

MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING
MINUTES OF October 11, 2023
Meeting Held Online through GoToMeeting.com - Hosted by the MRPC

B. Faxon, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

I. Introduction

Members

Rebecca Merrell, Ashburnham; Randy Williams, Ashburnham; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Tim Kilhart, Harvard; Janet Tice, Shirley; Beth Faxon, Townsend

Ex-Officio and Organizations

Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Ben Breger, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; George Kahale, MART

Non-Members

Brian Doheny, Ashburnham; Roger Hoyt, Ashburnham; Chelsey Patriss, CHNA; Carolyn Sellars, Public

Staff

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

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of August 9, 2023 Minutes

A consensus was reached to accept the minutes for August 9, 2023 as presented.

IV. Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee Bylaws Discussion

- Review of Article II – Membership in the Planning Group

B. Harris stated that, as discussed at the last meeting, an issue was raised related to membership in the MJTC. The question was asked if an individual can be appointed as a representative to the MJTC by more than one community. The current Bylaws for the MJTC do not specifically address this issue. They merely state that a town Selectboard/Mayor and Planning Board/Department can each appoint a representative to the MJTC, thus giving the community two representatives on the committee. Overall, the town only has one vote when formal votes are taken. In order to clarify the current bylaws or to change them to allow or not allow for multiple representation by one member, a change will need to be made to them. Based on the current bylaws, a bylaw change must be brought up at two consecutive meetings in order to be acted upon. At the first meeting, discussion will be had on the issue only. At the second meeting, members can then vote on any proposed bylaw change.

Discussion then focused on the possible issues related to an individual representing more than one community. Issues included the need to maximize outreach to and feedback from our members, the ability for smaller municipalities to find someone willing to be appointed a representative to any board, the fact that measures are passed by the MJTC through general consensus and not a formal vote, and if a formal vote is required would that individual have one or two votes. Comments on the issue focused on the matter of fairness to other municipalities who would have only one vote versus a member having two votes, one for each community they represent, and if there is a need to establish a proxy vote for the communities in question.

Members also felt that we should encourage every community to be represented and that the spirit of the MJTC is that a person only represents one community. It was also stated that if we allow an individual to represent more than one community, then it could lead to a person being appointed by 3, 4 or more municipalities. This could then lead to someone being able to swing the vote on their own. That would not be fair to the other communities.

A chat question asked if the representative positions for each community, i.e., one appointee from the Planning Board/Department and one appointee from the Selectboard/Mayor, are of equal status. B. Harris stated that yes, both have an equal standing. One is not designated as the representative and the other an alternate. In the case of a formal vote and both representatives are present, they can only vote once and must decide which member will cast that vote.

Another chat comment recommended that if this bylaw article, Article II – Membership in the Planning Group, is changed one way or the other, then it should also be changed in Article VI - Meetings of the MJTC, item 5 – Formal Votes to reflect what is decided.

From the discussions presented, the following options have been derived and will be reviewed by the MJTC at the November meeting for action if required. The options are as follows:

- A. No change to the current MJTC Bylaws
- B. Add to Article II – Membership in the Planning Group, item 2d. *An individual appointed to the MJTC can only be appointed as a representative for one community only. Appointment of the same individual by multiple communities is not allowed.*
- C. An individual may be appointed as a representative to the MJTC by more than one community as long as all communities involved are aware of the appointment situation and have formally agreed to the multiple appointments. Additionally, in the case of formal votes of the MJTC, an individual representing more than one community shall only be able to cast one vote on behalf of all communities they serve unless they have obtained written formal notice from the community board as to how to vote and proceed on that particular issue under review by the MJTC.

V. Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) Services Discussion

- Review of New Services Both Planned and Currently Online

G. Kahale discussed with the members the current services that MART is operating throughout the Region. He also reviewed some past programs as well as some new services under consideration and discussion. He stated that MART now covers 25 communities and operates fixed route services as well shuttle services that provide access to commuter rail stations and hospitals including to those in Boston. MART also has veteran only services for those that are eligible. G. Kahale went on to explain other MART changes in operation, public outreach and fares. He stated that if communities have any questions on the various operations, they can contact MART and we can then discuss possible options for the town.

A comment in the chat stated, "I see most services that require 24 hour notice call themselves "demand response" rather than "on demand" which is reserved for immediate booking like Uber."

VI. Contract Status Report

- FTA/RTA

S. Bean mentioned that a draft copy of the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan has been forwarded to MART for their review and comment. There is a need to update some information and data.

Also, we are looking for their plans for the future and what they would like to accomplish. A draft document will be presented to the MJTC at an upcoming meeting.

