



**NORTHERN
MIDDLESEX
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**
SERVING THE REGION SINCE 1963

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WHAT WE DO

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NMCOG Newsletter

October 2025

NMCOG News

NMCOG Annual Meeting a Success

A special thank you to the 60+ people attended our Annual Meeting at the Chelmsford Center for the Arts. Event highlights included the launch of NMCOG's first Distinguished Service Awards, where we recognized:

- Representative Jim Arciero for his exemplary legislative leadership on housing, education, transportation, and regional priorities.



- The Middlesex 3 Coalition for driving economic growth and collaboration along the Route 3 corridor.
- Jerry Frechette for his contributions to the NMCOG Council as Treasurer and for 17 years of service.
- Carlin Andrus for his excellence, innovation, and contributions to NMCOG's work.

We also thank NMCOG staff; the Council; Joan Roman, photographer; EdCo for awards; A Floral Moment by Juju Buds for floral arrangements; Bianco's Catering for desserts and drinks; the Town of Chelmsford; the Chelmsford Center for the Arts; and Chelmsford Telemedia.

The event underscored the importance of bringing our communities together, supporting collaboration, and addressing shared challenges across Greater Lowell and the surrounding communities. We are excited for the year to come!

NMCOG Awarded More Than \$500,000 for “Merrimack Watershed Revive: A Vision for Regional Resilience”

NMCOG was awarded a \$539,900 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program Action Grant to launch Merrimack Watershed Revive: A Vision for Regional Resilience. Working with leaders from 11 municipalities, regional organizations, and community partners, NMCOG developed the ambitious, multi-phase initiative that will produce a watershed-scale Hydrologic and Hydraulic (H&H) model to guide investments that reduce flooding, protect critical infrastructure, and strengthen climate resilience across the Lower Merrimack watershed. Learn more: [Merrimack Watershed Revive](#)



NMCOG Awarded \$56,500 to Support Municipal Energy Initiatives through the Green Communities Program

NMCOG secured a two-year \$56,500 grant from the [Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources' Regional Energy Planning Assistance \(REPA\) Program](#) to strengthen municipal energy efforts across its nine member communities. The funding provides direct support to Billerica, Dunstable, Pepperell, Tyngsborough, and Westford for their Green Communities' annual reporting and in preparing competitive grant applications, as well as helping each town maintain compliance and compete for state funding.



NMCOG will host peer-to-peer capacity-building workshops featuring a Gateway Cities and Climate Leaders series in Lowell, guidance on linking energy-reduction plans with capital budgets, and training on municipal energy aggregation.

NMCOG Staff Attend Culvert Assessment Training

NMCOG staff attended a free training hosted by the [Massachusetts Department of Ecological Restoration \(DER\) Stream Continuity Team](#), with support from the North and South Rivers Watershed Association and the Old Colony Planning Council.



The workshop explained how healthy streams and well-designed culverts prevent flooding and protect local infrastructure. Participants reviewed the state's culvert design standards, learned best practices for funding replacement projects, and joined discussions with local watershed groups.

A steady drizzle set the scene for a hands-on field session. Staff examined an active stream crossing, spotted signs of wildlife along the banks, and practiced

basic culvert assessment techniques—an opportunity to see stream dynamics up close and gather real-world data despite the rainy weather.

Many thanks to DER and Matthew Dryer at Old Colony Planning Council for organizing an informative and engaging session.

NMCOG Team Visits Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary

The NMCOG team recently toured [Pawtucket Farm Wildlife Sanctuary](#), a 32-acre urban greenspace along the Merrimack River in Lowell. The sanctuary is co-managed by [Mass Audubon](#) and the [Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust](#), with [Mill City Grows](#) providing community-based urban agriculture programs. Together, these partners protect critical riverfront habitat, expand public access, and demonstrate how conservation and local food production can work side by side.

Our hosts shared the property's history and described the years of effort invested to create public access while restoring native ecosystems. Their overview highlighted the collaborations that turned a shared vision for conservation and community engagement into reality. The sanctuary feels remarkably welcoming. The accessible trail—already mapped in NMCOG's regional trail database—sets a high standard for inclusion, and the edible forest designed with Mill City Grows shows how conservation and community use can flourish together. Walking the trails and taking in the river views underscored the thoughtful planning and ongoing restoration that make the sanctuary a regional treasure.

NMCOG extends sincere thanks to our guides for sharing their knowledge and for their dedication to keeping this special place thriving for the community.



NMCOG Executive Director, Jennifer Raitt, Elected to APA Board of Directors

We are proud to share that Jennifer Raitt has been elected to serve as **Director At Large on the American Planning Association (APA) Board of Directors**. APA's 16-member Board, chaired by the APA President, sets broad policy for the Association and guides its mission to support planners and the communities they serve.

The APA is the nation's leading organization for the planning profession, representing more than 40,000 members across the country. Its mission is to elevate and unite a diverse planning profession as it helps communities, their leaders, and residents anticipate and navigate change—ultimately creating great communities for all.

