

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 April 20, 2022

Stephen Woelfel called the remote meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Stephen Woelfel, MassDOT OTP; Arthur Frost, MassDOT Dist., 3; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; George Kahale, MART; Tom Skwierawski, Fitchburg; Trevor Beauregard, Gardner; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; Tracy Murphy, Subregion 1; Brian Doheny, 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; Michelle Ho, MassDOT OTP; Nicole Roberts, Winchendon; Andrew Reovan, FHWA; Erik Atkins, Green International

STAFF PRESENT

Brad Harris; Brian Doherty; Sheri Bean

II. Public Comments

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

III. Approval of March 16, 2022 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the March 16, 2022 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded and passed with B. Doheny abstaining.

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

- *Review of Comments Received on FFY 2022 Highway Element Amendment #3*
- *MPO Endorsement of FFY 2022 Highway TIP Amendment #3*
- *Discussion on Potential TIP Amendment #4*
- *MPO Action to Release TIP Amendment #4 for Public Comment*

B. Harris stated that the MPO voted to release the TIP Amendment #3 for a 21-day public review and comment period at the meeting on 3/16. This comment period started on 3/25/22 and ended on 4/14/22. The amendment consisted of 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%. No comments were received during the comment period. A recommendation

was made by the MJTC on 4/13/22 to endorse TIP Amendment #3 as presented. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve FFY 2022 TIP Amendment #3.

B.Harris presented a 4th amendment to FFY 2022 TIP that involves two projects. The first project is on Elm Street in Gardner for resurfacing and sidewalk improvements (#610672). This project should be moved from FFY 2022 to FFY 2023. The second project is in Westminster/Fitchburg – Pavement preservation and related work on Route 2 (#610730). This project should be removed from FFY 2024 and the TIP as it was advertised in December 2021 with Non-Federal Aid (NFA) funds. These are the highway element changes for this amendment. We were recently notified by the Transit Authority that there also needs to be some changes to the FY22 transit element of the TIP as well. A handout was presented on these changes. The changes include removing three projects (highlighted in red) and six projects (highlighted in yellow) that have cost changes. No new projects are being added and there is no impact on the transit budget. A. Frost had a correction to the highway element handout. The Westminster/Fitchburg Route 2 pavement project is supposed to be project number 610730 (instead of #609529 as presented in the handout). T. Beauregard from Gardner also had a question regarding the reason for the change on the Gardner Elm Street project. A. Frost indicated that this project is a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funded project and that with the changes being made in Gardner with a new Elementary School being built, there were some concerns that the project would no longer qualify for SRTS funding given the new school location. It has since been determined that it still qualifies but due to the confusion, there was a slight delay in the project development.

With that change, a motion was made to release TIP Amendment #4 as presented with the only change being to the project number for Westminster/Fitchburg Route 2 resurfacing project (610730) to a 21-day public comment period. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously. The comment period will begin on 4/26/22 and end on 5/16/22.

V. FFY 2023 Unified Work Planning Program (UPWP)

- *Presentation of Draft FFY 2023 UPWP*
- *MPO Action to Release Draft FFY 2023 UPWP for Public Comment*

S. Bean updated the members on the development of the full draft UPWP. She presented the final results of the equity and geographic analyses conducted for this UPWP. This included a look back at tasks conducted over the past five years. From this review, staff was able to identify which communities we should target in our outreach for future studies. She then highlighted several of the tasks within the UPWP. This included the Regional Transportation Update, the Housing Coordination Plan, Intersection Analysis, a Freight Study in several communities and as part of transit planning the Public Transit Coordination Plan Update. The budget for the FFY 2023 UPWP overall as well as for the individual tasks was then discussed with the members. S. Bean indicated that since last month, we have received an update to our FTA section 5303 funds that has increased our overall by an additional \$50,000. This resulted in changes to several transit related tasks in the UPWP. A recommendation was made by the MJTC on 4/13/22 to release the draft FY2023 UPWP for a 21-day public comment period. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to release for a 21-day public comment period that will start on 4/26/22 and end on 5/16/22.

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

- *Presentation of Draft FFY 2023-2027 TIP*
- *MPO Action to Release Draft FFY 2023-2027 for Public Comment*

B. Doherty provided the members with review of the full draft TIP. The document was reviewed in detail by the projects listed in each fiscal year as well as in the Appendix. The presented document was

virtually the same as the document presented at the previous MPO meeting with the exception of Athol project #608723, which is listed in 2024, was moved to the statewide funding section of the document and the Leominster project #604499 was originally advance constructed over three years and is now over two years (2024 & 2025). The fiscal year target projects are fiscally constrained as required for the TIP. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to release the draft TIP document for a 21-day public comment period that will start on 4/26/22 and end on 5/16/22.

