

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION June 26, 2019

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

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

Voting Members:

- Steven Woelfel, Chair (Representing MassDOT Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack)
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Board of Selectmen, NMCOG Chair
- Tom Bomil, Chair, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Constance Raphael, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Chris Timmel, Federal Highway Administration
- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Planning, MPO Liaison
- Ali Bent, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Tom Gazda, Vice Chair, Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Tami Gouveia, State Representative

NMMPO Staff:

- Beverly Woods, Chris Curry, Justin Howard, David Tilton, Jong Wai Tommee, Rosalyn Impink (Intern), Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

2. APPROVAL OF THE MAY 22, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with a copy of the May 22, 2019 minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion made by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted to approve the May 22, 2019 minutes as presented.

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

Tom Gazda from the Chelmsford Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) informed the group that Phase 1 of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail officially opened in August 2009. While it has been a great asset to the local communities, the trail has also incurred ten years of wear and tear and now has

significant root intrusion, which creates a safety hazard for trail users. The BPAC has been working with Chelmsford DPW to estimate the cost for addressing the problem locations. A recent estimate covering the cost of replacing about 2,000 feet of asphalt along the trail came in at around \$50,000. The work to remove pavement, roots, regrading the base, and repaving would double the cost. Chelmsford has neither the funds nor the DPW time to complete the work. An original agreement between then MassHighway and Lowell, Westford, and Chelmsford was signed June 11, 1997 specifying that the communities along the trail would be responsible for routine trail maintenance. Despite diligent upkeep, there are issues with the quality of the trail surface that have resulted in many complaints, as well as injuries relating to root intrusion. Tom requested information as to how to address this issue. The trail is owned by MassDOT, but as trail repair is not currently on the TIP, scheduling repair work through the TIP will take years. Steve Woelfel requested a copy of the agreement and suggested that the Committee explore other funding avenues such as MassTrails, Complete Streets, or other grant funds, as initiating a TIP project through the MPO is a lengthy process.

4. STATUS REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) PROJECTS UNDER DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Connie Raphael updated the NMMPO on project information changes since the May 22, 2019 meeting:

- Chelmsford – Intersection Improvements at Route 129 and Riverneck Road: Advertised on June 22, 2019. Bids are due on August 13, 2019.
- Lowell – Deck Replacements, Lowell Connector over Industrial Avenue East: Contract awarded to S&R Corporation. Waiting for Notice to Proceed.
- Tewksbury – Bridge Preservation, Mill Street over Shawsheen River: Price adjusted down to \$432,032.
- Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Main Street, Salem Road and South Street: At 100% design and price adjusted down to \$3,336,338.40.
- Lowell – Reconstruction & Related Work on VFW Highway: Cost adjusted down to \$6,344,132.56.
- Rourke Bridge Replacement, Wood Street Extension over Boston and Maine Railroad and Merrimack River: HNTB Notice to Proceed was issued on June 13, 2019.
- Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Andover Street (Route 133) and River Road: At 75% Design. Construction cost estimate adjustment to \$3,547,634.30.
- Lowell – Bridge Replacement, Market Street over the Western Canal: Open to traffic.

5. FFY 2020 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM – MPO ACTION TO ENDORSE

At the May meeting, the MPO voted to release the FFY 2020 UPWP for a 21-day public comment period. Justin Howard provided a summary of the comments received during that time and the resulting changes to the document. The full document has been made available on the NMCOG website. Justin requested that the MPO consider endorsement of the document.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Connie Raphael, the NMMPO voted unanimously to endorse the Draft FFY 2020 UPWP as presented.

6. DRAFT FFY 2020-2024 RTP – MPO ACTION TO RELEASE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Justin Howard gave a presentation explaining the Regional Transportation Plan process, performance measures, targets, and goals. He provided an executive summary for the MPO meeting packet, with the full document available on the NMCOG website or by request. He requested that the MPO authorize the release of the document for a 21-day public comment period. Beverly Woods expressed concern over the lack of programming of construction funds for the Rourke Bridge Replacement project within the financially constrained portion of the RTP. Steve Woelfel acknowledged that this project is a priority for the region, but stated that MassDOT cannot recommend programming due to the lack of an identified funding source for construction of the project. Funding is in place for preliminary design and environmental work.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Tom Bomil, the NMMPO voted unanimously to release the Draft FFY 2020-2024 RTP for public comment as presented.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Derek Shooster announced that Mass Trail Grant awards were released for 72 projects across the Commonwealth, including one grant for the Connector Trail in Lowell and another to NMCOG for production of a regional trail map. He also stated that the 2019 Moving Together Conference will be held on October 24th. MassDOT is currently soliciting ideas from transportation stakeholders on sessions and topics of interest for the conference. Derek requested that any input be forwarded to Justin Howard or himself.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:45 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 24, 2019, 2:00 PM at NMCOG offices.