

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

February 28, 2024

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M. in person at Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA and via Zoom. Attendees included:

Voting Members in Attendance:

- Stephen Woelfel,
- Derek Shooster - MassDOT
- Brian Fallon, MassDOT D4 (Representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board Chair, NMCOG Representative
- Karyn Puleo, LRTA MPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Tim Paris, MassDOT
- Chris Klem
- Miranda Briseno, MassDOT
- Justin Howard, LRTA
- Josh Levin, MassDOT D4
- Andrew Wang, MassDOT Planning
- Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT D3
- Marlies Henderson, CIG
- Alison Manuguian, Dracut
- Derek Krevat, MassDOT

NMMPO Staff:

- NMMPO staff Jennifer Raitt, Kelly Lynema, Jessica Boulanger, Blake Acton

2. OPEN FORUM – OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENTS FROM MPO MEMBER COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC (2:29)

Marlies Henderson, CIG – resident of North Billerica. She moved here in 1997 from the Netherlands. She is often confronted with the lack of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure as she rides her bike.

She would like to know if there is interest in having a bike pad input in a regional capacity, but would also like to be a voting member, not just public input. She knows there is a lot of talk about the Yankee Doodle trail, but she would like to see total connectivity everywhere.

Response - Stephen Woelfel – the MPO will have to talk this through after this meeting and get back to Marlies Henderson. He explained that there are other ways to get involved and he can reach out to the planning office to see where help is needed and get back to her. They will review the MOU and her participation in that also.

3. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 24, 2024 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES (8:18)

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the January 24, 2024 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the January 24, 2024 NMMPO meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

4. ACTION ITEM: ENDORSED TIP AMENDMENT #1 – LRTA AMENDMENT PACKAGE (9:05)

Blake Acton – NMCOC Transit Planner - gave an overview of the LRTA Amendment Package. This is the amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP, for FFY24 through FFY28. This amendment was presented to the Board in the previous meeting and we opened it up for public comment from February 2 through February 23 for a 21 day comment period. We accepted public comments to a dedicated email address that we set up for public comments at publiccomments@npc.org. We also held a virtual public meeting on February 14, at 5:30 PM. There were no public comments at that meeting. We received one comment from LRTA on the TIP Amendment.

The LRTA requested that we change one of the TIP projects to increase the funds for LRTA project 011635. The reason for this is to purchase equipment for ongoing automatic vehicle location and automatic passenger counter project, which is currently being installed and also to paint the handrails at the parking garage at Gallagher Terminal. Also, this would be used to purchase some computer equipment and conduct some repairs to the garage. These additional funds will come from State sources. We ask that the MPO endorse the amendment with the comments received from the LRTA.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the NMMPO unanimously endorsed TIP Amendment #1 – LRTA Amendment Package with the changes requested by the LRTA.

5. ACTION ITEM: TIP AMENDMENT #2 – LRTA AMENDMENT PACKAGE (12:50)

Blake Acton – NMCOC Transit Planner - gave an overview of the LRTA Amendment Package. The public comment period and the virtual public meeting are the same as the TIP Amendment #1. We collected public comments through the same dates and same times in same meetings. The MPO received no comments from the public during the public comment period or at the virtual public meeting on Amendment #2. We ask that the MPO endorse Amendment #1.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the NMMPO unanimously endorsed TIP AMENDMENT #2 – LRTA AMENDMENT PACKAGE

6. ADOPT UPDATED PM1 SAFETY PERFORMANCE MEASURE TARGETS (14:03)

Chris Clem, member of MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning in the MPO activities team – gave a detailed overview on Safety Performance Measures. The full presentation can be found in the handout distributed prior to this meeting. It can also be found on the [HERE](#).

Question – Karyn Puleo - Recognizing that these are realistic goals, setting versus aspirational goal setting with that Zero Vision - has somebody done some sort of mathematical computation of how many years until we get to that?

Response – Chris Clem – Not sure at this time.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the Safety Performance Measure Targets was approved unanimously.

