

# 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 October 18, 2023

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

## I. Introduction

### SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Steve Woelfel, MassDOT OTP; Ann Sullivan, MassDOT District 3; Trevor Beauregard, Gardner; George Kahale, MART; Glenn Eaton, MRPC; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Brian Croteau Subregion 1

### MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Charles Major, MassDOT; Keyna Thomas, MART; Ryan Josti, MART; Alyssa Peck; Weston & Sampson; Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; Ben Breger, MassDOT; Dawn Nims, MassDOT District 2; David DiNocco, MassDOT; Charlotte Mays, MassDOT; Sarah Cannamela, MassDOT; Charles Major, MassDOT

### STAFF PRESENT

Brad Harris, George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty; Tyler Godin; Kayla Kress

## II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

## III. Approval of August 16, 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 2024 Highway TIP Amendment #1*
- *MPO Action Related to FFY 2024 Highway TIP Amendment #1*

B. Doherty presented a summary of FFY 2024 – 28 TIP Highway Amendment #1. He mentioned that a new fiscal year started on October 1<sup>st</sup>, which means we are officially onto the 2024-28 TIP and this would be considered Amendment #1. The amendment is to *Project #613167 Athol-Phillipston-Templeton Bridge Preservation of 8 Bridge Crossings Along Route 2*, which is listed in FFY2024 in Section 1B/Earmark or Discretionary Grant Funded Projects. MassDOT has notified the MPO that the identified project needs to be amended in FFY 2024 in the current FFY 2024-2028 TIP in order to rectify a cost increase from \$9,499,000 to \$15,189,280.45, an increase of \$5,690,280.45 or approximately 60%. The project has an ad date of 12/23/2023. Therefore, in order for it to proceed, it must be amended in the

FFY 2024 Highway Element. He mentioned that the reason for the increased cost was price changes since the project was initiated, along with the inclusion of full bridge painting in the project.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously by the MPO to release Amendment #1 for a 21-day public comment period.

## **VI. Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) Fleet Electrification Feasibility Study**

- Presentation by Ryan Josti (MART) & Alyssa Peck (Weston & Sampson)

R. Josti gave an overview of the MART Fleet Electrification Feasibility Study. This report was completed in September and was compiled using information gathered for two grant applications. The purpose of the study was to review the financial and technical feasibility of incorporating solar power and energy storage into MART's electrical infrastructure, in an integrated and resilient campus energy system strategy.

A. Peck said that Weston & Sampsons team evaluated the necessary EV charging infrastructure to support a 50% fleet conversion to electric along with an option for sufficient EV charging to support a 35% fleet conversion to electric. The majority of MART's transit vehicles are gasoline powered, and no electric vehicle charging stations currently exist at the Fleet Yard which was our main focus of the study. The Fleet Yard, located at 1427 Water Street in Fitchburg, Massachusetts has 164 vehicles of which are entirely gasoline and diesel fueled. The two scenarios analyzed were a conversion to 35% fleet conversion (58 vehicles) and a 50% conversion scenario (82 vehicles) with the assumption that electric infrastructure and an appropriate number of charging stations would be projected to be installed. For the 50% conversion scenario it is projected that 33 Level 2 dual port charging stations (66 portschargers) in addition to 10 Level 3 On-Demand charging stations (20 portschargers) would need to be utilized to charge the 82 converted electric vehicles

The overall cost impact for implementing the solar, storage, and 50% electric vehicle conversion is approximately \$270,000 per year in savings, which is obtained by implementing a capital project with a cost of \$16,600,000 prior to incentives. This results in a simple payback of 61 years.

After all available grants and incentives are applied, the resulting capital cost of \$7,984,100 provides a simple payback of 29 years, primarily due to the capital intensive EV charging infrastructure cost. For this reason, MART, with support from our team, has applied for a Federal CFI Grant for EV charging infrastructure (June, 2023). MART should receive status from the US DOT on this grant application by December 31, 2023.

