



Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

A Multi-Disciplinary Regional Planning Agency Serving:

BillERICA – ChELMSford – DRacut – DUNstable – LOWell – PEPPERell – TEWksbury – TYNGSborough – WESTford

NOTICE OF MEETING

The next meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) will be held on **Wednesday, April 17, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. at NMCOG, 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01854** with optional remote access via Zoom. To join this meeting via Zoom, please go to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83176268692>.

The Meeting ID is: 831 7626 8692. If you are joining by phone, dial (309) 205-3325, Meeting ID# 831 7626 8692#

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**
2. **Officer Vacancy – (Vote Required)**
Per NMCOG Organizational Bylaws, Section 2 Council Organization, Paragraph 1, should any officer position become vacant, the Council shall elect a member to fill the position until the next election. The officer so elected shall take office upon election.
3. **Meeting Minutes – (Vote Required)**
Minutes from NMCOG Council Meeting 3/20/24
4. **Financial Report and Warrant - (Vote Required)**
5. **FFY 2025-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**
Staff will provide a brief update on the draft TIP.
6. **FFY 2025-2029 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**
Staff will provide a brief update on the UPWP development and project list.
7. **Report of the Executive Director – March 2024**
8. **Community Exchange**
9. **Reminders and Announcements**
NMMPO Meeting – April 24 at 2 PM
Greater Lowell Vision Zero Municipal Briefing Advisory Committee Meeting –April 25 at 5 PM
NMCOG Council Meeting – May 22 at 7 PM
10. **Other Business** not known at the time of posting of this agenda.
11. **Adjourn**

CITY/TOWN CLERKS: PLEASE POST PURSUANT TO OPEN MEETING LAW

Please contact Lesley Shahbazian at lshahbazian@nmcog.org with any questions on this agenda.

**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100
Lowell, MA 01854**

Minutes from Council Meeting March 20, 2024

I. The March 20, 2024 meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) was held hybrid at 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, in the conference room and via Zoom. The meeting was called to order by Stephen Themelis at 7:00 PM. The following were in attendance:

Councilors:

- Christopher Tribou, Assistant Clerk, Billerica Planning Board
- Mary McBride, Clerk, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, MPO Rep, Chelmsford Select Board
- Annita Tanini, Chelmsford Planning Board
- Douglas Bruce, Chelmsford Alternate
- Michael Pestana, Dracut Planning Board
- Philippe Thibault – Dracut Alternate
- Gerard Frechette, Treasurer, Lowell Planning Board
- Chuck Walkovich, Pepperell Select Board
- Stephen Themelis, Vice Chair, Pepperell Alternate
- Jayne Wellman, Assistant Treasurer, Tewksbury Select Board
- Alex Lowder, Tewksbury Alternate
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff:

- Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director
- Kelly Lynema, Deputy Director
- Sara Schreiber, Finance and Benefits Manager
- Christopher Hayes, Housing and Economic Development Manager
- Isabel Emmet, Regional Land Use Planner
- Meghan Tenhoff, Sustainability Planner

Guest

Mary Linskey - Anstiss & Co., P.C. representative

II. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting on February 21, 2024 were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a Motion by Philippe Thibault, seconded by Jayne Wellman, following a roll call vote, the Council unanimously approved the Minutes of the February 21, 2024 Council meeting.

III. Financial Report and Warrant

Sara Schreiber, Finance and Benefits Manager, presented the Financial Report and Warrant for review and approval. Based on a Motion by Gerard Frechette, seconded by Mary McBride, following a roll call vote, the Council unanimously approved the Financial Report and Warrant.

IV. FY2023 NMCOG Audit Presentation – Representatives from Anstiss & Co., P.C.

Mary Linksey, CPA and representative for Anstiss & Co., P.C. gave a summary presentation of the audit that was conducted for FY2023.

