

APRIL 2023



NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

NEWSLETTER
News and Resources



Northern Middlesex MPO Completes Title VI Annual Report

The Northern Middlesex Title VI Annual Report is complete for 2023. The report documents the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization's (NMMPO) Title VI program and compliance with federal Title VI regulations. Title VI and related non-discrimination authorities require that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, low income, or limited English proficiency, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the Massachusetts State Police receives Federal financial assistance. The Annual Report includes an analysis examining how MPO-funded transportation projects benefit Environmental Justice Communities of color and other underserved communities and whether these projects disproportionately affect them. The MPO endorsed this report on March 22, 2023, following a 21-day public comment period. For more information on Title VI visit www.nmcog.org/nondiscrimination-policy. To read the full report, visit our website.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: DATA COLLECTION FOR 2023 TRAFFIC COUNTING PROGRAM



NMCOG is seeking to hire a consultant to assist with traffic count data collection for the 2023 season. Traffic count data is to be collected at a minimum of 50 locations and/or a maximum of 80 locations within the Northern Middlesex Region of Massachusetts using Automatic Traffic Recorder devices. The traffic count season begins May 1, 2023 and concludes by November 30, 2023. Bids must be received by 4:00pm, Friday, April 14, 2023. Bid submittals should be clearly labeled as **"Traffic Count Program Data Collection Services Bid."**

All bids must be original and delivered by hand or mailed to the offices of the:

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
40 Church Street - Suite 200
Lowell, MA 01852
Attention: Justin Howard, Transportation Director
or by email to: jhoward@nmccog.org

Questions concerning this request should be directed to Justin Howard, NMCOG Transportation Director at (978) 454-8021 x 121 or to jhoward@nmccog.org.



ENVISION 2050 FORUM RECAP

On March 22, 2023, NMCOG along with UMass Lowell hosted its second public forum for the Envision 2050 plan. The hybrid event was held from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm at the Wannalancit Mills on the UMass Lowell Campus.



Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) representative and Chelmsford Select Board member Pat Wojtas gave a brief overview of the role of NMMPO, the seven voting NMMPO members, and the coordination of Envision 2050 with the NMMPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Constituents from across the region commented on transportation issues identified through outreach efforts including regional stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and survey data. Billerica Planning Board member and NMCOG Councilor Meeting participants emphasized the importance of road design to help calm traffic, reduce speeds, and enhance safety. Other comments focused on sustainability and environmentally-conscious transportation options to enhance access and improve livability across the region.



Massachusetts anticipates receiving approximately \$32.2 billion from the Federal Highway Administration through the year 2050; these funds will be distributed across several state programs including interstate maintenance, non-interstate national highway systems, and roadways. Funds will also be used for state maintenance, bridge programs, and remaining statewide programs such as MassDOT Complete Streets and Safe Routes to Schools programs. Of the \$32.2 billion, the Northern Middlesex Region is anticipated to receive \$457 million as a regional allocation. The Rourke Bridge replacement project in Lowell is an example of a recommendation of this plan and will receive a piece of the federal funding.

A link to the recording of the presentation is available on our website and [YouTube channel](#). If you would like more information on our plan or ways to engage further in this effort, you can visit our website at <https://www.nmcog.org/envision2050>.

UPDATES

Planning for Affordable Housing In Dracut



The Town of Dracut Affordable Housing Partnership, the Town Department of Community Development, and NMCOG are planning for affordable housing in Dracut. The team held a Housing and Community Listening Session and Workshop on March 11, 2023. More than two dozen community members attended the meeting and were guided through a presentation about Dracut's affordable housing needs. Then, community members broke into four groups to discuss potential scenarios on meeting those needs, including locations to create new housing opportunities. Workshop participants were able to express their hopes and concerns about Dracut's housing future. NMCOG will develop a report based on feedback and best practices to inform the Affordable Housing Partnership as they develop recommendations to amend the local zoning bylaw and other policies to create and preserve affordable housing.