## **VII. 2020 Census Urbanized Areas Updates**

- *MassDOT Presentation and Discussion*

Representatives from MassDOT gave a brief presentation on the most recent urbanized areas based off 2020 census information. They detailed the process which is used to create the boundaries and mentioned that this latest version is under review by MassDOT and the RPA's. Feedback from the RPA's to MassDOT regarding the boundaries is due by November 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **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 FFY2024.

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 1<sup>st</sup>. PS&E is due on February 16<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

- *Transit*

G. Kahale stated that he has no new updates.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

B Harris mentioned that the MJTC cancelled its October meeting and that its next scheduled meeting is for Wednesday November 8th at 2:30pm. The group will discuss possible bylaw changes as well as the TIP Highway Amendment #1.

The fully endorsed 2024 Montachusett RTP titled Journey to 2050 is available on the MRPC website through a banner link on the opening page. Individual chapters can be downloaded.

We have begun the new program year for our transportation planning activities. The new year began on October 1<sup>st</sup> and is currently budgeted at \$947,066.

There is a news release from the state and the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) announcing various awards through the Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grant Program. Two communities in our region received awards. They are:

- \$61,000 to Ashburnham for design and engineering for a culvert replacement on Bluefield Brook, to prepare it for replacement in FY24-FY25.
- \$55,000 to Ashby to fund field data collection for two culvert replacement projects on Harris Road to improve stream connectivity of Trapfall Brook and a tributary to the Brook.

There is an announcement from MassTrails as part of their Accessible Trails Discussion series, of an online discussion on how to get your accessible trails project funded through the MassTrails Grant Program. This will be held on October 23<sup>rd</sup> from 5 to 6:30 pm. A link to register is on the handout.

A copy of the Community Transportation News from MassMobility and MassDOT is available. This newsletter provides information from MassDOT Rail and Transit announcing the schedule for the next round of applications for wheelchair-accessible vehicles. This will open on November 28th. Regional Transit Authorities, nonprofits, municipalities, and private operators of public transit (shared-ride) services will be eligible to apply for fully accessible vehicles to expand mobility for older adults and

people with disabilities through MassDOT's Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP). Applications will be due by Friday, December 22nd. MassDOT will host two virtual application training sessions on Tuesday, November 28th from 10 to noon, and Thursday, November 30 from 1 to 3 pm. Each session will cover the same material. Training is required for new applicants and recommended for all.

Lastly, there is a handout from FHWA regarding planning updates and Active and Upcoming Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs). This is provided for informational purposes.

B. Harris provided an update on the FHWA Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant award to the MRPC. The MRPC was awarded a \$750,000 federal grant through this program to develop a Safety Action Plan for the region. We also joined with MART on the application and will be including 6 MART communities in the plan. We developed a Grant Agreement with FHWA and from there we compiled a Request for Proposals for the selection of a consultant to work on the development of this plan. That RFP was released on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Proposals are due October 23<sup>rd</sup>, in just under 2 weeks. We will then review the proposals and select a consultant shortly afterward. We hope to have someone on board by mid-November. We have also signed a contract with MassDOT to cover the 20% local match portion of this federal grant. We have estimated a 24-month time frame for completion of the Safety Action Plan. Once completed, communities will be eligible to apply for implementation grants under this program. A copy of the RFP is provided.

- *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*

The next meeting is scheduled for November 15th, at 1:00PM.

#### **X. Adjournment**

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

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

MPO 10 18 2023 Agenda  
MPO 8 16 2023 Minutes  
5 DRAFT FFY 2024 Highway Amendment #1 Summary  
5 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #1 10 2023  
7 LeominsterFitch Urbanized Area  
7 Massachusetts Urbanized Areas  
8 Community Transportation New Sep 21 2023  
8 MRPC SS4A Version 1 9 18 2023  
8 MT Newsletter\_Sept2023  
8 Northern Tier Public Mtg 10 26 2023  
8 State Culvert Announcement 9 18 2023