

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 August 16, 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; Mark Piermarini, Leominster; George Kahale, MART; Glenn Eaton, MRPC; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Tim Kilhart Subregion 3

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Randy Williams, Ashburnham; Keyna Thomas, MART; Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; Ben Breger, MassDOT; Andrew Wang, MassDOT Planning; Carolyn Sellars, Public

STAFF PRESENT

George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty; Tyler Godin

II. Public Comments

D. Krevat asked those present if there were any public comments to be made. C. Sellars requested to make a comment about her comments submitted on the Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). She gave a background of herself and her involvement with the Health Equity Partnership of North Central Massachusetts. Specifically, her work to integrate climate justice into work done in the region. Her concern is that the region does not have a robust roadmap for the future. She stated that there is a need for greater mobility in the region. She discussed a planning exercise done by that group which identified transportation as a “key domino” for the success of the region.

B. Doherty responded by thanking her for making her comment during the comment period. He mentioned that MRPC will be incorporating her comment, as well as others, into the RTP. He stated that these comments make the plan a better plan and though every suggestion made in the comments will not be added into the plan, the comment in its entirety will be included in the appendix to the final RTP. He also mentioned that these comments will be discussed in greater detail later in the meeting.

III. Approval of July 26, 2023 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the July 26, 2023 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was made, seconded and passed.

IV. Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- *Update by MassDOT OTP*

D. Krevat stated that there were no new updates for the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan. MassDOT hopes to have more to share this fall.

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

- *Review of Comments on FFY 2023 Highway TIP Amendment #6*
- *MPO Action Related to FFY 2023 Highway TIP Amendment #6*

G. Snow reviewed highway amendment #6 with the members. MassDOT has notified the MPO that 2 projects under consideration in FFY 2023 have seen cost increases and timing issues. The first is a bridge project in Harvard that went from \$2,694,992 to \$3,706,048; an increase of \$1,011,056 or approximately 37.5%. This project will also move from Section 1B – Earmark or Discretionary Grant Funded Projects to Section 2A – State Prioritized Reliability Projects. The second project is a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project in Gardner that increased from \$1,246,511 to \$1,814,944; an increase of \$568,433 or 45.6%. In addition, the project is not expected to be ready for advertisement in FFY 2023 and needs to be moved to FFY 2024. The cost changes represent an increase of more than \$500,000 for a programmed project under \$5,000,000 and therefore also requires an Amendment. The movement of the project back one FFY also requires an Amendment. There were no comments received on Highway Amendment #6 during the comment period.

G. Snow then reviewed Transit Amendment #6. The Amendment reflects the addition of 2 new projects to FFY 2023 due to recent funding awards. This is handled as an amendment due to the requirement that project additions are treated as amendments if the project was not part of any previously approved STIP that has been vetted through the public process. The projects allow for the purchase of vans for MART and GAAMHA. So, because these projects are new to the TIP process, they therefore require an Amendment for the current FFY 2023-2027 Montachusett TIP. The MPO also voted to release this Transit Amendment #6 for a reduced 14 day comment period due to time constraints. There were no comments received during the comment period.

G. Snow mentioned that the MJTC recommended that the MPO endorse both Highway Amendment #6 and Transit Amendment #6 at its meeting on 8/9.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously by the MPO for both Amendments to be endorsed.

VI. Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

- *Review of Comments Received on Draft 2024 RTP – Journey to 2050*
- *MPO Action Related to Draft 2024 RTP – Journey to 2050*
- *MPO Action Related to Self-Certification of Montachusett Transportation Planning Process*
- *MPO Action Related to Self-Certification of Montachusett Green House Gas Requirements*

B. Doherty mentioned that last month at the MPO meeting, the comments received for the draft RTP were reviewed and discussed. However, before the MPO was able to vote on endorsement, we were made aware of 3 additional comment letters that were overlooked by staff. The comments came in at the end of the comment period and somehow slipped through the cracks and had therefore not been addressed. The MPO then decided to hold off on endorsement of the RTP so that staff could review the three comment letters and respond to them accordingly. The endorsement of the RTP was therefore delayed until the August MPO meeting.

B. Doherty then proceeded to review in detail the additional comment letters with the group. He summarized the concerns and issues as well as the prepared responses to those concerns. He mentioned that the comments received were high quality.

G. Kahale mentioned that MART just finished a feasibility study for the electrification of the transit fleet. He said he would send it over to MRPC for review.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously for the endorsement of the RTP.

B. Doherty then went over the two additional self-certifications that go along with the RTP.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed, with one abstention to endorse the Self-Certification of Montachusett Transportation Planning Process

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to endorse the Self Certification of the Montachusett Greenhouse Gas Requirements.

