

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION NOVEMBER 30, 2022

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

In light of the COVID-19 emergency executive order authorizing virtual public meetings, the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M. via videoconference headquartered at the office of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), 40 Church Street, Suite 200, Lowell, MA. Attendees included:

Voting Members in Attendance:

- David Mohler, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Office of Transportation Planning (Representing MassDOT Secretary Jamey Tesler)
- Brian Fallon, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Karyn Puleo, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Member
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG NMMPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, MPO Liaison
- Andrew Wang, MassDOT Planning
- Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District 3
- Michelle Ho, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
- Ali Bent, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Meaghan O'Brien, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Elizabeth Oltman, City of Lowell Transportation Engineer
- Kevin Hardiman, Tewksbury Town Engineer
- Ting Chang, City of Lowell Engineer
- Andrew Jennings, Billerica LRTA Board Member

NMMPO Staff:

- Jennifer Raitt, Justin Howard, Chris Curry, Shrvanthi Gopalan Narayanan, and Jessica Boulanger, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

2. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 26, 2022 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the October 26, 2022 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the October 26, 2022 NMMPO meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

3. STATUS REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) PROJECTS UNDER DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Timothy Paris updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the October 26, 2022 meeting.

- **Westford – Interstate Maintenance and Related Work on I-495** – Project Manager now Luis Fernandes.
- **Lowell – Dracut – Methuen – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 110** – At 25% design with an updated cost estimate.
- **Lowell – Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Andover Street (Route 133) and River Road** – Construction 63% complete with a completion date of September 23, 2024.
- **Chelmsford – Medford – Somerville** – Construction 69% complete with a completion date of August 22, 2023.
- **Andover – Tewksbury – Highway Lighting System Rehabilitation and Repair at the Interchange of Interstate Routes 93 and 495** – Construction 52% complete with a completion date of August 18, 2023.
- **Burlington to Tyngsborough – Guide and Traffic Sign Replacement on a Section of US 3** – Construction 14% complete with a completion date of October 23, 2022.
- **Lowell – Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Five Bridges (Enel Bridges) Tiger Grant** – Construction 81% complete, MAS Building, with a completion date of November 30, 2023.
- **Chelmsford – Intersection Improvements at Boston Road and Concord Road** – Construction 96% complete with a completion date of April 2, 2023.
- **Dracut – Improvements on Nashua Road** – Construction 42% complete with a completion date of July 20, 2024.
- **Tewksbury – Resurfacing and Sidewalk Reconstruction on Route 38 Beginning at Colonial Drive North to the Intersection of Old Boston Road Approximately 1.5 Miles** – Construction 51% complete with a completion date of September 5, 2023.
- **Billerica – Rehabilitation on Boston Road (Route 3A) From Billerica Town Center to Floyd Street** – Construction 2% complete with a completion date of September 26, 2026.

4. OPEN FORUM – OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENTS FROM MPO MEMBERS, COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS, AND THE PUBLIC

There were no comments.

5. ENVISION 2050 UPDATES

Jessica Boulanger provided an Envision 2050 update and presentation with an overview of the RTP, a summary of the Kick-Off event on November 2nd, current information on engagement efforts, a project timeline and next steps. Public comments of note include infrastructure barriers, transit accessibility and frequency, regional connectivity, a desire for multi-modal transportation options, the nexus between transportation and employment, safety, and a desire for more transit oriented development through zoning. She gave a brief update of consistent themes arising from municipal meetings in the NMCOG region as well including sidewalk connectivity or lack of sidewalks, funding, safety, access to amenities including transit. As part of the team’s engagement strategy, there are upcoming meetings with LRTA, UMass Lowell, MassHire and regional Councils on Aging to learn more about industry-specific

transportation opportunities and challenges. NMCOG has made available “Meeting-in-a-Box” materials and have circulated to interested parties. An Envision 2050 Survey has been created and distributed to assist in shaping the future of transportation in the region. To date, 90 responses have been received. In January, there will be focus group meetings with Pedestrian/Bicyclist and Transit participants. Throughout February and March regional events as well as more organization meetings will be held and a draft plan will be developed. The draft plan will be presented to the NMMPO for approval to release for public comment, followed by a final plan for endorsement by the NMMPO in July. Jessica provided information on how attendees and stakeholders can be involved in leading the Envision 2050 conversation and directed any questions to the team at NMCOG.

