

# **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 of December 21, 2022**

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

## **I. Introduction**

### **SIGNATORIES PRESENT**

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Ann Sullivan, MassDOT Dist. 3; Liz Murphy, Fitchburg; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; George Kahale, MART; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; Brian Croteau, Subregion 1; Tracy Murphy, Subregion 2; Tim Kilhart, Subregion 3

### **MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT**

Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Andrew Wang, MassDOT OTP; Michelle Ho, MassDOT OTP; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT Dist. 3; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT Dist. 2; Brian Doheny, Ashburnham; Dan Van Schalkwyk, Ayer; Robert Szocik, Templeton.

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Brad Harris; George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty

## **II. Public Comments**

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

## **III. Approval of November 16, 2022 Minutes**

A motion was made to approve the October 19, 2022 MPO Meeting Minutes. G. Kahale indicated the need for a correction on page 3 under Transit. The last line reads "MART has updated the older bus route...". It should say "MART has updated the Athol bus route...". The motion was made to approve the minutes with the correction as indicated. The motion was seconded and passed with 2 abstentions.

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

- *Update by MassDOT OTP*

D. Krevat stated that there is not much of an update for this item. MassDOT is currently looking at the second phase survey results that were just received from our consultants. We will be analyzing those and then putting together some summaries. We should have an update, probably in January or February and we can speak a little bit more on this at that time.

## **V. Montachusett FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

- *Review of Comments on Draft Amendment #2 to the Transit Element*
- *MPO Action Related to Amendment #2*
- *Discussion on Highway TIP Amendment #3*
- *MPO Action Related to Highway TIP Amendment #1*

B Harris stated that at the last MPO meeting, members voted to release for a 21-day public review and comment period TIP Amendment #2 that contained changes to several projects in the FFY 2023 Transit Element. These changes were proposed by MART and are needed due to inflation and budget updates. There are five projects that were removed from the list, eight projects have cost changes and three new projects have been added. The comment period closed on December 19<sup>th</sup>. We have not received any comments on the proposed Amendment.

A motion was made and seconded for the MPO to endorse Transit TIP Amendment #2. The motion was passed unanimously.

B. Harris informed the MPO that we had been contacted by MassDOT regarding the need to amend a project in the FFY 2023 Highway Element of the current TIP. Project #608784 Templeton- roundabout construction at the intersection of Patriots Road, South Main Street, North Main Street and Gardner Road has seen a cost increase from \$2,037,795 to \$2,817,313.64; an increase of \$779,518.64. Because this represents an increase of more than \$500,000 for a programmed project under \$5,000,000, an Amendment to the FFY 2023 Highway Element for the current FFY 2023-2027 Montachusett TIP is required. This project is also a Target project under Section 1A – Regionally Prioritized Projects. The currently endorsed TIP is fiscally constrained for FFY 2023 with no additional target funds available. Currently, the total cost of the target projects for FFY 2023 are \$2,260,338 under our total federal aid target figure. Thus, there is room to increase the cost of this project by an additional \$779,518. 64 while still remaining fiscally constrained for FFY 2023 and the FFY 2023-2027 TIP.

A motion was made and seconded to release TIP Amendment #3 for a 21-day public review and comment period. The motion passed unanimously.

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

- Goals, Objectives, Strategies Discussion
- Performance Measures Discussion

B Doherty presented an update to the 2020 RTP Vision, Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures. He indicated that for the Goals section of the RTP, we have gone through the first two goals with the MJTC. We plan on reviewing all of the goals and re-defining or updating the goals, objectives, and strategies in the next two meetings. He then proceeded to review the currently proposed changes to the objectives, strategies, and performance measures in greater detail.

Six public outreach meetings were held in the past month, and we did receive some good feedback related to the strategies and performance measures that we will look at in greater detail. Also, the RTP survey is still live and available through the MRPC website. Staff also distributed paper surveys and drop off boxes at community libraries and senior centers. We expect to collect these around the end of January 2023.

## **VII. Updates**

- *MassDOT Highway Division*

A Sullivan of MassDOT District 3 provided the following updates. Westminster - Route 140, from Patricia Road to Princeton Town Line is at PS&E and has an August 2023 ad date. Gardner - Roundabout at Elm Street / Pearl Street / Central Street and Green Street, is at PS&E and has an ad date of April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Harvard - bridge Project Rt 2 to over Nashua River /Tank Road and Boston and Main Railroad covers three bridges and is a book job with 100% due in January. Fitchburg - Rt 2 is at 100%/PS&E with an ad date of February 4th. Ashby - Greenville Road at Turnpike Road was advertised last August and a Notice to Proceed was issued. Work will likely begin in earnest in the Spring. Gardner - Elm Street is a Safe Routes to School project. It is at 100%, and the PS&E is due in January and has a June ad date.

