

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION JANUARY 26, 2022

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

In light of the COVID-19 emergency executive order authorizing virtual public meetings, the 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:

- David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing MassDOT Secretary Jamey Tesler)
- Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Andrew Deslaurier, Billerica Select Board, NMCOG Chair
- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Councilor, MPO Representative
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG MPO Representative
- Kevin O'Connor, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board MPO Representative

Voting Members Absent:

- Tom Bomil, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Chair

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, MPO Liaison
- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Chris Timmel, FHWA
- Brian Fallon, MassDOT Projects Engineer
- Michelle Ho, MassDOT Planning
- Ali Bent, LRTA
- Christine McCall, City of Lowell Director DPD
- Andrew Jennings, Billerica LRTA Board Member
- Danielle McFadden, Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Alison Manugian, Town of Dracut Community Development Director
- Kevin Hardiman, Town of Tewksbury Engineer
- Mark Hamel, Town of Dracut Engineer
- Jon Rockwell, TEC Inc.

NMMPO Staff:

- Beverly Woods, Justin Howard, Chris Curry, David Tilton, and Katrina Garavanian, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

2. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 25, 2021 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the August 25, 2021 minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Kevin O'Connor and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the August 25, 2021 meeting minutes were approved. Andrew Deslaurier abstained as he was not present for that meeting.

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

Tim Paris updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the August 25, 2021 meeting:

- **Tewksbury – Resurfacing and Sidewalk Reconstruction on Route 38 Beginning at Colonial Drive North to the Intersection of Old Boston Road Approximately 1.5 Miles** – Estimates have been revised.
- **Billerica – Rehabilitation on Boston Road (Route 3A) from Billerica Town Center to Floyd Street** – Estimates have been revised.
- **Dracut – Improvements on Nashua Road** – Estimates and TIP costs have been revised.
- **Lowell – Pedestrian Walkway and Bicycle Connection at Pawtucket Falls Overlook, from Vandenberg Esplanade to School Street** – TIP cost has been revised.
- **Westford – Bridge Rehabilitation Beaver Brook Road over Beaver Brook** – Revised estimates.
- **Westford – Bridge Replacement, Stony Brook Road over the Stony Brook** – Revised participating Federal cost.
- **Lowell – Tewksbury – Route 38 Intersection Improvements** – Revised participating Federal construction cost.
- **Westford – Rehabilitation of Boston Road** – Revised estimates.
- **Lowell – Rourke Bridge Replacement, Wood Street Extension over Boston and Maine Railroad and Merrimack River** – Revised estimates.
- **Lowell – North Andover – Haverhill – Bridge Superstructure and Substructure Repairs Along I-495** – 100% Design with revised estimates.
- **Chelmsford – Improvements on Route 3A (Princeton Street) from Richardson Road to Technology Drive** – Approved. New estimates.

Justin Howard asked for confirmation on ad date for the Improvements on Nashua Road project in Dracut. The project was advertised on December 18, 2021.

Kevin O'Connor requested an update on the Rourke Bridge schedule. Frank Suszynski stated that there will be a Rourke Bridge working group meeting on Thursday, February 3rd, and he could provide more details on the project status following that meeting. He confirmed that Alignment 3 had been settled on and bridge type study report completed with the recommendation of a steel girded bridge. MassDOT is also currently working with the stakeholders' group to better define bike/ped accommodations over the bridge as well as the intersections on each side of the bridge. Additional discussion ensued with questions from Dan Rourke, Lowell City Councilor and Christine McCall, City of Lowell DPD. Frank explained the project programming and target funding for the region. Beverly Woods spoke to the MPO as well, including that this project should be on the STIP as a design-build with the intent to start construction within the next five year timeframe. Construction funding for the project has not been

identified and needs to be funded through State bridge program. David Mohler stated that the bridge list will be developed by MassDOT within the next few months. He stated that MassDOT is very mindful of the Rourke Bridge and cannot guarantee it will be funded but it is one of the bridges in consideration. MassDOT is mindful of how important the bridge is to the entire region. He fully detailed the process for funding and stated that MassDOT is actively trying to make this happen. All are encouraged to attend upcoming meetings regarding the Rourke Bridge.

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

There were no comments provided.

5. FFY 2021 ANNUAL LISTING OF OBLIGATED PROJECTS

Justin Howard provided a report of the FFY 2021 Annual Listing of Obligated Projects, reminding the group that the MPO is required annually to publish a listing of all Federal Obligations over the previous Federal Fiscal Year. This report follows the programming of the first year of the previous TIP, and outlines the projects that were obligated in 2021. The report is intended to assist the public in understanding how federal funds are spent. Justin provided a brief rundown of spending, stating that over \$14 million was obligated over projects in the region, \$7.9 million in highway projects, multiple transit projects including van purchases, new buses, passenger counters and lifts. The informational report has been posted to the NMCOG web site and Justin will be happy to answer any questions arising from the report.

6. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UPDATES – POTENTIAL ACTION TO ENDORSE

Derek Shooster presented Statewide CY 2022 Highway Safety Performance Measure Target updates, explaining goals for safety improvement, maintaining pavement and bridge condition, improving efficiency of the system and freight movement, reducing traffic congestion, and reducing emissions. He provided the targets specifically for the Northern Middlesex Region as well. A copy of his presentation was included as a summary in the meeting packet. Derek requested consideration to endorse by NMMPO members.

Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted to endorse CY 2022 Safety Performance Measure Targets.

Ali Bent presented the updated LRTA Transit Asset Management Targets explaining the asset classes that targets are set, and how they are set, for rolling stock, equipment, and facilities.

Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Dan Rourke, the MPO voted to endorse the LRTA Transit Asset Management Targets as presented.

7. FFY 2022-2026 TIP AMENDMENT 1 – POTENTIAL ACTION TO RELEASE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Justin Howard reviewed and presented proposed draft TIP Amendment 1 for consideration by NMMPO members to release for a 21-day public review and comment period. This amendment involves an increase in construction cost estimates for rehabilitation of the Beaver Brook Road Bridge over the

Beaver Brook in Westford, currently scheduled for construction advertisement in June. To ensure the project is fully funded, the NMMPO must consider amending the programmed funds from \$1,976,482 to \$2,508,049. The project is currently at final design.

Also included in proposed draft TIP Amendment 1 is a cost increase from \$300,000 to \$350,000 for the purchase of five LRTA bus lifts. The purchase will now be completely State funded with the Federal 5339b funds being removed.

Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Dan Rourke, the MPO voted to release FFY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment 1 for a twenty-one day public comment period.

8. FFY 2023 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) AND FFY 2023-2027 TIP DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULES

Justin Howard presented the timeline for development of the next regional TIP and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which are set to be endorsed by the MPO in the Spring and go into effect October 1, 2022. He pointed out activities and potential actions by the MPO as the two documents are developed, including upcoming meetings where guidance on development of the TIP and financial information will be provided to staff. He will provide updates to the MPO at the February MPO meeting.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

As this was Beverly Woods' last MPO meeting before retirement, Justin Howard thanked Beverly for her service to the NMCOG and to the MPO, recognizing all of her hard work and accomplishment in the region. The group offered congratulations and sincere appreciation for Beverly's input and guidance over the years. She will be sorely missed!

10. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Dan Rourke, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:59 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2022, 2:00 PM.