

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION FEBRUARY 22, 2023

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)
- Andrew Deslaurier, NMCOG Chair
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG NMMPO Representative
- Tom Bomil, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Chair
- Karyn Puleo, Lowell Regional Transit Authority MPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Krevat, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
- Ali Bent, LRTA
- Andrew Jennings, LRTA Board Member
- Andrew Wang
- Elizabeth Oltman, Lowell Transportation Engineer
- Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4
- Chris Timmel, FHWA
- Jack Moran, MassDOT OTP
- Josh Levin, MassDOT District 4
- Ian Hatfield
- Michelle Ho, MassDOT OTP
- Annabel Shein

NMMPO Staff:

- Justin Howard, Shrvanathi Gopalan Narayanan, and Jessica Boulanger, NMCOG

2. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 25, 2023 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the January 25, 2023 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the January 25, 2023 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 January 25, 2023 meeting.

- **Lowell – Dracut – Methuen – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 110** – Project has a new ad date March 9, 2024.
- **Westford – Bridge Rehabilitation, W-26-002, Stony Brook Road over the Stony Brook** – Project has a new ad date September 30, 2024.
- **Lowell – Rourke Bridge Replacement, Wood Street Extension over Boston and Maine Railroad and Merrimac River** – Project has a new ad date August 10, 2024.
- **Lowell – Tewksbury – Route 38 Intersection Improvements** – Project has a new TIP Cost of \$4,048,499.

Justin Howard commented that the Rourke Bridge project is a priority for the region and wanted to ensure that the project remains on track for a FFY 2024 construction advertisement. The project update moved the advertisement date later into the 4th quarter. Brian Fallon responded saying that the project is still on track for the August 2024 advertisement date.

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

There were no comments.

5. NMMPO TITLE VI PLAN PRESENTATION

Jessica Boulanger provided an update on Title VI, presenting with an overview of Title VI, objectives, and requirements of the plan. As part of the presentation, she also presented statistics and maps on the following for the region – population changes, median household income by municipality, minority populations across NMCOG region, population estimates by ancestry in Lowell, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Service Area Communities, Environmental Justice (EJ) population areas, and allocation of TIP investment in the region. NMCOG is currently in the process of updating translations for filing and notices. NMCOG staff requested MPO vote to release the draft for public comment, which will be shared on NMCOG’s website. Based on a motion by Karyn Puleo and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO released the draft report for a 21-day public comment period. The public comment period starts on Friday February 24, 2023 and ends on March 17, 2023.

6. Performance Measure Updates - Updated PM2 and PM3 Performance Targets

a. Updated PM2 Performance Targets

Jack Moran from MassDOT presented the updated Bridge and pavement condition Performance Targets. He presented the background on PM2 Performance Measures, which includes bridge and pavement measures, review of the first performance period, statewide pavement targets, and statewide bridge targets. He provided an overview of the first performance period from 2019 and 2021, regional distribution of interstates and non-interstate National Highway System (NHS) roads in the region. Northern Middlesex NHS Pavement, pavement targets – interstate and non-interstate, Northern Middlesex bridges, and bridge targets were presented for consideration by the MPO.

Based on a motion by Karyn Puleo and seconded by Tom Bomil, the NMMPO voted unanimously to endorse updated pavement and bridge condition targets as presented.

b. Updated PM3 Performance Targets

The MPO decided to postpone this agenda item to the March meeting.

7. FFY 2023-2027 TIP Amendment 3 - Action Item to Release for Public Comment

Justin Howard provided a summary of FFY 2023-2027 TIP Amendment 3. This summary includes changes to several transit and highway projects programmed in the current TIP. The proposal is for the MPO to vote to release this amendment as draft for 21 days ending on March 17, 2023. Upon the release of the amendment, a virtual meeting will be set up on March 7, 2023.

a. Highway

Amendment 3 involves adding \$786,944 cost increase for two bridge preservation projects on I-495 in Tewksbury – (1) Bridge over Route 133 and (2) Bridge over Route 38. The projects are scheduled to be advertised for construction in May and needs to be amended in the TIP to ensure that the projects are fully funded. The current programming is \$5,160,000 and the proposed amendment is for \$5,946,944.

b. Transit

LRTA proposes adding a new project in FFY 2023 to upgrade the parking system at the Gallagher Terminal parking garage for a total cost of \$110,000 using 100% state funding.

LRTA proposes adjusting the TIP to add \$100,000 in state funds to cover the match for replacing two 35-foot hybrid buses.

LRTA proposes to remove the automated passenger counter project from the TIP. The project currently uses a mix of 5339 and 5307 federal funds.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Tom Bomil, the NMMPO voted unanimously to release the amendment for public comment.

8. FFY 2024-2028 TIP Development

a. Financial Summary and TIP Readiness Day results

Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan provided an update on FFY 2024-2028 TIP development, presenting a financial summary used to develop regional targets. This financial summary was developed using the financial and narrative guidance received from MassDOT.

Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan also provided an update on the TIP Readiness Day results based on discussion with MassDOT on preliminary recommendations for programming of projects. The

information on project design stage, TIP readiness recommended year was shared for each project in TIP and also for projects that are under State program, which are outside TIP. TIP Scenarios will be presented in the next MPO meeting for approval.

9. FFY 2024 UPWP Development Timeline

Justin Howard presented UPWP Development schedule and key meeting dates which ranges from January 2023 to July 2023. Staff participated in MARPA/MassDOT meeting to discuss narrative and financial guidance for UPWP Development in January 2023. In February, UPWP schedule is presented to the MPO. NMCOG staff will review and present the preferred set of UPWP tasks and budget to MPO in March/April. Draft UPWP will be presented to MPO in May for voting and will be released for 21 day public review. Public meeting will be held to hear comments on draft and the updated UPWP report will be presented to MPO in June. In July, NMCOG staff will post endorsed FFY 2024 UPWP on NMCOG website and distribute to Federal, State and regional stakeholders.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

There were no other business.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next MPO meeting will be on March 22, 2023 at 2:00 PM.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Tom Bomil and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:09 PM.