Highlights:

- NMCOG was issued an "unmodified opinion" stating that our financials are not materially misstated.
- There were no internal control findings during the financial statement audit
- A single audit was required as Federal Expenditures exceeded the \$750K Single Audit threshold.
- The major program tested was the Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Non-Metropolitan Planning and Research Program. There were no internal controller compliance findings.
- There were no prior audit findings from the 2022 audit.
- One Management comment – Management was unable to provide support for one payroll period sampled during the audit. No formal letter was issued.
- There was a \$126,000 decrease in the due to grant or liability that NMCOG has been carrying since 1994. MassDOT allowed NMCOG to remove this from their books.
- There was an increase in deferred revenue. There were some billings for expense reimbursements related to Fiscal Year 2024 Nearmap for Fiscal Year 2023.
- Cash was up approximately \$200,000 due to some contract advances and some expenses came in under budget.
- There was an increase in fixed assets due to the purchase of a new server.
- Contract advances up around \$103,000

- Accrued compensation was down roughly \$65,000 due to the amount of departures during the year.
- Federal, State, and Local grants up by \$255,000.
- Other income is up \$124,000 due to the reversal of the MassDOT liability.
- There is a surplus of \$10,000.
- A very clean audit.

Questions – Stephen Themelis – Do you provide an overview in a page format?

Response – Mary Linskey – this would come from management not the auditor.

Question – Chuck Walkovich – We are recording our new lease as an asset and a liability which straight lines our expenses. If we were to do that on a cash basis, what would the impact be on our indirect cost?

Response – Mary Linskey – It doesn't necessarily straight-line anymore. It puts it on as a note. So you have an interest expense and you have the present value of the payments being made. So the expenses will change a little as time goes on. What is straight-lined is the amortization of the asset.

V. 2024 Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Performance Report (Endorsement Vote Requires)

Christopher Hayes, Housing and Economic Development Manager and Isabel Emmett, Regional Land Use Planner, gave an overview presentation on the 2024 Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Details of this presentation were distributed to all Council members prior to this meeting.

Based on a Motion by Philippe Thibault, seconded by Mary McBride, following a roll call vote, the Council unanimously endorsed the 2024 Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Performance Report.

VI. Report of the Executive Director – January 2024

The Executive Director's report was distributed for review to the Council in advance of this meeting. Ms. Raitt shared some highlights:

We received three bids for the 2024 traffic counting program and will be reviewing bids, and making an award, and entering into a contract soon.

The LRTA will be extending our current contract with them through the end of September 2024 (the end of this Federal Fiscal Year).

The Greater Lowell Vision Zero Public Forum was well attended with an interesting presentation by WSP about the high-injury network. NMCOG will be having follow-up conversations with each municipality in the region to gauge understanding of the Vision Zero process and commitment to Vision Zero outcomes before the next public forum.

We hosted a well-attended Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative meeting. With input from participating municipalities, we are updating the Memorandum of Understanding (last updated in 2011) and surveying to better understand data, GIS, and policy development relative to stormwater management and green infrastructure needs.

NMCOG was invited to participate in a MAPC-led Climate Pollution Reduction Grant application to assist area public housing authorities that meet specific criteria with decarbonization efforts.

NMCOG added the Town of Pepperell to the region's Weights and Measures program.

NMCOG issued a Request for Proposals from installers of electric vehicle charging stations to respond to an opportunity to install stations at two municipal buildings, one in Dunstable and the other in Pepperell. Bids are due on May 9th.

NMCOG will be preparing MEPA comment letters for the Talbot Mills Dam removal and the Yankee Doodle Bike Path. Any Councilors who are interested in providing comments to us for inclusion in the letter can follow up with NMCOG staff.

VII. Community Exchange

Billerica – Christopher Tribou provided an update on the Town's Warrant Articles related to the MBTA Communities law. There may be more than one Article heading to Town Meeting this spring, including the district that provides the Town with compliance and creates housing and another proposal that may significantly constrain new development.

Chelmsford – Pat Wojtas shared that the Town learned from Rep. Trahan that the Town will receive a Federal earmark to help fund the construction of a three-quarter mile sidewalk near the Biding School in South Chelmsford to allow a safer walking route.

Dracut – Philippe Thibault shared that the Massachusetts School Building Authority approved the Town's feasibility study for the Campbell School. A Request for Qualifications design services will be issued soon with the intention to complete the feasibility study by November 2025.

Dracut scholarship telethon is over the next three days where they raise money for scholarships for students. Last year they raised \$165,000.

Lowell – Gerard Frechette shared that the MassDOT hosted the final Rourke Bridge meeting. Construction is on schedule with an anticipated ribbon cutting by the middle of 2028. The total project cost is approximately \$190 million.

