

MONTACHUSETT METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MMPO) MEETING

Held Remotely via GoToMeeting.com
Hosted by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
464 Abbott Avenue, Leominster, MA 01453

Minutes of December 20, 2023

Steve Woelfel called the remote meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

I. Introduction

SIGNATORIES PRESENT

Steve Woelfel, MassDOT OTP; Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District 2; George Kahale, MART; Glenn Eaton, MRPC; Rosemarie Meissner, Subregion 2; Tim Kilhart Subregion 3, Mark Piermarini, Leominster; Nicholas Erickson, Fitchburg

MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT

Keyna Thomas, MART; Ben Breger, MassDOT District 2; Andrew Wang, MassDOT Planning, Derek Krevat, MassDOT OTP; Neil Angus, Devens; Sarah Cannamela, MassDOT/OTP

STAFF PRESENT

Brad Harris, George Snow; Sheri Bean; Brian Doherty; Tyler Godin

II. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of November 15, 2023 Minutes

A motion was made to approve the November 15, 2023, MPO Meeting Minutes. The motion was made, seconded, and passed.

IV. Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan Update

- *Update by MassDOT OTP*

S. Woelfel stated that there was nothing to present on this item.

V. Montachusett FFY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- *Review of Comments to TIP Amendment #2*
- *MPO Action Related to TIP Amendment #2*

B. Doherty stated Amendment #2 is for the 2024 Transit element of the TIP. The amendment was released for a 21-day public comment period at last month's meeting. The comment period ran from November 28th through this past Monday. It was presented at the MJTC, and their recommendation was that the MPO endorse the amendment at today's meeting. Additionally, no other comments were received during the comment period.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously by the MPO to endorse Amendment #2 of the 2024-2028 TIP.

VI. Montachusett MPO TIP and UPWP Development Schedules

B. Doherty presented the 2025-2029 TIP Interested Parties letter to the attendees. The TIP process will take place over the next several months and will begin in January. The UPWP will be following the same schedule. There's a tentative schedule available for the TIP and UPWP. Staff will be looking at projects and reviewing them with project proponents and consultants to gather new information such as updated cost and project status, etc. Staff will then be bringing that information before the MJTC and MPO meetings in January and February. Staff will be scoring some of these projects through our transportation evaluation criteria and looking at some target section scenarios through March, have a draft in April, and endorsement in May. The UPWP has the same timeframe and is expected to be endorsed in May for the program that starts October 1st, 2024. Communities that have a TIP project should start contacting their consultants for project updates for MassDOT and the MRPC so we can start working towards programming some of these projects. The same for the UPWP. If communities have intersection studies, walkability studies, and other types of transportation studies that need to be done we will be soliciting feedback for that in the coming months.

VII. Montachusett Region Title VI Report

- *MPO Action Related to Title VI Program*

S Bean stated that every year MassDOT requires a report that allows an RPA to show Title VI compliance and proper procedures. The MRPC received an official letter on August 29th in response to our 2022 Title VI report. The letter stated the report needed follow-up items. Our report has been updated to reflect the MassDOT recommendations and requirements that are highlighted throughout the report. The changes were then described.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously by the MPO to endorse the 2023 Title VI Report.

VIII. Updates

- *MassDOT Highway Division*
- *Transit*
- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*
- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

D. Amaral of MassDOT District 2 provided the updates for Districts 2 and 3. Updates for District 2 - For FFY 2024, Project# 608723 - Athol Intersection improvements at Crescent Street and Chestnut Hill Ave is at 100% design; PS&E is due on April 11th, 2024. Project #613167 Athol-Phillipston-Templeton Bridge Preservation of 8 Bridge Crossings Along Route 2, design is at PS&E and will be advertised December 30th. Project # 612151 – Athol Bridge Replacement Route 2A Main Street over the B&M Railroad is at pre-25% design with 25% due on February 17, 2024. Project# 608424 for FFY 2026 Templeton reconstruction of Rt 68 from Rt 202 to the Phillipston TL, design is at 75% and the 100% Right of Way plans are due December 15th, 2023, 100% design is due on August 25th, 2024.

