



Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

Events and Opportunities

Mark Your Calendars: Summer Storytelling and Fall Summit Approaching for *At Home in Greater Lowell*

Do you have a housing story to share? NMCOG is working with Stellar Story Company this summer and fall to identify meaningful, local stories about experiences with housing, lead storytelling training events, and coordinate a public education and storytelling campaign. There are many opportunities to participate, from volunteering as a story ambassador to cultivating your own personal story:

- Volunteer to be a storytelling ambassador: join a 30-minute info session this Thursday, 8/8 at 12:00 or 7:00pm.
- Register for a free storytelling training: sessions are scheduled for September 11 (online) from 2:00-4:00pm and September 25 at Billerica's Public Access TV (BATV) from 6:00-8:00pm.
- Host a "Home is Everything" event this fall.
- Schedule a 1:1 conversation with our storytelling team.



Share meaningful housing stories.
Be a storytelling ambassador.
Participate in free storytelling training.
Host a 'Home is Everything' story social.



MORE INFO:
stellarstory.com/housing

To sign up or express interest, fill out the interest form at nmcog.org/housingstories or email info@stellarstory.com.

On Thursday, November 7, NMCOG will host "Ideas to Action," the fall summit for *At Home in Greater Lowell*. This third summit will include the results of the year-long process to create a housing strategy for the Greater Lowell region and a discussion about working together on the next steps.

Register today! Networking at 5:30 pm, program begins at 6:00 pm. Additional event details will be posted to the [NMCOG event calendar](#) and shared via the [At Home in Greater Lowell mailing list](#).

This project is led by NMCOG and funded by an Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Planning Assistance Grant and the Greater Lowell Community Foundation.

Save the Date! October 16, 2024: Celebrate 60+ Years of NMCOG *NMCOG Annual Meeting*

Save the date for the NMCOG Annual Meeting, where we'll be celebrating more than 60 years of regional planning in Northern Middlesex. The NMCOG Council is hosting a special meeting,

open to all, on October 16, 2024 from 7:00 – 9:00pm at Tyngsborough Old Town Hall. The event will include a panel of state and regional leaders discussing the importance and impact of economic development, workforce, and housing across the Greater Lowell region. More details to come!

Grant Opportunities & Resources

Local Infrastructure Hub Offers Series of Federal Grant Application Bootcamps

The Local Infrastructure Hub, a national program designed to connect cities and towns with resources and expert advice to access federal infrastructure funding, will be [hosting a series of bootcamps this fall](#) focused on different funding opportunities made available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. Individuals who work for local governments with a population of fewer than 150,000 residents are invited to attend; registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Learn more and register today!

- [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities](#) (BRIC)
- [Flood Mitigation Assistance](#) (FMA) program
- [Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity](#) (RAISE)
- [Inflation Reduction Act Elective Pay](#)
- [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#) (DWSRF)

Looking for assistance in applying for or administering grants? NMCOG has funding available through the Massachusetts Grant Assistance Program to support member municipalities in these efforts. Contact Christopher Glenn Hayes, Housing and Economic Development Manager, at chayes@nmcog.org to request assistance.

Municipalities Invited to Apply for Community Compact Grants under the Best Practice Program

The Healey-Driscoll Administration recently announced that the FY25 Community Compact Best Practice Program will open in mid-August. The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Healey-Driscoll Administration and individual cities and towns of the Commonwealth. In a Community Compact, a community agrees to implement at least one [best practice](#) selected from across a variety of areas, ranging from education, energy, and housing, to IT, DEI, and economic development. The community's chosen best practice(s) will be reviewed between the Commonwealth and the municipality to ensure that the best practice(s) chosen are unique to the municipality and reflect needed areas of improvement.

The application window opens Monday, August 19, 2024. The program is open only to those municipalities who did not apply in FY24. Applications are anticipated to be reviewed within two weeks of submission; the program will run until all funds are exhausted. [Learn more and prepare to apply.](#)

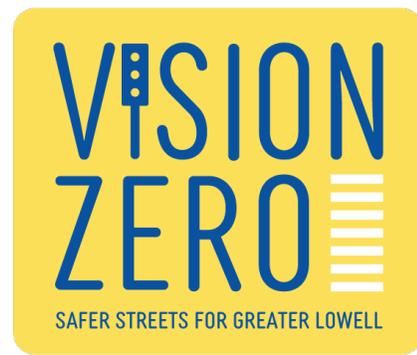
NMCOG News

NMMPO Endorses Greater Lowell Vision Zero Plan

At the July 24 NMMPO meeting, the MPO Board unanimously endorsed the Greater Lowell Vision Zero: Regional Safety Action Plan, committing to eliminate motor vehicle-related fatalities and serious injuries in the Greater Lowell Region by 2050.

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Since October 2023, NMCOG staff have collaborated with project consultant, WSP, to develop the plan, which includes strategies to improve roadway safety in Lowell and the towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford. The final plan will be available on the NMCOG website along with a web-based dashboard to visualize key elements and crash data by Fall 2024. To learn more about the project visit the [Greater Lowell Vision Zero webpage](#).



Intersection Transformation in Westford Described in Transportation Improvement Program Review Study

At the June meeting of the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO), NMCOG staff presented a report evaluating the effectiveness and impact of a project funded through the NMMPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): TIP Project 607251, Intersection and Signal Improvements at Route 110 (Littleton Road) and Tadmuck Road in Westford. This study analyzes and compares the safety conditions before and after the project was completed to understand the project's impact. The project's effectiveness was measured by examining the total number of crashes and their severity at this project location, and by reviewing the conditions at each project site before and after the construction improvements. NMCOG selects one project funded through the TIP each year to assess through these annual reports, as assessing before and after conditions is vital to informing future infrastructure improvements for projects. [Download the report](#).



