

MEETING MINUTES

Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO) Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) Offices

Haverhill, MA

Thursday, January 26, 2017 – 12:00p.m.

Attending:

Voting Members:

David Mohler, MassDOT, representing MassDOT Secretary Pollack
Frank Suszynski, representing Highway Administrator Thomas Tinlin
Theresa Park, representing City of Lawrence
Karen Conard, representing Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Joe Costanzo, representing Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority
Neil Harrington, Salisbury, representing MPO Subregion #1

Others Present:

Mary Kay Beninati, MVPC	Anthony Komornick, MVPC
David Chandler, FHWA	Rafael Mares, CLF
Robert Desmarais, Amesbury	Connie Raphael, MassDOT District 4
Betsy Goodrich, MVPC	Jim Terlizzi, MVPC
Jerry Klima, Town of Salisbury	Nikki Tishler, MassDOT OTP

Agenda ItemNo.1: Call to Order

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. and asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

Agenda Item No. 2: Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Mohler asked if there were any members of the public present who wished to speak to the MVMPO. No one came forward to do so.

Agenda Item No.3: Adoption of Minutes of the August 1, 2016 MVMPO Meeting

There was a motion to approve the August 1, 2016 MVMPO meeting minutes. *The motion was seconded and approved.*

Agenda Item No.4: FFYs 2017-2021 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

a. Status of TIP Roadway and Bridge Projects

Ms. Raphael updated the MVMPO on the status of the following FFYs 2017-2021 TIP projects:

FFY 2017:

- Amesbury - Powow Riverwalk Construction: Project is at 25% design. MassDOT comments have been sent to City's design engineer. Project advertising date is September 2017.
- Andover - Stormwater Improvements along I-93: Project is at 100% design. Projected advertising date is May 2017.
- Andover-Methuen-Interstate Maintenance & Related Work on I-93: Project is at 100% design. Project advertising date is March 2017.
- Haverhill - Reconstruction on Route 97 (Broadway), from Silver Birch Lane to Research Drive: Project is at 75% design. Projected advertising date is March 2017.
- Haverhill - Design/Build Bridge Superstructure Replacement on I-495 (NB & SB) over the Merrimack River: Project is at 25% design. Projected advertising date is August 2017.
- Lawrence - Reconstruction and Road Improvements at Bruce Elementary School: Project is at 100% design. MassDOT is awaiting Right of Way information from the City. Projected advertising date is August 2017.

FFY 2018:

- Amesbury-Salisbury - Trail Connector at I-95: Project is at 25% design. Comments sent to design engineer on June 15, 2016. Design Public Hearing date to be determined.
- Andover - Stormwater Improvements along Route 28 and I-495: Project has a projected advertising date of November 2017.
- North Andover - Intersection and Signal improvements at Route 125 & Mass Ave: Project is at 25% design. A 25% Design Public Hearing was on October 25, 2016, which resulted in extending the sidewalks for the project.
- Salisbury - Multi-use trail extension (Border to Boston Trail): Project includes a new bridge and is at 25% design. The Design Public Hearing was held on June 8, 2016.

FFY 2019:

- Amesbury - Reconstruction on Elm Street: Project is at 25% design. Awaiting response from City's design engineer to MassDOT comments.
- Georgetown-Boxford - Border to Boston Trail from Georgetown Road to West Main Street (Route 97): Project is at 25% design. Public Information Meeting on project was held in May 2016.
- Groveland - Reconstruction of School Street (Route 97) from Parker Street to Gardner Street: MassDOT is awaiting submittal from Groveland. Letter sent to community on project status.
- Haverhill-Bradford Rail Trail Extension from Route 125 to Railroad Street: Letter sent to community requesting information on design status.
- Haverhill-Merrimac-Amesbury traffic & guide sign replacement on a section of I-495: Project is at 25% design. Projected advertising date is August 2019.

FFY 2020:

- Georgetown-Newbury Border to Boston Trail: Project is at 25% design. MassDOT comments sent to design engineer.
- Groveland - Groveland Community Trail from Main Street to King Street: 25% design plans received by MassDOT. MassDOT comments sent to design engineer in December.
- Rowley-Ipswich - Resurfacing and related work on Route 1: MassDOT is working on design of state highway section of roadway.

FFY 2021

- North Andover - Corridor improvements on Route 114, between Route 125 (Andover Street) & Stop & Shop Driveway: Project has been assigned to a designer.
- Andover-Tewksbury Highway Lighting System Rehabilitation and Repair at the Interchange of Interstates 93 and 495: MassDOT is just beginning design work on this project.
- Boxford-Rowley Interstate Maintenance and Related Work on I-95: MassDOT is just beginning design work on this project.

b. Status of Transit Projects

MVRTA's Joe Costanzo updated the MVMPO on the following transit projects:

- MVRTA is issuing an RFP for the upgrade of its Van/Bus mobile

location system (Phase I of II). Phase II will allow for real time communication. By this time next year MVRTA should be able to show real time information on signboards and mobile devices.

