

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FEBRUARY 23, 2022

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

In light of the COVID-19 emergency executive order authorizing virtual public meetings, the 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:

- David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing MassDOT Secretary Jamey Tesler)
- Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Andrew Deslaurier, Billerica Select Board, NMCOG Chair
- Tom Bomil, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Chair
- Kevin O'Connor, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Representative to the MPO
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG MPO Representative

Voting Members Absent:

- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Councilor, MPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Chris Timmel, FHWA
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, MPO Liaison
- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Krevat, MassDOT Planning
- Michelle Ho, MassDOT Planning
- Brian Fallon, MassDOT Projects Engineer
- Meaghan O'Brien, LRTA
- Ali Bent, LRTA
- Christine McCall, City of Lowell DPD Director
- Ann Vandal, Dracut Town Manager
- Kevin Hardiman, Town of Tewksbury Engineer
- Stephen Strykowski, Town of Billerica Commission on Disability
- Andrew Jennings, Billerica LRTA Board Member
- Nathan Klosowski, UML Transportation Services
- Stephanie Beaver, VHB
- Jon Rockwell, TEC

NMMPO Staff:

- Justin Howard, Chris Curry, and Katrina Garavanian, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

2. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 26, 2022 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the January 26, 2022 minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Kevin O'Connor and seconded by Andrew Deslaurier, the January 26, 2022 meeting minutes were approved. Tom Bomil abstained, as he was not present for the January meeting.

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

Tim Paris updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the January 26, 2022 meeting:

- **Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Main Street/Pleasant Street & North Street/East Street** – This project was recently approved by the MassDOT Project Review Committee and is eligible for the TIP.
- **Lowell – Pawtucket Street Corridor Improvements** – This project was recently approved by the MassDOT Project Review Committee and is eligible for the TIP.
- **Chelmsford – Bridge Replacement, Gorham Street (Rt 3A) Over I-495 and Rehabilitation of Westford Street over I-495** – This project was recently approved by PRC, combining projects 605645 and 607681 into one.
- **Lowell – North Andover-Haverhill Bridge Superstructure & Substructure Repairs Along I-495** – Final design plans were received on February 10, 2022 with new cost estimates.
- **Burlington – Billerica Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 3A** – Project has a new cost estimate.
- **Westford – Rehabilitation of Boston Road** – Project has an updated federal participating cost.
- **Westford – Bridge Rehabilitation Beaver Brook Road Over Beaver Brook** – The project has a new construction advertisement date of June 18, 2022 and has an updated cost estimate.
- **Westford – Bridge Replacement, Stony Brook Road Over the Stony Brook** – This project has a new advertisement date of September 30, 2022.
- **Chelmsford – Improvements to Visitors Center at I-495** – This project has a new construction advertisement date (3/05/22) and the cost has been updated.
- **Lowell – Rourke Bridge Replacement – Wood Street Extension over Boston and Maine Railroad and Merrimack River** – This project has a new construction advertisement date of July 6, 2024.
- **Chelmsford – Bridge Replacement – Gorham Street (Rt 3A) Over I-495** – This project has been combined into project number 612631 and is no longer an active project.
- **Chelmsford – Bridge Betterment – Westford Street Over I-495** – This project has been combined into project number 612631 and is no longer an active project.
- **Billerica – Rehabilitation on Boston Road (Route 3A) from Billerica Town Center to Floy Street** – This project has a new cost estimate of \$13,250,602.31.

Justin Howard inquired as to which bridge in Lowell is part of project number 612197. Frank Suszynski stated that this is the structures maintenance contract for all bridges in the region over I-495. As the bridges are between the Northern Middlesex and Merrimack Valley regions, the project is being processed as a statewide action, with no action required by the NMMPO.

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

Steve Strykowski, Billerica Commission on Disability, informed the group that he has encountered difficulties when entering an LRTA bus with a power chair. Chairs currently enter at the front door of the bus, turn left to pass the payment machine, then incur difficulty parking and strapping into the chair spot. Steve suggests the floorplan be amended, with chairs allowed to enter the bus from the rear door and disembark at the front door to avoid this issue. Ali Bent will put Steve in touch with the LRTA Operations team to better understand the situation and incorporate into planning going forward.

5. FFY 2022-2026 DRAFT TIP AMENDMENT 1 – POTENTIAL ACTION TO ENDORSE

Justin Howard reminded the group that at the January meeting, the NMMPO voted to release Draft FFY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment 1. The amendment involves programming a cost increase for a bridge rehabilitation of the Beaver Brook Bridge over the Beaver Brook in Westford, currently scheduled for construction advertisement in June. To ensure the project is fully funded, the NMMPO must consider amending the programmed funds from \$1,976,482 to \$2,508,049. The project is currently at final design. In addition, this amendment includes the removal of Federal funding and addition of State funding at a cost of \$350,000 from LRTA Capital Funds for the purchase of five bus lifts. The public review and comment period ended on February 22 and staff have received no comments.

Based on a motion by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted to endorse FFY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment 1 as presented.

6. FFY 2023-2027 TIP DEVELOPMENT

Justin Howard informed the group that during the recent TIP Readiness Day meeting with MassDOT, staff received financial information and guidance on development of the FFY 2023-2027 TIP. He presented the proposed financial plan for the TIP and then reviewed the current and potential TIP project status and initial recommendations for programming. Justin highlighted those projects that are recommended to be programmed in different TIP years when compared to current programming.

Justin also provided an overview of funding allocated to the State through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). He stated that the BIL allowed the state to identify programming funds for construction of three bridges in the Northern Middlesex region, including the replacement of the Rourke Bridge.

7. FFY 2023 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) DEVELOPMENT

Justin Howard informed the NMMPO that staff have received budget and financial information and guidance on development of the next Unified Planning Work Program, which will go into effect on October 1, 2022. He gave a short presentation and detailed funding projections and regional allotments.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:31 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 23, 2022, 2:00 PM.