

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 March 15, 2023

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

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Ann Sullivan, MassDOT District 3; Nick Erickson, Fitchburg; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; George Kahale, MART; Brian Croteau, Subregion 1; Tim Kilhart, Subregion 3

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Derek Shooster, MassDOT OTP; Andrew Wang, MassDOT OTP; Michelle Scott OTP; Annabel Shein, MassDOT; Jack Moran, MassDOT; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Ben Berger, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; Dick Kilhart, Athol; Alan Manoian, Ayer; Janet Tice, Shirley; David Kline, The ARC of Opportunity; Lori Aho, TEC

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 February 15, 2023 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the February 15, 2023 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

IV. Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- *Update by MassDOT OTP*

C. Klem indicated that MassDOT has been hosting meetings around the state with various groups as part of their outreach efforts. One was held in February in this region with the Health Equity Partnership of North Central Massachusetts, known as CHNA9. We are beginning the analysis of the surveys and conversations from these meetings. Internally, we are drafting a presentation and when completed we will be sharing it with the MPO.

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

- *Discussion on Potential TIP Amendments/Adjustments*
- *MPO Action Related to Potential TIP Amendments/Adjustments*

B. Doherty stated that this is a standing line item on the agenda. There are no updates or amendments at this time.

VI. MassDOT Performance Measures 2 (Pavement & Bridge Condition) & 3 (System Performance, Congestion Reduction & Emissions) Presentation

- *Presentation & Discussion of State Targets (PM2 & PM3)*
- *MPO Action Related to MassDOT PM2 & PM3*

A. Shein and J. Moran presented to the MPO information on the development of state targets under Performance Measure 2, which focuses on Pavement and Bridge Conditions, and Performance Measure 3, which focuses on System Performance.

The framework for Performance Measure 2 was created by the Federal Highway Administration and is entirely focused on the National Highway System (NHS). The NHS is a network of strategic roadways identified through legislation in the mid 1990's, which includes the inter-state system and other roads serving airports, military bases, rail and truck terminals, and other intermodal transport facilities. MassDOT then reviewed the data collected on these targeted roadways and bridges regarding condition, past performance target estimates and the development of new targets for the next performance period.

D. Krevat informed the MPO that MPO's across the state are required to adopt these updated targets as developed by MassDOT.

A motion was made to approve Performance Measure 2 targets as presented by MassDOT for Pavement and Bridge Conditions. The motion was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

C. Klem presented information related to Performance Measure 3 and the targets developed by MassDOT. Measures under this PM include reliability, which is level of travel time reliability, both on the inter-state and the non-inter-state National Highway System, congestion, and emissions. Because the Montachusett Region does not contain any communities that are subject to air quality conformity standards, both the congestion and emissions performance measures don't apply here. C. Klem then presented the methodology used to develop the reliability targets, past performance and the requirements for the MPO to adopt the updated PM 3 targets.

A motion was made to approve Performance Measure 3 targets as presented by MassDOT for System Performance and Reliability. The motion was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

VII. Montachusett FFY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- *Review and Discussion of Project and Funding Issues*

B. Doherty indicated that the focus of this presentation will be the selection of a target funding scenario, so that a draft TIP can be developed and presented at the next MPO meeting. In addition to the three target scenarios, we have also received a listing of statewide projects for our region. These are projects selected and prioritized by the state. B. Doherty then reviewed the statewide projects for each federal fiscal year.

B. Doherty presented an updated list of the target eligible projects for the region as well as their revised and updated TEC scores. He then reviewed in detail three funding scenarios for these target eligible projects. The main issue with the scenarios is the status of the Route 12 project #604499 in Leominster. In the prior TIP, this project is listed in FFY 2024 and FFY 2025 through the advanced construction funding option due to its cost and our target limits for each FFY. At the TIP Readiness Day meeting with MassDOT, there was concern from the Right-of-Way section that this project would not be ready to go in 2024. They recommended that it be moved to FFY 2025. Doing so affects all of the remaining FFY's and projects. This would also leave us with no projects in FFY2024 due to the current status of the remaining projects. B. Doherty then reviewed in detail three specific fiscally constrained options for target funding for FFY 2024 to 2028. In addition, the recommended scenario (scenario 3) from the MJTC was highlighted for the members. A recommendation is sought from the MPO so that a draft TIP can be developed for next month and for release for a 21-day comment period.

