

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MARCH 22, 2023

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

In light of the COVID-19 emergency executive order authorizing virtual public meetings, 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)
- Andrew Deslaurier, NMCOG Chair
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG NMMPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3
- Jennifer Claro, Council on Aging, Town of Westford
- Ali Bent, LRTA
- Meaghan O'Brien, LRTA
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT
- David Langlais, Town of Dunstable
- Andrew Wang, MassDOT
- Elizabeth Oltman, Lowell Transportation Engineer, City of Lowell
- Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4
- Chris Timmel, FHWA
- Josh Levin, MassDOT District 4

NMMPO Staff:

- Jenny Raitt, Justin Howard, Chris Curry, Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan, and Jessica Boulanger, NMCOG

2. APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 25, 2023 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the February 22, 2023 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Brian Fallon, the February 22, 2023 NMMPO meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

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

Timothy Paris updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the February 22, 2023 meeting.

- **Project 608816 Lowell – Dracut – Methuen – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 110** – Project has a new ad date March 9, 2024.
- **Project 610704 Burlington – Billerica – resurfacing and related work on Route 3A** - Project has an updated ad date June 17, 2023 and there were some adjustments to the estimates.
- **Project 608774 Lowell – Tewksbury – Route 38 Intersection Improvements** – Project has an updated ad date May 5, 2023.

Sarah Bradbury from MassDOT District 3 provided an update that Project 612656, Bridge Preservation on I-495 over Boston Road and Concord Road was to be advertised the week after the meeting.

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

There were no comments.

5. Envision 2050 Update

Jessica Boulanger provided a preview on Regional Public Forum 2 meeting that was happening on that evening. She provided an overview of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), existing conditions and analysis, engagement activities, survey findings, performance measures, financial allocation, next steps and timeline of the RTP process and addressed questions from the participants.

6. Performance Measure Updates - Updated PM3 Performance Targets, Action item to Adopt

Derek Krevat presented the System Performance Measures that the MPOs are required to develop and endorse as per federal regulation. He provided a recap of the Safety and Bridge Conditions Performance Measures that were earlier voted by the MPO. In this presentation, he provided an overview of PM3 which includes improving efficiency of the system and freight movement, reducing traffic congestion, and reducing emissions. The specific measures that are included were – reliability, congestion, and emission reductions. A summary of the measures, proposed 2024 target and proposed 2026 targets were presented for the MPO to vote and endorse. Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the proposed targets were endorsed.

7. NMMPO TITLE VI PLAN PRESENTATION – Action Item to Endorse

Last month, a presentation on the Draft Title VI document was provided to the MPO and the MPO voted to release the document for public comment period. Chris Curry provided a recap on the comments received on the Draft Title VI document from Andrew Jennings, LRTA Board representative and Billerica resident. Andrew’s comments were related to transit, MBTA commuter rail, public comment period, and largely clarifications on the LRTA service information. Chris requested MPO to vote to endorse the draft.

Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO endorsed the Draft Title VI report.

8. FFY 2023-2027 TIP Amendment 3 - Action Item to Endorse

During the last month's MPO meeting, Justin provided a summary narrative of Amendment 3 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program and the MPO released it for a 21-day public comment period. The public comment period ended on March 17th.

Justin provided a recap on Amendment 3 – this amendment involves adding \$786,944 in Statewide Bridge Formula funding to cover a construction cost increase for Project 612658 Bridge preservation for I-495 over Route 133 and I-495 over Route 38 in Tewksbury. The cost estimate has increase by \$786,944 and since this is scheduled to be advertised on May, this amendment needs to be updated to fully fund the project.

The second project is to fully fund the parking system at the Gallagher Terminal parking garage with a total cost of \$110,000.

The third project is a proposal to add \$100,000 in state funding (RTACAP) to cover the match for replacing two 35-foot hybrid buses.

Lastly, the proposal to remove the automated passenger counter project from the FFY 2023-2027 TIP. The project currently uses a mix of 5339 and 5307 federal funds. This project will be added to the FFY 2024-2028 TIP.

Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO endorsed the Amendment 3 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program.

9. FFY 2024-2028 TIP Development

Justin Howard, Chris Curry and Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan continue to develop the FFY 2024-2028 TIP. In the previous meetings, they provided the MPO with financial and target information, and results of TIP Readiness Day based on the project's design stage.

a. Project Scoring Overview

Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan provided an overview of the Project Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC) and score summary for proposed FFY 2024-2028 TIP projects based on a set of approved transportation criteria. There are 6 categories for evaluation and the scores ranges from -18 to +18 based on the impacts to transportation system and project priority. Further, there are sub-categories for the 6 categories and the scores for these sub-categories ranges from -3 to +3. Each TIP project was scored using the categories and sub-categories and a summary of these scores for each TIP project was presented to the MPO.

b. Highway TIP Programming Scenarios – Action item to approve preferred scenario

Justin Howard provided an overview of the programming options based on a review of all eligible TIP projects and projects funded through State programs. There were 4 scenarios presented to the MPO based on TIP Readiness Day recommendations, financial constraint, and project evaluation which includes the list of projects programmed and not programmed with financial target information for each of the scenarios. MPO members' unanimously agreed that Scenario 1 is the preferred scenario given that it is the financially best option to use the target funding allocation. Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO approved the use of Scenario 1 for TIP Programming.

c. Preliminary Transit Projects

Chris Curry provided an overview of the preliminary transit projects programmed annually by LRTA for FFY 2024-2028 for each year of the TIP. It is important to note that the transit projects are currently awaiting MassDOT Rail and Transit Division approval.

10. FFY 2024 UPWP Development

a. UPWP Financial Guidance

The MARPA/MassDOT Annual Meeting was held on January 27, 2023, where there were discussions on budgeting for the various certifications, RTP, TIP, and UPWP. Justin Howard shared the funding allocation summary, which the MPO uses to fund staff activities for FFY 2024 beginning in October 1, 2023, running through September 30, 2024. Funding received as State's apportionment is \$12,095,567 with an obligation authority of 90%, Federal Planning funds is \$10,886,010, and with the State match, the total is \$13,607,513 available for UPWP activities from the State. Including both the Planning (PL) funds from FHWA, and funds from federal Transit Administration (Title 5303), the overall allocation to the State is \$18,287,935. The NMMPO's share totals \$1,115,378, or approximately 4% of the State total. In the next month's MPO meeting, staff will share a preliminary task listing of projects and studies programmed in the next UPWP.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other business.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next MPO meeting will be on April 26, 2023 at 2:00 PM.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:56 PM.