

MONTACHUSETT METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MMPO) MEETING

**Held Remotely via GoToMeeting.com
Hosted by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
464 Abbott Avenue, Leominster, MA 01453**

Minutes July 15, 2020

S. Woelfel representing MassDOT Secretary Stephanie Pollack called the remote meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Steve Woelfel, MassDOT OTP; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Mary Jo Bohart, Fitchburg; Bonnie Mahoney, MART; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Laura Hanson, MassDOT Dist. 2; Christopher Timmel, FHWA

STAFF PRESENT

Sheri Bean; Brad Harris; George Kahale

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of June 17, 2020 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the June 17, 2020 MPO Meeting Minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

IV. Montachusett FFY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

- *Review of Comments on Budget Amendment*
- *MPO Action to Endorse to UPWP Task Budget Amendment*

S. Bean reviewed with the MPO an Amendment to the FFY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to change the task budgets of several tasks in the UPWP. The MPO voted in June to release this Amendment for a 21-day public review and comment period that started on June 24th and closed on July 14th. The changes are in response to the restrictions implemented by the state due to the COVID-19 pandemic that have adversely affected the data collection efforts for these tasks. S. Bean then reviewed the various actions that make up this amendment. The budgets for Task 2.31 - Data Collection and Analysis Program and Task 4.41 - Bus Routes Performance Evaluation are being reduced while two tasks, Task 1.11 Support of 3C Process and Task 2.21 GIS Mapping and Analysis, will be increased.

To date we have not received any comments regarding this Amendment. A motion was made to approve the FFY 2020 UPWP Amendment. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no further discussion.

V. Pandemic Impact on MART Ridership

- *A Review of Ridership Data Before & During Pandemic*

B. Mahoney gave a presentation of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on MART ridership. She indicated that the pandemic had impacted the ridership drastically. As a result, MART altered their bus routes. Some of the changes included the routes that were associated with educational facilities (ie. Fitchburg State University & MWCC) which were suspended or changed over to summer schedules. The Littleton/Westford, Worcester and Boston shuttles were suspended until further notice, and routes to the commuter rail stations were suspended or reduced.

Ridership from 2019 to 2020 were generally the same until the month of March where ridership dropped off by around one third. The closing of FSU, MWCC and local high schools had the highest impact on ridership reduction. Other programs such as Dial-a-Ride or Council on Aging services were also impacted greatly. City bus lines could be continued once the schools and other organizations open back up. Other services will be on a case by case basis. It was also mentioned that MART hopes to resume collecting their regular fees around Labor Day. Their biggest concern is the safety of the drivers.

VI. Updates

- *MassDOT Highway Division*
- *Transit*
- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*
- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

L. Hanson mentioned that the District 2 project #608548 in Winchendon on Central Street is expecting 100% submittal during the week of July 27th. S. Bradbury added that for District 3 the Ayer Route 2A resurfacing project was advertised in April and the bid was opened on July 14th and the Leominster Route 13 project was expected to be advertised on July 18th.

B. Mahoney stated that MART is working on updating their Safety Plan and hopes to present the document to the MART board on August 18 and, once approved, she hopes to present the document to the MPO in September. G. Kahale mentioned that the Ayer project is underway. The transit turn around and the drop off/pick up location has been completed but they are still waiting for the completion of the pedestrian plaza before fully opening the facility. They are aiming for the end of September for it to open. He also mentioned that all the commuter rail parking facilities have a significant reduction in vehicles parked due to the pandemic.

B. Harris mentioned that elections for officers were held at the July MJTC meeting. Those elected were Jon Wyman, Chair; Nicholas Bosonetto, Vice Chair; and Tracy Murphy, Secretary. They also decided to cancel the August meeting so the next scheduled meeting will be held virtually on September 9th at 2:30.

B. Harris also referenced a few handouts – a public webinar put on by MassDOT Highway Division regarding the Glen Valley Road over East Branch of Swift River Bridge replacement project in Petersham and Shared Streets info.

G. Corbosiero indicated that the MRPC office remains closed to the public and staff are either working remotely or on alternating schedules in the office. He also mentioned that the MRPC is anticipating a \$400,000 Economic Development Administration grant to assist communities with COVID-19 related planning and to hire an Economic Recovery Coordinator for the 2-year period of the grant. Also, the Attorney General's office made a \$25,000 award to the MRPC for small business assistance grants for member communities. He also wanted to remind communities that MRPC offers 8 free hours of GIS

services for those who are interested. With a \$300,000 EPA grant, brownfield Phase 1 & 2 assessments are being conducted on sites in Fitchburg, Lunenburg & Winchendon.

VII. Administrative Matters

- Next MPO Meeting

B. Harris mentioned that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on August 19th. At this time there are no pressing matters or actions that need to be take in August so the meeting could be canceled if the members agreed. The consensus was to skip the August meeting and meet on September 16th at 1:00pm.

It was also mentioned that recently there were some changes in the MPO signatories. Michael J. Nicholson was recently elected as the Mayor of Gardner and Phyllis Luck of Lunenburg who was the Subregion 3 representative has retired and the town has appointed Michael-Ray Jeffreys as her replacement.

Also, if anyone needs copies of the handouts for the meeting, they are located right on the MRPC website at the end of the meeting announcements page.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 7 15 2020 Agenda

3 MPO 6 17 2020 Minutes

4 Int Parties UPWP Budget Amend Memo 6 22 2020

4 MJTC MPO Task Adjustment Summary 6 10 2020

5 MART Ridership in a COVID Era

6 MART Survey Flyer

6 MEMORANDUM MPO Monthly Report 7-15-2020

6 PF# 608850 Petersham PH Flyer

6 Shared Streets & Spaces

6 Shared Streets and Spaces Program