

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 December 16, 2020

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

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Steve Woelfel, MassDOT; Arthur Frost, MassDOT; Gordon Robertson, Leominster; Guy Corbosiero; MRPC; Bonnie Mahoney, MART; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Tim Kilhart, Subregion 3;

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Paula Simmons, MassDOT Dist. 2; Laura Hanson, MassDOT Dist. 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Brian Doheny, Ashburnham; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Mark Piermarani, Leominster; Robert Oliva, Lunenburg; Chris Timmel, FHWA; Sujatha Krishan, CMRPC; Jon Rockwell, The Engineering Group;

STAFF PRESENT

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

II. Public Comments

No public comments were made.

A. Frost mentioned that at a prior MPO meeting, a question was asked about the Route 70 bridge over Route 2 in Lancaster and when the repairs would be completed. Repairs had been expected to take longer but repairs have moved forward rather quickly. The repairs are complete and the bridge is now open in both directions for all traffic.

III. Approval of November 18, 2020 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the November 18, 2020 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded and passed with Gordon Robertson abstaining.

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*

S. Bean mentioned that there was a memo that went out on Nov. 20th regarding a 21-day comment period for TIP amendment #1 to the FFY 2021 TIP. The amendment involved a number of changes to the transit element where a handful of projects were removed, added and/or had cost changes. These changes were presented and discussed in depth by Bonnie Mahoney of MART at the previous MPO meeting last month. It was at that meeting that a vote took place to release the document for a 21-day public review and comment period that started on November 23rd and ended on December 14th. During

that time, no comments were submitted to the MRPC. At last week's MJTC meeting, the Amendment was discussed and it was the consensus of the group to recommend that the MPO endorse TIP Amendment #1.

A motion was made to endorse the Montachusett FFY 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #1. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

V. Worcester Urbanized Area Transportation Planning MOU

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

G. Snow discussed a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) developed by the Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and agencies operating in the Worcester MA Urbanized Area (Worcester UZA). The reason for our notification and involvement on this MOU is due to the fact that a small portion of the Worcester UZA enters into our region in Clinton, Lancaster and Sterling. 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. The MOU contains and outlines the basic roles and responsibilities between the agencies operating within the Worcester 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 recently approved between the Montachusett MPO and the Nashua UZA last month. The MOU has been passed on to MART for their review and approval as well.

G. Snow then reviewed the various articles of the MOU with the MPO members. In addition, at the last MJTC meeting, members reached consensus to recommend that the MPO endorse and sign the MOU as presented. The MPO has the option of reviewing the document further and then seek endorsement at next month's meeting or accept and seek endorsement at today's meeting.

A motion was made to endorse the Worcester UZA MOU as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

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

- Development schedule and participation

B. Doherty reviewed with MPO members the planned schedule for the development of the FFY 2022-2026 Montachusett TIP. We have anticipated endorsement date of May 19, 2021. He then referenced a memo that was sent out regarding upcoming MPO, MJTC and MRPC meetings where the TIP will be a major topic of discussion. This memo also invites input from interested parties throughout the development process. There is another handout that outlines the FY2022-2026 TIP development schedule. Over the next month or so we will be reviewing current projects as well as new potential projects for the TIP. B. Doherty reviewed the steps and deadlines that go into the development of the TIP. As mentioned, this all leads to an anticipated endorsement date of May 19, 2021.

B. Doherty also mentioned that in the past, the MRPC has encouraged communities to give a presentation for any TIP projects that are in the works during the January and February MPO meetings. This will allow MRPC staff to have more information and score these projects more accurately. If this is something that a community is interested in then please contact MRPC to set up a presentation date.

A question was asked by B. Mahoney as to when you see MART would need to present their Transit projects for the TIP. She indicated that they will be submitting a list to MassDOT Rail and Transit Division by January 4, 2021 where it will be reviewed and evaluated. We do not know when the list will be approved, etc. B. Doherty indicated that obviously the sooner we can get the project listing the better but we can work with MART as the listing moves along.

VII. Updates

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

L. Hanson stated that FFY 21 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 mid-January 2021; in FFY 22 Project #608850 Petersham Bridge Replacement Glen Valley Rd over the East Branch Swift River, the 100% design is due July 7, 2021; FFY 23 Project #608784, Templeton Roundabout at Patriots Road, South Main St, North Main St and Gardner Road, the 75% is due May 3, 2021; and in FFY 24, Project #609107, Phillipston/Templeton Pavement Preservation on Route 2 is at 75% design and is working to 100% design.

