

## Summary Narrative of Amendment 1 to the FFY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program for the Northern Middlesex Region

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### Introduction and Overview

The table below summarizes the final amendment package to Fiscal Year 2024 of the FFY 2024-2028 Northern Middlesex Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Amendment 1 involved several items that had the net effect of reducing transit funds by \$17,022,000, of which \$15,188,600 were from federal sources and \$1,833,400 were from state sources. The proposed amendment package was released for a 21-day comment period at the January 24, 2024, NMMPO meeting. Following its release, a public comment meeting was scheduled and held on February 14, 2024, via Zoom. The public was invited to comment on this amendment package by email to [pchristner@nmcog.org](mailto:pchristner@nmcog.org), [publiccomments@nmcog.org](mailto:publiccomments@nmcog.org) or by mail to NMCOG, 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01854. After the public comment period closed on February 23, the NMMPO met on February 28 day to hear any comments received and endorsed this amendment package with comments received.

**Table of Changes to the FFY 2024 LRTA TIP Program of Projects**

| TIP Code   | Change         | Project  | Reason   |
|------------|----------------|--|--|
| LRTA011667 | + \$50,000     | Hire a Mobility Outreach Coordinator           | LRTA Awarded Community Transit Grant   |
| LRTA011635 | + \$2,759,984  | Facility & equipment improvements              | LRTA received more state funds than anticipated  |
| RTD0010688 | + \$7,373,000  | Purchase 7 hybrid buses in FY24                | LRTA Awarded with Low or No Emission FTA Grant   |
| RTD0010703 | - \$6,600,000  | Purchase 1 hybrid bus in FY24 & 6 BEBs in FY26 |  |
| RTD0010696 | - \$250,000    | Upgrade to parking garage payment system       | Federal funds not needed because LRTA received more state funds than anticipated. Project completed in FY23. |
| T00039     | - \$800,000    | Implement AVL/APC system for fixed route buses | Federal funds were spent in FY23, so federal funds no longer needed in FY24.                                 |
| RTD0011205 | - \$300,000    | Purchase a backup generator                    | Delay in final design for pedestrian access way & Commuter Rail platform following FTA/MBTA feedback.        |
| T00040     | - \$15,000,000 | Pedestrian access way & Commuter Rail platform |  |
| T00058     | - \$3,600,000  | Improvements to Maguire facility               |  |

## TIP Program Description

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a critical federally mandated document that directs the allocation of federal transportation funding within the NMMPO region. The TIP outlines a five-year capital plan, featuring a diverse array of projects anticipated to receive federal and state aid. The most [recent TIP](#) is available on the NMCOG website as well as TIPs from [recent years](#). Our TIP is bifurcated into two principal components: one focusing on transit projects through the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) and the other on regional transportation infrastructure enhancements.

## LRTA Program of Projects

LRTA's Program of Projects, which forms a significant part of the NMMPO TIP, is formulated and submitted by LRTA to MassDOT for approval. This submission is a prerequisite for securing the necessary state match through MassDOT's statewide Capital Improvement Program. Furthermore, any modifications to this plan are subject to review and approval by the MassDOT Rail & Transit Division, ensuring compliance and alignment with state transportation objectives. Prior to finalization, proposed changes to the TIP, referred to as "amendments" including those related to the LRTA's projects, are presented to the NMMPO Board for comprehensive review and consideration for inclusion in the regional plan.

## Public Comment Summary

The NMMPO and LRTA invited the public to provide their input on this TIP amendment package. We established a 21-day comment period to ensure sufficient opportunity for community feedback. This process satisfied the LRTA's public participation requirements for the Program of Projects.

### **21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: FEBRUARY 2, 2024 - FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

The NMMPO accepted public comments at [publiccomments@nmcog.org](mailto:publiccomments@nmcog.org) during the public comment period.

On February 21, 2024, one comment was provided by email from LRTA staff to MPO staff with regard to the cost change to Project #LRTA011635, Facility & Equipment Improvements (100% State). It was noted that additional items have been added to the project, with a need for an increase in funding from \$2,105,000 to \$2,759,984. These items include painting of handrails at Gallagher Terminal and equipment purchase support for the AVL/APC project. This project is fully funded through RTACAP and has been approved by MassDOT Rail and Transit. The MPO adjusted the amendment as requested by the LRTA and endorsed the modified amendment.

### **VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING: FEBRUARY 14, 2024 AT 5:30 PM ON ZOOM**

NMMPO staff Paul Christner and Blake Acton hosted a virtual public meeting on Zoom. No members of the public attended the meeting, so no comments were recorded.