The City recently approved three transportation zones – high rise, medium rise, and neighborhood zones. The first project in one of the transportation zones is for a condominium development with opportunities for first-time buyers.

Pepperell – Chuck Walkovich shared that the Select Board has been engaged in developing the FY25 budget and preparing language for a \$3 million override. Part of that \$3 million is to fix a budget deficit from last year of about \$710,000. The school budget will be going up roughly 6.2%.

Tewksbury – Alex Lowder shared that the Select Board held their last meeting with Todd Johnson, who serves as chair. After 15 years of service, he is vacating his seat. The Town Election is on April 6th and the Annual Town Meeting is Monday, May 6th and Wednesday, May 8th.

Two marijuana establishments retained licenses last year and both went through the Planning Board permitting process. The third license is still available. The two that have their licenses are both ready for building permits.

A lot of sidewalk and resurfacing projects are starting on Main Street and will continue toward Wilmington. Rep. Moulton earmarked Federal funds for sidewalks to help with the town's sidewalk network.

A former extended-stay hotel is being converted to 130 permanent residential units. This is a Comprehensive Permit process.

A developer purchased a former memory care facility at 2580 Main Street which will become a semi-independent living facility for age 55 and older.

The Town will be working with NMCOCG on a study of small lots and examine clusters of quarter and half-acre zoning lots.

There is a public hearing on MBTA Communities. The Finance Committee and Select Board will discuss the Article in preparation for Town Meeting.

The town is holding a Health Fair on April 4th at the Senior Center. They have also finished a successful pilot winter Farmers Market at the Senior Center.

The town will also hold a "Fall-o-ween" event. Multiple Town Departments are discussing coordination details to combine nine separate fall events into one large event. Part of Main Street will be shut down at the end of October for this event.

Westford – Darrin Wizst shared that Annual Town Meeting is Saturday and two main agenda items will likely attract a crowd: the override and MBTA communities. The Town is planning for overflow crowds.

IX. Reminders and Announcements

Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting - March 27, 2 PM

NMCOG Council Meeting – April 17, 7 PM

X. Adjournment

Following a motion made by Gerard Frechette and seconded by Mary McBride, and following a voice vote, the Council unanimously adjourned the meeting at 8:39 PM.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of
March 20, 2024.

Attest:



Mary K. McBride, Clerk

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
Vendor & Payroll Warrant
04/18/2024 - 05/22/2024

Date: April 17, 2024

Amount: \$ 215,555.38

WE THE COUNCILORS OF NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS BY A MOTION TO APPROVE, VOTE IN FAVOR TO AUTHORIZE PAYMENT OF THIS WARRANT.

SIGNED: Jenny Raitt, Executive Director
Jennifer Raitt

Matthew Mide, Billerica
Billerica

Pat Wojtas, Billerica
Chelmsford
Chelmsford

Doug Bruce, Chelmsford
Mark G, Dracut
Dracut
Dracut

[Signature], Dunstable
Dunstable
Dunstable
Lowell
Lowell
Lowell

[Signature], Pepperell
Pepperell
Pepperell
Tewksbury
Tewksbury
Tewksbury
Tyngsborough
Tyngsborough
Tyngsborough
Westford
Westford
Westford

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
Warrant Report

Vendor	Amount	Description
COMCAST	144.32	Business Internet
Cytracom	468.25	Phones
ELC SECURITY PRODUCTS	396.35	Weights & Measures supplies
Fortune Lowell LLC	7,550.81	Rent
GRANTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	370.00	Accounting Software
Guardian Information Technologies, Inc.	10,419.00	IT
GUARDIAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY	375.76	Life Insurance
MARPA	4,005.00	Dues
MIIA Health Benefits Trust	25,109.34	Health & Dental Insurance
National Grid	342.82	Gas Service
PORTSMOUTH COMPUTER GROUP	125.00	IT
RENAISSANCE ALLIANCE INSURANCE SERVICES, LLC	4,644.76	Errors & Omissions Policy Renewal
Staples	413.26	Office Supplies
Stellar Story Company	1,437.50	AHGL Consultant
UMass Lowell	199.00	Railt Conference
Umass Transportation Center	225.00	Transportation Team Conference
Umass Transportation Center	150.00	Transportation Team Conference
UMass Donahue Institute	22,487.50	AHGL Consultant
VERIZON WIRELESS	50.00	Stormwater Internet
W.B. MASON COMPANY, INC.	137.50	Office Supplies
WSP USA INC	45,286.69	SS4A Consultant
Vendor Totals	124,337.86	