VII. 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 was advertised on March 26, 2022. Project #608793 in Hubbardston on Route 68 has at a final PS&E stage with 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 100% design. Ashby #609314 Intersection Improvements at Greenville Rd and Turnpike Rd is at 100% design and is due to advertise on July 30, 2022 or maybe a little bit later than that. Leominster #609529 Viscoloid Ave Safe Routes to School is at 100% design and due to be advertised June 25, 2022. Gardner #610672 Elm Street Resurfacing Sidewalk Improvement Safe Routes to School is at 25% design and is expected to advertise in January 2023. Gardner / Westminster #610729 Pavement Preservation and Related work on Route 2 is at 100% design and is due to advertised on June 18, 2022. Westminster / Fitchburg #610730 Pavement Preservation and Related work on Route 2 was advertised in December.

A. Frost informed the MPO that he will be retiring at the end of May, so next month will be his last meeting.

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; 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 any day now and has an ad date of January 14, 2023.

- Transit

G. Kahale stated that the Board of Selectmen for the town of Phillipston have voted to join the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART). The MART Advisory Board is meeting in May and will make a decision whether or not to accept Phillipston as a member.

- Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)

B. Harris stated that the MJTC met last week on April 13th. The TIP and UPWP were reviewed. The next MJTC is set for Wednesday, May 11th at 2:30 PM and will be a virtual meeting. This meeting will also be used as an opportunity for public comment for the public comment period for both the UPWP & TIP documents.

Staff attended a public meeting held by the City of Fitchburg and the consulting firm of Weston & Sampson. This meeting was related to a study entitled *FLOOD REDUCTION FOR FALULAH & BAKER BROOK*. The discussion focused on project priorities for reducing flooding on John Fitch Highway and the rest of the Falulah/Baker Brook watershed.

MRPC is still seeking interns for the upcoming count season. Most of the work will be in data collection based on our current work program. Information is also be posted to the MRPC website. If you know anyone that might be interested, please have them check the website.

There are several handouts for members. All of these announcements are listed on the MRPC website on the front page under the Announcements tab.

- The first is related to a survey from MARPA for our member communities to fill out. It relates to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law or BIL and its numerous funding programs and opportunities. The survey is asking about local needs and projects and how the RPAs can assist the municipalities. Deadline on this survey is May 13th.
- The second handout relates to some upcoming Pre-Application webinars for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program. There are specific webinars for Tribal Governments, Towns and Transit Authorities and MPOs. The grant application process for this program has not opened as of yet but it is expected to begin this Spring.
- The third handout is from MassTrails announcing a Spring Grant Round for MassTrail Grants. The grant amount has been increased to \$500,000 per award. Deadline for submittal is May 16th.
- Finally, there is a handout on a webinar regarding the EPA's Clean School Bus Rebate Program. The webinar is scheduled for April 27th at 1:00 pm and participants must register. The program seeks to replace current buses with low or zero emission school buses.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Corbosiero stated the town of Lancaster hired the MRPC to complete an All-Hazards Mitigation Plan. This project is ongoing and anticipated to be completed by this June. These local plans must be in place so that communities may apply for grants to address local infrastructure projects such as replacing culverts. Please contact Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director, or Jeffrey Legros, Principal Planner concerning this project.

Annually, the MRPC applies to the State Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) for Planning Assistance Grants (PAG) to address local land use planning and zoning amendments. Recently, downtown zoning bylaw amendments were completed in Athol while master planning work continues in Hubbardston and Sterling. PAG proposals are typically due into EOEEA each May. Please contact Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director for any of the above projects.

The State-funded District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program is now in its 15th year. By the end of this calendar year, the following projects will be completed.

1. Ashburnham Master Plan Land Use Chapter and Zoning Map, and Infrastructure Mapping.
2. Harvard Master Plan Transportation Chapter and Agriculture Commission Study.
3. Hubbardston Town Center Overlay District
4. Lancaster 40R District Development
5. Leominster Open Space Update
6. Nashoba Regional Greenways Planning Assistance
7. Royalston Village Center Bylaw Amendments
8. Shirley 40R Feasibility
9. Sterling Streamlined Permitting Guidebook

S. Woelfel announced to the members that the MassDOT Innovation Conference will occur May 24th to 25th in Worcester at the DCU Center. If interested in attending, please register soon as we are nearing the attendance limit. This will be a hybrid event, so individuals can attend in person or virtually.

VIII. Administrative Matters

- Next MPO Meeting

B. Harris stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on May 18, 2022 at 1:00 pm.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

NOTE: MPO and MRPC Staff would like to recognize MassDOT District 3 Project Development Engineer Arthur Frost for all of his work and efforts to maintain and improve the communities in the Region. His assistance and knowledge have produced numerous projects that have and will continue to benefit us all. He has been an invaluable resource for us, and we wish him the best of luck in his newfound freedom.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 4 20 2022 Agenda

MPO 3 16 2022 Minutes

4 DRAFT FFY 2022 Amendment #4 Summary

4 DRAFT FFY 2022 Highway Amendment #3 Summary

4 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #3

4 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #4 & Transit Summary

4 Transit FY22 TIP Amendment #4 Updated 4 14 2022

5 DRAFT FFY 2023 UPWP

6 DRAFT FFY 2023 2027 TIP

7 04-27-2022 Clean School Bus Program Webinar – ENGLISH

7 MARPA RPA BIL Community Survey 4 19 2022

7 PreApplication Webinar Shared Streets Program Flyer 2022

7 Spring 2022 MassTrails Grant Announcement