

MONTACHUSETT JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (MJTC) MEETING
and
Regional Transportation Plan Update - Transit Outreach Meeting

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 18, 2015

J. Wyman called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m.

I. INTRODUCTION

MEMBERS

Doug Walsh, Athol; John Wyman, Westminster

EX-OFFICIO

Jeff Hoynoski, MassDOT District 2

GUESTS

Jason Zelesky, Mount Wachusett Community College; Charlie Powderly, ARC; Eric Rodriguez, Cleghorn Neighborhood Center; Ann Berube, Westminster; Jillian Berube, Westminster

STAFF

Brad Harris, Brian Doherty, George Snow, Sheri Bean, George Kahale

II. APPROVAL OF JANUARY 21, 2015 MINUTES

As there was no quorum present the approval of the minutes of January 21, 2015 was tabled until the next meeting.

III. REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP) OUTREACH – Transit

RTP Overview

B. Harris indicated that RTP surveys were available for completion both in English and Spanish and the survey was also available online. MRPC is conducting a number of outreach meetings for the development of the 2016 Regional Transportation Plan(RTP). The plan needs to be updated every four years and provides guidance as how to spend state and federal funds. Public involvement is a very important part of the process. Each meeting has a different topic. The topic at this meeting will be transit. We are looking to gather input and feedback. MRPC has a website dedicated to the RTP and its development at mrpc.org. MRPC's planning area covers three cities and 19 towns located in northern Worcester and western Middlesex counties. MRPC is a regional agency created by state legislation. B. Harris gave an overview of the transportation planning process.

MassDOT Policies & Draft Visions and Goals

B. Harris explained that MassDOT provides input into the RTP process and have developed initiatives and policies that impact the development of the plan. The initiatives and policies are Green DOT, which is a comprehensive environmental responsibility and sustainability initiative with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions; promoting healthy transportation options and supporting smart growth. The Healthy Transportation Policy directive formalizes their commitment to the implementation of maintenance of a transportation network that serves all mode choices. The Statewide Mode Shift goal

seek to increase the number of people that utilize walking, biking, transit, rather than single passenger cars.

Transit

G. Kahale indicated that the 2016 RTP will evaluate the existing transit services in our region and analyze its gaps and needs. Several studies will be reviewed that have been completed by MRPC and other organizations. Surveys completed for the Fitchburg/Leominster Transit Development Plan will also be reviewed. MRPC's studies are available on line at its website. G. Kahale gave an overview of the transit services provided by Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) and presented a series of maps on transit routes in the region. He also discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the transit system and proposed service recommendations and the needs of the commuter rail system.

Questions were asked and answered about the cost of MART's subscription service, what communities the service was available in and how the service worked.

Discussion took place regarding fixed route transit services in Westminster. G. Kahale explained there is no fixed route service in Westminster. There is an express service to MWCC that passes through Westminster but it is a direct service that does not stop. The Selectmen of Westminster would have to make a request for the service to stop.

B. Harris explained the vision statement and goals of the RTP. He asked for comments and feedback on the goals and objectives as well as an issues, topics, or areas of concern that those present would like to see addressed regarding transit.

C. Powderly of ARC commented that ARC serves those with disabilities and transportation services are a constant challenge for people with disabilities. It is key for employment, medical and social needs. There is a lack of services available and more services need to be encouraged. He mentioned a client having to relocate from Winchendon to Fitchburg just to be able to access transportation services.

E. Rodriguez of Cleghorn Neighborhood Center stated that CNC serves a low income demographic. His concern was that although MART offers subscription transportation services it does not work for his constituents as only four changes in schedule are allowed per month. Most of his constituents work jobs where their work schedule changes consistently. The transit system does not have much material available for those who speak Spanish or other languages. Problematic is the lack of transit service for those who work late hours.

G. Kahale informed that MART does provide night transportation service between 10:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

B. Harris added that those comments were also a concern at our earlier meeting regarding outreach and publicizing by MART. We will pass the comments on to MART.

J. Zelesky of MWCC commented that its student population relies heavily on transportation services. He was concerned about some points made earlier regarding the strong language concerning the highly subsidized but low ridership of the GLink. GLink service for students from Athol is the only doorway for some to access MWCC. Fixed route bus service is not available after 5:00 p.m. Therefore those students attending classes later in the day are unable to get home and those attending evening classes have no transportation options at all. The summer MWCC bus schedule does not match the needs of the students. Transportation is a barrier for those who want to attend MWCC. He indicated that he has been working with MART but more needs to be done to coincide with the academic schedules of MWCC students.

E. Rodriguez added the CNC offers adult education services in the evening which run until 9:00 p.m but there is no transportation available for his constituents.

B. Harris thanked everyone for their feedback and indicated this information will also be provided to MART.

IV. CONTRACT STATUS REPORTS

a. FTA/RTA

G. Kahale indicated that the contractor is continuing work on the Wachusett Commuter Rail Station which is scheduled for completion in September 2016. The North Leominster Commuter Rail Parking Garage is complete. MBTA and the landowner in Ayer are still negotiating an agreement on the Ayer Parking Facility. MART is working with Lunenburg to expand fixed route bus service.

b. MASSDOT 3C

B. Harris mentioned that copies of the trail guide map were available and MRPC is in the process of distributing them to communities. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process will begin soon and we will be looking at projects for our region in the next couple of months. MRPC is purchasing new software for our Pavement Management System which means we will have a new system up and running this year.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

B. Harris indicated the next MPO meeting is March 11, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. at MRPC and. The next MJTC meeting is March 18, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at MRPC.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS AVAILABLE AT MEETING:

MJTC Agenda February 18, 2015
January 21, 2015 MJTC Minutes
2016 RTP Survey English and Spanish
2016 RTP Green DOT Goals
2016 RTP Transit Presentation
RTP Outreach Notice
Draft Vision Goals 12/31/2014