

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 June 15, 2022

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

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Stephen Woelfel, MassDOT OTP; Ann Sullivan, MassDOT Dist., 3; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; George Kahale, MART; Trevor Beauregard, Gardner; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Derek Drevat, MassDOT OTP; Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Thomas Ruta, MassDOT Dist. 2; Michelle Ho, MassDOT OTP; Sara Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Beth Faxon, Townsend; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Brian Croteau, Winchendon; Bonnie Mahoney, MART; Kate Hodges, Lancaster

STAFF PRESENT

George Snow; Brian Doherty

II. Public Comments

S. Woelfel asked those present if there were any public comments to be made.

There were none.

III. Approval of May 18, 2022 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the May 18, 2022 MPO Meeting Minutes.

B. Doherty made a comment on a revised section on the minutes. The Members and Guests Present list was revised from the minutes that went out with the mailing.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with the revised attendance list.

IV. Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- *Presentation by MassDOT OTP*

C. Klem mentioned that there is no official update this month, but said it is important to keep a standing MPO agenda item on this subject to keep members informed when updates do come. He encouraged members to look at the plan website (<https://www.mass.gov/beyond-mobility>) and take the survey if they have not already done so. The plan will have a significant impact on transportation decisions moving forward.

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

- *Review of Comments Received on FFY 2022 Amendment #5*
- *MPO Endorsement of FFY 2022 TIP Amendment #5*

- *FFY 2022 Transit Project Cost Change Correction – Possible MPO Action*

B. Doherty reviewed with the members Draft TIP Amendment #5 that involves one (1) project in the FFY 2022 Highway Element of the FFY 2022-2026 TIP. MassDOT informed us that project #609314, Ashby - Intersection Improvements at Greenville Road (Route 31) and Turnpike Road, was at 100% design and close to final design. There is an expected advertisement date of August 27th, and the overall cost has increased. This project is listed in the TIP under Section 2B/State Prioritized Modernization Projects – Intersection Improvements and does not impact any target funded projects or the TIP's fiscal constraint. The design consultant has identified three major reasons for the cost increase:

1. In response to 75% design review comments, the Design Engineer (DE) was directed to move some of the earth work quantities to Unclassified Excavation. The unit price for Unclassified Excavation was significantly higher than the price for Earth Excavation.
2. Drainage costs increased as a result of revisions required per on-going permitting and comments from the Boston Environmental (MassDOT) section. All existing Catch Basins (CB's) in the project area are now replaced and will have deep sumps as a Best Management Practice (BMP) for example.
3. All unit costs were updated to reflect current price trends with weighted average bid prices. There has been significant inflation, so the DE used the most recent 4 months instead of 12 months for determining unit cost.

The new cost estimate for this project is now at \$3,224,713; an increase of \$721,315 or 28.8%. The MPO voted to release this Amendment for a 21-day public review that began on May 24th and closed on Monday on June 13th. To date we have not received any comments on this Amendment. Also, the MJTC at its June meeting reviewed and recommended that the MPO endorse the Amendment.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to endorse TIP Amendment #5.

VI. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

- *Review and Discussion of Draft Schedule and Vision Statement*

B. Doherty provided the members with a review of the development schedule of the next Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The last plan was endorsed in 2019 and federal regulations require an update every four years. The RTP encompass all modes and methods of transportation in the region and outlines future growth and needs over a 20-to-30-year life span. The new RTP will need to be endorsed by the MPO around this time next year, so to accomplish that we have developed a draft schedule that outlines the major parts of the plan that we need to address. We plan to begin with the overall Vision Statement for the RTP as well as the goals and objectives. This will begin with the MJTC next month at which we will discuss the prior Vision Statement and refine and update as needed. Public outreach will be maintained throughout the process and will be a major point of emphasis. B. Doherty then reviewed the planned schedule in more detail. In addition, the Executive Summary from the last RTP was presented to provide members with a glimpse as to what will be part of the RTP.

VII. MART TAM Plan Update

- *Presentation, Review and MPO Action as Needed*

B. Mahoney presented on the MART Transportation Asset Management Plan update, which is required to be updated this year under the federal FAST Act legislation. Every agency must develop a TAM plan if it owns, operates, or manages capital assets used to provide public transportation and receives federal financial assistance under 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 as a recipient or subrecipient. A full copy of the updated

plan is available on MART's website. The presentation being given is an updated version of the presentation given to the MPO in 2018.

The TAM Plan:

- outlines how people, processes and tools come together to address asset management policy and goals.
- Provides accountability and visibility for furthering understanding of leveraging asset management practices.
- Supports planning, budgeting, and communication to internal and external stakeholders.

B. Mahoney reviewed MART's inventory of assets which was reported in the plan. The presentation included a condition assessment of assets and prioritized list of investments identified in the plan. She mentioned that the MPO does not have to vote to accept the plan, but it is a requirement to present the plan to the MPO.

T. Beauregard asked what MART is doing in terms of acquiring more electric vehicles in its fleet.

B. Mahoney said that MassDOT is doing an electric vehicle study for all the Regional Transit Authorities which is expected in June. MART was waiting to program the purchase of electric vehicles until the feasibility study was finished. MART has also been in contact with National Grid to discuss their electric vehicle fleet assistance process. Most likely in the 2024 TIP there will be more purchases of electric vehicle assets. Another development underway is through MassDEP, to spend some of the Volkswagen mitigation fund money. Most likely those funds will be used to replace three 2007 vehicles with electric vehicles in the next few years.