Payroll & Taxes	Amount	Description
PR-09	45,608.76	Pay period 4/6/24 - 4/19/24
PR-10	45,608.76	Pay period 4/20/24 - 5/3/24
Payroll & Taxes Totals	91,217.52	

Warrant Total	215,555.38
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To: Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, Council and Alternate Members
From: Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director
Re: Executive Director's Report for March
Date: March 2024

REGIONAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Transportation/ Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO)

Massachusetts Department of Transportation Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt joined the NMCOG Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting to discuss regional transportation planning. We were proud to host the Secretary and members of her team at our office.



From left to right: Carlin Andrus, Data and GIS Program Manager; Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director; Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt; Kelly Lynema, Deputy Director; Jessica Boulanger, Transportation Mobility Specialist; Austen Torres-Davis, Regional Transportation Planner II; and Blake Acton, Regional Transit Planner II.

- **Traffic Counting Program**

In March staff worked on various activities related to the 2024 Traffic Counting Season and continued work on the 2022 Traffic Volume Report.

At the end of January, NMCOG released a Request for Proposals (RFP) to retain a consultant to assist with data collection in the 2024 Traffic Counting Season. Three bids were received by March 1; staff began review of all bids on March 11, utilizing an RFP scoring sheet prepared in February. In March NMCOG awarded the Traffic Counting contract to New England Traffic Counts. Staff prepared a Letter of Award, which was signed and returned by the consultant.

In April, staff will prepare a Contract for the consultant's review and signature. Staff will also meet with New England Traffic Counts for an introductory meeting and to discuss preparations for the beginning of the 2024 Traffic Counting Season, which begins on May 1. NMCOG will finalize and execute the Traffic Counting contract, apply for permits to collect counts on District 3 and 4 roadways, and collect insurance information and a traffic management plan from New England Traffic Counts. New England Traffic Counts will test their traffic counting equipment, and NMCOG staff will provide that information to MassDOT for review.

- **Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) Planning Support**

The LRTA and NMCOG signed an extension of the existing contract through September 30, 2024. The contract enables NMCOG to provide transit planning and data collection support to the LRTA, including for projects such as an inventory of bus stops across the LRTA service area.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES AND COLLABORATIONS

- **DLTA Day on the Hill**

On March 26, Jenny Raitt, Kelly Lynema, and Chris Hayes joined Directors and staff from regional planning agencies across the Commonwealth at the State House to meet with legislators to advocate for a modest increase in funding for the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program and continued funding for the Grants Assistance Program (GAP). NMCOG and other regional planning agencies use DLTA to fund much-needed technical assistance for cities and towns. DLTA planning dollars help cities and towns take on necessary projects, for which they may not have the staff capacity to address on their own, and to partner with neighboring communities to tackle shared projects with reduced administrative burden. GAP funds will allow NMCOG and other RPAs to assist municipalities in pursuing state grants and federal funding.

MAPC has prepared a [template advocacy letter](#) for use by anyone to ask legislators to support funding for DLTA and the GAP – download the letter here. Members of the Council are asked to share letters of support with our regional delegation to ensure ongoing funding for these critical programs. [Additional information about DLTA and GAP is available here.](#)



Representative Paul Donato speaks before the crowd at the Massachusetts State House for DLTA Day. DLTA is filed within 1599–0026 and amendment #102 was filed by Rep. Donato.

- **Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Annual Conference**

On March 16, Jenny Raitt led a session at the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) annual conference on Fair Housing Laws, moderated by Kelly Lynema. The CPTC conference is an annual event designed for local elected officials, planning and zoning board members, municipal committee members, and municipal staff to learn the basics of state and federal land use laws, processes, and best practices in planning. The Fair Housing Laws session provided an overview of fair housing laws and described how land use regulations have been (and continue to be) used to exclude groups from specific

neighborhoods and properties. It also provided an overview of federal and state laws intended to prevent discrimination and promote equity in housing, with a special focus on the role of the municipality in enforcing a commitment to fair housing, and the potential consequences of not doing so. Additional information about CPTC and their training opportunities is available at <https://masscptc.org/>.