MassDOT Unveils Final Plan for Beyond Mobility, the Massachusetts 2050 Transportation Plan

Plan will guide MassDOT's decision making and investments through 2050

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has released the final Beyond Mobility Plan. Considered the Massachusetts 2050 Transportation Plan, Beyond Mobility serves as a blueprint for guiding transportation decision making and investments in Massachusetts in a way that advances MassDOT's goals and maximizes the equity and resiliency of the transportation system. The plan identifies six key priority areas of Massachusetts to focus on over the long term: safety, destination connectivity, travel experience, reliability, supporting clean transportation, and resiliency. Within the Plan, vision statements, values, problem statements, and over 100 action items have been developed and are organized by these six priority areas. Read the plan at mass.gov/beyondmobility.



Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office Offers Direct Pay for Municipalities

The MA Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office (FFIO) has developed a suite of materials to assist municipalities in taking advantage of the Direct Pay Program. Direct Pay, also known as Elective Pay, is a program that allows cities, towns, and other tax-exempt organizations to receive federal tax credits for completing certain clean energy projects or investments.

Visit the following resources for more information:

- [FFIO website with Direct Pay Resources](#)
- [Direct Pay presentation from the state's Deputy Climate Chief at the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience](#)
- [Making Dollars and Cents of Direct Pay, a webinar featuring a presentation from FFIO Deputy Director, Bob LaRocca](#)

Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships Seeks Cohorts for Electrification

The Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships (NEEP) is creating a group of Massachusetts communities to work on municipal electrification projects. They welcome communities at any stage of development, from early ideas to fully implemented programs. The group will meet monthly until December, with the possibility of continuing into 2025.

Emphasizing peer learning and collaboration, the group will collectively develop an Administrative Toolkit for Community Heating Electrification Campaigns. Cohort members will learn from each other to advance their respective initiatives while contributing their knowledge and advice to develop the toolkit. To express interest or suggest resources and information that should be included in an administrative toolkit, [complete this short survey](#) or send an email to Andy Winslow, NEEP Senior Associate, State & Community Solutions at awinslow@neep.org.

Northern Middlesex News

Governor Healey Signs Affordable Homes Act to Address State's Housing Needs

On August 6th, Governor Healey signed the Affordable Homes Act. NMCOG staff Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director, and Chris Hayes, Housing and Economic Development Manager, attended the bill signing ceremony.

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The bill includes \$5.16 billion dollars in spending authorizations with several policy priorities included: \$2 billion in funding for public housing modernization and decarbonization, \$50 million in funding to assist MBTA Communities in complying with multifamily zoning requirements, and \$20 million in funding for the Smart Growth Housing Trust Fund (which supports 40R districts).

Local communities and organizations in Greater Lowell will also receive support:

- Funding for a local housing trust: \$350k to the Dunstable Affordable Housing Trust to improve



Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director,

- and renovate site conditions in Dunstable.
- Funding for area nonprofits, including the Merrimack Valley Housing Partnership, \$500k to City of Lowell for veteran preference in housing and \$1 million for the Revitalization Effort Toward New Urbanism, Inc, for the production of more than 100 affordable housing units along Merrimack St in Lowell.
- Funding for area housing authorities: \$8 million to the Lowell Housing Authority for developing new affordable housing and veterans supportive housing units; \$1 million to the Chelmsford Housing Authority for redeveloping Chelmsford Arms senior housing; \$500k to Dracut Housing Authority for capital improvements; \$250k for the Pepperell Housing Authority for improvements; and \$500k to Tyngsborough Housing Authority for improvements.

NMCOG with State Representative James Arciero, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Housing



[Read the final bill](#) from the Conference Committee. Additional [notable sections of the act can be found here](#).

City of Lowell Awarded Nearly \$1M MVP Action Grant for Saint Louis Sponge Park

The City of Lowell has secured a \$929,120 MVP Action Grant for Phase 2 of the Saint Louis Sponge Park Project in Centralville. Announced by Governor Maura Healey and Secretary Rebecca Tapper, this grant will support transforming the under-utilized park into a "sponge park" with green infrastructure to tackle flooding, urban heat, and environmental challenges. NMCOG played a key role by providing detailed climate projections, expertise in nature-based solutions, and technical assistance. Collaborating with Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust (LPCT) and UMass Lowell, the project features educational signage, an outdoor classroom, and public art, with a focus on environmental justice and youth engagement, in line with the Lowell Forward Master Plan. [Read the full press release on the City of Lowell's website](#).

Work with Us! Employment Opportunities and RFPs

Request for Proposals: 2025-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

NMCOG is seeking a planning and/or economic development consultant or team to assist in the development of a five year Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2025-2030. This includes collaborating closely with NMCOG on data collection and analysis; stakeholder interviews; an economic development summit; and identifying unique, actionable, and relevant economic development recommendations including a potential work program and funding sources for a regional economic development program. Anticipated contract is \$95,000.

Proposals are due via email no later than 12:00pm on Monday, September 9, 2024, and may be downloaded at nmcog.org/request-for-proposals.

NMCOG is Hiring!

Come work with us! We are seeking to fill the position of Executive Assistant (32 hours per week) and Sealer of Weights and Measures (24 hours per week). Learn more and apply at nmcog.org/employment.

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