Chris Hayes, AICP
NMCOG Economic Development and
Housing Planner



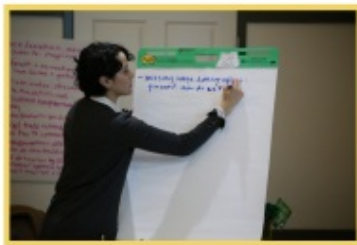
Daniela Garcia Moreno
NMCOG Sustainability Planner

UPDATES

Net Zero Action Planning in Pepperell

NMCOG and the Town of Pepperell's Climate Change Committee hosted a successful Net Zero Action Plan Scoping Engagement Kickoff Meeting on March 16, 2023. The hybrid meeting took place in person at the Albert Harris Senior Center in Pepperell and remotely via GoTo meeting.

NMCOG Sustainability Planner, Daniela Garcia Moreno, kicked off the meeting with an overview of net zero planning concepts and important planning developments within the Commonwealth and the Town of Pepperell. Jim Scarsdale, a member of the Climate Change Committee and Net Zero Plan Subcommittee Chair, provided an overview of the Climate Change Committee's efforts and upcoming events. Attendees then participated in a visioning session, where they were prompted to discuss what Pepperell would look like as a Net Zero town in 2050, how they might continue to be engaged in the planning process, challenges the Town might face in achieving this climate goal, and additional stakeholders that should be a part of the Net Zero planning process. NMCOG is working closely with members of the Climate Change Committee to develop a draft Scope of Work (SOW) for the development of the NZAP based on the feedback received during the kickoff. The next opportunity to engage in the NZAP process will be a meeting in late April 2023, where attendees will learn about the elements of the draft and provide feedback to make the proposed SOW more reflective of their community's needs. You can access the presentation materials [here](#), and a recording of the presentation will be available To stay up to date on Net Zero planning, and other sustainability work in Pepperell, please visit [greenpepperell.org](https://www.greenpepperell.org).



Daniela Garcia Moreno
NMCOG Sustainability Planner



Community Members

Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative

On March 22, 2023, NMCOG hosted the Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative for a meeting on Green Infrastructure for Stormwater Management. The collaborative heard presentations from Elisabeth Infield, Professor of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Massachusetts Amherst; Dr. Padmini Das and Judy Rondeau, MassDEP Nonpoint Source Section Chief and Outreach Coordinator, respectively; and Tom Maguire, MassDEP Wetlands Program, and Dave Roman, Principal Engineer for Comprehensive Environmental Inc. You can watch a recording of the meeting on [NMCOG's YouTube Channel](#) and access the presentation materials [here](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program FY24 Action Grant Funding Round Now Open for Applications

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs EEA is seeking proposals for MVP Action Grants, which provide communities funding to implement priority climate adaptation actions. The Request for Responses and required forms can be accessed through the [MVP program website](#) or directly on [COMMBUYS](#). Action Grant proposals are due by 2:00 p.m. ET on Thursday, May 4, 2023 for projects that must be completed by June 30, 2024, or June 30, 2025. To learn more about the FY24 funding round, view a presentation [here](#).

NMCOG AT THE STATE HOUSE

On March 29, 2023, NMCOG staff participated in District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Advocacy Day at the State House with representatives from other Regional Planning Agencies in Massachusetts. The day was hosted by Senator Eldridge and Representative Donato and included presentations about the importance of DLTA to local planning and regionalization efforts, including the Vinal Square showcased by NMCOG. The advocacy intended to bring awareness to the program and request an increase in funding through bill District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) 1599 – 0026.



Regional planning agency staff from across Massachusetts at the State House. Jennifer Raitt, NMCOG Executive Director, second from left on the bottom row, and Justin Howard and Chris Hayes first and second from right on the top row, respectively.

NMCOG IN THE NEWS

Filling ‘The Missing Middle’ of Housing Is Goal of Town

TEWKSBURY - The "missing middle," a term coined by architect and urban designer Daniel Parolek, describes a gap in the housing types being built in many communities, including Tewksbury. It refers to a lack of what we might call starter homes – smaller single families, detached duplexes and townhouses at affordable prices. "I'm sure as some of you have seen driving around town, a lot of the new construction is really beautiful homes, but they're really big," said Town Planner Alex Lowder at a recent workshop held with Chris Hayes of NMCOG. "And if we're talking about the folks who need housing, it's seniors, it's folks with disabilities, it's small families..." [Read More](#)

