

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 November 18, 2020

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

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Brian Pounds, MassDOT; Arthur Frost, MassDOT; Mary Jo Bohart, Fitchburg; Bonnie Mahoney, MART; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Mark Piermarani, Leominster; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; Tim Kilhart, Subregion 3; Trevor Beauregard, Gardner;

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Paula Simmons, MassDOT Dist. 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Laura Hanson, MassDOT Dist. 2; Chris Timmel, FHWA, Brian Doheny, Ashburnham; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Brandon Kelly, Shirley; Jeff Bennett, Templeton; Bob Szocik, Templeton;

STAFF PRESENT

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

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

III. Approval of October 21, 2020 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the October 21, 2020 MPO Meeting Minutes. B. Harris mentioned that there were technical difficulties with the meeting recording so MPO staff had to go off of meeting notes and memory when creating the meeting minutes. The motion was seconded and passed.

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

- *Review and Discussion of Amendment to FFY 2021 Transit Element*
- *MPO Action Related to Propose TIP Amendment*

B. Mahony discussed a transit amendment for the FFY 2021-2025 TIP. The Amendment reflects the addition of nine (9) projects to the FFY 2021 Transit Element as well as cost changes to three (3) projects and the removal of six (6) projects within this TIP Element. Due to discretionary awards that MART received, projects had to be shifted around to incorporate these funds. Bus purchases that were originally scheduled for FFY 2021 were purchased with the grant awards and must now be removed from the TIP project list.

A motion was made and seconded to release the Amendment #1 for a 21-day comment period for the FFY 2021 Transit Element. The motion was approved. The 21-day comment period will begin on Monday November 23rd and end on Monday December 14th, just prior to the following MPO meeting scheduled

for December 16th. The MJTC meeting scheduled for December 9th will be an opportunity for public comment.

V. Re-endorsement of MPO Self Certification

- *Review & Discussion of MPO Self Certification Document Revision*
- *MPO Action to Endorse Revised Montachusett MPO Self Certification*

B. Harris referenced the “Certification of the Montachusett MPO 3C Transportation Planning Process” handout. This is a certification that is typically done each year when the Transportation Improvement Plan is endorsed. It lists a number of regulations and requirements that the MPO and planning agency adhere to when developing our plans. It was discovered that there was a missing line item (#6) when the most recent certification was signed back in May 2020. MassDOT is asking that the MPO review and endorse the updated document that includes that missing line item.

A motion was moved to endorse the revised Montachusett MPO Self Certification. The motion was seconded and passed without any further discussion.

B. Pounds mentioned that due to COVID and the fact that this document was already approved back in May, the MPO chair will be signing on behalf of the entire MPO signatories.

VI. MART PTASP Plan & Safety Metrics

- *Review and Discussion*
- *MPO Action as Needed regarding MOU*

B. Mahoney gave a presentation regarding this plan at the September MPO meeting but wanted to clarify a few things regarding the document. She reviewed Section 3. Safety and Performance Targets. She mentioned that the consultant that was used to put the document together had told her that the MPO has 180 days from when the targets were presented to the MPO to either come up with their own targets or adopted the MART targets that was presented. It is because of this that MART would like to re-present the safety targets to the MPO today to have them consider adopting MARTs targets or develop their own. B. Mahoney reviewed the MART targets.

B. Pounds had a question regarding the performance period. B. Mahoney indicated that it followed federal fiscal year. B. Pounds also indicated that their process in determining targets (a 5-year rolling average) is very similar to how they do it on the highway side. He also asked if the targets have been approved by the MART board yet. B. Mahoney indicated that it was officially approved yesterday (11/17/20). She also indicated that the plan itself does not need to be approved by the MPO but the targets need to be approved.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the targets as presented. The motion passed.

VII. Nashua NH-MA Urbanized Area Draft Transportation Planning MOU

- *Review and Discussion of Final MOU*
- *MPO Action to Adopt and Sign Final MOU*

B. Doherty discussed a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) developed by the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) and agencies operating in the Nashua NH-MA Urbanized Area (Nashua UZA). The reason for our notification and involvement on this MOU is due to the fact that a small portion of the Nashua UZA enters into our region in Groton. Because of this we were asked to review and comment on a draft of the MOU and then to subsequently sign onto it through MPO approval. Staff discussed the draft MOU with both MassDOT and Northern Middlesex Council of

Governments (NMCOG), who are also impacted by the Nashua UZA. The MOU contains and outlines the basic roles and responsibilities between the agencies operating within the Nashua UZA. This includes the sharing of data and information and coordination in the development of studies and plans.

The document is similar to a MOU approved between the Montachusett MPO and several Boston UZA agencies in 2018. The MOU was discussed by the MPO at their October 21, 2020 meeting at which time MART advised the MPO and subsequently the Nashua RPC that although they are listed on the draft MOU, they do not have any member communities that are actually in the Nashua UZA and should therefore be removed as a signee. Other than that, no other comments were submitted to the Nashua RPC. It was also discussed at the October MJTC meeting where no comments were made. They have therefore developed the final version of the MOU presented today which no longer includes MART as a signee.

