

# **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 July 20, 2022**

Derek Krevat called the remote meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

## **I. Introduction**

### **SIGNATORIES PRESENT**

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Sara Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Tom Skwierawski, Fitchburg; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; Bonnie Mahoney, MART; Brian Croteau, Subregion 1; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2

### **MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT**

Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Andrew Wang, MassDOT OTP; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT Dist. 2; Chris Timmel, FHWA; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Jasmin Farinacci, Lancaster; Alice Livdahl, Hubbardston

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Brad Harris; George Snow

## **II. Public Comments**

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

## **III. Approval of June 15, 2022 Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the June 15, 2022 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **IV. Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan Update**

- *Presentation by MassDOT OTP*

D. Krevat stated that the statewide long range transportation plan is continuing but there is nothing too extensive to report this month. The current survey that asks about a broad vision for the future of transportation statewide will be closing at the end of this month. We are close to our goal for survey responses. We will make the link available and ask if members could share the survey and encourage participation in order to increase responses from north central MA. Results should be made available soon. We will also be launching an additional survey in August or September that will ask about priorities and preferences.

B. Mahoney stated that if MassDOT provides her with the link, she will have it made available through the MART website.

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

- *Review of Potential Adjustments & Amendment #6 to the Transit Element*
- *MPO Action Related to Potential Adjustment/Amendment*

B. Mahoney reviewed with the members present several proposed changes to the FFY 2022 Transit Element of the FFY 2022-2026 Montachusett TIP. In particular, the changes reflect cost changes to seven (7) separate transit projects and the addition of one (1) new project. The added project reflects the recent award to MART of 5 replacement vehicles under the Section 5310 Community Transit Grant Program. The cost changes to the remaining projects are due to design, construction estimates and priorities. Five of the projects saw a cost reduction ranging from \$20 to \$36,700. The remaining two projects saw a cost increase from \$1,313 to \$57,460. Based on the Amendment/Adjustment definition contained in the TIP, project cost changes of more than 10% should require a TIP Amendment. Four of these seven projects meet this criteria.

A question was asked regarding the work to be conducted at the Intermodal Transit Center (ITC) in Fitchburg and whether it included an elevator. B. Mahoney replied that there is a FFY 2023 project to repair the elevators. This project is just for the first floor south pod and the commuter rail area.

D. Krevat asked if the adjustments and amendment actions should be handled separately. B. Mahoney indicated that they would have no issue with all of the projects be handled as part of an amendment.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to release TIP Amendment #6 for a 21 day public review and comment period.

## **VI. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

### **– Vision Statement Review and Discussion**

B. Harris presented to the members the RTP Draft Development Schedule that was presented last month. He stated that currently we are working on a Vision Statement that will describe what the Transportation network will look like in 2050 under ideal conditions and developing a survey to distribute to the public.

At the last MJTC meeting, the group discussed the Vision Statement from the 2020 RTP, and what we would like the 2024 Vision Statement to portray. What we are looking to do is understand the purpose of the Vision Statement and to review possible changes the 2020 RTP Statement. One of the things that is important is to have the Vision Statement be concise and to the point, while still portraying our full intent for the future. After we adopt a 2024 RTP Vision Statement, the goals, objectives and performance measures will then be examined further.

There are two questions for the members:

- From the 2020 Statement, is there anything we can reduce without losing any of the substance; and
- Given the changes since the RTP was developed in 2019, what needs to be added to the statement to express what we feel is the ideal Vision of the Transportation Network in the future.

B. Harris then reviewed a draft survey put together by staff that we plan on distributing to the public. We based this on the 2020 survey and added some additional questions that will consider the impacts COVID has had on travel habits in the region. We intend to keep this survey relatively short and to the point. We encourage feedback from the MPO and to tell us:

- Is it easily understandable?
- Are there any other questions that would be insightful?

- Any feedback on distribution? Where should we seek out survey takers?

Any feedback is welcomed. The next step after revising the vision statement is updating and revising the RTP goals, objectives and performance measures. These will be discussed with the MJTC and the MPO at future meetings.

A question was asked regarding providing feedback on the Vision Statement and the survey. B. Harris stated that any comments can be sent to us via email or over the phone. Regarding the survey, we hope to finalize in the next couple of months.

