

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 March 16, 2022

Due to technical difficulties, Derek Krevat assumed the duties of Stephen Woelfel and is representing Secretary Jamey Tesler. D. Krevat called the remote meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Arthur Frost, MassDOT Dist. 3; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; George Kahale, MART; Tom Skwierawski, Fitchburg; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Tim Kilhart, Subregion 3

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Andrew Wang, MassDOT; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT Dist. 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Bonnie Mahoney, MART; Josh Hall, Westminster; Jon Rockwell, TEC, Inc.

STAFF PRESENT

Brian Doherty; George Snow; Sheri Bean

II. Public Comments

D. Krevat asked those present if there were any public comments to be made. There were none at this time.

III. Approval of January 19, 2022 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the February 16, 2022 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded and passed.

IV. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Presentation by MassDOT

D. Krevat presented an update on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) that was passed into law in the fall of 2021. BIL provides increased funding for the MPO's regional target funding for the FY 2022 TIP as well as the FY 2023 – 2027 TIP. The implications on Highway Formula Programs (HFP), Transit Formula Programs (TFP), and Discretionary Programs were discussed. For HFP, BIL serves as the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act that covers FYs 2022 – 2026. For Massachusetts, BIL includes \$5.4 billion in highway formula funds for the 5-year period of which approximately \$1.9 billion is increased funding for existing and new programs. The Montachusett MPO's FY 2022 TIP regional target will increase by \$2,028,930 and the FY 2023 – 2026 will increase by \$8.8 million. MassDOT Planning will be coordinating with MPOs over the next few months for potential projects to spend the new funding on. For TFP, BIL is providing Massachusetts with \$2.8 billion of which \$2.2 billion is for the MBTA and \$600 million will be distributed the RTAs. The variety of Discretionary Programs was presented which have also received an increase in funding and new programs are available.

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

- *Discussion of FFY 2022 Highway Element Amendment #3*
- *Recommendation of MPO to Release Amendment #3 for Public Review & Comment*

B. Doherty stated that proposed TIP Amendment #3 is for two projects on the current highway TIP. MassDOT Highway Division has asked for costs increases on the following two projects. The first project is Project #609529 - Viscoloid Avenue Improvements (Safe Routes to School) in Leominster. Cost needs to be adjusted in FFY 2022 due to increases as a result of changes in the scope of work. The project cost has increased from \$2,232,523 to \$3,094,619 for a total increase of \$826,096 or approximately 38.6%. The second project is Project #608850 - Bridge Replacement of #P-08-002 - Glen Valley Road over Swift River East Branch. Cost needs to be adjusted in FFY 2022 due to increases as a result of the rising price of steel. The project cost has increased from \$2,050,591 to \$2,844,044 for a total increase of \$793,453 or approximately 38.7%. A recommendation from the MPO is being sought to release TIP Amendment #3 for a 21-day public review and comment period. The comment period will begin on March 25th and close on April 14th. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to release FFY 2022 TIP Amendment #3 for a 21-day public review and comment period.

VI. FFY 2023 Unified Work Planning Program (UPWP)

- *Update & Discussion on Local Task Requests*
- *Initial Budget Options*

S. Bean discussed the most recent requested project list to be moved forward to the 2023 UPWP. The project list includes: Route 117 at Jungle Road Intersection Study in Leominster; Route 119 at Route 13 Intersection Study in Townsend; Chase Road at Northfield Road Intersection Study in Lunenburg; Freight Truck Study for Ayer / Lunenburg / Shirley; and a Housing Coordination Plan for the region based on MassDOT UPWP guidance. The equity analysis for both the Environmental Justice & Title VI and geographic equity showed that Ayer & Shirley came out as the top communities that would benefit the most from these types of projects. All requested projects moved forward with one exception: Route 13 at West Street in Lunenburg due to the number of project requests and order of prioritization by the community. It is anticipated that a full draft will be ready for the next MPO meeting in April to be released for public comment at that time. Letters will be sent to the communities informing them of project acceptance.

T. Skwierawski asked for further detail about the Housing Coordination Plan. D. Krevat stated that in the new infrastructure law, there is language about housing coordination plans, and aligning transportation planning with housing production goals. The law states that Metropolitan Planning Funds can be spent on advancing regional housing goals.