6. LRTA TRANSIT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN: UPDATED PERFORMANCE TARGETS

Ali Bent presented LRTA’s Transit Asset Management Plan including Performance Targets and Measures, Capital Asset Inventory, Condition Assessment, Decision Support Tools and Investment Prioritization. The plan covers a four year period from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2026. She stated that LRTA operates as an FTA-defined Tier II Transit Operator. Ali defined capital assets and laid out targets for each along with an investment prioritization for all revenue vehicles, non-revenue vehicles and facilities. The Transit Asset Management Plan performance measures and targets need an adoption vote from the NMMPO members.

Based on a motion by Karyn Puleo and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted unanimously to adopt the Transit Asset Management Plan targets as presented.

7. FFY 2023-2027 TIP AMENDMENT 1: ACTION ITEM TO ENDORSE

Justin Howard provided a summary of Amendment 1 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Amendment 1 involves the removal of \$2,400,000 in Federal Funding for Rehabilitation and ADA Improvements for the Commuter Access Way at the Gallagher Terminal in Lowell. This project was programmed in FFY 2023 with the anticipation of receiving an FTA 5339b discretionary grant award. The grant was not awarded, therefore, the TIP needs amending to reflect the change. The \$600,000 in State funding (RTACAP) remains programmed in FFY 2023. The TIP also contains programming of \$3,987,912 in flex funding from FHWA to FTA for this project. The amendment needs to be considered by the NMMPO to ensure that it is fully funded. A 21-day public comment period ended November 18, 2022 and no comments were received.

Based on a motion by Karyn Puleo and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted unanimously to endorse Amendment 1 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program for the Northern Middlesex Region.

8. NMMPO TITLE VI PLAN REPORTING UPDATES

Chris Curry explained that Title VI is part of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that prohibits discrimination based on race, color or national origin. The NMMPO Title VI report identifies transportation projects and transit services within the region as they relate to the demographics of each neighborhood and the communities they serve. Staff are currently working on an update to the Title VI report. The MassDOT

Civil Rights Division provided input for requirements that should be focused on. Certifications and Assurances have been reviewed and submitted to MassDOT. Staff are currently preparing the Title VI Notice of Complaint Procedure, Complaint Form and Complaint Log. Demographic data and maps are being updated and will be completed within the next month. TIP project locations are being reviewed in relation to minority, low income, and limited English proficient populations within the region. Transportation system investments will be identified to address any unequal impacts in TIP project programming. The document will be ready for review at the January 25 MPO meeting. Staff will submit the document to MassDOT at that time.

9. CMAQ PERFORMANCE PLAN REPORTING

Justin Howard gave a presentation on the Northern Middlesex MPO CMAQ Performance Reporting. He informed the group that FHWA requires tracking of three performance measures: PM1 Safety; PM2 Pavement and Bridge; and, PM3 Congestion and Emissions. The City of Lowell's 20-year limited maintenance plan expired in April of 2022, however, the FHWA most recent applicability determination in October 2021 occurred prior to the expiration of the limited maintenance plan, thus the MPO is required to continue development of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program performance plans. Two plans are being submitted to MassDOT as part of their reporting to USDOT: First Performance Period Final Report (2018-21) and Second Performance Period Baseline Conditions Report (2022-2025). Justin provided information with the contents of each report. He described congestion and emissions performance measures, percent of non single occupancy vehicle travel, annual hours of peak hour excessive delay (PHED) per capita, total reduction of on-road mobile source emissions from projects funded under the CMAQ program. He stated that the Final 1st Period Report and Baseline 2nd Period Report to MassDOT will be submitted on December 2 and will be available on the NMMCOG web site for those who wish to review. Staff will monitor federal requirements to determine applicability to develop a 2nd Performance Period Mid-Period Report in 2 years.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Justin Howard informed the group that NMMCOG is developing a Municipal TIP Workshop, which will be provided annually to key members in each of the region's communities. As long-time municipal employees retire and new municipal team members are hired there is a need to provide training and education to the municipalities to provide an overview of what the TIP is and how the TIP planning process works. Derek Shooster stated that other regions are creating similar workshops and there is opportunity to share information as the workshops are put together.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

As the fourth Wednesday in December falls during a busy holiday week, the NMMPO chose to forego a December meeting and meet on January 25, 2023 at 2:00 PM.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:58 PM.