

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION SEPTEMBER 28, 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:

- Stephen Woelfel, 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
- Andrew Deslaurier, Billerica Select Board, NMCOG Chair
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG NMMPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Raissah Kaoumae, MassDOT Planning
- Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3
- Ali Bent, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Alison Manugian, Dracut Community Development Director
- Liz Oltman, City of Lowell Transportation Engineer

NMMPO Staff:

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

2. APPROVAL OF THE JULY 27, 2022 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the July 27, 2022 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Tom Bomil, the July 27, 2022 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 July 27, 2022 meeting:

- **Chelmsford – Improvements on Route 3A (Princeton Street) from Richardson Road to Technology Drive** – The project has a new construction advertisement date of October 2, 2050.
- **Chelmsford – Interstate Preservation on I-495** – The project has a new construction advertisement date of October 2, 2050.
- **Billerica – Yankee Doodle Bike Path Construction (Phase I)** – At 75% Design and has a revised estimate.
- **Lowell – Pedestrian Walkway & Bicycle Connection at Pawtucket Falls Overlook, from Vandenberg Esplanade to School Street** – Project will be deactivated following PRC meeting.
- **Chelmsford – Bridge Replacement, Gorham Street (ST 3A) Over I-495** – This project has combined with **Chelmsford – Bridge Betterment, Westford Street Over I-495** and become one Project #612631.
- **Billerica – Intersection Improvements at Boston Road (Route 3A), Lexington Street and Glad Valley Road** – At 75% Design and has a revised estimate.
- **Westford – Rehabilitation of Boston Road** – New estimate.
- **Lowell – Tewksbury – Route 38 Intersection Improvements** – At 100% Design and has a new estimate.
- **Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Main Street, Salem Road and South Street** – Construction 100% complete.
- **Lowell – Deck Replacements, Lowell Connector Over Industrial Avenue East** – Construction 100% complete.

Ali Bent provided an update that LRTA is continuing work on the ADA commuter access project design with a goal of being ready to begin the RFP process this fall and award after the new year. LRTA has received two hybrid buses in replacement of 2010 diesel vehicles. The new buses will be in service within the next month.

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

There were no comments.

5. ENVISION 2050 – THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan provided a presentation to the group stating that NMCOG is embarking on updating the Long Range Regional Transportation Plan “Envision 2050” for FFY 2024-2050. Envision 2050 is a 25-year plan designed to identify transportation issues in the region and address them through federal funding allocated through the USDOT. The plan serves as framework for transportation investments in highways, bridges, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and transportation related air quality improvement projects. NMCOG’s goal is to develop a multi-modal, cost-effective, energy efficient transportation system that is fair and equitable for all users in the Northern Middlesex Region. The goal areas are safety, infrastructure and assets, multi-modal

transportation efforts, economic development, environmental impacts and transportation equity. Shrvanathi stated that outreach goals are: to identify, address, listen and build consensus around transportation issues and priorities in the NMCOG region; to educate people about the process, create more advocates and greater advocacy; to focus on multi-modal transportation planning including new technologies and micromobility; to reach out to people who live, work, visit and play in the NMCOG region; and, to utilize an equitable outreach and engagement process. She identified public outreach strategies. She also provided a timeline, beginning with a KickOff meeting on November 2 and continuing the public input process and opportunities through February, transportation mode-based sessions through March, development of the draft report from February through June, public comments in July, and endorsement at the July NMMPO meeting. Shrvanathi encouraged attendees to contact her with any questions.

6. NORTHERN MIDDLESEX ANNUAL SAFETY REPORT

David Tilton provided a Northern Middlesex Regional Transportation Safety Report presentation. The purpose of the report is to provide crash data analysis for determining transportation safety improvement. The data analysis can lead to further studies through the UPWP, Road Safety Audit and HSIP program. That information is then used when developing NMCOG's TIP and RTP. The FFY 2022 Northern Middlesex Regional Safety Report examines transportation safety conditions across the region. Over the past two decades, NMMPO staff have worked with MassDOT, FHWA, FTA, and LRTA to identify safety issues that need to be addressed and strive to prioritize projects with safety benefits. Ensuring safe travel of the public is the most important goal of this program. David provided safety performance measures and targets, NMCOG crash statistics, top crash locations and intersections, bike / ped statistics, and long term targets for the region. Specific programs that address safety in the region are the UPWP, the TIP, MassDOT's Impact Portal, Safe Routes to School, and Complete Streets Funding Program.

7. TIP REVIEW STUDY – A LOOK AT SAFETY IMPACTS OF TIP FUNDED PROJECTS IN LOWELL AND TEWKSBURY

Shrvanathi Gopalan Narayanan provided a TIP Project Review of two intersections in the NMCOG region: East Street, Dascomb Road and Shawsheen Street in Tewksbury; and, VFW Highway, Bridge Street and Lakeview Avenue in Lowell. The purpose of the TIP before and after study is to compile and review data relative to completed projects funded through the Northern Middlesex TIP. The comparison encompasses the safety conditions before project implementation and after project completion to assess the effectiveness of projects. The measures of effectiveness are total number of crashes, equivalent property damage only, and intersection crash rate. The intersection in Tewksbury includes primarily commercial and industrial properties. Before improvements, all three roadways were two-way, single lane approaches to the intersection. Shawsheen Street was under STOP control, with East Street and Dascomb Road under free flow. Shrvanathi gave a full review of obstruction, sidewalks, and so forth. Improvements included installation of a new fully actuated traffic signal with an exclusive pedestrian phase, geometric changes to improve approaches, improved sight distance, and added infrastructure for non-motorized users of the intersection. The total crashes have reduced from 1.05 crashes per MEV in 2011 to .09 crashes per MEV through 2017-2019 after the improvements. The VFW Highway, Bridge Street and Lakeview Avenue in Lowell intersection was initially a five-legged signalized

intersection. Shrvanathi described the intersection prior to improvements and after, as well as the crash statistics before and after. Comparing the crash rates before and after improvements, the crash rate reduced by 49.4%. NMCOG staff will continue to monitor the intersections examined in this study, as well as others in the region, as part of the NMCOG safety program outlined in the region's work program. The report is available on NMCOG's web site and Shrvanathi encouraged attendees to contact her with any questions.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Steve Woelfel reminded the group that the Moving Together conference is November 1st in Boston. Please register right away if you have not already.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:35 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 26, 2022 at 2:00 PM.