

# MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FEBRUARY 24, 2021

## 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

In light of the COVID-19 emergency legislation 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:

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

### Voting Members Absent:

- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Councilor, MPO Representative
- Tom Bomil, Chair, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board

### Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Chris Timmel, Federal Highway
- Constance Raphael, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, MPO Liaison
- Jayne Wellman, Tewksbury Board of Selectmen, NMCOG Councilor
- Ali Bent, LRTA
- Marlies Henderson, Billerica Conservation Commission

### NMMPO Staff:

- Beverly Woods, Justin Howard, Chris Curry, and David Righter, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

## 2. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 27, 2021 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the January 27, 2021 minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Kevin O'Connor and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the January 27, 2021 meeting

minutes were approved, with an abstention by Andrew Deslaurier, as he was not present for the January meeting.

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

Connie Raphael updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the January 21, 2021 meeting:

- **Andover/Tewksbury – Highway Lighting System Rehabilitation and Repair at the Interchange of Interstate Routes 93 and 495** is at 100% design with a slight cost change and has a construction start date of March 13, 2021.
- **Burlington to Tyngsborough Guide and Traffic Sign Replacement on a Section of US 3** - Construction bids were opened on January 26, 2021. A contract has been awarded to Lindell Brothers and they are awaiting a notice to proceed.
- **Dunstable – Improvements on Main Street (Route 113), from Pleasant Street to 750 Ft east of Westford Street** is at 100% design, with an estimated cost of \$4.7 million, and construction start date of September 25, 2021. There is a concern about the project being ready for advertisement in FFY 2021.
- **Tewksbury – Resurfacing and Sidewalk Reconstruction on Route 38 beginning at Colonial Drive north to the Intersection of Old Boston Road** is at 75% design, with an estimated cost of \$6.4 million.

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

Andrew Deslaurier informed the group that the Billerica Planning Board approved a major redevelopment project for the Billerica Mall, which may potentially impact traffic in and around Billerica Center. Frank Suszynski requested information relating to the project as soon as available.

### 5. FFY 2021-2025 TIP UPDATES

Justin Howard informed the group that there is a need to update the TIP to reflect changes to several Lowell Regional Transit Authority projects. He presented the proposed amendment, which includes the following changes:

- Adding the purchase of automated passenger counters for the fixed route fleet to FFY 2021, reflecting a FTA 5339 funding award;
- Advancing the replacement of 2 fixed route buses from 2022 to 2021;
- Advancing the replacement of 4 fixed route cutaway vans from 2023 to 2021; and
- Advancing the purchase of replacement fixed route bus lifts from 2022 to 2021.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Kevin O'Connor, the NMMPO voted unanimously to release the Amendment as proposed for the required twenty-one day public comment period.

## 6. FFY 2022-2026 TIP DEVELOPMENT

Justin Howard informed the NMMPO that financial information and guidance on development of the next TIP has been provided by MassDOT and FHWA. He summarized the information through a short presentation on development of the TIP's financial targets. He then reviewed project status updates for the FFY 2021 projects and for projects slated to be funded in the FFY 2022 to 2026 period. He presented the initial recommendations for programming based on discussions at the TIP Readiness Day meeting with MassDOT. Details were included in the meeting packet.

## 7. FFY 2022 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, 2021. He gave a short presentation and detailed funding projections and regional allotments. Staff will present specific tasks for possible inclusion within the UPWP at the March/April NMMPO meeting.

## 8. NMMPO MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING UPDATE

Justin Howard reminded the group that a preliminary draft of the MOU had been discussed at the January MPO meeting and that the MOU was distributed to LRTA and MassDOT, FTA and FHWA staff. He gave a brief review of the document and requested that NMMPO members submit any comments on the document by March 12, 2021. A final draft document is to be presented at the March MPO meeting and considered for endorsement at that time. Chris Timmel reminded the NMMPO that this effort was undertaken in response to the findings of the NMMPO's certification review and satisfies the corrective action noted. Once endorsed, FHWA/FTA will produce a final certification review letter to the NMMPO.

## 9. OTHER BUSINESS

Beverly Woods stated that MassDOT recently made a presentation to the Lowell City Council regarding the Rourke Bridge replacement. At that meeting, there was a discussion about the need to program the Rourke Bridge project within the TIP. MassDOT is undertaking the project as a design-build project and has an ambitious timeframe, with a projected start date within the next two years. Beverly then asked how to address within the TIP, and also asked whether the project will be in the CIP. Bryan Pounds stated that development of the statewide bridge list is in process. He will reach out to the bridge unit and further stated that the statewide bridge list will be put into the CIP. Frank Suszynski added that the current project cost estimate is between \$130 and \$142 million, noting that there is a line item in the transportation bond bill for the project but it needs to be fully vetted. He noted that any project receiving federal financial assistance would need to be programmed in the TIP/STIP and that this project would likely be programmed under statewide programs.

Derek Shooster informed the group that the Shared Winter Streets and Spaces grant program has extended its fourth and final funding application round deadline to Friday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.

## 10. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Kevin O'Connor, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 3:08 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 24, 2021, at 2:00 PM. Should a virtual meeting be required, a link will be sent to participants and published in the public notice.