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

- *Update of Project Listings, Costs & Status*
- *FFY 2023-2027 Target Funding Scenarios*
- *Recommendation on Funding Scenarios*

B. Doherty first presented additional information for the Transit section and the Statewide section of projects to be included in the draft TIP then presented two scenarios for the TIP Target Projects section. The goal is to reach an agreement upon a slate of projects that can be moved forward and developed into a draft TIP that will be brought before the MPO next month. The main difference in each of these scenarios is the placement of Project #607432 Westminster Rehab Box widening on Route 140 that pertained to moving the project due to a lack of project readiness. In Scenario One, it is listed in 2023, but listed in 2024 in Scenario Two. However, the latest available info indicates that the project can remain in 2023. Both scenarios leave a significant balance under fiscal year 2023. Scenario One leaves a balance of \$2.7 million, and no other project is ready to be placed in 2023. However, in Scenario One

for 2024 - 2026, there is no target fund balance left over and in 2027 there is a balance of just over \$19,000. The effect of moving the Route 140 to Scenario Two is that only one project can be moved from the Appendix which would be Project #608723 into 2027. Also, Scenario Two would leave a \$9 million balance in 2023 but leave very little balance in 2024 - 2027. The Scenarios were presented at the MJTC last week which recommended Scenario One to the MPO. A recommendation from the MPO is being sought today on what Scenario to develop into a draft TIP to be discussed at the next MPO meeting.

Tim Kilhart recommended that the MPO go with Scenario One as recommended by the MJTC last week. A. Frost recommended that a qualifier be placed on Scenario One to inform people that at this point, the target is zeroed out every year, so if there's any cost increase in any project, changes will have to be made. D. Krevat recommended that Scenario One should be the scenario to develop into a draft TIP to be discussed at the MPO meeting next month.

VIII. MART New Automatic Fare Collection System Presentation

B. Mahoney presented MARTs recently purchased Automatic Fare Collection System. This is a \$1.5 million project. Public meetings will be held to present the new system and the changes that it will cause to our current procedures and fair system. The system will be installed in buses beginning May 8th. The new system that is separate from the Charlie Card so there will be a new fair card and fair box and six ticket vending machines will be placed in MART communities in the first round and another six in a second round of funding in FY 23. There will 12 ticket vending machines altogether spread around all of MART communities. There is now a mobile app that does real-time arrivals and has a trip planner, shows all bus routes, service alerts, and purchase mobile tickets. There are many other features to the new system. There are four public meetings scheduled for the new fare box system and fixed route changes which is being posted on the MART website.

IX. Updates

- MassDOT Highway Division

A. Frost of MassDOT District 3 provided the following updates on FFY 2022. Project #608779 Lancaster Route 117 at Route 70 is at PS&E and has an ad date of March 26, 2022. Project #608793 in Hubbardston on Route 68 has an ad date of June 4, 2022. Statewide project update included Fitchburg #605296 Circle Street Bridge over the North Nashua River the advertisement date is August 27, 2022 and it's at 75% design. Littleton/Ayer #608443 Route 2A Willow and Bruce Bridge is due to be advertised on August 27, 2022. Ashby #609314 Intersection Improvements at Greenville Rd and Turnpike Rd is going to most likely move to a September 2022 advertisement date. Leominster #609529 Viscoloid Ave Safe Routes to School is at 100% design and due to be advertised May 21, 2022. Gardner #610672 Elm Street Resurfacing Sidewalk Improvement Safe Routes to School is going to advertisement date on September 30, 2022. This project experienced a school use changed but the project is still moving ahead but won't make it as an FY 22 project. Gardner / Westminster #610729 Pavement Preservation and Related work on Route 2 is due to advertised on June 18, 2022. Westminster / Fitchburg #610730 Pavement Preservation and Related work on Route 2 was advertised in December.

D. Amaral of MassDOT District 2 provided the following update. In FFY 2022 project #608850 Petersham Glen Valley Road Bridge Replacement over the East Branch of the Swift River is at PS&E with a current ad date of June 11, 2022 with a cost of \$2,844,000; in FFY 2023, project #608784 Templeton Roundabout at Patriots Road/South Main Street/North Main Street/Gardner Road is at 75% design, 100% is due on March 21, 2022 right of way plans are under review with an ad date of January 14, 2023, with an estimated cost of \$2,037,795; in FFY 2024, project #609107 Phillipston-Templeton Pavement Preservation on Route 2 is at PS&E which was completed February 25, 2022, ad date is November 11, 2023 with a cost of \$10,300,466; and in FFY 2026, project #608424 Templeton Reconstruction of Route

68 from King Phillip Trail to the Phillipston Town Line, design is at 75%, 100% is due June 23rd with an ad date of January 10, 2026 and an estimated cost of \$6,063,291.

