

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

June 28, 2023

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M. via videoconference headquartered at the office of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), 40 Church Street, Suite 200, Lowell, MA. Attendees included:

Voting Members in Attendance:

- Derek Krevat, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing MassDOT Secretary and CEO Gina Fiandaca)
- Brian Fallon, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG NMMPO Representative
- Ron Keohane (Representing LRTA MPO representative Karyn Puleo)

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Derek Shooster, MassDOT
- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Ali Bent, LRTA
- Sarah Bradbury MassDOT D3
- Andrew Jennings, LRTA Advisory Board - Town of Billerica
- Alan Heredia, City of Lowell
- John Byatt – BETA
- Chris Timmel, FHWA

NMMPO Staff:

- Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director, and NMMPO staff Shrvanthi Gopalan Narayanan and Jessica Boulanger

2. APPROVAL OF THE May 24, 2023 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the May 24, 2023 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Ron Keohane, the May 24, 2023 NMMPO meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

3. STATUS REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) PROJECTS UNDER DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION (Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4)

Timothy Paris updated the NMMPO regarding new projects because of the recent PRC meeting and other project updates.

- New projects
 - **Project 613394 – Chelmsford-Lowell-Tewksbury Interstate pavement Preservation and Related work on I-495** – Project cost: \$5.7 million.
 - **Project 613268 – Tyngsborough-Culvert Replacement on Westford Road** – Project cost: just under \$2 million.
 - **Project 613213 – Bedford-Billerica-Chelmsford-Tyngsborough-Bridge Preservation of 41 Bridges in Route 3 Corridor** - Project cost: \$10 million.
 - **Project 613120 – Tewksbury – Bridge replacement, T-03-013, North Street Over I-495** - Project cost: \$32.6 million.
 - **Project 613109 – Chelmsford-Lowell-Deck Replacement, C-08-030 (2JG) and L-15-065 (2H2, 2H3), Lowell Connector (NB/SB) and Lowell Connector B-11 over I-495** - Project cost: \$11.6 million.
 - **Project 612977 – Chelmsford-Vinal Square Safety Improvements** - Project cost: \$5.7 million.
 - **Project 612658 – Tewksbury – Bridge Preservation of T-03-014, I-495 over Route 133, and T-03-015, I-495 over Route 38** - Project cost: \$6.2 million.
 - **Project 612656 Westford-Bridge Preservation, W-26,018, W-26-019, I-495 (NB/SB) over Concord and Boston Road** - Project cost: \$2.8 million.
 - **Project 612631 – Chelmsford-Bridge Replacement, C-08-039, Gorham Street (ST 3A) over I-495 and Replacement of C-08-036, Westford Street over I-495 (DB)** - Project cost: \$44.3 million.

- Updates on existing projects
 - **Project 607887 – Lowell-Rourke Bridge Replacement, L-15-008, Wood Street Extension over Boston and Maine Railroad and Merrimac River** – Has reached 25% Design with new estimates with a Federal Participating cost of \$193 million and a total contract cost of \$186 million.
 - **Project 610704 – Burlington-Billerica- Resurfacing and related work on Route 3A** – Project has a new ad date September 2, 2023.
 - **Project 608774 – Lowell-Tewksbury- Route 38 Intersection Improvements** – Project has a new ad date September 9, 2023 and updated estimates.

Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan asked how often the committee meets to review the projects. Timothy Paris commented that they meet quarterly.

Ron Keohane commented on the Tyngsborough Culvert – he thought they were 25% design complete but it is listed as “Approved”. Timothy Paris replied that the status in the database is “Approved”. If the project manager updated it before this list was printed it might not have been reflected on this list.

No additional updates from Sarah Bradbury from MassDOT District 3.

4. OPEN FORUM – OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENTS FROM MPO MEMBERS, COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS, AND THE PUBLIC

Derek Shooster congratulated the City of Lowell for receiving a RAISE grant.

5. FFY 2024 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) – MPO ACTION FOR ENDORSEMENT

Ms. Raitt thanked Jessica Boulanger for her work in putting together this document – responding to comments from many entities including MassDOT, Safe Streets For All grant. A lot of this is reflected in the final document. Adjustments may need to be made in the future to reflect the staffing transitions that have occurred. Ms. Raitt is holding off responding to these comments until we hire a new Program Manager and two other positions.

Jessica Boulanger gave her presentation and reviewed the comments and responses from the Public Meeting held on June 6, 2023. Detailed comments and responses are included in the appendix of the UPWP.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Brian Fallon, the FFY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program was endorsed unanimously.

