

# **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 May 17, 2023**

D. 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; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; George Kahale, MART; Guy Corbosiero, MRPC; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Tim Kilhart, Subregion 3

### **MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT**

Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Michelle Scott, MassDOT OTP; Andrew Wang, MassDOT OTP; Michelle Ho, MassDOT OTP; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; David Kline, The ARC of Opportunity; Alan Manoian, Ayer; Susan Templeton, Sen. Cronin's Office

### **STAFF PRESENT**

Brad Harris; George Snow; Brian Doherty; Sheri Bean

## **II. Public Comments**

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

## **III. Approval of April 19, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the April 19, 2023 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

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

- *Update by MassDOT OTP*

D. Krevat stated that some of the document materials are currently being reviewed internally at MassDOT but in the next few months they should be posted to the plan website. Interested individuals should continue to check the MassDOT website.

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

- *Review of Comments on Draft TIP Amendment #4 to the Transit Element*
- *MPO Action Related to TIP Amendment #4*

B. Harris presented the members with information regarding a draft Amendment #4 to the FFY 2023 Transit Element of the FFY 2023-2027 TIP. At the previous MPO meeting, the MPO voted to release TIP Amendment #4 for a 21-day public review and comment period. The Amendment reflects the removal of one (1) project, cost changes to six (6) projects and the addition of one (1) project to the FFY 2023 Transit Element. These changes are due to increased cost changes and updated priorities for MART. The public review and comment period began on Tuesday April 25, 2023, and ended at the end of business on Monday May 15, 2023. To date we have not received any comments on Amendment #4. We also used the last MJTC meeting on May 10th as an opportunity for public comment but did not receive any.

The MJTC reviewed the amendment and came to a consensus to recommend that the MPO endorse TIP Amendment #4.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously for the MPO to endorse the Draft FFY 2023 TIP Amendment #4 as presented.

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

- *Review of Comments Received on Draft FFY 2024-2028 TIP*
- *MPO Endorsement of Draft FFY 2024-2028 TIP*
- *MPO Action to Endorse Montachusett MPO Self Certification*
- *MPO Action to Endorse Certification of the Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements*

B. Doherty presented members with the draft FFY 2024-2028 TIP that was recently out for a public review and comment period. He mentioned that the comment period for this document ran from Tuesday April 25, 2023 and ended at the end of business on Monday May 15, 2023. B. Doherty then reviewed the individual comments received and our response to those comments with the MPO members.

A motion was made and seconded to endorse the FFY 2024-2028 TIP as presented with the comments incorporated. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Doherty reviewed the Montachusett MPO Self Certification which certifies that the process used to develop the long-range transportation plan; air quality conformity determination; Transportation Improvement Program and UPWP complies with all applicable requirements of the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

B. Doherty reviewed the Certification of the Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements which certifies that the federal fiscal year 2023 through 2027 Transportation Improvement Program and the air quality conformity determination for the 2020 through 2040 long range transportation plan for the Montachusett MPO is in compliance with all applicable requirements, state regulations, and the Global Warming Solutions Act requirements that pertain to the transportation sector.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously for the MPO to endorse the Self Certification and the Certification of the Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements.

**VII. Montachusett FFY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

- *Review of Comments Received on Draft FFY 2024 UPWP*
- *MPO Endorsement of Draft FFY 2024 UPWP*

S. Bean presented the members with the Draft UPWP that was released for a 21-day public comment period that began on Tuesday April 25, 2023 and ended at the end of business on Monday May 15, 2023. S. Bean then reviewed the individual comments received from MassDOT and Federal Highway and our response to those comments with the MPO members.

A motion was made to endorse the FFY 2024 Montachusett Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**VIII. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

- *Goals, Objectives, Policy Final Edits*
- *Timeline for Draft, Public Comments & Endorsement*

B. Doherty presented an update to the RTP Goals, Objectives and Strategies based off of feedback received from the previous MJTC and MPO meetings. In Goal 1 – Improve and Maintain Safety and

Security, we added a third objective - Promote traffic calming and safety measures where appropriate for all modes. Under this objective the following strategies were included – Offer truck exclusion studies and advice for communities in the region, where appropriate, and consider specific improvements encouraging safe use of local roadways by heavy vehicles. Under Goal 2 – Reduce Congestion and Improve Mobility, references to heavy vehicles and rail crossings were added. There were also several other areas where heavy vehicles were referenced.

For the final document, we hope to have a draft ready to be released for a 21-day public comment period for the next MPO meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup> and the document will be made available on the MRPC website a week before on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

## **IX. Updates**

- *MassDOT Highway Division*
- *Transit*
- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*
- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

A Sullivan of MassDOT District 3 provided the following updates. Westminster Project #607432 - Route 140, from Patricia Road to Princeton Town Line has an August 12, 2023 ad date. Gardner Project #609279 - Roundabout at Elm Street / Pearl Street / Central Street and Green Street is at PS&E and has an ad date of May 6<sup>th</sup>. Harvard Project #612620- bridge project on Route 2 over the Nashua River/Tank Road and the Boston & Main Railroad is at 100% with a June 10<sup>th</sup> date. Fitchburg Project #610631- Route 2 was advertised in February and awarded to J H Lynch with a Notice to Proceed (NTP) issued in late March. Ashby Project #609314 - Greenville Road at Turnpike Road was advertised in August 2022 and a NTP was issued to ETL in October. Gardner Project # 610672 - Elm Street is a Safe Routes to School project is at 100% with an ad date of June 24<sup>th</sup>.

