



NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

PRESS RELEASE

NORTHERN MIDDLESEX COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS ANNOUNCES FUNDING AWARDS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

May 8, 2023 – LOWELL - The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) is pleased to announce nearly \$800,000 in technical assistance across the region to the City of Lowell and the Towns of Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Pepperell, Tewksbury, Tyngsborough, and Westford addressing housing, energy and sustainability, economic development, and transportation.

NMCOG, one of the 13 regional planning agencies (RPAs) established by the state legislature, annually provides technical assistance across the region for projects through several programs, including the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program, which utilizes funding the legislature and Governor appropriate annually and offer through the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which utilizes federal transportation funding allocated by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. All funded projects prioritized one of the following areas: regional collaboration, economic recovery, housing creation and choice, transportation planning, and sustainability.

“Our open call for project ideas generated many potential project ideas demonstrating the importance of our technical assistance programs and the need for additional local capacity and support to achieve local and regional economic success,” said Jenny Raitt, Executive Director for NMCOG. “We are looking forward to continuing to assist many of our municipalities as they work toward compliance with the multi-family zoning requirements required for MBTA Communities (MGL C.40A Section 3A). We will also be providing assistance to municipalities on projects that find ways to reuse vacant municipal property, create more climate friendly transportation alternatives, and make streets and roads safer and more usable for all modes.”



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NMCOG distributed a request for assistance proposals to the nine communities in early spring 2023. The following FY23 local projects have been awarded:

- Billerica: Compliance with MBTA Zoning
- Chelmsford: Compliance with MBTA Zoning
- Chelmsford: Housing and Demographic Data Report
- Dracut: Transportation Prioritization and Grant Assistance
- Dracut: Aiken Avenue at Bridge Street Intersection Study
- Dunstable: Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
- Dunstable: Union Building Future Use Planning Process
- Lowell: Downtown Lowell Open Streets Planning
- Lowell: Lowell Housing Production Plan Phase 2A
- Pepperell: Housing Market Study Grant Seeking/Writing Assistance
- Pepperell: Subdivision Regulation Update Phase II
- Tewksbury: MBTA Zoning Compliance Modeling
- Tyngsborough: Compliance with MBTA Zoning
- Westford: MBTA Zoning Compliance Modeling

In addition, seven projects, which serve all nine communities, were awarded assistance:

- Regional Housing Workgroup and Subsidized Housing Inventory Review
- Housing Choice Initiative Support
- Regional Weights and Measures Program
- Regional Energy Efficiency Opportunity Support
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Implementation
- Northern Middlesex Municipal CEO Group
- Northern Middlesex MBTA Communities Support



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Additionally, Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) technical assistance funded through the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) includes the following projects, which provide assistance to the region:

- Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Study
- Traffic Counting Assistance
- Stormwater Management
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning
- Freight Planning
- GIS Assistance
- UPWP Local Technical Assistance
- Sustainability Livability Climate Change
- Transit Planning
- Transit System Performance
- Multidisciplinary Planning

Nearly all projects seek to advance equity and ecological sustainability in the region. Many will include working with communities on innovative outreach strategies to increase inclusivity of the process and actively solicit and respect input from people with diverse lived experiences. Projects that advanced fair housing goals, especially compliance with M.G.L. chapter 40A Section 3A, were prioritized. In addition, NMCOG prioritized projects that are second phases of previous projects or otherwise prioritized in existing master plans, housing production plans, regional plans, or other plans.

“The NMCOG region has historically been a diverse and forward-thinking part of the Commonwealth,” said Billerica Select Board member and NMCOG Chair Andrew Deslaurier. “In order to maintain a region that welcomes and embraces our shared diversity with the challenges of sustainability, NMCOG is leading in partnership with our communities to achieve a successful future.”

NMCOG intends to release a second request for proposals, this one focused on assistance with capacity-building related to prioritization of projects and grant seeking, writing, and managing. This call is anticipated to be released in early summer 2023.