6. FFY 2023-2027 TIP AMENDMENT 5 (ATTACHED) – THIS AMENDMENT INCLUDES COST CHANGES FOR LRTA PROJECTS. MPO ACTION TO RELEASE DRAFT FOR 21 DAY PUBLIC COMMENT

Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan presented a summary Narrative of Amendment 5 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program for the Northern Middlesex Region. The current and proposed funding are included in this amendment. This proposed amendment is to be considered for release for public comment at today's MPO meeting. Public Comment meeting is scheduled for July 17, 2023 to receive any comments on the amendment. Public comments can also be emailed to Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan or at NMCOG. After the Public Comment meeting the MPO will meet on July 26, 2023 to discuss comments received and consider the endorsement of this amendment.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Brian Fallon, the FFY 2023-2027 TIP Amendment 5 was released for a 21-Day Public Comment period.

Pat Wojtas asked what type of vehicles the LRTA plans to purchase – electric or hybrid. Ali Bent from LRTA answered that they are gas vehicles.

Derek Shooster asked if there are two other action items for this amendment for replacement van type A's using 5310 carry over.

Ali Bent commented those were 2021 community transit grants. Those vehicles were delayed. They were added on when that grant was awarded.

Derek Shooster explained that the records he received from the Rail and Trail division were input a few days after the list was shared with Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan. There are 2 more projects for vans using old 5310 carry over money because the buses were not deliverable when they were programmed. Before the funds can be obligated FTA will need to see these on an active TIP. He suggested to release a version of this amendment that includes those 2 projects to make sure those purchases can happen this fiscal year.

Based on an amended motion by Pat Wojtas to include 2 vehicles and seconded by Brian Fallon, the FFY 2023-2027 TIP Amendment 5 was released for a 21 Day Public Comment period from June 30, 2023 – July 20, 2023. A public meeting will be held on July 17, 2023.

7. DRAFT COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT HUMAN SERVICES PLAN – MPO ACTION TO RELEASE DRAFT FOR 21 DAY PUBLIC COMMENT

Jessica Boulanger gave a presentation on the draft Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Plan which included the project timeline. In June we would like to release this Draft plan for a Public Comment period and in July MPO meeting we will address the public comments and vote to endorse the plan.

Pat Wojtas asked that if someone would like a Roadrunner service do they have to live within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of an LRTA route. Jessica Boulanger responded that this is correct. Pat Wojtas wants to know the logic behind this.

Ali Bent commented that this is FTA regulation. They don't have to live within the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile route but they need to be within a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile fixed route stop to have the Roadrunner pick them up.

Jessica Boulanger added that a huge outcome of coordinated plan work and our regional transportation plan work is that many Councils on Aging desire more coordination among the Councils to share best practices. Having the LRTA and other regional stakeholders at the table would be fruitful to the conversation.

Derek Krevat asked that one of the action items is to increase services to people under the age of 65 who have a disability. Why is there a cutoff age? Jessica Boulanger explained it is difficult to identify if the Council on Aging is responsible or the LRTA Roadrunner responsible for persons with disabilities under the age of 65. Clear guidance for riders on who they can count on for service would be helpful and appreciated.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Ron Keohane the Draft Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Plan was released for a 21-Day Public Comment period.

8. 2025 – 2050 DRAFT LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (ENVISION 2050) – UPDATE

Ms. Raitt shared that the plan has been delayed about one and a half months. The full draft was anticipated to be completed on May 12, 2023. As of May 31, 2023 we lost our Program Manager. Thanks to Jessica Boulanger and Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan for their work on many sections of the document. More is needed to be done in order complete this document including content and formatting so the document is easy to read and understand.

Ms. Raitt reviewed the completion plan and shared the steps that NMCOG is planning to take to complete the plan. Giving the timing it will mean that the NMMPO will need to meet in July and August and will need a quorum for both meetings. By July 19, 2023 you will receive a full draft of this document so by the July 26, 2023 meeting so we can kick off the public comment period. By August 21, 2023 we can summarize everything, present the edited document to the MPO, and finalize all the documents, so by August 23, 2023 we can officially submit to all our required partners.

Derek Krevat commented this document looks good and includes all the required information needed for the public process.

9. SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL – UPDATE

Jessica Boulanger provided an update on the Safe Streets and Roads For All process. In 2022, NMCOG applied for a Safe Streets and Roads For All grant with Merrimack Valley Planning Commission as the lead applicant. This is to develop a Northeast Massachusetts Comprehensive Safety Action Plan. This aims to develop a holistic well-defined strategy to prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries in our region. We are developing two separate plans – NMCOG will be developing a plan and Merrimack Valley Planning Commission will be developing a plan. This change requires the approval of the Federal Highway Association as well as Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies. We anticipate receiving all the documents and completing this process by August 2023. The total Federal Funding award was \$375,233 - \$93,808 were MassDOT funds for a total of \$469,041.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

- Next meeting date – July 26, 2023
- Registration is now open for MassDOT’s annual Moving Together conference on October 4, 2023. This will take place at the Sheraton Hotel in Boston, MA.
- Derek Shooster asked if the 5339 that LRTA received – is this being amended onto the TIP this year. Ali Bent replied that she will ask FTA next week how they want to handle this. Derek Shooster also congratulated the LRTA for being awarded this grant that will help the region procure hybrid electric buses.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Brian Fallon, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:51 PM.