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 11<sup>th</sup>, the bid opening was on March 21<sup>st</sup>, it was awarded to F.M. Morello & Sons on April 5<sup>th</sup> and the notice to proceed was just issued on April 25<sup>th</sup> to A.F. Amorello & Sons for \$2.25 million. For FFY 2024, Project# 608723 - Athol Intersection improvements at Crescent Street and Chestnut Hill Ave has a 100% design submittal with review comments completed on March 1<sup>st</sup> and the PS&E is due December 6<sup>th</sup> and the current ad date is February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Project # 612151 – Athol Bridge Replacement Route 2A Main Street over the B&M Railroad has a design at pre- 25%, an over the shoulder review is anticipated for July 12, 2023 and 25% design is due January 7, 2024 and the current ad date is December 7, 2024.

- *Transit*

G. Kahale had no new update for members at this time.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Harris reviewed the following handouts –

From MassDOT, there is the Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study newsletter for April 29th. The newsletter discusses the next step in the study process. As part of the analysis of the four additional service alternatives, schedule times and trip times will be developed for service scenarios. Then, the team will develop ridership levels and estimates for cost to design and build the infrastructure for each scenario. Please see the MRPC website for the newsletter.

An announcement from MassDOT regarding a Public Information Meeting on Tuesday May 23rd at 6:00 PM. The purpose of this informational meeting is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the Bridge Replacement of the Bridge H-24-003 located on Williamsville Road over Burnshirt River in Hubbardston, MA. Information is included on the flyer on how to register. This notice is also on our website under Announcements.

A MassDOT announcement on a new round of funding for the Fiscal Year 2024 Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP). Effective May 1<sup>st</sup> and until 5 p.m., Thursday, June 1<sup>st</sup>, the program is accepting applications from freight rail-supported businesses across the state for projects to expand or improve rail or freight access and which will support economic opportunity, safety and job growth. IRAP is a competitive state-funded public/private partnership program that provides financial assistance to eligible applicants to invest in industry-based rail infrastructure access improvement projects. Applicants must match public funds with private funds, with private funds paying at least 40 percent of a project's total cost. Applicants may match more than the required minimum. For more information, a link is provided on the notice to the program. This notice is also included on our website.

A notice from MassDOT regarding the FY 2024 Community Transit Grant Program. They are now accepting applications for operating and mobility management projects that expand mobility for older adults and people with disabilities. Those interested in applying, are asked to request application forms and application training from MDOT at [Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us](mailto:Rachel.L.Fichtenbaum@dot.state.ma.us) or (857) 368-8584. Applications are due June 23, 2023. Applications for wheelchair-accessible vehicles will open later this year. As always, this notice is also on our website.

A notice from US EPA announcing the 2023 Clean School Bus Grant Program. The US EPA anticipates awarding approximately \$400 million in competitive grant funding to eligible applicants nationwide to procure electric school buses and charging infrastructure. These grants are made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. US EPA is prioritizing applications that will replace buses serving high-need local education agencies. Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity are:

1. State and local governmental entities that provide bus service
2. Public charter school districts
3. Tribal school districts
4. Nonprofit School Transportation Associations
5. Eligible Contractors (including OEMs, dealers, school bus service providers, and private bus fleets)

A webinar was held on May 10<sup>th</sup> but if you go to the program website, EPA's Clean School Bus Program, a recording should be available.

A notice from FHWA announcing a webinar on Identifying Discretionary Grant Opportunities to be held on May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 4:00 pm. The webinar will discuss Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success or ROUTES. The webinar will showcase the new USDOT Discretionary Grants Dashboard, a tool that seeks to make it easier to search for and find grant opportunities depending on the type of project, the type of organization applying, match requirements and other considerations. A link to register is on the handout which is also available on our website.

A copy of an email that MRPC sent out regarding the availability of free signage from MassDOT for communities to put up regarding an Act to Reduce Fatalities. This is a new sign for passing vulnerable roadway users, indicating that the motor vehicle should give at least four feet to bicycles and pedestrians. There is a Memorandum of Agreement that is associated with this as well. If you're interested please contact MassDOT.

The final handout is regarding the upcoming FF24 Capital Investment Program (CIP). MassDOT presents this each year through a number of public hearings. There is a meeting to cover Central Mass on June 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm.

S.Bean indicated that there is also a Regional Transportation Workshop being held at Quabbin High School on May 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm. Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) is the lead on the project and MRPC and CHNA9 are also involved. They are investigating the transportation/transit options in the area and determining what the needs are for that small region.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Corbosiero stated that MRPC has currently advertised for three positions – full-time Principal Planner in Transportation, full-time Principal Planner in Planning and Development, and another part-time intern position. More information regarding these positions can be found on the MRPC website.

#### **X. Administrative Matters**

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B. Harris stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is on June 21, 2023 at 1:00 pm.

#### **XI. Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m.

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

MPO 5 17 2023 Agenda

MPO 4 19 2023 Minutes

5 Draft TIP Amendment #4 Announcement & Summary 4 13 2023

6 DRAFT FFY 2024 2028 TIP with Maps

6 int\_parties\_draft\_tip\_upwp\_memo\_4\_20\_2023\_english

6 TIP 3C Endorsement

6 TIP Comments Received

6 TIP Endorsement Page

6 TIP Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements

7 DRAFT FFY 2024 UPWP

7 UPWP Comments

8 G,O,S,PM recommended changes

9 Community Transportation News

9A Northern Tier April 2023 Newsletter

9B Hubbardston DPH #609187 Williamsville Rd Flyer

9C MassDOT Industrial Rail Access Program Grant Applications 5 3 2023

9D federal\_grant\_opportunity\_2023\_clean\_school\_bus\_program

9E USDOT Webinar Identifying Discretionary Grant Opportunities 5 10 2023

9F MJTC Notice MassDOT Signage 5 10 2023

9G draft CIP Outreach Flyer 041823