## **VII. Updates**

### *- MassDOT Highway Division*

S. Bradbury of MassDOT District 3 provided the following updates on FFY 2022 projects. Project #608779 Rt 117 and Rt 70 in Lancaster was advertised on March 22nd. The Gardner/Westminster preservation and related work on Rt 2 project #610729 was advertised on July 16th. In Hubbardston, the Rt 68 project #608793 was advertised on June 4th. The Leominster Viscoloid Avenue #609529 Safe Routes to School project is due to be advertised August 13th. The Ashby Greenville Road and Turnpike Road project #609314 is due to be advertised on August 27th. Also, the Fitchburg Bridge Preservation project for Circle Street over the North Nashua River, #605296, is due to be advertised on August 27th. The Littleton/Ayer Route 2A/Willow Road project is also due to be advertised on August 27<sup>th</sup>.

B. Mahoney asked about the status of the second phase project for the Twin Cities Rail Trail. She indicated the MART was buying new stationary bike racks for the project and they were interested on when they should make the purchase. S. Bradbury stated she did not have that information available right now but that she would find out and provide the information to MART.

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 was advertised on June 11<sup>th</sup>, the bids were opened on July 12<sup>th</sup> and the contract for \$2.14 million was awarded to Tulley Construction. In FFY 2023, project #608784 Templeton Roundabout at Patriots Road/South Main Street/North Main Street/Gardner Road has completed its 100% design review, the PS&E is due August 22<sup>nd</sup> with an ad date of January 14, 2023. The Phillipston/Templeton project #609107 Rt 2 preservation and related work is at PS&E with an ad date of November 12, 2022; and in FFY 2024, Athol project #608723 Crescent Street at Chestnut Hill Avenue intersection improvements is at 75% design with the 100% due October 14<sup>th</sup> and an ad date of January 6, 2024.

### *- Transit*

B. Mahoney stated that there are not any real updates due to construction delays. As a result, MART has started working on the RFPs for our FFY 2023 projects. The new transit app is still not available in the app stores due to a technical issue. The Trip Planner piece is not functioning as planned. We have told them to go ahead and release as is and then we can address that piece of the app and release an update. Keep an eye on the MART website for information on the release. The app is called MART On the Go.

### *- Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Harris provided the following updates:

- The MJTC met last week on July 13th. At that meeting, elections were held for the officers of the MJTC. Elected for the year beginning in July were Chair – Dick Kilhart from Athol; Vice Chair

- Travis Condon from the North Central MA Chamber of Commerce; and Secretary - Bob Swartz from Gardner. The MJTC has decided to take the months of August, October and December off. The schedule for the rest of the year will be September 14<sup>th</sup>, and November 9<sup>th</sup>. They will return to an every month meeting schedule beginning January 11, 2023 when we start the development of the next TIP. All MJTC meetings will begin at 2:30 pm.

- The MRPC has been able to secure the services of an outside contractor to conduct traffic counts for us this year. Amos Engineering, LLC DBA Boston Traffic Data out of Framingham. They should be underway at his time.
- One of the handouts is the MassDOT Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study June Newsletter. There was a virtual Public Information Meeting on July 14th that was well attended. At the meeting the consultant presented information and data collected and analyzed to date. A video of the meeting and the presentation can be found at the Northern Tier Project website at [www.mass.gov/northern-tier-passenger-rail-study](http://www.mass.gov/northern-tier-passenger-rail-study). information on future meetings will be posted to the MRPC website under Announcements on the home page.
- There are two handouts related to a MA DEP grant program. The first is an announcement newsletter and the second is an Application Guidance and Grant Requirements guide. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announced a new funding opportunity for private, public, and non-profit entities to replace eligible diesel vehicles and equipment with zero emission technologies. Through the federal Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) program, Massachusetts is conducting a competitive electric-only Solicitation with an application deadline of 5 PM **August 24, 2022**. This is an early replacement program designed to accelerate the retirement of less efficient and more polluting diesel vehicles and equipment. Eligible diesel vehicles, engines and equipment include, but are not limited to School Buses, Transit Buses, Medium-duty or heavy-duty trucks, and Non-road engines, equipment, or vehicles. MassDEP has approximately \$1.88 million available for this new program and is open to any entity, public or private, with an eligible vehicle, engine, or equipment to replace. Equipment eligibility is based on criteria listed in the 2021 DERA Guide.
- There are handouts that provide information on 2 new federally funded grant programs enacted by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The first covers the program titled Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A). The second grant program is entitled Reconnecting American Communities (RCA). Both programs were discussed at the MJTC. MRPC will be putting together an application for the SS4A program to develop an Action Plan for the region. An Action Plan is needed in order to apply for Implementation grants. We anticipate that we will file as a MPO with communities signing on as a joint applicant. We have developed a survey to judge interest, identify a primary contact person and possible match sources. Applications will be due by **September 15, 2022**.
- The Reconnecting American Communities grant application will also be explored in more depth with interested jurisdictions. The program is designed to help reconnect communities that were previously cut off from economic opportunities by transportation infrastructure. Reconnecting a community could mean adapting existing infrastructure— such as building a pedestrian walkway over or under an existing highway— to better connect neighborhoods to opportunities or better means of access such as crosswalks and redesigned intersections. Applications for this program will be due by **October 13, 2022**.
- The last handout talks about the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP). The purpose of the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) is to reduce transportation emissions through the development of State carbon reduction strategies and by funding projects designed to reduce transportation

