, develop a slate of candidates for the three positions, Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, present that slate of officers in June and then have the actual vote at the July MJTC meeting. Today, we are seeking three volunteers to serve on the Nominating Committee, one of which would be the committee convenor and would run the committee meeting. MRPC staff will be available to assist throughout the process. After some discussion, Bob Swartz of Gardner volunteered to be the Nominating Committee convenor. George Kahale of MART and Brian Croteau of Winchendon also volunteered to serve. B. Harris indicated that he will solicit volunteers to serve as a MJTC officer and inform the Nominating Committee if he receives any responses.

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

- Discussion on Draft Amendment #4 to the Highway & Transit Elements
- MJTC Recommendation to the Montachusett MPO

G. Snow reviewed with the members Draft TIP Amendment #4 that involves two (2) projects in the FFY 2022 Highway Element and nine (9) projects in the FFY 2022 Transit Element. MassDOT Highway proposed the amendment for projects #610672 Gardner and #610730 Westminster-Fitchburg. The Gardner project needs to

be moved from FFY 2022 to FFY 2023 while the Westminster-Fitchburg project should be removed from the FFY 2024 TIP list as it has already been advertised in December 2021 with state funds. On the Transit side, there are six projects that have cost changes and three are being removed altogether. None of these changes impacts our fiscal constraint for the TIP nor do they effect any target eligible projects. The MPO voted to release this Amendment for a 21 day public review that began on April 26th and will close next Monday on May 16th. To date we have not received any comments on this Amendment.

A motion was made and seconded to recommend that the MPO endorse TIP Amendment #4 as presented. Consensus was given to recommend endorsement by the MPO.

VI. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Presentation

B. Harris presented a review of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) that was passed in 2021. BIL has increased the funding for regional target funds we use in the development of the TIP. The various highway and transit programs contained in BIL were then reviewed and discussed. The major point highlighted for the members is the increased funds to existing programs as well as the establishment of new grant programs. Overall, the Montachusett MPO has seen an increase in our regional target amounts. For FFY 2022, this is an increase of \$2,028,930 and over FY 2023 – 2026 an increase of \$8.8 million. The various new discretionary programs and their implementing agencies was then reviewed and discussed with the members. As the Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO's) are prepared and released for these discretionary programs, staff will let members know and discuss the mechanism to be used to apply for the grant.

A member asked what the term NOFO referred to. B. Harris stated that NOFO stands for Notice of Funding Opportunity. This is basically the guide on what the program funds, what is eligible and how to apply.

A question was asked related to the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) program. Townsend has an intersection of concern that actually spans three communities and subsequently two RPAs or MPOs. How would we go about actually applying for funding? B. Harris indicated that some of the answer would depend on the program requirements, so we would need to look into the NOFO. Typically, one community would take the lead and apply on behalf of all those involved. We did learn that the SS4A program allows for communities to band together on an application as well as allowing MPOs to apply on behalf of communities. We would need to review the NOFO when it is released to get a final answer. We will look into that question. B. Doherty indicated that the MRPC did review that particular intersection back in 2009. I will forward a copy to Townsend.

VII. FFY 2023-2027 Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

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

B. Doherty provided the members with an update on the draft FFY 2023-2027 TIP. The MPO voted in April to release the draft TIP for a 21 day public review and comment period. That comment period began on April 26th and will close on May 16th. To date, we have only received comments from MassDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). B. Doherty then reviewed the individual comments and the proposed responses with the MJTC members. A final TIP will then be presented to the MPO with the responses incorporated as discussed.

After review of the comments and responses, it was the consensus of the MJTC that the recommendation to the MPO would be to endorse the FFY 2023-2027 TIP based on the comments and responses presented.

VIII. FFY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

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

S. Bean reviewed with the MJTC members the draft FFY 2023 UPWP that was put out for public comment. The MPO voted in April to release the draft UPWP for a comment period to run from April 26th to May 16th. During this time frame, we received comments on the UPWP from MassDOT and the FHWA. S. Bean then reviewed the comments and the planned responses to them. These responses will be incorporated into a final FFY 2023 UPWP for the MPO to review.

After review of the comments and responses, it was the consensus of the MJTC that the recommendation to the MPO would be to endorse the FFY 2023 UPWP based on the comments and responses presented.

IX. Contract Status Reports

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

G. Kahale stated the only item he had at this time was that MART was going to begin work on a rehab of the Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC) in Fitchburg. This will be a major project that will hopefully begin in September.

- MassDOT 3C

B. Harris stated the next MPO will be next week on May 18th at 1:00 pm. As discussed earlier the major action item will be the endorsement of the FFY 2023-2027 TIP and the FFY 2023 UPWP. There will also be a discussion on a possible FFY 2022 TIP Amendment #5 related to a project cost change for the Ashby Route 31/Turnpike Road Roundabout project. Several factors have led to the overall cost estimate increase. That project is scheduled for advertisement on July 30th. The comment period will likely run from Monday May 23rd to Monday June 13th.

MRPC is in the process of looking to hire a consultant to assist us with our traffic count program this year. We have had little to no success in the hiring of interns, so we are exploring this option. Bids are due at the end of this week.

B. Harris stated that there were some handouts of note:

- The first handout relates to some to the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program. There are several eligible activities for this program that communities and MPOs can apply for. Webinars were held for Tribal Governments, Towns and Transit Authorities and MPOs. The grant application process for this program has not opened as of yet but it is expected to begin this Spring. Recordings of the webinars are available for viewing at transportation.gov/SS4A
- The second handout is from MassTrails announcing a Spring Grant Round for MassTrail Grants. The grant amount has been increased to \$500,000 per award. Deadline for submittal is May 16th.
- The final handout is for the upcoming public comment release for the FY 2023-2027 Massachusetts Capital Investment Plan (CIP). Virtual public meetings will be held between May 24th to June 2nd. The Central MA meeting is set for May 26th at 6:00 pm. Individuals can attend any of the meetings as most of the information will be the same, however, each event in the series will highlight investments in a specific region.

Finally, we were informed at the MPO meeting last month that Arthur Frost the MassDOT Project Development Engineer for District 3 will be retiring at the end of this month. Arthur has been one of our main points of contact for the TIP, project guidance, initiation, and discussion. He has been an invaluable resource for us over the years. All of our staff wishes him the best of luck in his retirement.

X. Administrative Matters

- Next MJTC Meeting

B. Harris stated that the next meeting is scheduled for June 8, 2022 at 2:30 pm.

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:22 p.m.

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:

- 5 11 2022 Agenda
- 4 13 2022 MJTC minutes
- 4 Nominating Committee Role 5 11 2022
- 5 DRAFT FFY 2022 Amendment #4 Summary
- 5 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #4 & Transit Summary
- 5 Transit FY22 TIP Amendment #4 Updated 4 14 2022
- 6 BIL - Montachusett MPO Presentation
- 7 DRAFT FFY 2023 2027 TIP
- 7 Draft TIP 2023-27 Comments
- 7 Int Parties Draft TIP UPWP Memo 4 22 2022
- 8 DRAFT FFY 2023 UPWP
- 8 FFY 2023 UPWP Comments 5 18 2022
- 9 CIP Outreach Flyer 033022
- 9 Safe-Streets-and-Roads-for-All-Fact-Sheet_March-2022
- 9 Spring 2022 MassTrails Grant Announcement