

Summary Narrative of Amendment 1 to the FFY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program for the Northern Middlesex Region

Introduction and Overview

The following table summarizes a draft amendment package to Fiscal Year 2024 of the FFY 2024-2028 Northern Middlesex Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). **Amendment 1** involves several items described below that will have the net effect of reducing transit funds by \$17,022,000 of which \$15,188,600 are from federal sources and \$1,833,400 are from state sources.. The proposed amendment package will be considered for release for public comment period at the January 24, 2024 NMMPO meeting. If released, a public comment meeting will be scheduled for February 14, 2024 via zoom. The public is invited to comment on this amendment package by email to publiccomments@nmcog.org or by mail to NMCOG, 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01852. Following the public comment period, the NMMPO will meet again on February 28, 2024 to hear any comments received and consider endorsement of this amendment package.

Table of Proposed Changes to the FY 2024 LRTA TIP Program of Projects

TIP Code	Change	Project	Reason
LRTA011667	+ \$50,000	Hire a Mobility Outreach Coordinator	LRTA Awarded Community Transit Grant
LRTA011635	+ \$2,105,000	Facility & equipment improvements	LRTA received more state funds than anticipated
RTD0010688	+ \$7,373,000	Purchase 7 hybrid buses in FY24	LRTA Awarded with Low or No Emission FTA Grant
RTD0010703	- \$6,600,000	Purchase 1 hybrid bus in FY24 & 6 BEBs in FY26	
RTD0010696	- \$250,000	Upgrade to parking garage payment system	Federal funds not needed because LRTA received more state funds than anticipated. Project completed in FY23.
T00039	- \$800,000	Implement AVL/APC system for fixed route buses	Federal funds were spent in FY23, so federal funds no longer needed in FY24.
RTD0011205	- \$300,000	Purchase a backup generator	Delay in final design for pedestrian access way & Commuter Rail platform following FTA/MBTA feedback.
T00040	- \$15,000,000	Pedestrian access way & Commuter Rail platform	

T00058	- \$3,600,000	Improvements to Maguire facility	
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TIP Program Description

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a critical federally mandated document that directs the allocation of federal transportation funding within the NMMPO region. The TIP outlines a five-year capital plan, featuring a diverse array of projects anticipated to receive federal and state aid. The most [recent TIP](#) is available on the NMCOG website as well as TIPs from [recent years](#). Our TIP is bifurcated into two principal components: one focusing on transit projects through the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) and the other on regional transportation infrastructure enhancements.

LRTA Program of Projects

LRTA’s Program of Projects, which forms a significant part of the NMMPO TIP, is formulated and submitted by LRTA to MassDOT for approval. This submission is a prerequisite for securing the necessary state match through MassDOT’s statewide Capital Improvement Program. Furthermore, any modifications to this plan are subject to review and approval by the MassDOT Rail & Transit Division, ensuring compliance and alignment with state transportation objectives. Prior to finalization, proposed changes to the TIP, referred to as “amendments” including those related to the LRTA’s projects, are presented to the NMMPO Board for comprehensive review and consideration for inclusion in the regional plan.

Invitation for Public Comment

The NMMPO and LRTA invite the public to provide their input on this TIP amendment package. We have established a 21-day comment period to ensure sufficient opportunity for community feedback. This process satisfies the LRTA’s public participation requirements for the Program of Projects.

Please refer any comments to Paul Christner, Transportation Program Manager at publiccomments@nmcog.org or 978-454-8021, ext. 121.

Detailed List of Proposed Changes

- LRTA011667 - Mobility Outreach Coordinator:** LRTA applied for and received a Community Transit Grant to recruit a Mobility Outreach coordinator. As outlined in NMMPO’s [Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan](#) (CPT-HST) from 2023, the primary responsibility of the new hire will be to educate and train seniors and individuals with disabilities. The initial focus will be strengthening relationships with Councils on Aging (COAs) in the LRTA service area, understanding how their service works and their service needs. LRTA proposes programming \$40,000 from

5310 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds and \$10,000 from State Contract Assistance (SCA).