- *Transit*

G. Kahale stated that there are no additional updates.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Doherty stated that the MJTC met last week on March 9th. The TIP and UPWP which were discussed today. The next MJTC is set for Wednesday, April 13th at 2:30 PM and will be a virtual meeting.

The MRPC received a notice from MassDOT that the Project Review Committee has approved for federal funding a project for the Route 140 and Route 62 intersection in the Town of Sterling, the Project number is 612612 with an estimated cost of \$3,117,500. This project will included in the TIP appendix of the current update. Staff met with the Town of Winchendon and MassDOT to discuss the project submittal of Blair Square. The Town mentioned the preferred option at that location and MassDOT has provided feedback through MaPIT. The MRPC will be looking for interns for the upcoming summer traffic out season. The majority of the work will be in data collection based on our current work program which will be posted on the MRPC website.

S. Bean responded to T Skwierawski request from the last MPO meeting to discuss the work being completed under the current UPWP. Several projects that staff are working on were discussed. The Route 12 Fitchburg Corridor Profile will be put in a draft form by the end of the month. Summer construction along the corridor lead to major delays in the study. The UPWP and TIP are currently under development and drafts should be available for the April MPO meeting. Under the data collection and analysis program, interns will be conducting traffic counts and staff will be collecting crash data for the regional high crash location report and database. For the Pavement Management system, staff is preparing a schedule for inventory collection and have reviewed different pavement management programs that are available. Discussions are being held for a possible new software purchase in conjunction with MassDOT. The mapping of potential vulnerable infrastructure locations is under development. The RTP is underway as staff is developing a scope and schedule for outreach meetings and plan other events. For Task 3.1 staff is doing some research and reaching out to our local communities to identify related reports on transportation, mobility, and access. Initial mapping of trails, sidewalks, local ADA information, and other features is also underway. Scopes of work are being developed for the Ashburnham and Shirley corridor profiles and data collection will begin soon. route to try project will be put in a draft form by the end of the month. For community trail planning, mapping is underway that combines trails, sidewalks, and other features. Staff has also been working with the Towns of Sterling and Winchendon to assist with some possible future trail funding and development. Scope of works are being developed for the intersection analyses for the Route 68 and High Street intersection in Hubbardston and the Mechanic Street and Leominster Connector intersection in Leominster and data collection will begin soon. Finally, the Bus Stop ADA Accessibility Evaluation that was completed for Fitchburg and Leominster will be repeated for Gardner. A scope of work has been developed and data collection will be started this spring and into the summer. Coordination with MART will be conducted as needed.

The next MJTC meeting will be on Wednesday April 13th at 2:30 pm.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Corbosiero stated the MRPC is in the process of submitting a grant proposal under the Economic Adjustment Assistance Program administered by the Federal Economic Development. The proposal will

analyze the availability of utilities within proximity to road and rail transportation infrastructure that would be desirable by the private sector for the establishment of new business starts both on brownfield and Greenfield sites. We will also study the availability and quality of the labor market across the region, the availability of training instructions and programming availability to the workforce in other amenities needed by private sector to foster the development of new enterprise and expansion of existing business. MRPC Planning and Development Department will be tasked with completing the analysis, researching, and reporting. MRPCs Transportation and GIS Departments will contribute to the project. The future Industrial Lands, long-term Economic Development, and Resiliency grant proposals will be approximately \$400,000. For any additional information please contact Joan Chapman, Planning and Development Director or Glenn Eaton, the Executive Director. The second deadline related to the call for proposals for District Local Technical Assistance Services, is April 5th, 2022. Awards for Services to the Communities will be made on Thursday April 7th at 7:00 PM. Again, contact Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director for additional information. The MRPC is in the process of completing its 2021 to 2025 update to Montachusett Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies. Again, if you need information, contact Karen Chapman or Glenn Eaton.

D. Krevat announced to the members a save the date for that the MassDOT Innovation Conference. It will occur May 24th to 25th in Worcester at the DCU Center and it will be available online as well as in person. There is a link in the chat if anyone wants to register.

X. Administrative Matters

- *Next MPO Meeting*

D. Krevat stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on April 20th, 2022 at 1:00 pm.

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:23 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 3 16 2022 Agenda
MPO 2 16 2022 Minutes
5 DRAFT FFY 2022 Highway Amendment #3 Summary
7 Statewide Program PrelimProjects 3_9_22
7 TIP Target Current Schedule
7 TIP Target Scenario 1
7 TIP Target Scenario 2
7 Transit Prelim 3_9_22
8 MART Farebox Presentation
BIL - Montachusett MPO Presentation