### Detailed List of Changes

1. **LRTA011667 - Mobility Outreach Coordinator:** LRTA applied for and received a Community Transit Grant to recruit a Mobility Outreach coordinator. As outlined in NMMPO's [Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan](#) (CPT-HST) from 2023, the primary responsibility of the new hire will be to educate and train seniors and individuals with disabilities. The initial focus will be strengthening relationships with Councils on Aging (COAs) in the LRTA service area, understanding how their service works and their service needs. LRTA proposed programming \$40,000 from 5310 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds and \$10,000 from State Contract Assistance (SCA).
2. **LRTA011635 – Transit Facility and Equipment Improvements:** LRTA proposed leveraging \$2,759,984 of newly available state funds through the Regional Transit Authority Capital Assistance Program (RTACAP) to support a variety of improvements to transit facilities and equipment including:
  - a. Design for Commuter Rail Access Project
  - b. Design for Maguire (paratransit) facility improvements
  - c. Replacement of three (3) end of life service trucks
  - d. Reconstruction of roof drainage and storm water trenches
  - e. Elevator repairs
  - f. Sidewalk and paving repairs
  - g. Replacement of maintenance equipment
  - h. Exterior building maintenance
  - i. Purchasing an additional parking payment kiosk
  - j. Misc. bus support equipment adjacent to AVL system
  - k. Painting of handrails throughout parking garage, purchasing of computer equipment and garage repairs
3. **RTD0010688 and RTD0010703 – Fixed-Route Vehicle Replacement:** LRTA applied for and received a grant from the FTA Low or No (LowNo) Emission Grant Program to purchase seven (7) new Gillig hybrid electric buses for fixed-route service. LRTA proposed amending the TIP to move the Federal share programmed for FY26 to FY24 and to combine RTD0010688 and RTD0010703 into one project. This amendment removed \$5,280,000 of federal share and \$1,320,000 of state share (RTACAP) from FY26 and added \$6,171,400 of federal share and \$31,600 of Transportation Development Credits (TDC) state share to FY24 as well as added \$1,170,000 of state TDC to FY26. These changes enable LRTA to access the LowNo grant funds to place orders for the new buses in FY24. Additionally, LRTA has decided to purchase hybrid buses instead of battery electric buses (BEB) in this replacement cycle as described in the TIP. Given the

current technological landscape and operational considerations, LRTA has chosen hybrid buses as a more feasible and reliable option at this stage, ensuring both environmental benefits and practicality for the service area. LRTA remains committed to sustainability and will actively monitor advancements in technologies like BEBs, considering them in future replacement cycles.

- 4. RTD0010696 – Gallagher Parking Garage Upgrades:** In SFY23, LRTA upgraded the parking payment system at Gallagher Transportation Center Garage to allow visitors to pay for hourly parking and to pay using electronic payment at a self-serve kiosk, as well as facility entrance/exit design changes to accommodate the new system. LRTA proposed amending the TIP to remove the \$200,000 of federal share (5307) and \$50,000 of state share (RTACAP) programmed for this project in FY24. LRTA received more state funding in SFY23 than anticipated in the TIP, so LRTA was able to complete this project without using the federal funds programmed in the FY24 TIP.
- 5. T00039 – Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) and Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) Systems:** This project was formerly LRTA011460 in the FY23-27 TIP and proposed purchasing and installing a new AVL and APC system in all fixed-route buses to enable live vehicle tracking and automatic passenger counting across the entire system. In FY24, LRTA signed a contract with EQUANS to install these systems and is currently in the process of implementing them. To fund this project, LRTA obligated federal funds in FY23 and plans to obligate state funds in FY24. Since LRTA already obligated the federal funds in FY23 this amendment is to remove the \$800,000 of federal funds programmed for FY24.
- 6. RTD0011205 – Purchase Backup Generator:** LRTA proposed removing \$240,000 of Federal (5307) funds and \$60,000 of state (RTACAP) funds for purchasing a backup generator for the Gallagher Terminal and Administration Office from the TIP. LRTA intends to delay the purchase of the generator until the design of the Commuter Rail Access Project is complete and obligate funds in a future TIP.
- 7. T00040 - Rehab of Commuter Rail Access Way:** LRTA requested that \$12,000,000 of federal funds and \$3,000,000 of state funds (RTACAP) be removed from FY24. This project is delayed due to a redesign based on feedback from the FTA and MBTA, so LRTA has not yet secured a discretionary source of funding for this project. Once the design is finalized, the LRTA plans to propose programming this project in the FY25-29 TIP and apply for 5339 discretionary federal funding.
- 8. T00058 – Maguire and Paratransit Maintenance Facility Improvements:** Initially, the scope of this project depended on the pending final design of the Commuter Rail Access Way project. Because of delays to that project, these improvements were separated

into a stand alone project. Because of timing of this project, the LRTA requested that \$2,880,000 of federal share and \$720,000 of state share (RTACAP) be removed from FFY24. LRTA plans to program this project in the FFY 2025-2029 TIP. The project includes replacing the windows and facade of the Admin and Paratransit Maintenance and Operations Facility, and associated interior rehab to stop water leakage/improve drainage.