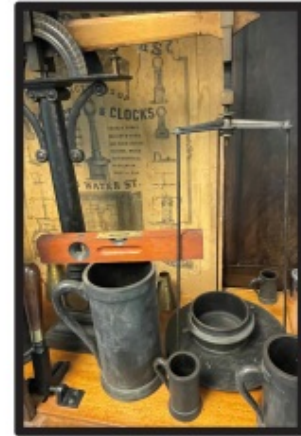
FUN FACTS

History of Weights and Measures

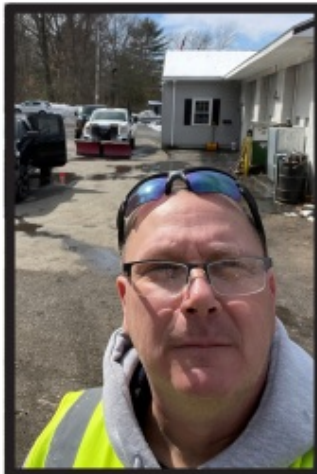
Measures can be traced as far back from the 3rd & 4th Millennium BC. Early standard units may have applied to a single community or small region, with every area developing its own standards for lengths, areas, volumes, and masses. Often such systems were closely tied to one field of use, so that volume measures used, for example, for dry grains were unrelated to those for liquids, with neither bearing any relationship to units of length used for measuring cloth or land.

Weights and measures were first created and signed into law with then President John Adams on March 3, 1799. It was designed to ensure that merchants and merchant mariners were paid without prejudice for goods received and traded. Weights and Measures became an official Commonwealth of Massachusetts entity in 1919, now within the Office of Consumer Affairs, Division of Standards. Many additions and processes were added to ensure consumers and merchants are protected for products purchased and sold ranging from markets, pharmacies, and gas stations to concrete, asphalt, cords of wood, propane, home heating oil and more.

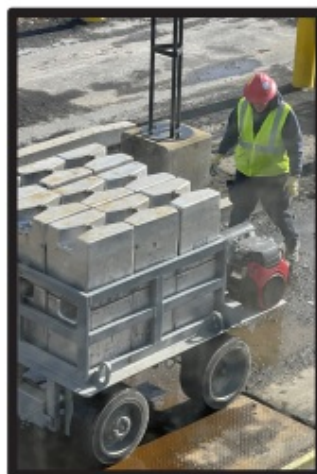
The NMCOG Weights and Measures program has proudly been in operation for more than two decades ensuring consumers and businesses are protected throughout the region and beyond.



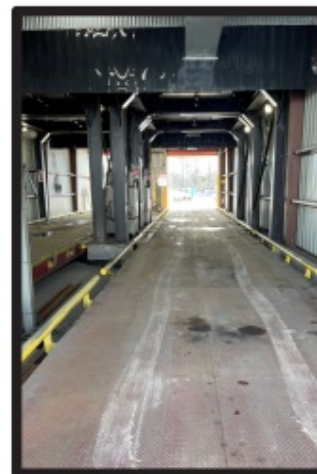
Equipment from past generations used for weights and measures. On display at Littleton Town Hall



Mark Normandin, NMCOG Deputy Sealer of Weights and Measures, working in the field



Third party calibration team operating a 120,000 pound truck scale



Covered Truck Scale

WELCOMING NEW NMCORG STAFF



SARA PAZ

Sara Paz is the new Finance and Benefits Manager at NMCORG. Sara has been a financial professional for just over 20 years. She started out as a Bank Teller in 2002 and her most recent position was the Controller for a Global Corporation. Sara brings with her expertise and skills she gained along the way especially in her role as the Treasurer/Collector for the Town of Ashburnham from 2017-2022. Sara's hobbies include interior design and home renovations. She also enjoys watching football on TV - especially when her favorite team is playing... Go Chiefs! Sara was born in Lowell, raised in Ashby, and for the last seven years has been a resident of Ashburnham. She loves to spend time with her two children, 15 and 13, and her two rescue dogs, 5 and 3.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT NMCORG

**COME JOIN A TALENTED TEAM WORKING
ACROSS THE NMCORG REGION**

OPEN POSITIONS

*Transportation Mobility Specialist
Regional Land Use Planner I or II*

Visit <https://www.nmcog.org/employment-opportunities> for more information and to apply or share with your networks.

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments | 40 Church Street, Suite 200, Lowell, MA 01852

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