- **Massachusetts Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Board Bi-Monthly Meeting**

On March 20, NMCOG hosted the bi-monthly meeting of the Massachusetts Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Board led by Peter Sutton - Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator. The hybrid meeting was in-person at the NMCOG office and included presentations from NMCOG staff and Board Member, Jessica Boulanger, City of Lowell, and MassDOT. Jessica presented on the Greater Lowell Vision Zero Plan, Billerica Yankee Doodle Bike Path, and the Rourke Bridge. The highlights of the presentation included an overview of the High Injury and High-Risk Network in the NMCOG region.

Additionally, the group learned about the new Yankee Doodle Bike Path, a four-mile-long trail project in Billerica that will connect Billerica to the Minuteman Bikeway in Bedford. After the meeting, the group participated in a site visit of the proposed multimillion-dollar UMass Lowell Innovation Network Corridor project led by UMass Lowell staff.



- **Regional Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program**

In March, staff conducted several stakeholder interviews with school districts and veterans service offices. Survey outreach messages and charrette agendas were developed. Each municipality submitted a W-9 and contact information for a main contact and designated signatory to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute to reserve implementation funds that will be distributed later this year. Scheduling and coordination of focus groups and charrettes will begin in April.

- **“At Home in Greater Lowell” Regional Housing Strategy**

On March 12, NMCOG kicked off the At Home in Greater Lowell regional housing strategy at a kickoff summit at Mill No. 5 in Lowell. At the meeting, more than eighty elected officials, board members, housing experts, and community members gathered to begin the collaborative planning process, learning about resources, and set goals for the regional housing strategy. Preparation included coordination with keynote speaker, State Representative James Arciero,

and panelists Robert Shumeyko of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Eric Shupin of the MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Dana LeWinter of the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, Kirk Fulton of the Chelmsford Housing Authority, and Keith Bergman, a 37-year municipal manager. Staff will next be working to formalize goals and objectives for discussion at the next summit this summer, create and distribute a meeting summary, apply for additional funding for the project, finalize the “Home is Everything” storytelling campaign and develop an RFP for campaign implementation.

- **Northern Middlesex Council of Governments Stormwater Collaborative (NMSC)**

During the Q1 meeting NMSC members requested NMCOG organize two trainings: a presentation on the proposed changes to the Stormwater Handbook, which was held on March 19; and a Good Housekeeping training for stormwater/public works, which is scheduled for April 16. Additionally, staff developed a survey to aid in the revision of the MOU and guide future programs. The survey will be open from April 1-29.

- **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Report**

A draft of the 2024 CEDS Report was sent to CEDS committee members for review on Friday, February 23. On March 1, a subcommittee of the CEDS Committee met to hear a brief of economic trends NMCOG has noted in the region over 2023 and to develop 2024’s economic development priorities in response to those trends. The CEDS Committee met March 7th to refine these priorities, which will be packaged with the trend information into an Annual CEDS Performance Report that which was voted for approval by the CEDS committee in mid-March and later voted for approval by the NMCOG Council at their March 20th meeting.

- **Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grant**

NMCOG received a “merits further consideration” letter from the EDA for a \$75,000 planning grant to create a new Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS); this strategy is critical both for allowing NMCOG and its member communities to receive grants from EDA and for coordinating and prioritizing the activities of NMCOG; local, regional, and state economic development agencies; and municipalities. The current CEDS expires May 30, 2025. NMCOG sent the required documentation mid-February and is in active communication with EDA pending the formal grant announcement.

- **Regional Weights and Measures Program**

NMCOG staff conducted 42 inspections in the communities of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Littleton, Lowell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford in March. Of those 42 inspections, 32 were annual inspections and 10 were price verifications. The outcome of these inspections resulted in 375 devices being inspected, with 368 sealed and 7 condemned for being outside of acceptable tolerance. The price verifications resulted in more than 500 items verified for price accuracy with no issues. Weights and Measures staff responded to two complaints, both of which have been resolved. Pepperell inspections have begun with an anticipated completion date of April 19, weather permitting.

ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES

- **Multi-Family Zoning for MBTA Communities – Compliance Activities**

NMCOG continued work with communities subject to MBTA Communities Law across the region. In March, staff worked with the planning staffs of Tewksbury, Chelmsford, Billerica, Tyngsborough and Westford to address comments and recommendations raised in each of EOHLC’s preadoption review and as well as correspondences from the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office (AGO) to ensure the proposed zoning amendments are in compliance with the Section 3A MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Law requirements. GIS staff compiled and published a web map and mapping service with the latest regional MBTA Communities multifamily zoning districts unit capacities and compliance status.

Staff met with the Dracut Zoning Bylaw Review Committee (ZBRC) on March 14 and 28 to finalize and refine the potential district boundaries. At the first meeting the ZBRC selected their preferred district scenario. Staff were then tasked with providing a more detailed analysis of potential compliance related issues of the selected district area. Staff presented updated mapping and compliance modeling, as well as findings and recommended actions at the second meeting with the ZBRC. The ZBRC accepted the recommended actions by vote, finalizing the district boundaries.

NMCOG assisted the Billerica Planning Department by mapping and compliance modeling two potential districts submitted by a resident and Select Board member for the Town Meeting Warrant to assess capacity and compliance with Section 3A MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Law requirements. The findings and compliance models were presented to Town staff.

Staff worked with the Chelmsford Planning Director, EOHLC staff, and Chelmsford’s Town Counsel to work through potential solutions to complex issues raised in EOHLC’s preadoption review. NMCOG provided several strategies and options with supporting compliance models and boundary mapping.

NMCOG also hosted a monthly technical support conference call with all seven participating MBTA Communities from the NMCOG region on March 12.

- **Housing Production Plans (Chelmsford, Dracut, Lowell, and Tyngsborough)**

NMCOG staff have met with Chelmsford, Dracut, and Tyngsborough planning staff to refine scopes and schedules for Housing Production Plans for those three communities. Dracut HPP is anticipated to be complete by August 2024, Tyngsborough by December 2024, and Chelmsford by February 2025. Kick-off meetings for respective committees are currently being scheduled and initial data is being collected. Meanwhile, the Lowell Housing Production Plan’s Housing Goals and Implementation Strategies section is being completed, with a planned April meeting with City of Lowell staff to map sites ideal for affordable housing production. The Lowell HPP is anticipated to be completed by early June 2024.

- **Chelmsford Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)**

NMCOG initiated the process for Chelmsford's OSRP 2024 update. As part of this effort, a

dedicated OSRP Committee is being established in Chelmsford. A project kickoff meeting with NMCOG staff, Town staff, and the Town's committee is scheduled for April 16th. Staff are currently reviewing intersecting plans and crafting a community engagement strategy, with a particular emphasis on reaching Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. Additionally, staff are identifying relevant data to integrate into the required maps, ensuring they convey a compelling narrative.

- **Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)**

As the Recreation Commission meeting scheduled for March 4 was cancelled, NMCOG worked with the Recreation Department Director to obtain recreation related feedback. A final draft of the plan is expected to be presented to the public in April.

- **Lowell Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) FY25 Action Grant Support**

Staff provided support to Lowell's Saint Louis Sponge Park project grant application by drafting letters of support for potential partners and conducting an infrastructure criticality assessment using Climate Resilience Design Standards Tool (CRDS). In April, staff will provide an analysis of climate projections and design standards recommendations and write the Nature-Based Solutions section of the grant application. MVP FY25 Action Grants did not require a match from Tyngsborough, Pepperell, and Lowell.

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations in Dunstable and Pepperell**

Staff have received questions about the RFP and project from interested consultants; a project site visit for the project is scheduled on April 9. RFP questions due on April 17 and an addendum will be posted on April 25.

GIS AND DATA SHARING

NMCOG GIS staff participated in the 2024 Massachusetts GIS Strategic Plan workshop in March in Andover. The state is developing a new GIS strategic plan to replace the plan last updated in 2007. The workshop focused on the formation of a governance council in line with other states around the country to align stakeholder interests with state initiatives and legislation. NMCOG provided recommendations for improving stakeholder participation and oversight, data coordination between the state and local providers, and developing and sharing new technologies to improve municipal, regional, and state GIS systems and processes. Additional information about the state's plan is available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-2024-strategic-plan>

GIS staff also participated in the statewide trails meeting hosted by MAPC to review Phase 2 progress towards the development of a trail data management system. The application development will be subcontracted to a MassGIS vendor and will allow Regional Planning Agencies and other stakeholders to transform, load and manage statewide trails data.