D Amaral of MassDOT District 2 provided the following updates. For FFY 23, Project# 608784 - Templeton Roundabout at the intersection of Patriots Road/South Main Street/North Main Street/Gardner Road, design is at PS&E with a current add date of January 21st, 2023. Project# 609107 – Rt 2 Phillipston/Templeton Pavement Preservation and related work on Route 2 was advertised on November 5th and the bid opening was on December 13th. The low bid of \$9.8 million from P.J. Keating Company. For FFY 24, Project# 608723 - Athol Intersection improvements at Crescent Street and Chestnut Hill Ave is at 75% design rating and we are awaiting a response to the comments. The 100% is due February 20th 2023 with a current add date of January 6th, 2024.

- *Transit*

G. Kahale of MART had no update information at this time.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Harris stated that the MJTC did not meet in December. The next meeting will be on Wednesday January 11, 2023 at 2:30 pm. This will also be the start of the TIP and UPWP process for FFY 2024.

There are a series of handouts for discussion. The first is a project list of organizations and agencies that were awarded Community Transit Grant Program Operating and Mobility Management Grants. Unfortunately, none of the 30 awards are in the Montachusett MPO region. If there were any awards, the MPO would need to do a TIP amendment, but this year that is not the case.

From MassDOT, there is the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study newsletter for November 30, 2022. The newsletter talks about freight and passenger rail infrastructure and the need for careful scheduling for the two services. There is also a brief discussion why steel wheels work well on the rail line. No further information is provided on the next public meeting for this study. When we receive further information on this workshop, we will post it on the MRPC website under Announcements.

There is a brief announcement handout for an updated schedule for the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line related to the return of the “Ski Train” for service to Wachusett Mountain Ski Area. Ski trains feature a specifically modified coach equipped with racks for ski and snowboard equipment. Beginning the week of December 12th, there will be an inbound and outbound ski train on Saturday and Sunday. Wachusett Mountain Ski area operates a shuttle between the ski area and Wachusett station to connect passengers from the ski trains. An additional weekday ski train will operate on Wednesdays beginning on January 4th. The ski trains will run through the week of March 6th, the last Wednesday trains running on March 8th and the last weekend trains running on Saturday March 10th and Sunday March 11<sup>th</sup>.

MassTrails Grant Program has announced that the 2023 Grant Round is now open. Now through February 1, 2023, applications can be submitted to receive funds for project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared use pathways and amenities that support trails.

We recently sent out to our communities, information from MassDOT on No Cost Equipment for Speed Feedback and School Zone Speed Limit Signs. There is a link on this handout to submit applications for this program. The application deadline is January 16, 2023. MassDOT will supply the equipment and installation and maintenance will be the responsibility of the community.

There is an announcement related to the upcoming Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program through the MA Division of Ecological Restoration. Currently, they are in the Pre-RFR Project

Inquiry process where applicants are encouraged to discuss their project and its eligibility. This pre-RFR process runs until February 1, 2023. Project application deadline will be mid-March 2023.

Finally, there is a calendar for 2023 available that highlights the regularly scheduled meetings of the Commission, the MJTC and the MPO. This is provided for your reference.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G Corbosiero provided the following updates. On December 1<sup>st</sup>, MRPC held its first Lunch and Learn meeting concerning the State's new Digital Equity Planning (DEP) Program. The two goals of this program, overseen by Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MassTech) and the Mass Broadband Institute (MBI) are to:

1. Guide municipal decision-making and investments that will increase access, adoption, and usage of the internet for the populations most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Prepare municipalities to submit grant proposals to existing or forthcoming state or federal programs to support digital equity activities.

MRPC staff can provide assistance to communities if they are interested in applying for planning support for the completion of the public input sessions and relevant plans. The MRPC is a prequalified planning provider for the above program. For more information, please contact Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director at [kchapman@mrpc.org](mailto:kchapman@mrpc.org).

MRPC's second Lunch and Learn program will be held at Noon on Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup>. Staff will explain the Commonwealth's One Stop Grants Program through which municipalities can access 12 State grant programs. To learn more see <https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth>. You can also contact Karen Chapman of the MRPC.

#### **VIII. Administrative Matters**

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B Harris stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on January 18, 2023 at 1:00 pm.

#### **IX. Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:37 p.m.

#### **DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING**

MPO 12 21 2022 Agenda

MPO 11 16 2022 Minutes

5 DRAFT FFY 2023 Transit TIP Amendment #2 Full Summary 11 29 2022

5 DRAFT Potential FFY 2023 Highway Amendment #3 Summary

6 2020 vs 2024 Goals Objectives Strategies MPO

6 2020 vs 2024 Performance Measures MPO 12 21 2022

7 2023 Meeting Calendar Ver 2

7 Culvert NOFO Announcement 12 2022

7 Mass Trail Grant Notice 11 2022

7 MassDOT FY23 CTGP operating mobility management grants project list

7 MRPC MPO Monthly Report 12-21-22

7 Northern Tier Nov 2022 Newsletter

7 Notice to Municipalities - Speed Feedback and School Zone Speed Limit Signs

7 Ski Train Release 12 2 2022