- The Authority is proceeding with State of Good Repair projects to replace parking facility revenue collection equipment at the McGovern Transportation Center and Haverhill Intermodal Parking Center.
- The delivery of six replacement buses is expected in May of this year. Last August the MVMPO approved using \$600k of CMAQ funds to assist the Authority in the purchase of three diesel electric hybrid buses. The bus manufacturer (Gillig) is six weeks away from production of these hybrid buses and has already purchased parts and materials. If the CMAQ funds are not available and the MVRTA changes its order, there will be harsh penalty charges. He said that he needs to know by tomorrow (January 27, 2017) the status on the availability of the CMAQ funds. Nikki Tishler will follow up with Joe on status of CMAQ funds.

Agenda Item No.5: Discussion and Action for FFYs 2017-2021 TIP proposed Adjustment #1

Mr. Komornick and Ms. Beninati reported on proposed Adjustment #1 to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP:

- Add Transit Project Green House Gas (GHG) analyses that staff completed last fall after the adoption of the TIP in August. The amendment will be included in the appendix of this document. Ms. Beninati added that the transit projects are bus and van replacements using new equipment with lower Greenhouse Gas emissions.

Vote: *There was a motion to approve the proposed adjustment to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

Agenda Item No. 6: Discussion and Action for FFYs 2017-2021 TIP Proposed Adjustment #2

Mr. Komornick reported on the proposed changes contained in Adjustment #2 to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP:

- Add "includes new bridge S-02-004" to the description of the Salisbury-Multiuse Trail Extension (Borders to Boston Trail) in FFY 2018. Mr. Komornick referred to the adjustments highlighted in blue in the

handout provided.

Vote: *There was a motion to approve the proposed adjustment to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP. The motion was seconded and unanimously.*

Agenda Item No.7: Discussion and Action for FFYs 2017-2021 TIP - Proposed Amendment #1

Mr. Komornick reported on proposed changes to Amendment #1 to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP:

- Increase the cost of the Andover-Methuen Interstate Maintenance on I-93 project from \$10,357,600 to \$13,932,707 by adding \$3,575,107 in Interstate Maintenance funding. Mr. Komornick referred to the description highlighted in yellow on page 6 of the handout provided.

Vote: *There was a motion to release this proposed amendment to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP for a 30-day public review and comment period. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

Agenda Item No. 8: Discussion and Action for FFYs 2017-2021 TIP - Proposed Amendment #2

Mr. Komornick reported on proposed changes to Amendment #2 to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP:

- Repurpose \$20,315 of SAFETEA-LU Earmark funds (\$20,315 Federal dollars) left over from the Rehabilitation of Parker River Road (Demo ID MA 175) and assign this amount to the North Andover Intersection and Signal Improvements at Route 125 & Massachusetts Avenue, replacing STP funds in FFY 2018 for total of \$25,394 (including the State match).

Vote: *There was a motion to release this proposed amendment to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP for a 30-day public review and comment period. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

Agenda Item No. 9: Status of Proposals for new FFY 2017 Target Projects.

Mr. Komornick reported on the status of proposals for new FFY 2017 Target Projects and referred members to the handout "Jan 2017 Proposed Amendment #1" and to line item "Remaining Available Funds = \$1,350,694".

Most of this amount is STP funding with a sizeable amount of HSIP funds. MVPC is trying to develop projects in the region that would use most or all of the available funds for projects that could be advertised for construction by the end of September, which means that they would have to be initiated, designed and permitted in a highly concentrated period of time.

Mr. Komornick highlighted the following project proposals that have come forward from communities.

- **Haverhill:** Resurfacing of roadways leading to the Ward Hill Industrial Park.
- **Lawrence:** Signalization of the intersection of Commonwealth Drive/Marston Street.

Mr. Komornick noted that this latter project had been approved in July 2015 and was being designed by MassDOT. Identified as a 'Crash Cluster' location, a Road Safety Audit for this intersection was completed in September 2015.

He said that the City of Lawrence has proposed to assume the design and permitting responsibilities for this project in order to expedite the construction of improvements that would address the safety issues at this location and support redevelopment opportunities in the surrounding area.

Theresa Park of Lawrence noted that this project is a priority for the City in that it addresses the public safety issues identified in the Road Safety Audit and in so doing promotes the significant redevelopment opportunity that exists near this intersection. She said that the area includes a school and a number of single homes and the Road Safety Audit showed that there is a lack of clearly defined sidewalks, poor street/pedestrian markings and no pedestrian signals.