Support was provided to three communities for the regional imagery program. NMCOG Coordinated responses to Billerica resident imagery date confirmation requests, provided support for Eagleview Connect users, and met with Dracut staff to address questions from town staff. Renewal quotes with price increases for Nearmap imagery subscriptions were received and

NMCOG negotiated level pricing on behalf of the participating towns.

NMCOG has reached out to community IT managers and cybersecurity officers to facilitate regional cybersecurity awareness and coordination. The agency has also renewed the IT Managed Services agreement with our service provider which will provide additional equipment monitoring services and significantly lower monthly backup costs.

REGIONAL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Updates

NMCOG completed MEOA Comment Letters for the Talbot Mills Dam project in Billerica and the Yankee Doodle Bike Path also in Billerica. The two projects described below are currently being reviewed. The table below identifies the projects, including comment deadlines. Please contact Meghan Tenhoff at mtenhoff@nmcog.org with any comments or questions.

RESTORATION OF BOSTON ROAD	
MEPA/NMCOG NUMBER AND DOCUMENT TYPE	MEPA #16811 /NMCOG #695 ENF
PROJECT NAME AND LOCATION	Restoration of Boston Road Westford, MA
APPLICANT NAME AND ADDRESS	TEC, Inc. on behalf of the Town of Westford – in conjunction with Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	The Rehabilitation of Boston Road in the Town of Westford targets refurbishing the aging infrastructure of this crucial corridor to enhance pedestrian and cyclist accessibility. Spanning 1.05 miles, the project focuses on safety and accessibility improvements by adding 5-foot-wide bicycle lanes, 11-foot travel lanes in both directions, and constructing sidewalks with vertical granite curbing. ADA/AAB-compliant wheelchair ramps will also be installed at intersections. Adjustments to traffic signals at the Boston Road and I-495 Southbound ramps are planned to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion. The project includes a comprehensive overhaul of the storm drain system and water line replacements to enhance stormwater management and infrastructure resilience. Full-depth pavement reclamation, along with new markings and signage, will extend the road's lifespan and enhance navigation, contributing to a more efficient, accessible, and safer road environment.
PRIORITY RANK	C
COMMENT DEADLINE	April 11, 2024

SANDY POND TO TEWKSBURY RELIABILITY PROJECT (NATIONAL GRID)	
MEPA/NMCOG NUMBER AND DOCUMENT TYPE	MEP #16813 /NMCOG #696 EENF
PROJECT NAME AND LOCATION	Sandy Pond to Tewksbury Reliability Project (National Grid) Billerica, Tewksbury, Chelmsford, and Westford
APPLICANT NAME AND CONTACT	BSC Group. Alison Milliman, (617) 896-4532, amilliman@bscgroup.com on behalf of New England Power Company/National Grid
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	The Project involves refurbishing existing Transmission Lines, including maintenance, removal, and replacement of structures, and insulation and conductor replacement. New stone access roads and work envelope construction will be required. The aim is to create a more reliable and resilient transmission system capable of meeting future energy demands and withstanding extreme weather. Project impacts include temporary and permanent impacts to wetland areas, rare species habitat, and Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. This includes acreage of temporary wetland impacts due to construction activities and permanent impacts from structure foundation fill and road construction.
PRIORITY RANK	C
COMMENT DEADLINE	April 22, 2024

NMCOG Open House

NMCOG welcomed neighbors, long-time friends, and partners to our Open House in March. The crowd enjoyed perusing the new office space, discussions about NMCOG’s local and regional planning efforts, and meeting new people across the community and region.



From left to right: Carlin Andrus, GIS and Data Program Manager; Jessica Boulanger, Transportation Mobility Specialist; Kelly Lynema, Deputy Director; David Langlais, PE, Associate / Regional Business Manager – MA at Hoyle Tanner; and Joel Anders, Senior Transportation Planner, at WSP.