



**NORTHERN  
MIDDLESEX  
COUNCIL OF  
GOVERNMENTS**  
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NMCOG Newsletter

February 2026

## NMCOG News

### **NMCOG Awards More Than \$210,000 in Planning Assistance to Local Communities**

Twenty-two municipal and regional projects in Greater Lowell will leverage more than \$210,000 to advance local and regional priorities in housing, energy and sustainability, economic development, transportation, and grant research, application, and administration. NMCOG annually provides technical assistance for planning projects across the region. This work is funded through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program and the Grant Assistance Program (GAP), which utilizes funding the Legislature and Governor appropriate annually and are distributed to all regional planning agencies, including NMCOG. In making project awards, NMCOG prioritized projects that advance fair housing

goals, implement existing local or regional plans, lead directly to changes in policy, utilize matching funds, or represent collaborations between multiple municipalities.

NMCOG solicited project proposals from its nine communities in December 2025. The following local projects have been awarded technical assistance and are being advanced in 2026:

- **Billerica:** Assistance administering the regional “Bridging the Digital Divide” digital equity grant, scoping and grant writing assistance to obtain funding for a Community Master Plan, updated Trail Maps, and modernization of Town Subdivision Rules and Regulations
- **Chelmsford:** Scoping, grant writing, and technical assistance for a Managed Growth Strategy
- **Dracut:** Revision of a recently completed Open Space and Recreation Plan for state approval, and a Commercial Zoning Analysis to incentivize economic development
- **Dunstable:** A **Larter Field Master Plan**, grant writing and administration assistance with the Union School Building Reuse Study, and creation of a Townwide Fishing Brochure
- **Lowell:** Completion of the Evaluation of **Lowell’s Urban Renewal Districts**
- **Pepperell:** Completion of the **Pepperell Housing Production Plan**, grant writing assistance for Housing Production Plan implementation, a Commercial Zoning Analysis to incentivize economic development, and a Small Towns Collaborative Economic Development Survey
- **Tewksbury:** Completion of the **Tewksbury Open Space and Recreation Plan**
- **Tyngsborough:** A Hazard Mitigation Plan
- **Westford:** Completion of the **Westford Open Space and Recreation Plan**, and the first phase of a Housing Production Plan

In addition, regional projects serving all nine communities are being advanced:

- **At Home in Greater Lowell: Regional Housing Strategy Phase 2**
- Application for a regional **Communitywide Brownfields Assessment Grant**
- Northern Middlesex CEO Group support

Additional technical assistance beyond the projects listed above is provided to member communities through NMCOG’s Unified Planning Work Program,

annual assessments from member municipalities, leveraged grants from state programs, and fee-for-service contributions. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis and additional awards may be announced later in the year.

Read more about NMCOG's Technical Assistance Program at [nmcog.org/tap](https://nmcog.org/tap).

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## **Lowell, State Leaders Talk Fair Housing**

### ***Event part of a statewide listening tour to allocate funding under the Affordable Homes Act***

On January 29, a packed Fair Housing Listening Session at UTEC brought together residents, advocates, and state and local leaders to discuss barriers to safe, affordable, and fair housing across Greater Lowell. Organized in partnership with the [Massachusetts Office of Fair Housing](#) and [Community Teamwork Inc.](#), the session was framed by NMCOG Executive Director Jennifer Raitt, who highlighted the region's longstanding structural barriers to housing access and NMCOG's work with local communities to address discrimination, availability, and affordability. Raitt also shared regional data showing disability as one of the most common basis for housing discrimination and emphasized fair housing as a core element of NMCOG's [At Home in Greater Lowell regional housing strategy](#).

[Read the full coverage in the Lowell Sun by Melanie Gilbert.](#)



From left, state Director of Fair Housing Whitney Demetrius, with Lowell Mayor Erik Gitschier, State Rep. Vanna Howard, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments Executive Director Jennifer Raitt, State rep. Rodney Elliott and Community Teamwork CEO Carl Howell at the Greater Lowell Fair Housing Listening Session held at UTEC on Jan. 29, 2026. (Melanie Gilbert/Lowell Sun)

## Upcoming Events and Opportunities

# Amendment #2 to the FFY 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program Open for Public Comment

On Wednesday, January 28 the NMMPO voted to release Amendment #2 to the Federal Fiscal Year 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Amendment #2 involves the following:

- Project ID #608227: Billerica Yankee Doodle Bike Path Construction (Phase 1): project cost increase of \$7,370,699
- Project ID #613876: Billerica Yankee Doodle Bike Path Construction (Phase 2): change in programmed TIP year from 2027 to 2028 and project cost decrease of \$528,786
- Project ID #609510: Dracut Improvements at George Englesby Elementary School (SRTS): change in programmed TIP year from 2029 to 2028 and project cost increase of \$355,204
- Project ID #RTD0011235: LRTA – Revenue Vehicle Replacement - 35' Hybrids (18): change in programmed TIP year from 2027 to 2026 and cost increase of \$2,080,277

**[Read a summary narrative of Amendment #2 to the FFY 2026-2030 TIP.](#)**

All are invited to comment on this amendment by email to [publiccomments@nmcog.org](mailto:publiccomments@nmcog.org) or by mail to NMCOG, 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01854 through February 19. A virtual public hearing will be held as part of the **February 25, 2026 NMMPO meeting** at 2:00pm. Following the public comment period, the NMMPO will vote on whether to endorse the amendment with consideration to comments received.