Updates for District 3, the following updates were provided - Project #604499 Leominster- Route 12 is at 75% design, 100% will be due on March 1st, Right of Way plans have been accepted. Project 608189 Fitchburg-Bridge Replacement on Water Street over Boulder Drive and Pan-Am Railroad - the 100% design is under review with PS&E due on April 9th the Right of Way plans have been accepted. Project 612110 Fitchburg/Ashby- Resurfacing and related work on Route 31 is at pre-25% design. Project 609411 Fitchburg/Leominster – Twin City Rail Trail Phase 2, 100% design is under review, PS&E is due January 31st, 2024.

- *Transit*

G Kahale stated that Harvard has requested a new commuter shuttle service between downtown Harvard and the Littleton commuter rail station to provide access for residents to the Boston area. MART has completed the creation of 50 spaces on Carey Street at their offices in Fitchburg. MART has installed two bus shelters in Athol, four shelters in Gardner, and one in Leominster through the Shared Streets and Spaces program. As part of this program, 12 bus shelters will be installed in Athol, Gardner, Fitchburg, and Leominster. MART fare changes will result in the reduction of fares for the fixed route buses from \$1.25 to \$1.00, students will ride fare free over the system, and there will be no cost transfers between regional routes.

- *Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)*

T Godin provided an update on the MART eastern communities TDP. After staff completed a survey in November, the analysis of the responses was incorporated into the report and other sections of the report were completed. Based on the findings, service recommendations were made, and staff are working on getting the draft report finalized. Staff will be meeting with MART to discuss the findings and will discuss developing a TDP for their fixed routes.

B Harris stated the MJTC met last Wednesday, December 13th. The members passed a revision to the MJTC bylaws. The revised bylaw allows an individual the opportunity to represent more than one community at the MJTC. In the case of a formal vote, the person would only be voting once unless they had written information from the other communities they are representing indicating how they should vote then they could potentially cast more than one vote.

The next MJTC is scheduled for Wednesday, January 10th, at 2:30 PM.

Handouts: Division of Ecological Restoration regarding a Culvert Replacement Grant program. Potential applicants are encouraged to schedule a Project Inquiry call with the ER staff who will meet with the applicants prior to the RFP being released to discuss the project's eligibility. This process is intended to provide potential applicants with feedback on the project before submitting a formal application. Project inquiries must be requested by Thursday, January 18th of 2024. Other programs are also listed in the handout which is posted on our website.

For the Safe Streets for All Action Plan grant, we have finalized the contract with our consultant, and it has been signed. WSP USA Inc, is the chosen consultant who will be developing the action plan for the region.

B Harris stated that as of January 5th, 2024, he is retiring therefore this will be his last MPO meeting. B Harris thanked everyone for their participation and assistance over the years. The input and support from the state has been very helpful and very meaningful in his work with the MRPC and hopes the best for the future of the MPO. B Harris added that he knows the MRPC staff will continue to do an excellent job for the MPO and will keep everyone informed.

S Woelfel congratulated B Harris on his retirement on behalf of MassDOT and all the board members and expressed gratefulness for his work and wished him luck in his retirement.

- *Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)*

G Eaton thanked B Harris for his long 38 years of service to the MRPC as he has been the backbone of the Transportation Planning Department for those many years. B Harris has touched virtually everyone's life who lives, works, or travels through the region for any kind of improvement that you can think about on the road transportation network and transit network.

IX. Administrative Matters

- *Next MPO Meeting*

The next meeting is scheduled for January 17th, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.

B . Harris mentioned that due to the recent election for Mayor in the City of Fitchburg, there will be a new member on the MPO. Samantha Squailia will be replacing Stephen DiNatale as the primary signatory for the city. Depending on the inauguration date, this may be in effect at the next MPO meeting.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.

DOCUMENT/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

MPO 12 20 2023 Agenda

MPO 11 15 2023 Minutes

5 FINAL DRAFT FY24 TIP Amendment #2

5 Int Parties Draft TIP Amendment #2 11 28 2023

6 Draft TIP Schedule FFY 2025 2029

6 Draft UPWP Schedule FFY 2025

6 TIP Development Memo 12 6 2023

7 DRAFT 2023 Title VI Report

7 MRPC Title VI Review Report

8 2024 Meeting Calendar Version 1

8 Culvert Connection Announcement 11 30 2023