7. MNMOP FFY 2025-2029 TIP DEVELOPMENT (23:31)

Derke Shooster, MassDOT gave an overview of the TIP development timeline. This schedule and key 2024 meeting dates can be found in the handout distributed prior to this meeting. It can also be found on the [HERE](#)

Question – Pat Wojtas - on one slide you have improvements on Chancellor Street Route 110 and you said these were going to stay in the years that are shown. But then on the next slide you imply that this one is going to move.

Response – Derek Shooster MassDOT - the top project is 609317. The bottom project is 607401.

Project 607317 is currently programmed for 2026, however, at TIP readiness days, a readiness year recommendation was made for 27 or 28, with the note that project design work is happening in tandem with Project 607401 and that the improvements on Chelmsford Street Route 110 will, most likely, be deliverable after 607401.

Project 607401 is recommended for 27. That's not to say both of them couldn't happen in 27. The design needs to advance on one first and the other needs to follow after.

Response – Brian Fallon, MassDOT – The two projects are adjacent to each other. So the traffic study is going to inform the other project on what the traffic signals are going to be. They are being looked at in a traffic study right now just to find out what the final conditions will be and the design moving forward. So they are joined together right now. But when they become projects they will get separated and one can follow the other. For construction purposes, it would probably be good to have some kind of delay between the construction aspects of either of these projects – like a year.

Blake Acton, NMCOG, gave an overview of the Draft TIP Scenarios from the LRTA for FFY 2025-2029. This spreadsheet can be found in the handout distributed prior to this meeting. It can also be found on the [HERE](#).

Derek Shooster, MassDot, clarified that several RTA's, for reasons of being eligible to receive a discretionary grant that they apply for with FTA, are supposed to demonstrate in a TIP whether a project is prioritized. But TIP's are also only supposed to show things that are real and awarded. So the compromise was any project that uses the funding code DOF - meaning Discretionary-Other-Federal. I just wanted to make clear to Board members that this is to communicate that LRTA anticipates applying for a discretionary grant for a particular investment. But it's only plan discretionary until it's actually awarded. This is a relatively new way of listing items in the Transit TIP's. But I just wanted to make sure that was clear in case any board members had questions on that or any other discretionary grants that LRTA applies for. This is only true for the Transit Program, not the Highway Program.

8. STATUS REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT (TIP) PROJECTS UNDER DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION (48:49)

Timothy Paris gave a summary of the projects under design and construction

- 612631 – Chelmsford Bridge replacement, Gorham Street over 495 and the replacement of Westford Street over 495. This is advertised and the numbers were adjusted based on what came I from the advertisement by about less than a million.
- 609510 - Dracut improvements at George Englesby Elementary School. A safe school project. Those cost numbers have been adjusted up about a million and a half.
- 604694 – Lowell Connector reconstruction from Thorndike to Gorham Street. That total Federal participating cost has increased about half a million
- 607401 - Chelmsford traffic signal installation, number 110 and route 495 (2 locations). Those costs have increased approximately 6.5 million.
- 607887 - basically bookkeeping. We've zeroed out the total contract cost and our records.
- 609317 - the project costs have changed with decreases of up to 3 million.
- 605966 – Lowell reconstruction related work on VFW Highway. We go the 100% designing on that. That is being reviewed.

9. FEDERAL CERTIFICATION REVIEW UPDATE (51:16)

No one from the Federal Highway or Federal Transit was at this meeting. Derek Shooster explained there was a Federal Certification Review at NMCOG last month. It was very comprehensive. Ms. Raitt explained that there will be a lot of changes coming as a result of it and we are looking forward to receiving a draft report which is anticipated later this Spring. We will report back to the MPO at a future meeting.

10. OTHER BUSINESS (59:58)

- Massachusetts Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Board -March 20, 2024 at 1:00 PM at NMCOG office at 672 Suffolk Street, Lowell
- February 27, 2024 NMCOG hosted a Greater Lowell Vision Zero Forum. All materials are posted on our website and were also distributed to the MPO members.
- MassDOT Innovation Conference – April 30 – May 1, 2024

11. ADJOURNMENT (54.56)

Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:54 PM.