emissions. CRP funding may be used on a wide range of projects that support the reduction of transportation emissions. Projects must be identified in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)/Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and be consistent with the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan(s).

For each fiscal year, 65 percent of funds apportioned to the State for the CRP shall be obligated, in proportion to their relative shares of the population in the State:

- In urbanized areas of the State with an urbanized area population of more than 200,000.
- In urbanized areas of the State with an urbanized population of not less than 50,000 and not more than 200,000;
- In urban areas of the State with a population of not less than 5,000 and not more than 49,999; and
- In other areas of the State with a population of less than 5,000.

The Leominster-Fitchburg Urbanized Area has a suballocation amount of \$209,071. How these funds are to be allocated will be investigated further.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

B. Harris gave the following updates on ongoing projects:

- Providing assistance to ten “MBTA Communities” in compliance with the Chapter 40A, Section 3A, Zoning Act;
- Staff completed a Hazards Mitigation Plan (HMP) in Lancaster, opening up the door for the town to obtain federal funding for to correct hazards to local streets;
- Provided assistance to communities with the preparation of Green Communities Competitive Grants to the MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and administration of these awards for energy saving projects, such as the installation of energy-efficient heating systems, new lighting in public buildings and the purchase of electric vehicles for municipalities;
- Completed several Master Plan elements for the Town of Ashburnham; and
- Conducted zoning bylaw updates to several communities funded through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program and local funds.

Since 1998, the MRPC has had a very successful brownfields assessment and cleanup program. We’ve been awarded approximately \$1.5 million in environmental site assessment grants from the EPA and another \$480,000 in a revolving loan fund grant. These US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) contracts also fund training in brownfields assessments and reuse planning. Staff will be attending the National EPA Brownfields Conference from August 16-19 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

This summer, MRPC is updating Census and other socioeconomic information for the Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA) completed for the Heywood Group and UMass Memorial HealthAlliance - Clinton Hospital.

Staff will complete for Growing Places, Inc. a strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (SOAR) analyses and strategic plan for the creation of a “food hub” in the Montachusett region.

MRPC extended its office lease agreement with the Trustees of Reservations (TOR) for five years (through June 20, 2027).

MRPC passed its budget in June for FY23.

**VIII. Administrative Matters**

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B. Harris stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on August 17, 2022 at 1:00 pm.

**IX. Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:48 p.m.

**DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING**

MPO 7 20 2022 Agenda

MPO 6 15 2022 Minutes

5 Summary Adjustment Amendment #6 7 20 2022

6 RTP Draft Development Schedule

6 RTP Draft Survey

6 RTP Visioning Session

7 CRP Guidance 2022

7 CRP Info Qvia\_com Website

7 MassDEP DERA Guidance and Grant Requirements 2022

7 MassDEP Emission Reduction Program 2022

7 Northern Tier June Newsletter

7 RCA Press Release 6 30 2022

7 SS4A FAQs 7 13 2022