Jennifer brings decades of leadership experience in planning and community development, including work in Massachusetts and nationally through the APA Massachusetts Chapter, national committees, and major initiatives on housing and regional planning. Her four-year term on the Board begins January 1, 2026.

As a member of the Board, Jennifer will help shape APA's strategic direction, set its mission and values, ensure resources are in place, and provide oversight of

operations and programs. Board members are also charged with identifying emerging trends, promoting APA externally, and mentoring future leaders.

Throughout her career, Jennifer has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the planning profession—championing inclusive, forward-thinking policies and mentoring the next generation of planners. Please join us in congratulating her on this achievement and follow the American Planning Association for updates on her work with the Board.

Upcoming Events and Opportunities

Share your vision for Chelmsford Center Village and Chelmsford Street

The Town of Chelmsford is working with NMCOG to create a vision for Chelmsford Street, from Center Square to Alpine Lane. This vision will help the Town work with MassDOT and other partners to improve the street, including sidewalks, travel lanes, parking, and other elements of the street. Its goal is to determine the best way to use the limited space available, to enhance accessibility for people of all abilities, and to safely and comfortably accommodate all types of users such as pedestrians, bicyclists, buses, and vehicles.



An important part of this work is understanding how Chelmsford residents and visitors use the area, what their hopes are for the street, and what special meanings the village has for them. **[NMCOG will host a pop-up event on Wednesday the 22nd from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Navigation Brewing Company's Chelmsford Tap Room.](#)**

More information can be found on the project website **nmcog.org/chelmsfordstreet** including the link to the public survey.

CHAPA Regional Meeting

NMCOG is a co-sponsor for a CHAPA Regional Meeting for the North Shore and Merrimack Valley. The meeting is on **Monday, October 27 from 1:00 to 3:00pm** at the YWCA Greater Newburyport.

Each year, CHAPA convenes stakeholders from across the housing ecosystem to learn directly from those doing the work on the ground. This is an opportunity to share your experiences about what is working, what can improve, and what CHAPA should prioritize in the coming year.

These sessions are free and open to all. You can [learn more and register here](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to Lily Linke, CHAPA's Director of Municipal Engagement at lilinke@chapa.org.

Register Today for November 17 Greater Lowell Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Virtual Workshop

After a summer of engagement with each of our nine communities, NMCOG and our consultants from Toole Design Group are excited to share a draft bicycle and pedestrian network for public review!

The logo is a red rectangular box with white text and icons. The text reads "GREATER LOWELL BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN" in all caps. Below the text are three white icons: a person in a wheelchair, a person on a bicycle, and a person walking.

GREATER LOWELL
**BICYCLE AND
PEDESTRIAN
PLAN**

Join us on **Monday, November 17 at 7:00pm** to learn what we heard from our public survey, summer engagement events, and municipal meetings. We'll share a draft of the future bicycle and pedestrian network and invite you to provide feedback and comments on whether we got it right, opportunities for improvement, and broader policy recommendations that should be addressed in the plan.

The meeting will be conducted virtually via zoom. Advance registration is recommended; [please register by clicking here](#).

Save the Date for NMCOG's Fall Housing Summit

At Home in Greater Lowell: Homelessness to Hopefulness to address regionwide challenges in serving our most vulnerable community members

Save the date for NMCOG's fall housing summit: *At Home in Greater Lowell Homelessness to Hopefulness*. The summit will begin with the release of the *At Home in Greater Lowell Part 1 Report*, followed by a panel discussion between housing experts from across the state, each of which have unique perspectives, solutions, and recommendations for addressing housing affordability and homelessness within the Greater Lowell region.

Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Time: 5:30pm to 8:00pm

Location: UMass Lowell Coburn Hall, 850 Broadway Street, Lowell, MA 01854

RSVP: [Accepting RSVPs now!](#)

Stay tuned for additional event details including our lineup of panelists in the coming weeks. Visit nmcog.org/ahgl for details about the plan.



At Home in Greater Lowell
a housing strategy for the greater lowell region

Help Shape the Future of Open Space and Recreation in Tewksbury and Westford

NMCOG is working with Tewksbury and Westford to update each town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), which guides investments in parks, fields, trails, and natural areas for the next decade.

Community members can help set local priorities by completing a short community survey:

- [Take the Tewksbury OSRP Survey](#)
- [Take the Westford OSRP Survey](#)

Survey responses will help identify recreation needs, guide open space preservation, and inform future park and trail improvements. Community input ensures that the updated plans reflect local values and create a clear roadmap for protecting and enhancing outdoor spaces in both towns.

Attend a NMCOG Council or NMMPO Meeting!

NMCOG Council Meeting

The NMCOG Council meets the third Wednesday of each month via Zoom and in person at NMCOG's office.

Date: **Wednesday, November 19**

Time: 7:00pm

Location: online via Zoom or in person at 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, in Lowell

[View meeting details](#)

Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

The NMMPO meets the fourth Wednesday of each month via Zoom and in person at NMCOG's office.

Date: **Wednesday, October 22**

Time: 2:00pm

Location: online via Zoom or in person at 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, in Lowell

[View meeting details](#)

NMCOG.org



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