A. Frost mentioned that the FY21 Westminster resurfacing and related work on Project #607431 Rt. 140 from Route 2A to Patricia Road is to be advertised on January 2nd; Project #608657 Lunenburg bridge rehabilitation for Rt. 2A over Pearl Hill Brook was advertised on December 5th; Project #608888 Gardner resurfacing and related work on Pearson Blvd. is at 25%/75% design and they hope to advertise on September 11, 2021; Project #608891 Gardner resurfacing and rumble strip installation on Rt. 140 is at 75% design and is scheduled to be advertised on May 22, 2021; and finally, Project #608561 Leominster Rt. 12 North Main Street at Hamilton and Nelson Streets is at 100% design and should be advertised on September 4th 2021.

B. Mahoney mentioned that 4 out of 5 our new busses have arrived. There will likely be service cancelations tomorrow due to the predicted snow storm. Users should check the MART web page for outages and Covid restrictions. New schedules will be put out in January that will reflect some of the changes that have been implemented over the past few months.

B. Harris mentioned that the MJTC had met last week on December 9 and the next scheduled meeting will be on January 13th at 2:30pm. The major topic of this meeting will be the upcoming FFY 2022-2026 TIP development as well as the FFY2022-2023 UPWP.

Staff will be meeting with students from WPI to discuss their progress on an intersection analysis for Rt 31/Rt 2A/River St in Fitchburg. We will review their work to date and help to finalize the project. Staff will also be meeting with the town of Hubbardston to discuss improvements to High Street and potential funding sources.

In terms of handouts for this meeting, we have a notice of the opening for applications for the MassTrails grants. They are due by February 1, 2021; a handout regarding a notice from MassDOT of a new funding opportunity for municipalities titled “Shared Winter Streets and Spaces”. This is similar to and a continuation of the “Shared Streets and Spaces” program from the summer. The handout discusses the program and the application process. It is also posted to the MRPC website with appropriate links to the program on the MassDOT website. There are multiple submittal dates for project applications. The final handout is a calendar for 2021 with anticipated meeting dates for the MRPC, MJTC and MPO for reference.

G. Corbosiero mentioned the MRPC has received many new contracts have been executed between the MRPC and a series of non-profit, local, state, and federal clients throughout this fiscal year. The increase in funds to this organization has resulted in the hiring of four, new employees over the past three months; one full-time Economic Development Manager, two part-time Senior Planners, and one

Economic Development Intern. The MRPC is also seeking another two full-time equivalent employees. A new job advertisement for additional personal can be found on the MRPC's website. The increase in business is the result of aggressive grant writing for new projects on behalf of our communities, new business that has been generated by repeat customers, and an injection of funding from the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) for economic development planning related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MRPC office remains closed to visitors and all public meetings are continuing virtually. MRPC's Executive Director has been monitoring the increase in COVID-19 cases throughout the Nation, the Commonwealth, and the Montachusett region. On December 9th, due to significant increases in all three, he restricted access to the MRPC office. MRPC staff are no longer authorized to work at the office in any group of any size. Only one employee may visit the office at any one time. MRPC's Executive Director takes the safety of all employees seriously. Due to the seriousness of this pandemic coupled with the highly contagious nature of the COVID-19 virus, all MRPC clients are requested to consider the necessity of the presence of MRPC staff at public meetings and on work sites. MRPC's Executive Director requests that our clients consider allowing MRPC staff to participate in these instances via phone or teleconference when and where possible.

VIII. Administrative Matters

- Next MPO Meeting

B. Harris stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on January 20, 2021 at 1:00pm.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 12 16 2020 Agenda
MPO 11 18 2020 Minutes
4 FFY 2021 DRAFT Amendment 1 Comment Period 11 24 2020
4 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #1
5 DRAFT Worcester MA CT UZA MOU October 2020_v4
6 TIP Development Memo 11 13 2020
6 TIP Schedule FFY 2022 2026
7 MassTrailsGrants2020
7 Shared Winter Streets News Release 11 10 2020
7 2021 Meeting Calendar Ver 1