

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 August 17, 2022

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

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Steve Woelfel, MassDOT OTP; Ann Sullivan, MassDOT Dist. 3; Tom Skwierawski; Fitchburg; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; George Kahale, MART; Brian Croteau, Subregion 1; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Glenn Eaton, MRPC

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Andrew Wang, MassDOT OTP; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3.; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT Dist. 2; Chris Timmel, FHWA;

STAFF PRESENT

George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty

II. Public Comments

Steve Woelfel asked those present if there were any public comments to be made. There were none.

III. Approval of July 20, 2022 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the July 20, 2022 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

IV. Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- *Presentation by MassDOT OTP*

C. Klem stated that the statewide long range transportation plan is continuing but there is nothing too extensive to report this month. The survey that asks about a broad vision for the future of transportation statewide closed at the end of July. 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.

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

- *Review of Comments Received on Amendment #6 to the Transit Element*
- *MPO Action on Amendment #6*

B. Doherty reviewed with the members present amendment #6 which includes several 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. These changes went out for a 21-day public comment period that ended on Tuesday, August 16. No comments were received during the comment period.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to endorse amendment #6 to the 2022-2026 TIP.

VI. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

- Vision Statement Review and Discussion

B. Doherty 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. He reviewed comments made over the last month on the Vision Statement and proposed Vision Statement draft #2 as follows:

Vision Draft 2 - The Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization seeks to provide a multi-modal transportation system that is safe, secure, efficient and affordable to all individuals while supporting and encouraging environmentally- sustainable economic development, growth, and revitalization in the Montachusett Region.

Vision draft 2 included a recommendation made to add in reference to environmental sustainability.

B. Doherty then briefly reviewed the Goals, Objectives and Strategies of the 2020 RTP for the purpose of getting members familiar with this next step. Staff will work to develop these for the 2024 RTP and present to members and attain feedback at a future meeting.

B. Doherty 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 on the survey, and will look to finalize it in the coming month.

VII. Safe Streets for All Action Plan Grant Application Update

G Snow discussed the purpose of the SS4A program, the two (2) types of grants available, the eligibility requirements, the differences between a joint application and a partnering application, and the due date.

S. Bean presented information on staffs upcoming grant application for the Safe Streets for All Action Plan (SS4A). The MRPC is continuing to investigate and develop an application for the Safe Streets for All program to develop an Action Plan for the Montachusett Region. Staff sent an email to all communities to gauge their possible interest in the program and to assess their level of participation. To date we have had positive responses from 7 communities including all 3 of the cities. We plan on following up with everybody and will be soliciting a letter of support for the application from all involved. All of the respondents have also indicated their willingness to be a joint applicant with the MRPC/MPO as the lead applicant.

VIII. Updates

- MassDOT Highway Division

A Sullivan 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 27th.

- *Transit*

G. Kahale did not have any transit updates.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

G. Snow provided the following updates

- The MJTC did not meet in August. The next scheduled meeting will be September 14th at 2:30 pm.
- One handout for review is the MassDOT Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study July Newsletter. The newsletter outlines the study progress to date and provides links to various online resources. The Northern Tier Project website can be found at www.mass.gov/northern-tier-passenger-rail-study. The newsletter is also posted on the MRPC website under Announcements on the home page.
- Also provided as a handout is a copy of the MassDOT National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Program Deployment Plan for Massachusetts. This Plan is the framework for Massachusetts to expand its electric vehicle (EV) highway fast charging network through the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Consistent with the intent of the NEVI Program, this plan focuses on direct current fast charging (DCFC) infrastructure serving long-distance travel corridors, specifically Massachusetts' federally designated EV Alternative Fuel Corridors. The EV Alternative Fuel Corridor (AFC) network across the Commonwealth is made up of nine Interstates, two U.S. Routes, and three State Routes designated as EV AFCs. The total length of designated EV AFC roadways is approximately 847 miles
- Provided some information related to the FHWA program known as "Focusing on Reducing Rural Roadway Departure" through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).
- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*
- G. Eaton did not have any new updates for MRPC other than then next scheduled meeting is for Thursday, September 8th at 7:00 PM, held virtually. He also commended the Transportation Department at MRPC for their hard work and professionalism.

IX. Administrative Matters

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B. Doherty stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on September 21, 2022 at 1:00 pm, however, he asked if the group would like to skip the September meeting and meet in October, as we have done

in the past. If there is a need to meet in September staff would reach out to members. After discussion, it was consensus to skip September and meet October 19 at 1:00 pm.

X. Adjournment

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

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 8 17 2022 Agenda

MPO 7 20 2022 Minutes

5 Int Partied Draft TIP Amendment #6

5 Summary Adjustment Amendment #6 7 20 2022

6 RTP Draft Development Schedule

6 RTP Draft Survey

6 RTP Visioning Session

7 SS\$A NOFO Amendment #1 FAQs

7 SS\$A NOFO Amendment #1 Changes Only

8 FoRRRwD – Safety _ Federal Highway Administration

8 MassDOT NEVI Plan

8 Northern Tier July 2022 Newsletter