

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
March 28, 2018**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 2:30 P.M. at the office of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), 40 Church Street, Suite 200, Lowell, MA. Attendees included:

Voting Members:

- Stephen Woelfel, Chair (representing MassDOT Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack)
- Roland Nutter, Pepperell Board of Selectmen, NMCOG NMMPO Representative
- Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4 (Representing Highway Administrator Johnathan Gulliver)
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Board of Selectmen, NMCOG Chair

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Christine Bruins, Lowell National Historic Park
- Ron Desrosiers, MDM Transportation Consultants
- Mark Hamel, Dracut Town Engineer
- Kevin Hardiman, Tewksbury Department of Public Works
- Stephen Jahnle, Chelmsford DPW
- Derek Krevat, MassDOT Planning, MPO Liaison
- Constance Raphael, MassDOT District 4
- Ali Sarault, LRTA
- Stephen Strykowski, Billerica Commission on Disability, Council on Aging

NMMPO Staff:

- Beverly Woods, Chris Curry, Justin Howard, Jong Wai Tommee and Katrina Garavanian, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

2. APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 28, 2018 MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with a copy of the February 28, 2018 minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Roland Nutter, the NMMPO voted to unanimously approve the February 28, 2018 minutes as presented.

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

There were no comments.

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

Connie Raphael updated the NMMPO on project information changes since the February 28, 2018 Meeting:

- Littleton-Westford Interstate Maintenance and related Work on 495 is currently at 75% with an ad date of April 7, 2018.
- Lowell-Chelmsford-Andover Stormwater Improvements along Route 28 and I-495 is at 100% design with an ad date of May 5, 2018.
- Lowell – Improvements on Route 38 at Four Intersections is at final design but waiting for right of way. The ad date is September 15, 2018.
- Westford - Intersection Improvements at Groton Rd. (Rte. 40) and Dunstable Rd. is at 75% design with an ad date of August 4, 2018.
- Lowell – Deck Replacements Lowell Connector over Industrial Avenue is in final design with an ad date of November 10, 2018.
- Lowell – Connector Reconstruction from Thorndike Street to Gorham Street: There is a meeting scheduled on April 9, 2018 with designers and the City to discuss alternatives and combine the project with the Thorndike Street Ramp project.
- Dunstable – Improvements on Main Street (Route 113) has a cost estimate change to \$4.4 million.
- Chelmsford - Bridge Deck Replacement, Including Intersection Improvements at Route 4 and I-495: A preconstruction conference call was held on March 20, 2018.

5. FFY 2018-2022 TIP AMENDMENT 2 – DISCUSSION AND VOTE TO RELEASE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Justin Howard summarized a proposed amendment to FFY 2018 of the FFY 2018-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Amendment involves the programming of a Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) grant award for the construction of crosswalks and signage along the Canalway pedestrian walkway system and the repair of the Swamp Locks/Pawtucket Canal pedestrian bridge in Lowell. The projects have been amended into the original agreement between FHWA – Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division (EFLHD), the National Park Service, and the City of Lowell. The agreement also included the Merrimack Riverwalk extension project FLAP award in 2014. The award amount to be programmed is \$1,292,400 with the Federal portion totaling \$1,077,000. The remaining portion (\$215,400) represents a local match provided by the City of Lowell.

Based on a motion by Roland Nutter and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted unanimously to release the draft amendment for a 21-day public comment period.

6. FFY 2019-2023 TIP DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

a. DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION OF TARGET PROJECT PROGRAMMING

Justin Howard presented a Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC) Summary for the FFY 2019-2023 TIP. He explained the evaluation criteria scoring process and the priority of projects. He also presented a summary of the Green House Gas (GHG) analysis for applicable projects quantified for the FFY 2019-2023 TIP. The Transit GHG analysis will be updated, but transit information was received as of March 27, 2018 and is under review.

The TIP Readiness Day Results were also discussed. If the MPO were to stick with the outcome of that process, there would be just one project programmed in FFY 2019, leaving nearly \$5.7 million un-programmed. At the February 28, 2018 meeting, two scenarios were provided to the MPO for utilizing the un-programmed funds in 2019: 1) program the Chelmsford Route 129/Riverneck Road intersection; or 2) program Dracut's Nashua Road project. Stephen Jahnle from the town of Chelmsford updated the NMMPO, stating that VHB provided a schedule for the Route 129/Riverneck Road project just prior to this meeting, noting that the project is at 25% design, a utility meeting has been held, and the town is hoping to have resubmitted documents and response to any comments by mid- to late-April, with 75% design submittal at some point this summer. Ron Desrosiers of MDM Transportation Consultants informed the NMMPO that Dracut should be submitting 25% design plans for Nashua Road at the end of this week. He noted that the ad date may be slowed due to a couple of issues with Right of Way and the acquisition of property. NMCOG Staff recommended that the NMMPO move forward with programming of the Chelmsford project in 2019 and the Dracut project in 2020.

b. DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDED TRANSIT PROJECTS

Justin Howard reviewed the preliminary transit project recommendations for the upcoming TIP and provided a spreadsheet to the NMMPO summarizing the recommendations. The list includes all federally funded transit projects in the region and serves to fund the operation of the LRTA. The projects include ongoing programs, preventative maintenance, updates and maintenance to terminal buildings, operating assistance, planning activities, and equipment replacement.

7. FFY 2019 UPWP DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Justin Howard presented the draft NMMPO Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Budget and itemized FFY 2019 tasks, with the overall UPWP budget totaling \$955,284. He noted that significant effort will go into updating the Regional Transportation Plan, and that a new task has been added to study Route 110 in Chelmsford from the town center to the Westford line.

8. PROPOSED LOWELL REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY FARE INCREASES

Chris Curry stated that the LRTA's rates have remained steady since July 2002, however a 25% increase has been proposed system wide. Five Public Informational Meetings and one Public Hearing will be held throughout the region during the months of April and May 2018 to offer information regarding the proposed fare increases and to receive feedback from the public. If approved, the fares increases are expected to go into effect in July 2018.

9. 2017 NORTHERN MIDDLESEX TRAFFIC VOLUME REPORT

A 2017 Northern Middlesex Traffic Volume Report was included in the NMMPO meeting packets. Justin Howard explained the counting program and reporting process. The report is available on the NMCOG website and hard copies can be provided upon request. Justin noted that the 2018 program is underway and that staff are accepting requests from communities for count locations.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Roland Nutter and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 3:05 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 2:30PM at NMCOG offices.