VII. Montachusett FFY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program

- Direct Cost Budget Adjustment

S. Bean went over a request for a budget adjustment to the 2023 UPWP. She detailed the need to adjust the amount of direct costs from the current level of \$41,658 to \$106,500; an increase of \$64,842. The reason for the adjustment is to purchase the following:

1. New Pavement Management Software (\$22,000 estimated)
2. Transportation Engineering Analysis Services (\$45,000 estimated)
3. Vehicle Classification Counts (\$9,500 estimated)

S. Bean then went over several task budgets in the UPWP which would be adjusted to accommodate for the above purchases. She mentioned that based on available funds and the estimated budgeted balances after the removal of direct costs, sufficient funding remains in each task to support staff time to satisfactorily complete the necessary work.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjust the Direct Cost Budget of the 2023 UPWP as was presented.

VIII. 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 is at PS&E and has an August 19, 2023 ad date. Gardner Project #609279 - Roundabout at Elm Street / Pearl Street / Central Street and Green Street is at PS&E and had a May ad date and was awarded to EH Perkins. Harvard Project #612620- bridge project on Route 2 over the Nashua River/Tank Road and the Boston & Main Railroad is at 100% with a September 9th ad date. Fitchburg Project #610631- Route 2 was advertised and awarded to J H Lynch. Ashby Project #609314 - Greenville Road at Turnpike Road was advertised and awarded to ETL in October of 2022. Gardner Project # 610672 - Elm Street is a Safe Routes to School project and is at PS&E but will not be ready for the current TIP year as discussed previously. The Right of Way acquisition will push this project to FFY24'.

D. Amaral of MassDOT District 2 provided the following updates. For FFY 2024, Project# 608723 - Athol Intersection improvements at Crescent Street and Chestnut Hill Ave is at 100% design and review comments were completed on March 1st. PS&E is due on February 16th 2024. Project # 612151 – Athol Bridge Replacement Route 2A Main Street over the B&M Railroad is at pre-25% design with 25% due on February 11, 2024. Project# 608424 for FFY 2026 Templeton reconstruction of Rt 68 from Rt 202 to the Phillipston TL. The design is at 75% and the 100% design is due on December 30th, 2023.

- *Transit*

G. Kahale stated that he has no new updates.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B. Doherty mentioned the MJTC is next scheduled to meet on September 13th at 2:30 pm. The members are expected to begin discussion on some potential amendments to the MJTC By Laws. He then reviewed a number of handouts.

From the MassDOT Safe Routes to School Program is an announcement of the launch of the Signs & Lines Program AND the Infrastructure Grant Program that is happening at the same time this year! Both application periods will open on Wednesday, August 23, 2023 and one informational webinar will be held on August 23rd at 12:00 pm Noon. Municipal staff, school and school district staff, SRTS task force members, and anyone else interested in Safe Routes to School is encouraged to attend. The webinar will provide details on both application processes and expected project timelines, as well as review some examples of eligible and ineligible projects.

Next is a handout from The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) announcing a new funding opportunity for private and public entities to replace eligible diesel vehicles and equipment. Through the VW settlement, MassDEP is allocating \$7.5 million for zero-emission technologies. As part of the initiative in the 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, funded by the Climate Protection and Mitigation Expendable Trust (CMT), MassDEP is allocating \$4 million to replace municipal waste-serving refuse trucks with more efficient options. This competitive Solicitation has an application deadline of 5 PM September 26, 2023. The handout lists eligible project types as well as how to find more information.

There was also a handout from FHWA regarding planning updates for August. This is provided for informational purposes.

Copies of these handouts are all posted on the MRPC website under Announcements.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Eaton stated that he posted in the chat that the MRPC is still looking for personnel in the Planning and Development Department, please share the link accordingly.

IX. Administrative Matters

- *Next MPO Meeting*

B. Doherty stated that the next scheduled MPO meeting is Wednesday September 20th at 1:00 pm. However, in the past what we have done in the fall is to go every other month, unless significant business needs to be conducted. Staff will make sure to reach out to the group if there is a need to meet in September.

The consensus of the group was to tentatively skip September and meet in October. The next meeting is scheduled for October 18th, at 1:00PM.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 8 16 2023 Agenda

MPO 7 26 2023 Minutes

5A Int Parties Draft Highway TIP Amendment #6 7 28 2023

5B FFY 2023 Highway Amendment #6 Summary

5C Int Parties Draft Transit TIP Amendment #6 7 28 2023

5D FFY 2023 Transit Amendment #6 Summary

6A 20230718 Letter to MRPC

6B NC4 24July 21 comments to the MRPC on the Draft 2024 Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan

6C CSellers comments on MRPC RTP 24July2023

6D Appendix C Comments

6E RTP Endorsement Formatted 8 16 2023

6F 3C Endorsement Formatted 8 16 2023

6G GHG Endorsement Formatted 8 16 2023

7 DIRECTS Limit Increase Information 8 8 2023

7 Task Budgets after Directs 8 10 2023

8 FHWA Flyer_-_BIL_and_Fed_Requirements

8 FHWA PLANNING UPDATES FOR AUGUST 2023

8 massdep_vw_and_refuse_truck_electric_solicitation_grant_announced_7_27_2023

8 SRTS Grant Opportunities 8 3 2023