

# MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION January 22, 2020

## 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:

- David Mohler, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack)
- Ron Keohane, Tyngsborough Board of Selectmen, NMCOG MPO Representative
- Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4 (Representing Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG Chair
- Kevin O'Connor, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Jules Williams, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
- Constance Raphael, MassDOT District 4
- Chris Timmel, Federal Highway Administration
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Planning, MPO Liaison
- Stephanie Cronin, Middlesex 3 Coalition
- Ali Bent, Lowell Regional Transportation Authority
- Chris Hayes, City of Lowell Transportation Project Manager
- Christine Bruins, Lowell National Historical Park
- Natasha Vance, City of Lowell Transportation Engineer

NMMPO Staff:

- Beverly Woods, Chris Curry, Justin Howard, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 18, 2019 MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with a copy of the December 18, 2019 minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion made by Kevin O'Connor and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted to approve December 18, 2019 minutes as presented.

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

Stephanie Cronin, Middlesex 3 Coalition, inquired as to the status of Park and Ride lots in the region, as her organization is looking at the need for additional parking in lots such as the Tyngsborough Park and Ride lot and the Billerica LRTA commuter rail lot. Beverly Woods stated that NMCOG has been in touch with MassDOT regarding the Tyngsborough Park and Ride lot. Derek Shooster advised the group that MassDOT Highway Division is in receipt of a letter from the Town of Tyngsborough requesting that the lot be expanded. The Highway Division has met with staff from the Office of Transportation Planning to discuss data collection and future planning for Park and Ride facilities. David Mohler suggested a meeting be arranged between MassDOT, NMCOG, Middlesex 3 Coalition, and Town staff to further discuss the issue.

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

Connie Raphael updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the December 18, 2019 meeting:

Projects in design:

- Chelmsford – Intersection Improvements at Boston Road and Concord Road: The 100% design submittal is due in February. Cost estimates and status updates should be available at the next MPO meeting.
- Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Andover Street (Route 133) and River Road: At 100% with an ad date of February 29, 2020. The updated cost estimate is now \$4,611,078.
- Lowell – Pedestrian Walkway and Bicycle Connection at Pawtucket Falls Overlook, from Vandenberg Esplanade to School Street, is at 25% design. The current cost estimate is \$2,548,903.
- Dracut – Improvements on Nashua Road are at 25% Design. A Design Public Hearing was held on January 16, 2020.
- Billerica – Intersection Improvements at Boston Road (Route 3A), Lexington Street, and Glad Valley Road is now at 25% design. The current cost estimate is \$3,863,720.

Projects under construction:

- Tewksbury – Bridge Preservation, Mill Street over Shawsheen River: A pre-construction conference is scheduled for February 6, 2020, and the project has a construction completion date of September 2, 2020.
- Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Main Street, Salem Road and South Street: Bids were opened on October 8. A Notice to Proceed was issued January 14, 2020, with a construction completion date of March 21, 2022.

Justin Howard requested an update on the Boston Road (Route 3A) rehabilitation/reconstruction project on behalf of the Billerica town engineer. He also requested an update on the resurfacing project on Route 38 in Tewksbury, from Colonial Drive North to the intersection of Old Boston Road.

## 5. MassDOT TRANSPORTATION CLIMATE INITIATIVE (TCI) PRESENTATION

Jules Williams gave a brief overview and presentation on the Transportation Climate Initiative, a regional collaboration of 12 Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing the transportation system's reliance on high-carbon fuels, promoting sustainable growth and addressing the challenges of increased vehicle miles traveled. He explained the cap-and-invest program, benefits, and timeline for implementation.

## 6. FFY 2020-2024 DRAFT TIP AMENDMENT 1 – MPO ACTION TO ENDORSE

At the December MPO meeting, Justin Howard presented the draft TIP Amendment 1 to FFY 2020-2024. The amendment involves a cost change to the Andover Road/River Road intersection improvement project in Tewksbury. The original amendment was released with a cost estimate of \$5,390,721. During the comment period, the Town of Tewksbury and MassDOT updated the cost estimate, which now stands at \$4,611,078. Justin requested that the MPO endorse the amendment as presented with the revised estimate.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas, and seconded by Kevin O'Connor, the MPO voted unanimously to endorse the FFY 2020-2024 Draft Tip Amendment 1 as presented.

Pat Wojtas requested that MassDOT provide a comparison between the programmed amounts and actual construction costs for the region's TIP projects. This came from a discussion at the NMCOG Council meeting, where Council members were interested in the accuracy of cost estimates. Staff will work with MassDOT to review recently completed project construction costs.

## 7. LOWELL MERRIMACK RIVERWALK EXTENSION PROJECT UPDATE

Justin Howard informed the MPO that there are \$1.3 million in unfunded target money in 2020, inclusive of the amendment. The City of Lowell has requested that the MPO program \$400,000 to fill a funding gap in the Merrimack Riverwalk extension project. The MPO has already committed to funding the Boston Road at Concord Road intersection improvement project in Chelmsford. NMMPO staff are awaiting 100% design cost estimates for that project. The City of Lowell and National Park Service provided an overview of the Riverwalk Extension project and explained the need for additional funds: the Riverwalk Extension Project (Phase II) design was completed in 2019, with an engineers' cost estimate at \$3,324,856. An IFB was released August 7, 2019. Six bids were received, with the lowest eligible bid of \$4,775,368. This, combined with spent or obligated soft costs, resulted in a total project cost of \$5,298,876, leaving a gap of approximately \$1.15 million. In the 90 days after bids were opened, the City identified \$785,000 in new funding, hence the current gap request of \$400,000.

After discussion of the timeline for completing the project, the NMMPO decided to wait until the 100% design submittal for the Chelmsford project is available before voting on whether to fund the Merrimack Riverwalk project shortfall. The NMMPO will add this issue to the agenda for the February 26, 2020 meeting.

## 8. FFY 2021 UPWP AND FFY 2021-2025 TIP DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Justin Howard presented the preliminary TIP and UPWP schedule of activities for developing and approving the next round of certification documents, which go into effect October 1, 2020.

## 9. NMMPO CERTIFICATION REVIEW UPDATE

Chris Timmel introduced the Certification Review process and timeline. He stated that the desk review of MPO materials is ongoing. The February 26, 2020 MPO meeting will include an opportunity for the public to provide comment and feedback to FHWA and FTA partners. The on-site certification review meeting with MPO staff is scheduled for March 4, 2020. After the on-site meeting, a summary report will be made available to the MPO. Justin Howard will send out notifications to the MPO distribution list with more information.

## 10. OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Kevin O'Connor, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 3:06 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 26, 2020, 2:00 PM at the NMCOG offices.