T. Godin then presented the members with an update on the Eastern Communities Transit Development Plan. This includes the communities of Harvard, Lancaster, Shirley, Littleton and Devens. T. Godin then reviewed the various sections of the TDP and its current status. Sections include the following; a **Purpose and Scope of Project** that has the goals and objectives of the project and a list of critical elements; **Community Profiles** that provide an overview of each individual community; **Previous Service** that discusses the current transit services within this region, such as Devens On-Demand, Devens Workforce Ride Program, MART Connects and the MBTA Commuter Rail; a **Demographics Analysis** that examines key demographic factors to determining transit dependency. These factors include population density, income, elderly, disabled, households with 0 vehicles, and households with 1 vehicle. Each of these factors were examined on the block group level with a map and table for reference. At the end of this section each block group is ranked based on these factors to determine transit demand. Then we have a section on **Services and Facilities** that looks at the services and facilities in the region. These are important to consider as these can be highly desirable locations for transit dependent demographic groups. This includes major employers, day care facilities, elderly facilities, medical facilities, and schools. Also, a **Survey** was created and distributed via email to all communities COAs, town clerks, libraries, housing authorities and several other non-profits and community organizations within the region. Paper copies of the survey were distributed within each town at libraries, senior centers, and other community facilities. This survey is to get feedback from the residents of the region on travel habits, opinions on transit, and their desire for additional transit in the region. Once the survey has concluded on October 23rd we will begin to analyze and input our findings into the report. From this data, we will identify a list of **Recommended Transit Locations**. This list of transit locations will help to create additional transit routes and services in the area. MRPC will discuss with MART how to incorporate this list into the report.

- MassDOT 3C

B. Harris mentioned that the MPO will be meeting next week on Wednesday October 18th at 1:00 PM. There is the potential for some TIP Amendment action items.

The fully endorsed 2024 Montachusett RTP titled Journey to 2050 is available on the MRPC website through a banner link on the opening page. Individual chapters can be downloaded.

We have begun the new program year for our transportation planning activities. The new year began on October 1st and is currently budgeted at \$947,066.

There is a news release from the state and the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) announcing various awards through the Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grant Program. Two communities in our region received awards. They are:

- \$61,000 to Ashburnham for design and engineering for a culvert replacement on Bluefield Brook, to prepare it for replacement in FY24-FY25.
- \$55,000 to Ashby to fund field data collection for two culvert replacement projects on Harris Road to improve stream connectivity of Trapfall Brook and a tributary to the Brook.

There is an announcement from MassTrails as part of their Accessible Trails Discussion series, of an online discussion on how to get your accessible trails project funded through the MassTrails Grant Program. This will be held on October 23rd from 5 to 6:30 pm. A link to register is on the handout.

A copy of the Community Transportation News from MassMobility and MassDOT is available. This newsletter provides information from MassDOT Rail and Transit announcing the schedule for the next round of applications for wheelchair-accessible vehicles. This will open on November 28th. Regional Transit Authorities, nonprofits,

municipalities, and private operators of public transit (shared-ride) services will be eligible to apply for fully accessible vehicles to expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities through MassDOT's Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP). Applications will be due by Friday, December 22nd. MassDOT will host two virtual application training sessions on Tuesday, November 28th from 10 to noon, and Thursday, November 30 from 1 to 3 pm. Each session will cover the same material. Training is required for new applicants and recommended for all.

Lastly, there is a handout from FHWA regarding planning updates and Active and Upcoming Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs). This is provided for informational purposes.

B. Harris provided an update on the FHWA Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant award to the MRPC. The MRPC was awarded a \$750,000 federal grant through this program to develop a Safety Action Plan for the region. We also joined with MART on the application and will be including 6 MART communities in the plan. We developed a Grant Agreement with FHWA and from there we compiled a Request for Proposals for the selection of a consultant to work on the development of this plan. That RFP was released on September 25th. Proposals are due October 23rd, in just under 2 weeks. We will then review the proposals and select a consultant shortly afterward. We hope to have someone on board by mid-November. We have also signed a contract with MassDOT to cover the 20% local match portion of this federal grant. We have estimated a 24-month time frame for completion of the Safety Action Plan. Once completed, communities will be eligible to apply for implementation grants under this program. A copy of the RFP is provided.

VII. Administrative Matters

- Next MJTC Meeting

The next meeting will be held on November 8th at 2:30.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 3:28 pm.

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:

- 10 11 2023 Agenda
- 8 9 2023 MJTC minutes
- 4 MJTC Bylaws 9 17 2014 Highlighted MJTC 8 9 2023
- 6 Community Transportation News Sep 21 2023
- 6 MRPC SS4A RFP Version 1 9 18 2023
- 6 MT Newsletter_Sept2023
- 6 State Culvert Announcement 9 18 2023
- 6 USDOT Grants and Other Funding Opportunities