- 2. LRTA011635 – Transit Facility and Equipment Improvements:** LRTA proposes leveraging \$2,105,000 of newly available state funds through the Regional Transit Authority Capital Assistance Program (RTACAP) to support a variety of improvements to transit facilities and equipment including:

 - a. Design for Commuter Rail Access Project
 - b. Design for Maguire (paratransit) facility improvements
 - c. Replacement of three (3) end of life service trucks
 - d. Reconstruction of roof drainage and storm water trenches
 - e. Elevator repairs
 - f. Sidewalk and paving repairs
 - g. Replacement of maintenance equipment
 - h. Exterior building maintenance
 - i. Purchasing an additional parking payment kiosk

- 3. RTD0010688 and RTD0010703 – Fixed-Route Vehicle Replacement:** LRTA applied for and received a grant from the FTA Low or No (LowNo) Emission Grant Program to purchase seven (7) new Gillig hybrid electric buses for fixed-route service. LRTA proposes amending the TIP to move the Federal share programmed for FY26 to FY24 and to combine RTD0010688 and RTD0010703 into one project. This amendment is to remove \$5,280,000 of federal share and \$1,320,000 of state share (RTACAP) from FY26 and add \$6,171,400 of federal share and \$31,600 of Transportation Development Credits (TDC) state share to FY24 as well as add \$1,170,000 of state TDC to FY26. These changes enable LRTA to access the LowNo grant funds to place orders for the new buses in FY24. Additionally, LRTA has decided to purchase hybrid buses instead of battery electric buses (BEB) in this replacement cycle as described in the TIP. Given the current technological landscape and operational considerations, LRTA has chosen hybrid buses as a more feasible and reliable option at this stage, ensuring both environmental benefits and practicality for the service area. LRTA remains committed to sustainability and will actively monitor advancements in technologies like BEBs, considering them in future replacement cycles.

- 4. RTD0010696 – Gallagher Parking Garage Upgrades:** In SFY23, LRTA upgraded the parking payment system at Gallagher Transportation Center Garage to allow visitors to pay for hourly parking and to pay using electronic payment at a self-serve kiosk, as well as facility entrance/exit design changes to accommodate the new system. LRTA proposes amending the TIP to remove the \$200,000 of federal share (5307) and \$50,000 of state share (RTACAP) programmed for this project in FY24. LRTA received more state funding in SFY23 than anticipated in the TIP, so LRTA was able to complete this project without using the federal funds programmed in the FY24 TIP.

5. T00039 – Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) and Automatic Passenger Counter (APC)

Systems: This project was formerly LRTA011460 in the FY23-27 TIP and proposes purchasing and installing a new AVL and APC system in all fixed-route buses to enable live vehicle tracking and automatic passenger counting across the entire system. In FY24, LRTA signed a contract with EQUANS to install these systems and is currently in the process of implementing them. To fund this project, LRTA obligated federal funds in FY23 and plans to obligate state funds in FY24. Since LRTA already obligated the federal funds in FY23 this amendment is to remove the \$800,000 of federal funds programmed for FY24.

6. RTD0011205 – Purchase Backup Generator: LRTA proposes removing \$240,000 of Federal (5307) funds and \$60,000 of state (RTACAP) funds for purchasing a backup generator for the Gallagher Terminal and Administration Office from the TIP. LRTA intends to delay the purchase of the generator until the design of the Commuter Rail Access Project is complete and obligate funds in a future TIP.

7. T00040 - Rehab of Commuter Rail Access Way: LRTA requests that \$12,000,000 of federal funds and \$3,000,000 of state funds (RTACAP) be removed from FY24. This project is delayed due to a redesign based on feedback from the FTA and MBTA, so LRTA has not yet secured a discretionary source of funding for this project. Once the design is finalized, the LRTA plans to propose programming this project in the FY25-29 TIP and apply for 5339 discretionary federal funding.

8. T00058 – Maguire and Paratransit Maintenance Facility Improvements: The scope of this project depends on the currently pending final design of the Commuter Rail Access Way project, so LRTA requests that \$2,880,000 of federal share and \$720,000 of state share (RTACAP) be removed from FY24. LRTA plans to program this project in a future TIP. The project includes replacing the windows and facade of the Admin and Paratransit Maintenance and Operations Facility, and associated interior rehab to stop water leakage/improve drainage.