The MJTC have reviewed the final document and recommends that the MPO approve. B. Doherty also indicated that MassDOT has decided that once all of the Massachusetts MPO's involved in the MOU have agreed to it, then the Secretary of MassDOT, Stephanie Pollack, will sign on behalf of the MPOs.

A motion was made and seconded to approve MOU as presented. The motion passed.

VIII. Updates

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

L. Hanson stated that FY21 Project #608548 Winchendon, Route 202 from Front St to Maple St – is at 100%. According to the latest project schedule, the PS&E submission is due 12/17/2020; FY22 Project #608850 Petersham Bridge Replacement Glen Valley Rd/East Branch Swift River – is at 75% design and is currently under review at MassDOT and comments are due on 12/16/20; FY23 Project #608784, Templeton Roundabout at Patriots Road, South Main St, North Main St and Gardner Road the – 75% is due 5/3/21; Virtual DPH was posted on 11/4, and this is the last day for receiving public comments; FY24 Project #609107, Phillipston/Templeton Pavement Preservation on Route 2, the 25/75% comments are under review. A current construction project is underway: Athol-Phillipson – Resurfacing and related work on Route 2– **The** Contractor is Warner Brothers.

A. Frost mentioned that the FY21 Westminster resurfacing and related work on Rt. 140 (Project #607431) is to be advertised on January 2nd; Lunenburg bridge rehabilitation for Rt. 2A over Pearl Hill Brook (#608657) will be advertised on November 28th; Gardner resurfacing and related work on Pearson Blvd. (#608888) is at 75% design and they hope to advertise in September or sooner; Gardner resurfacing and rumble strip installation on Rt. 140 (#608891) is at 75% design and is scheduled to be advertised on May 22, 2021. For state funded projects we have Leominster Rt. 12 & Hamilton Street and Rt. 12 at Nelson Street (#608561) at 75 or 100% and should be advertised on September 4th; Fitchburg/Leominster Twin Cities Rail Trail (#609411) is currently doing a subsurface utility exploration to make sure that there aren't any major utilities in the way for the abutments for the bridge. All other projects in the out years appear to be on schedule at this time.

There are a couple of Safe Routes to School projects in the upcoming few years that also appear to be on schedule.

B. Mahoney had a question regarding the status of the Leominster Rt. 13 project because this project will affect the bus service for MART. A. Frost will look into it and get back to her.

B. Mahoney indicated that MART has 5 new busses arriving in December and Fitchburg State University will be closing down their campus which will interrupt some of the bus service which will be updated on the MART website.

B. Harris mentioned that the MJTC had met last week on November 10th and the next scheduled meeting will be on December 9th at 2:30pm. As it was mentioned earlier, we will be using that meeting as an opportunity for public comment for TIP Amendment #1. At the previous MPO meeting there was a question regarding Rt. 70 over Rt. 2 in Lancaster. District 3 responded with a news release indicating that the southbound lane would be closed for several months while the bridge is repaired after a bridge strike on the highway. A. Frost felt that the bridge repair may be faster than originally anticipated and they hope to open up the roadway within a month or so.

Another notice that was received was the notice of a pre-recorded virtual public hearing for the proposed Gardner roundabout construction at Elm St, Pearl St, Central St, and Green St (#609279) on December 7th.

B. Harris also mentioned another handout regarding the “Shared Winter Streets & Spaces” funding opportunity. This is basically a continuation of the Shared Streets & Spaces that was offered earlier this year. More information on what could be funded is mentioned in the handout.

It was also mentioned that there is a handout on the MassTrails grant program funding opportunity with a deadline of 2/1/21.

The upcoming meeting calendar was also presented and B. Pounds added that the annual MARPA meeting will be happening at the end of January and TIP project readiness days will likely happen during the 2nd week in February.

G. Corbosiero mentioned that the MRPC recently hired 3 new employees – A Manager, Planner and Intern for the Economic Development Department and will soon be advertising for 2-4 additional part-time employees to assist with carrying out work due to an overwhelming surge in additional contracts.

IX. Administrative Matters

- Next MPO Meeting

B. Harris stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on December 16th at 1:00pm.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:06 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 11 18 2020 Agenda

MPO 10 21 2020 Minutes

FFY 2021 DRAFT Amendment 1 UPDATED 11 18 2020

FFY 2021 Proposed Amendment 1
Self Cert REVISED Endorsement Pg 1 Sig 11 18 2020
MART Final_PTASP
NashuaUZAMOU_Final_Nov 18 2020
NashuaUZAMOU_FinalDraft_Oct2020
Nashua UZA Image
Nashua UZA
Rt 70 Bridge MassDOT News Release
Gardner Proj 609279 Public Hearing Flyer
Shared Winter Streets News Release 11 10 2020
2021 Meeting Calendar Ver 1
MassTrailsGrants2020