A. Sullivan provided members with some additional information on the Route 12 project in Leominster. It has been discussed in Boston with right of way. They are willing to let it remain in 2024 but it will be a high-risk project that will require constant monitoring in order to keep it moving forward.

The MPO reached consensus that funding scenario 3 be used for the development of the draft TIP. Scenario 3 maintains the Route 12 Leominster project in FFY 2024 and will require MassDOT to continue to monitor its progress.

VIII. Montachusett FFY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

- Review and Discussion of Tasks and Budget

S. Bean updated the members on the development of the FFY 2024 UPWP. She reviewed the memo sent out to communities soliciting possible tasks for the program year. Three requests have been received: one from Groton related to a walkability study; one from Townsend regarding a corridor study on Route 119 near the North Middlesex High School; and the last from the North County Land Trust related to trail mapping and trail locations. S. Bean also reviewed the latest budget data for the FFY 2024 program year. On March 2nd, we received an updated allocation budget from MassDOT that contained revised population figures and final FTA allotments. The overall result is that the FFY 2024 year will be budgeted at \$944,066. This is an increase of approximately \$17,000 from our current program year of \$927,037.

S. Bean then indicated that we are currently working on the equity analysis for the UPWP as well as the individual task write ups and budgets based upon the revised numbers received. We plan to have a draft document for review at the next MPO meeting. In addition, she stated that even thou the deadline for project requests had passed, we still received some additional inquiries. We want to let people know that we can receive project requests at any time. They may not be incorporated into the next upcoming UPWP, but we will definitely keep them in our files and in mind in case there are other types of funding information that we receive that may be appropriate for those projects.

IX. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

- Progress Update

B. Harris presented information on the initial analysis of the RTP public survey. The online survey was closed to the public on February 28th and since then we have been collecting paper surveys from the boxes that were set up at each community's library and senior center. We have approximately 300 surveys in total. The geographic distribution of the respondents was discussed as well as some observational information on priority rankings of various transportation issues.

B. Doherty then presented information on the financial section of the RTP. He reviewed the funding estimates prepared by MassDOT for each RPA that are to be used to develop the document's financial element. A comparison with figures from the last RTP was also presented.

X. Updates

- MassDOT Highway Division

A Sullivan of MassDOT District 3 provided the following updates. Westminster - Route 140, from Patricia Road to Princeton Town Line has an August 12, 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 22nd. Harvard - bridge Project on Route 2 over the Nashua River/Tank Road and the Boston & Main Railroad the 100% design is due March 16th and has a May 13th ad date. Fitchburg - Route 2 was advertised on February 4th and awarded to J H Lynch. Ashby - Greenville Road at Turnpike Road was advertised and a Notice to

Proceed was issued to ETL. Gardner - Elm Street is a Safe Routes to School project is at 100% with PS&E due March 28th and has an ad date of June 24th.

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 was advertised on February 11th and the bid opening is set for March 21st. For FFY 2024, Project# 608723 - Athol Intersection improvements at Crescent Street and Chestnut Hill Ave is at 75% design. Review and comments were completed on March 1st and we are awaiting a response. The current ad date is January 6, 2024. Project # 612151 – Athol Bridge Replacement Route 2A Main Street over the B&M Railroad is at pre 25% with an ad date of December 7, 2024.

- *Transit*

G. Kahale stated that MART had received a request from the town of Townsend to join the regional transit authority. At the last MART Advisory Board meeting held on March 9th, the board voted to accept Townsend as its newest member. That now gives MART 25 member communities.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Harris stated that the MJTC met last week on March 8th. Discussions focused on the TIP, UPWP and RTP development. The next MJTC meeting will be on Wednesday April 12th at 2:30 PM.

Some handouts for discussion were reviewed. From MassDOT, there is the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study newsletter for February 28th. The newsletter discusses the study and the next step in the study process that involves the development of four additional potential service plans (also known as "alternatives") for passenger rail service along the North Adams-Greenfield-Boston corridor. They will also be looking at various attractors and notable points of interest that could help drive ridership. On the MRPC web page under announcements, is a link to a recording of the January 11th Public Workshop as well as for this newsletter.