Lawrence will build upon the work that was already completed by MassDOT including survey, which will be completed by the City in the next three weeks, and concept design. The City is hoping to hold the curb line on the south side of Marston Street so as not to disturb the existing utilities in the area in an effort to streamline the design and review processes. Because of these factors, the City is confident that it can have the project designed, reviewed and permitted in time for it to be advertised in FFY 2017.

Mr. Suszynski thanked the City of Lawrence for stepping in to complete the design of the project and noted that including it in the TIP will facilitate its

expedited review by MassDOT.

Ms. Park stated that the updated preliminary cost estimate for the project, which includes construction of a median and some minor widening of Marston Street, is between \$1 million to \$1.2 million. Mr. Komornick noted that all the MPO target funds available could be used for the project.

Vote: *There was a motion to release this proposed amendment to the FFYs 2017-2021 TIP for a 30-day public review and comment period. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

Agenda Item No. 10: Discussion and Action on Proposed Amendment to MVMPO Public Participation Plan

Mr. Komornick stated that the MPO is seeking to amend its Public Participation Plan (PPP) by reducing the public review and comment period for drafts of the UPWP, TIP and RTP, as well as amendments to these documents from 30 days to 21 days to better accommodate the scheduling of monthly MPO meetings. This proposed 21-day review and comment period does not apply to the changes to the PPP which, by federal regulation, must have a 45-day public review and comment period. Changes to this document would become effective if approved at the MPO Meeting following the upcoming public review and comment period, which concludes on March 17th.

Mr. Komornick noted that the changes he described are highlighted in yellow on pages 3,8,64 and 65 of the 2016 PPP handout.

Rafael Mares noted that the reduction of the review period could result in an increase in the likelihood that comments might be received late and asked what the MPO's policy would be in addressing such comments.

Mr. Mohler said that he expected MPO staff to perform their work on the comments that they receive in the 21-day period and to inform MPO members of the comments they may receive after that period.

Vote: *There was a motion to release the proposed changes to the Public Participation Plan as noted for a 45-day public review and comment period. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*

Agenda Item No. 11: MVMPO Meeting Dates for 2017

Following up on the previous agenda item, Mr. Komornick noted that MVPC, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments and MassDOT had recommended establishing a meeting date on the fourth Wednesday of every month. The MVMPO meetings would be held at the MVPC Offices at noon and meetings of the Northern Middlesex MPO would take place afterward. He said that the MVMPO would likely meet monthly through May as this is the time when the TIP and UPWP are prepared and endorsed. Thereafter, it would meet less frequently as needed. If there is no need to meet in a given month, the MPO meeting would be cancelled.

Mr. Mohler noted that under this schedule, the next MVMPO meeting would be on February 22nd.

Agenda Item No. 12: New Rulemaking for MPO Coordination and Planning Area Reform

Mr. Komornick briefly summarized the history of the rule noting that it had been released as a proposed rule early in the summer of 2016. Its intent was to:

- Clearly define what a Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) is and the relationship(s) that may exist between an MPO(s) and that area, and
- Establish that unified planning products (i.e. the TIP and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)) should consider and reflect the transportation planning and programming priorities of the entire MPA.

The proposed rule provided three options that states and MPOs could take to come into compliance:

- Change MPO boundaries
- MPO Mergers
- Have multiple MPO's for the MPA, but require that they cooperate to develop a single RTP, TIP, and employ the same performance measures and targets.

The Final Rule added a fourth option for reaching compliance, which would be through the Secretary's approval of a written exception request made by the governors and all the MPOs in the MPA to FTA and FHWA.

Mr. Komornick said that the MVMPO submitted comments that opposed the proposed rule and noted that the existing process in Massachusetts works

well. He cited the Central Artery project as an example of this as it directly impacted the core of the Boston MPA, but its implementation required the cooperation of all the MPOs in the state through the development of their RTPs and TIPs.

Mr. Mohler said that MassDOT is reviewing the rule and hasn't taken a position yet. He added that it would constitute a major change for most of our MPOs.

David Chandler suggested that if the existing TMA agreements were made more robust, a case could be made that the exemption scenario noted above could be approved. Mr. Chandler also suggested that any questions the MVMPO may have concerning the new rule could be sent to him so that he could forward them to FHWA and FTA.

Mr. Costanzo agreed that the existing process works and cited the fact that, unlike other areas in the country, RTAs in Massachusetts have had a seat at the MPO table for many years.

Agenda Item No. 13: Other –

None

Agenda Item No. 14: Adjourn

Vote: *There was a motion to adjourn at 1:00p.m. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.*