# Do You Visit, Work, Live, or Drive Through Chelmsford Center Village?

*Attend the February 26 Community Workshop to Provide Input on Streetscape Redesign Concepts*

NMCOG is assisting the Town of Chelmsford in reimagining the Chelmsford Street (Route 110) streetscape between Billerica Road and Alpine Avenue. On the heels of a number of outreach events in the fall of 2025, including a public workshop, communitywide survey, and pop-up events at the Chelmsford Market and Navigation Brewery, along with a parking study, interviews of local businesses, and meetings with municipal staff, we are ready to share conceptual designs of the streetscape for public feedback.



Provide your input on the best way to use the 55 to 65 feet of right-of-way along Chelmsford Street, create a stronger sense of place, enhance accessibility for people of all ages and abilities, and accommodate residents, visitors, employers, and employees alike.

**Date: Thursday, February 26**

**Time: 6:30 to 8:00pm**

**Location: Chelmsford Public Library, 25 Boston Road, Chelmsford**

Learn more about this project at [nmcog.org/chelmsfordstreet](https://nmcog.org/chelmsfordstreet).

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## Applications for Housing Choice Community and Rural and Small-Town Housing Choice Community Designations Available Now

In late 2025, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) updated the Housing Choice Community (HCC) Designation, and created a new

designation--the Rural and Small-Town Housing Choice Community (RST-HCC) Designation--for all Massachusetts Rural and Small Towns.

- [View the HCC Designation Criteria and Best Practices](#)
- [View the RST-HCC Designation Criteria and Best Practices](#)

Achieving HCC or RST-HCC designation avails communities of priority and/or exclusive access to many grant programs, including exclusive access to the Housing Choice Grant Program through the Community One Stop for Growth, and special considerations from various Housing Choice Initiative participating state programs.

[Applications are accepted on an annual basis, with 2026 applications due February 27, 2026.](#)

[Learn more about the HCC](#) or [contact Chris Hayes](#), Director of Housing and Economic Development, for more information.

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## **New Environment & Climate One Stop (ECO One Stop) Grant Portal Now Open**



The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) has launched the new [Environment & Climate One Stop](#) (ECO One Stop), a streamlined grant application that consolidates multiple state climate and environmental resilience funding programs into a single application. Municipalities, regional planning agencies, and other eligible entities can now apply once and be considered for several funding opportunities that support climate adaptation, environmental resilience, and planning.

Grants available through ECO One Stop include:

- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grants
- Dam and Seawall Program
- Cooling Corridors Program

- Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grants
- Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Coastal Resilience Grants
- CZM Coastal Habitat & Water Quality Grants
- EEA Planning Assistance Grants

The **[FY27 ECO One Stop application is now open](#)**, with applications due by **Friday, March 20**.

NMCOG can assist communities and regional partners with identifying eligible projects, confirming grant alignment, coordinating multi-community applications, and providing technical assistance or letters of support where appropriate. Contact **[Kelly Lynema](#)**, Deputy Director, or **[Chris Hayes](#)**, Director of Housing and Economic Development, for assistance.

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## Community One Stop for Growth Expression of Interest Portal is Open!



The Commonwealth has opened the **[FY27 Community One Stop for Growth](#)**, a consolidated grant portal that brings together the state's primary housing and economic development programs into a single application and coordinated review process. Administered by the Executive Office of Economic Development, the **[One Stop for Growth](#)** is the main vehicle for public economic development investment in Massachusetts, supporting projects across the full development continuum, from early planning and visioning to infrastructure, site readiness, and construction.

The FY27 round is now underway, with Expressions of Interest due by **June 3**, and full applications due by **June 3**, following the application window opening on **May 4**.

NMCOG can assist municipalities and regional partners with identifying eligible projects, preparing expressions of interest, coordinating multi-program strategies, and providing technical assistance or letters of support as

communities prepare One Stop applications. Contact [Kelly Lynema](#), Deputy Director, or [Chris Hayes](#), Director of Housing and Economic Development, for assistance.

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## **MHP Local Boards & Commissions Training Series** *Strengthening Local Decision-Making to Support Affordable Housing*



Join Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) for a free, three-part virtual training series designed to help local boards, commissions, and community members better understand their role in supporting affordable housing.

**Dates: March 11, 18, and 25** (three week series)

**Time: 12:00 to 1:30pm**

**Registration: [Free via Zoom](#)**

This practitioner-led series explores how local boards and commissions shape housing outcomes, clarifies municipal responsibilities versus those of developers and the state, and highlights effective strategies for building public support for affordable housing. Using real-world examples from across Massachusetts, participants will gain practical insights to improve decision-making, collaboration, and community engagement.

The training is ideal for members of planning boards, ZBAs, select boards, housing trusts, CPCs, Affordable Housing Committees, as well as residents and organizations interested in advancing affordable housing locally.

**[Learn more and register today!](#)**

**Attend a NMCOC Council or  
NMMPO Meeting!**

## Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting

The NMMPO meets the fourth Wednesday of each month via Zoom and in person at NMCOG's office. This month's meeting will include a public comment period for [Amendment #2 to the 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program](#) (TIP), report on new TIP funding programs, discussion of the FFY2027-2031 TIP, and designation of new freight corridors.

Date: **Wednesday, February 25**

Time: 2:00pm

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

[View meeting details](#)

## NMCOG Council Meeting

The NMCOG Council will meet off-schedule this month on the fourth Wednesday, both via Zoom and in person at NMCOG's office.

Date: **Wednesday, February 25**

Time: 7:00pm

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

[View meeting details](#)

NMCOG.org



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

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