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), has announced a Notice of Grant Opportunity under the Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance grant program. They are seeking proposals from Massachusetts local government units interested in replacing undersized, perched, and/or degraded culverts and bridges located in areas of high ecological value. The purpose of this funding is to encourage eligible applicants to replace structures with better designed crossings that meet improved structural and environmental design standards and climate resiliency criteria. In general, individual awards have ranged from \$25,000 to \$400,000 for single stream crossing replacements, depending on the project phases and work proposed. Awards over \$200,000 are anticipated for construction projects only. Interested communities should view the full announcement, including funding, eligibility and evaluation criteria that can be found on COMMBUYS. The announcement with appropriate links is also on the MRPC website under announcements.

We received from FTA a newsletter for FTA Region 1 which covers Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. It highlights some new projects and programs that involved FTA. It is also posted on our website under Announcements.

Last month, a Transportation Open Forum sponsored by MassDOT, the Health Equity Partnership of North Central Mass (CHNA 9) and the MRPC was held. A large group of interested individuals met to hear about the state's Long Range Transportation Plan as well as the Montachusett RTP. Several comments and issues were presented by those in attendance. We expect many of the comments will be incorporated into the RTP. A recording of the forum can be found through the MRPC web page through the announcements section.

We received word from the US DOT that our application for a planning grant under the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program for the study of a possible new interchange off of Route 2 at South Athol Road in Athol was not selected for funding. We plan on meeting with the town in the future to discuss other possible options for funding such a planning study.

Finally, as a heads up, we received a voice mail from MassDOT requesting that we notify our member communities about a MassDOT public hearing for the North Central Pathway pedestrian bridge project. The meeting is scheduled for April 25th at 6:30 pm. A meeting notice will be sent to us and when we have it we will post it to our website as well as making it available for the upcoming MJTC and MPO meetings.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

B. Harris stated that the MRPC met last on Thursday March 9th. Topics discussed included a meeting of department directors to discuss the delivery of services of existing contracts, oversight of several new planning grants that have been awarded to the regional planning district, and the human resources and consultants that will be needed to complete all planning activities. These types of meetings will continue throughout the fiscal year.

The Executive Director is considering engaging a firm to provide onsite threat training and safety programs for all employees related to Emergency Response Training such as an Active Shooter, etc. The Executive Director and Administrative Manager met with Protective Advanced Safety Services (PASS) to learn more about this firm's employee safety and threat training services. Our Human Resources consulting firm, the Employers Association of the North East (EANE), recommended PASS to the MRPC.

The Planning and Development Director and the Executive Director met with Molly Singer, CEO and President of Dexterity Management to review and develop a scope of services in order to sign a contract with Ms. Singer so that she could provide grant writing services for the MRPC until June 30th.

The FY22 Audit presentation is set to be made to the commission on Thursday, March 23rd.

In response to a solicitation, issued February 14, 2023, a total of two (2) proposals were received for the use of District Local Technical Assistance Augmentation (DLTA-A) funds. The proposals received were from: Harvard to collaborate with the Harvard Transportation Advisory Committee and Devens to research and apply for grants for the design and implementation of a pedestrian and bicycling friendly route between Harvard and Devens as part of the Nashoba Regional Greenway project; and from Townsend to prioritize identified and studied project goals, identify funding resources, and complete grant applications in order to secure implementation funds for the prioritized projects.

XI. Administrative Matters

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B. Harris stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on April 19, 2023 at 1:00 pm. It was also mentioned that the next meeting might be an in person or hybrid meeting due to the impending end date on the Governors Executive Order regarding virtual meetings. The state legislature is examining this issue and may have some decision by the next meeting. We do plan on having a virtual component to the meeting in either case.

XII. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 3 15 2023 Agenda
MPO 2 15 2023 Minutes
6 2022 PM3 Presentation for Montachusett MPO
6 Montachusett_massDOTPm2 2024_2026
6 State Report pmf_MA_2022_BPP_04-Jan-2023_12-38
7 FFY 2024 2028 TEC Scores
7 TEC Template
7 TIP Target Project Master List
7 TIP Target Scenario 1
7 TIP Target Scenario 2
7 TIP Target Scenario 3
8 2024 UPWP Project Solicitation Memo 1 24 2023
8 FFY 2024 PL and SPR Guidance - REVISED 3 2 2023
9 Summary Regional Transportation Plan Survey Q1
10 Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grant RFR Notice 3 6 2023
10 Final Region 1 Newsletter March 2023
10 Northern Tier Feb 2023 Newsletter