## Summary Narrative of Amendment 2 to the FFY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program for the Northern Middlesex Region

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### Introduction and Overview

The following table summarizes a draft amendment to Fiscal Year 2024 of the FFY 2024-2028 Northern Middlesex Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). **Amendment 2** involved the addition of two new, fully funded, projects. These projects are considered statewide projects because they will occur in more than one MPO region. Because part of each of these projects will take place in the NMMPO region, the projects needed to be amended onto the NMMPO TIP.

The proposed amendment was released for a 21-day public comment period at the January 24, 2024 NMMPO meeting. A public comment meeting was held on February 14, 2024 via zoom. The public was invited to comment on this amendment by email to [pchristner@nmcog.org](mailto:pchristner@nmcog.org), [publiccomments@nmcog.org](mailto:publiccomments@nmcog.org) or by mail to NMCOG, 672 Suffolk Street, Suite 100, Lowell, MA 01854. After the public comment period closed on February 23, the NMMPO met on February 28, 2024 to heard any comments received and endorsed this amendment.

**Table of Changes to the FFY 2024 TIP Program of Projects**

| Project Amendment   | Notes  | Project Number | Change         |
|---|--|----------------|----------------|
| Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 110<br><br>Lowell- Dracut- Methuen                                  | Add Regionally Prioritized Project<br><br>(National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) Funded) | 608816         | + \$18,436,452 |
| Bridge Preservation of 41 Bridges in Route 3 Corridor<br><br>Bedford- Billerica- Chelmsford- Tyngsborough | Add State Prioritized Project<br><br>(Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) Funded)             | 613213         | + \$ 9,999,250 |

### TIP Program Description

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federal and state aid. The most [recent TIP](#) is available on the NMCOG website as well as TIPs from [recent years](#). Our TIP is bifurcated into two principal components: one focusing on transit projects through the Lowell Regional Transit Authority's (LRTA) and the other on regional transportation infrastructure enhancements.

### **Public Comment Summary**

The NMMPO invited the public to provide their input on this TIP amendment. A 21-day comment period was established to ensure sufficient opportunity for community feedback. This process satisfies the MPO's public participation requirements for the Program of Projects.

#### **21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: FEBRUARY 2, 2024 - FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

The NMMPO accepted public comments at [publiccomments@nmcog.org](mailto:publiccomments@nmcog.org) during the public comment period.

The NMMPO received no comments on the proposed amendment.

#### **VIRTUAL PUBLIC MEETING: FEBRUARY 14, 2024 AT 5:30 PM ON ZOOM**

NMMPO staff Paul Christner and Blake Acton hosted a virtual public meeting on Zoom. No members of the public attended the meeting, so no comments were recorded.

### **Detailed List of Changes**

#### **1. 608816 – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 110:**

The purpose of this project is to resurface a 5.9-mile portion of the Route 110 corridor and provide overall improvements to the existing infrastructure. The project will provide new pedestrian and bicycle accommodations as well as update existing pedestrian accommodations to ADA compliance. Additionally, the proposed work will include pavement mill and overlay, restriping, and new signage. The proposed cross section consists of 11-foot travel lanes in each direction, a two-foot shoulder on the north side of the road, a 5.5-foot reconstructed sidewalk on the north side, and a 10-foot at-grade shared use path separated from the vehicle travel lane by a two-foot to six-foot buffer containing guardrail or flex-posts. The vehicle travel lanes, shoulders, and at-grade buffered shared use path are proposed to fit within the existing pavement width. The typical width of the buffer is proposed to be six feet. However, in areas where turn lanes are needed, or other constraints exist, the buffer may be reduced to two feet. The typical buffer separation will include w-beam guardrail with a backing on the post-side to protect the pedestrians and bicyclists. Breaks would be provided along the guardrail for driveways and at pedestrian crossings/access points. Flex posts are proposed, in place of guardrail, in areas where there are frequent driveways, and in constrained areas where the buffer narrows.

2. **613213 – Bridge Preservation of 41 Bridges in Route 3 Corridor:**

This project will perform minor concrete patching to the existing bridge components as well as joint replacement on 41 bridges carrying Route 3 from the NH line to the town of Bedford.