

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 November 15, 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; Tim Kilhart Subregion 3

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Keyna Thomas, MART; Chris Klem, MassDOT OTP; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3; Ben Breger, MassDOT District 2; Dan Van Shalkwyk, Ayer; Dick Kilhart, Athol

STAFF PRESENT

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

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of October 18, 2023 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the October 18, 2023 MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was made, seconded and passed.

IV. Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- Update by MassDOT OTP

S. Woelfel stated that there was nothing to present on this item.

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

- Review of Comments on FFY 2024 Highway TIP Amendment #1
- MPO Action Related to FFY 2024 Highway TIP Amendment #1
- Review of TIP Amendment #2
- MPO Action Related to TIP Amendment #2

B. Doherty presented a summary of FFY 2024 – 28 TIP Highway Amendment #1 which was put out for a 21-day public comment period that ran from October 25th to November 14th. 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%. 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. He mentioned that a vote to endorse was being sought.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously by the MPO to endorse Amendment #1 of the 2024-2028 TIP.

B. Doherty mentioned that Amendment #2 of the 2024-2028 TIP would be presented by Keyna Thomas and we are looking to put this amendment out for a 21-day public comment period.

K. Thomas detailed Amendment #2, which consists of several transit project amendments in FFY 2024. Due to several cost changes, along with changes in funding sources, a total of 10 projects will be removed, with money disbursed to four existing projects which are in need of additional funding. Additionally, six projects will be added, as detailed in Amendment #2 summary handout. Ms. Thomas detailed several factors that resulted in these changes.

There was discussion on the approach of using adjustments versus amendments for the changes presented. It was agreed that all changes presented would be combined as Amendment #2.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously by the MPO to release Amendment #2 of the 2024-2028 TIP for a 21-day public comment period running from November 28th, through December 18th.

VI. Montachusett MPO TIP and UPWP Development Schedules

B. Doherty mentioned that this agenda item was included to give a heads up to members that the development of both the FFY 2025-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and FFY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) will be underway over the next several months. Typically, this process starts with project solicitation and updates occurring in January and draft documents reviewed and discussed through April with the MMPO. The aim is to have a draft of both documents for the MPO to release for a 21-day public comment period in April, and endorsement in May. These two items will be discussed in greater detail at meetings in the months to come.

VII. Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Federal Grant Update

B. Harris provided an update on the status of the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Regional Safety Action Plan grant awarded to MRPC, along with MART, in 2022. He reviewed the RFP for consultants to spearhead the plan along with MRPC and MART, which responses were due back in October. We received seven responses from possible consultants. Staff reviewed and scored all responses and conducted interviews with finalists on November 14th. Mr. Harris briefly reviewed the budget and scope for the plan and mentioned a final decision on a consultant will be made by mid-November and planning activities will begin shortly thereafter. 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.

T. Beauregard asked if it was possible to announce the consultant which was chosen.

Mr. Harris mentioned that the final decision would be made by the end of the week.

VIII. Updates

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

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; PS&E is due on March 27th 2024. Project #613167 Athol-Phillipston-Templeton Bridge Preservation of 8 Bridge Crossings Along Route 2, design is at 100% and is under review. Project # 612151 – Athol Bridge Replacement Route 2A Main Street over the B&M Railroad is at pre-25% design with 25% due on February 17, 2024. Project# 608424 for FFY 2026 Templeton reconstruction of Rt 68 from Rt 202 to the Phillipston TL, design is at 75% and the 100% Right of Way plans are due December 15th, 2023, 100% design is due on August 25th, 2024.

A. Sullivan of MassDOT District 3 provided the following updates. Project #604499 Leominster- Route 12 is at 75% design, 100% will be due in December, Right of Way plans have been accepted. Project 608189 Fitchburg-Bridge Replacement on Water Street over Boulder Drive and Pan-Am Railroad is at 75% design with 100% design due December 1st, 2023, Right of Way plans have been accepted. Project 612110 Fitchburg/Ashby- Resurfacing and related work on Route 31, is at pre-25% design. Project 609411 Fitchburg/Leominster – Twin City Rail Trail Phase 2, 100% design is under review, PS&E is due January 31st, 2024.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

G. Snow mentioned that the MJTC met last Wednesday November 8th. The members discussed a possible bylaw change related to community representatives. Members are expecting to make a decision at the next meeting currently scheduled for Wednesday December 13th at 1:00 PM.

The staff has begun work on various tasks as part of the new Work Program year. As the year moves forward, we will be bringing regular updates of these studies to the MJTC. This includes a freight study for the Lancaster, Lunenburg, Shirley and Ayer area, the Coordinated Human Services Plan and the Eastern Region Transit Development program.

There is a 2024 Calander handout available that highlights the regularly scheduled meetings of the MRPC. These include the Commission meeting, usually held on the first Thursday of the month, the MJTC held on the second Wednesday and the MPO held on the third Wednesday. These dates at times are subject to change so everyone should also refer to the Upcoming Meetings listing on our website.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G. Eaton stated employees of the organization provide quarterly reports to Commissioners. As of January 2024, the format of these reports will be map-based. MRPC will use its Montachusett Region Mapper system (**MRMapper**SM) for future reporting. All visitors to mrpc.org will have free access to **MRMapper**SM “24/7/365.” Users will be able to click on a community name and using a pull-down menu system learn about the status of the more than 30 contracts MRPC has with communities, non-governmental organizations, and State and Federal agencies.

As reported to the Commissioners on November 9th, this year, MRPC has hired three new Planners in the Planning and Development Department, and we are in the process of onboarding a Communications Intern to assist with outreach to communities with all this agency’s local and regional planning efforts such as with Digital Equity Planning.

MRPC has discontinued its advertising for Principal and Senior Planners. Applications for paid Intern positions are welcome. Please click here for more information:

<https://www.mrpc.org/home/news/part-and-full-time-positions-open>.

IX. Administrative Matters

- *Next MPO Meeting*

The next meeting is scheduled for December 20th, at 1:00PM.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 1:36 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 11 15 2023 Agenda

MPO 11 15 2023 Minutes

5 DRAFT FFY 2024 Highway Amendment #1 Summary

5 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #1 10 2023

5 FINAL DRAFT FY24 TIP Amendment #2

7 Montachusett RPC SS4A Full Budget Est

7 MRPC SS4A RFP Version 1 9 18 2023

7 SS4A-Action Plan Components

8 2024 Meeting Calendar Version 1

8 MPO Monthly Report 11-15-23 GE