VIII. Updates

- MassDOT Highway Division

A. Sullivan of MassDOT District 3 provided the following updates on FFY 2022. Project #608779 Rt 117 and Rt 70 in Lancaster was advertised in March. In Hubbardston, Rt 68 #608793 was due to be advertised on June 4th. In Fitchburg, Bridge Preservation for Circle Street over the North Nashua River #605296 is due to be advertised on August 27th. In Gardner and Westminster preservation and related work on Rt 2 #610729 is due to be advertised on July 16th. In Ashby, Greenville Road and Turnpike Road #609314 is due to be advertised on August 27th. In Leominster, Visculoid Avenue #609529 is due to be advertised August 13th. In Gardner #610672 has been moved to 2023.

T. Ruta 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 was advertised June 11, 2022; in FFY 2023, project #608784 Templeton Roundabout at Patriots Road/South Main Street/North Main Street/Gardner Road is at 100% design and has an ad date of January 14, 2023. In Phillipston and Templeton, #609107 Rt 2 preservation and related work is proposed for 2023 with a current advertisement date of December 10th.

- 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 voted to accept Phillipston as a member of MART. This brings the total communities which MART serves to 24.

MART has also been awarded \$180,000 under the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Program to install bus shelters in Fitchburg, Gardner and Athol. Funds will be available after October 1st.

He mentioned Phase III of the Ayer pedestrian plaza is underway, which will result in restroom facilities being installed and will be completed in the fall.

MART's new ticketing system is up and running and the mobile app will be available in the app store this month. The app will allow the buying of tickets, tracking of buses and viewing of schedules.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Doherty gave a number of updates which included the following:

- The MJTC met on June 8th to review TIP Amendment #5. Also Nominating Committee presented a slate for Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. They are: Chair – Dick Kilhart from Winchendon; Vice Chair - Travis Condon from the North Central MA Chamber of Commerce; and for Secretary we have 2 nominees – Guy Corbosiero from Winchendon and Bob Swartz from Gardner. Elections will take place at the next meeting. The date for the next MJTC meeting is Wednesday July 13th at 2:30 pm.
- The MJTC also decided that after the July meeting, they will go to an every other month meeting for the remainder of 2022. Therefore, the schedule will be July 13th, September 14th and November 9th. It was also decided if there was a need for a meeting on one of the off months, one can be called.
- One handout for discussion: A newsletter from MassDOT for the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study from May 27th. The newsletter provides a status update of the study as well as an announcement for the next Working Group Meeting that is set for June 22nd at 1:00 pm. Information and instructions on how to access the meeting are in the newsletter. The newsletter has also been posted to the MRPC website under Announcements.
- Staff attended a webinar this past Monday on the application process for the new federally funded program titled Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A). The webinar covered the recently released Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Program. Applications will be due by **September 15, 2022**. Staff will be discussing this program at the upcoming MJTC meeting.
- MRPC received copies of letters to Leominster, Lancaster and Sterling regarding recent actions by the Project Review Committee. The PRC has evaluated project number 612659 *LEOMINSTER-LANCASTER- PAVEMENT PRESERVATION AND RELATED WORK ON ROUTE 2* and project number 612730 *HARVARD- LITTLETON- RESURFACING AND RELATED WORK ON ROUTE 2, FROM OLD LITTLETON ROAD BRIDGE TO EAST OF WHITCOMB AVENUE BRIDGE* and determined that they are eligible for funding. Based on the project's estimated construction cost, plus contingencies and police details, the PRC approved the Leominster-Lancaster project at a cost of \$4,920,000 and the Harvard Littleton project at a cost of \$5,631,250. These projects will be worked into the TIP that will be developed next year.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Corbosiero gave the following updates:

Our GIS Department continues to deliver services to Assessors offices in Ayer, Clinton, Royalston, Shirley, Townsend, and Westminster and makes periodic updates to the MRMapper website.

MRPC maintains a spreadsheet which identifies grants available to communities. Eight programs have been identified. Grant funds are available for a variety of local needs. Please contact Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director at kchapman@mrpc.org for additional information.

The Planning and Development Department is working on delivering services under 13 contracts to at least 11 of our communities while Brownfields Environmental Site Assessment and Economic Development Planning programming is available to all 22 cities and towns. The next quarterly update of all projects will be completed and distributed in July. Please contact Karen Chapman for further information.

IX. Administrative Matters

- Next MPO Meeting

B. Doherty stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on July 20, 2022 at 1:00 pm. He also mentioned that in the past the MPO has decided to meet every other month, like the MJTC is doing, with the caveat that a meeting will be called in the off months if any issues come up.

S. Woelfel suggested that this be revisited at the July MPO meeting.

X. Adjournment

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

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 6 15 2022 Agenda

MPO 5 18 2022 Minutes

5 DRAFT FFY 2022 TIP Amendment #5 Summary

5 In Parties Draft TIP Amendment #5

6 2020 RTP Executive Summary

6 RTP Draft Development Schedule

7 2022 MART TAM Plan

7 TAM Plan MPO Presentation

8 Northern Tier Newsletter May 2022