

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION OCTOBER 26, 2022

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, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Office of Transportation Planning (Representing MassDOT Secretary Jamey Tesler)
- Brian Fallon, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Tom Bomil, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Chair
- Karyn Puleo, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Member
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG NMMPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Chris Timmel, FHWA
- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, MPO Liaison
- Andrew Wang, MassDOT Planning
- Josh Levin, MassDOT District 4 Planning
- Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3
- Michelle Ho, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
- Ali Bent, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Meaghan O'Brien, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Elizabeth Oltman, City of Lowell Transportation Engineer
- Tony Repucci, Chelmsford Town Engineer
- Ann Vandal, Dracut Town Manager
- Joe Giniewicz, Westford Town Planner
- John Byatt, BETA Group

NMMPO Staff:

- Jennifer Raitt, Justin Howard, Chris Curry, Shrvanthi Gopalan Narayanan, and Jessica Boulanger, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

2. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 28, 2022 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the September 28, 2022 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the September 28, 2022 NMMPO meeting minutes were approved unanimously. Karyn Puleo abstained, as she was not present for the September meeting.

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

Timothy Paris updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the September 28, 2022 meeting. Note: Cost estimate and TIP year changes reflect the newly in effect FFY 2023-2027 TIP.

- **Burlington to Tyngsborough – Pavement Preservation on Route 3** – This project has an updated TIP Year and cost estimate to reflect the FFY 2023-2027 TIP.
- **Lowell – Dracut – Methuen – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 110** – This project has an updated construction cost estimate.
- **Westford – Bridge Replacement, Stony Brook Road over the Stony Brook** – This project has an updated construction cost estimate.
- **Dracut – Improvements at George Englesby Elementary School** – This project has an updated construction cost estimate.
- **Chelmsford – Traffic Signal Installation at Route 110 & Route 495** – This project has an update TIP Year of 2025.
- **Lowell – Rourke Bridge Replacement, Wood Street Extension over Boston and Maine Railroad and Merrimack River** – This project has an updated TIP Year of 2024 and an updated cost estimate.
- **Chelmsford – Improvements on Chelmsford Street (Route 110)** – This project has an updated TIP Year and cost estimate to reflect the FFY 2023-2027 TIP.
- **Billerica – Yankee Doodle Bike Path Construction (Phase I)** – This project has an updated construction cost estimate.
- **Lowell – Pedestrian Walkway & Bicycle Connection at Pawtucket Falls Overlook, from Vandenberg Esplanade to School Street** – This project has been deactivated and is no longer eligible for TIP funding.
- **Billerica – Intersection Improvements at Boston Road (Route 3A), Lexington Street and Glad Valley Road** – This project has an updated construction cost estimate.
- **Burlington – Billerica – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 3A** – Ad date of February 11, 2023. In the 2023 TIP with a new cost.
- **Westford – Rehabilitation of Boston Road** – This project has an updated construction cost estimate.
- **Lowell – Reconstruction and Related Work on VFW Highway** – This project has an updated construction cost estimate.
- **Lowell – Tewksbury – Route 38 Intersection Improvements** – This project has a new construction Ad date of February 4, 2023 with a new cost estimate.
- **Amesbury – Haverhill – Lowell – Methuen Bridge Preservation Bundle Along I-495** – This project has been advertised for construction.

- **Westford – Bridge Rehabilitation Beaver Brook Road over Beaver Brook** – This project has been advertised for construction.
- **Billerica – Rehabilitation on Boston Road (Route 3A) From Billerica Town Center to Floyd Street** – This project has an updated TIP Year and cost estimate to reflect the FFY 2023-2027 TIP.

Derek Shooster noted that some of the projects listed above, such as Burlington – Billerica Resurfacing, are interregional and are programmed on the STIP as statewide projects. Derek shared a link for the 2027 STIP as adopted for attendees to review.

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

There were no comments.

5. ENVISION 2050 UPDATES

Jessica Boulanger provided an Envision 2050 Presentation, beginning with a request for attendees to provide their definition of “Envision”. She gave an overview of the RTP, laid out goals and vision for the region, previously programmed projects, community engagement goals and strategies and a timeline including next steps. Jessica asked the group what the biggest transportation concerns in the region might be. Responses included traffic, interregional multi-modal options, traffic flow over the Rourke Bridge. She encouraged the group to engage in discussion regarding transportation options, spending of transportation dollars, using this discussion as an example of how public engagement meetings will be laid out. NMCOG will host an Envision 2050 kickoff event on November 2nd, followed by municipal meetings and focus groups in December, guidance and financial information in January, draft plan development in February and a draft submittal in March for NMMO endorsement. All NMMPO members are invited to attend the November 2nd kickoff.

6. FFY 2023-2027 TIP AMENDMENT 1

Justin Howard presented a summary of proposed FFY 2023-2027 TIP Amendment 1, which addresses a change in Federal funding for improvements made to the Gallagher Terminal Commuter Access Way in Lowell to reflect the removal of programming of a grant that was not awarded to the LRTA. The improvements include repairs to the commuter rail platform, rebuilding of the stairway and upgrade to the elevators to the platform, and reconstruction of the pedestrian walkway over the railroad tracks between the terminal and the commuter rail platform. Total construction cost, currently at 65% design, is around \$5,000,000. In order to acquire the funding needing to construct the project, the LRTA applied for an FTA 5339B grant for \$2,400,000 this past spring, which was programmed in the TIP in anticipation of receiving the award. LRTA did not receive the award and an amendment is needed to reflect the current funding for the project. It should be noted that \$3.9 million had been flexed from FHWA to FTA to help fund this project in the spring. That, along with \$600,000 in state funding available for the project, remain programmed. There is a gap that will be addressed at a future MPO meeting. Justin explained that the amendment proposed is to remove the \$2,400,000 that was not awarded as part of that grant application and he asked the MPO to consider a vote to release the draft amendment for a 21-day public review and comment period.

Based on a motion by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted unanimously to release Draft FFY 2023-2027 TIP Amendment 1 for a twenty-one day public comment period.

7. NMMPO TITLE VI PLAN REPORTING UPDATES

Chris Curry informed the group that the last full Title VI Update in this district was done in 2014, followed by annual changes as recommended by MassDOT. He provided an overview of Title VI and its goals, requirements, the Northern Middlesex region demographics, a description of the procedures by which the mobility needs of minority populations are identified and considered within the planning process, analysis of the MPO's transportation system investments, language assistance plan update, notification of protections under Title VI, complaint logs and procedures. Chris laid out the timeline for update, stating that it is quite short and will be provided to the NMMPO prior to the December meeting. Certifications and assurances will be signed by the end of November and the plan endorsed and submitted to MassDOT in December 2022.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Derek Krevat informed the group that there is currently a call for Safe Routes to School Infrastructure projects. He provided a link to the group, mentioning a deadline date of November 18th for those communities interested to submit an application. (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safe-routes-to-school-engineering>)

9. NEXT MEETING DATES

Justin Howard reminded the group that the next regularly scheduled meeting date would fall on the day prior to Thanksgiving. The December regularly scheduled meeting would fall just after Christmas. Finding quorum on those two dates is generally difficult. Justin will coordinate with MassDOT and Merrimack Valley MPO, and provide an update to the group when a meeting date has been selected.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:40 PM.