

MEETING MINUTES OF THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION JANUARY 04, 2023

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:

- Stephen Woelfel, 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)
- Andrew Deslaurier, NMCOG Chair
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG NMMPO Representative
- Tom Bomil, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Board Chair
- Karyn Puleo, Lowell Regional Transit Authority MPO Representative

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
- Fred Russell, Billerica DPW
- Josh Levin, MassDOT
- Josh Trearchis, VHB
- Andrew Jennings
- Andrew Wang, MassDOT
- Derek Krevat, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
- Eric Salerno, Town of Tyngsborough
- Meaghan O'Brien, LRTA
- Ali Bent, LRTA
- Chris Timmel, FHWA
- Patrick Lewis
- Paul Starratt, Town of Westford

NMMPO Staff:

- Jennifer Raitt, Justin Howard, Chris Curry, Jessica Boulanger, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

2. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 30, 2022 NMMPO MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with copies of the November 30, 2022 NMMPO minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Karyn Puleo, the November 30, 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 November 30, 2022 meeting.

- **Westford – Interstate Maintenance and Related Work on I-495** – Project year changed to 2025.
- **Lowell – Dracut – Methuen – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 110** – 25% design comments went back to the Design Engineer on 11/29/2022.

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 municipal meetings, phased approach, project timeline, and next steps. She gave an update of consistent themes arising from municipal meetings in the NMCOG region as well including pedestrian crossing and biking barriers, transit accessibility and frequency of services, regional connectivity, a desire for multi-modal transportation options, the nexus between transportation and employment centers, desire for more Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) through zoning and safety. She briefly outlined the federal aid eligible road miles for all 9 communities in our region. An Envision 2050 Survey has been created and distributed to assist in shaping the future of transportation in the region. To date, 340 responses have been received. In January, there will be virtual focus group meetings with pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users. The second Envision 2050 regional event will be held on March 22, 2023 and the results of Envision 2050 survey will be shared with participants. Throughout February and March, regional events and organization meetings will be held. In June, 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. FFY 2023-2027 TIP AMENDMENT 2: ACTION ITEM TO RELEASE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

a. Route 38 intersection improvements project in Lowell

Justin Howard provided a summary of Amendment 2 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Amendment 2 involves the programming a construction cost estimate increase for

projects that involve improving several intersections around I-495/Route 38 and along Tewksbury/Lowell line. This includes an upgrade to electrical systems for the traffic signals that are in need of updating. This project is proposed to be advertised on February 4th of this year. This Amendment involves an increase of over \$700,000 to the cost estimate from \$3.3 to just over \$4 million. Since this project is scheduled so soon, it is released today for a shortened comment period of 15 days to address any comments that are received on this amendment and vote to endorse at the January 25th MPO meeting.

Based on a motion by Andrew Deslaurier and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted unanimously to endorse Amendment 2 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program for the Northern Middlesex Region.

7. FFY 2023-2027 TIP ADJUSTMENT 1

a. Commuter/ADA Access at Gallagher Terminal

Justin Howard provided a summary of Adjustment 1 to the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MPO programmed \$3.9 million in Flex funding from Federal Highway to FTA for this project. The initial funding source used for this flex was the Carbon Reduction Program and this proposal changes the funding to the Surface Transportation Block Group Program. This adjustment is to reflect the new funding program. The proposal doesn't affect total amount of funding available for this project.

8. FFY 2022 ANNUAL OBLIGATION OF PROJECTS REPORT

Justin Howard presented FFY 2022 Annual Listing of Federally Obligated Transportation Projects in the Northern Middlesex Region. This is a document that the MPO is required to publish annually and is a list of all Federal Obligations over the previous Federal Fiscal Year 2022, which ended at the end of September 2022. In 2022, over \$17.3 million were obligated for approximately 11 projects in our region. The majority of the funding goes to Highway Obligations for 3 projects with \$16.9 million, including the rehabilitation of Route 3A (Boston Road) in Billerica, improvements on Nashua Road in Dracut, and bridge rehabilitation of Beaver Brook Road over Beaver Brook in Westford. For transit, \$250,000 was obligated to purchase of 3 replacement vans and various maintenance projects. The requirement for this is for the MPO staff to publish this document on the website within 90 days of the end of Federal Fiscal year.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Stephen Woelfel informed the group that the Innovation Conference will be held on the 2nd and 3rd of May.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next MPO meeting will be on January 25, 2023 at 2:00 PM.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Tom Bomil, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:23 PM.