

Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization Docket November 29, 2023

Item 6 – Active Transportation Plan Scope

Context: MVMPO Staff is conducting an update of the regional Active Transportation Plan (ATP) that was last completed in 2014. The ATP will focus on advancing the Active Transportation Network. The Active Transportation Network allow people to move freely to regional destinations on safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle paths. The comfortable paths will converge at nodes that create connections and concentrations of activity. By studying the region's existing paths, nodes, and the users' experiences, the MVMPO can begin to understand which connections, improvements, and expansions will allow greater access to opportunities for our regional community.

Discussion: During the meeting, MVMPO staff will present the scope of work for the ATP to the MVMPO Board. The Board is encouraged to ask questions as well as provide feedback and direction on the scope.

Proposed Action: Receive the proposed scope and provide feedback and/or scope adjustments, as warranted.

Item 7 – TIP Adjustment #1: Community Transit Grants

Context: MassDOT administers Section 5301 Federal Aid, packaging this funding stream as *Community Transit Grants*. This discretionary program supports transit services for target populations, including individuals with disabilities, individuals who are over the age of 65, and veterans.

Discussion: This proposed Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) adjustment will add grant award funding to the FY24-28 TIP in FY24 to fund van purchases for several communities. These awards were on the FFY23 TIP, but funds were not obligated. As such, this action is an adjustment rather than an amendment. The attached TIP revisions report provides the financials of the proposed change.

Proposed Action: Approve the proposed adjustment.

Item 8 – FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #1 – Salisbury Reconstruction of Route 1; Methuen Improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road; Border to Boston Design Earmarks

Context: The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a five-year capital plan of projects located within the region that are anticipated to receive federal aid. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s approach to TIP programming depicts programmed projects into separate tranches: “regional priority” projects and “statewide priority” projects. The MVMPO Board determines which “regional priority projects” should be funded within a fiscal constraint ceiling based on a funding formula determined by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA). The state also suggests “statewide priority” projects (which are located in the region) for programming and facilitating the development of an annual TIP funding program for the region’s consideration. The MVMPO Board ultimately approves both the regional and statewide portfolios included in the TIP.

Discussion: The proposed amendment to the FFY24-28 TIP includes three actions:

- Reduce programmed funding in FFY24 for Salisbury – Reconstruction of Route 1 (#602202) to account for additional programmed funds in FFY23 resulting from the federal August redistribution process;
- Program additional funding in FFY23 for the Methuen – Intersection Improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road (#610658) project to accommodate increases in material unit costs for project components; and
- Add design earmark funding for Newbury and Boxford (#S12862 and #S122863, respectively), which were programmed but not obligated in FFY23.

Proposed Action: Close the 21-day comment period and approve the proposed amendment.

Item 9 – Discussion of Unprogrammed FFY24 Balance

Context: TIP Amendment #1, if approved, will result in a balance of roughly \$6.8 million of FFY24 funds for programming in FFY24.

Discussion: If amendment #1 is approved, the MVMPO will need to determine programming preferences for the fund remainder in FFY24. Several options were presented at a high level at the previous October meeting, including a flex to FTA to support MeVa capital needs, expenditures on the Lawrence to Manchester Rail Trail to advance the project, movement of a regional priority project programmed in an outyear forward to FFY24, and use of funds to create a design pipeline. Following review of project programmed in an outyear, MassDOT has determined that there is not a regional priority project that may realistically slide forward to make use of funds obligated in FFY24. The Lawrence to Manchester Trail remains a viable option. Additionally, MeVa has submitted a letter indicating that a portion of these funds would be useful for purchase of additional rolling stock, which is included as an attachment to the docket. Finally, MVPC has been approached by several communities interested in exploring opportunities for design support.

During the November MVMPO meeting, staff will present various options to the Board for discussion. Should it be the Board's pleasure, the Board may vote on a programming decision for a portion of the programmable amount or its entirety; however, it is not necessary that a decision be immediately made. These funds would simply need to be obligated prior to the close of FFY24 (September 30, 2024).

Action: Receive the presentation regarding programming options, *AND*; provide staff direction on future needs to inform decision making, *AND/OR*; propose a motion to amend the TIP to program a portion or the entirety of the funding remainders.

Item 10 – Discussion of Previous Years' Carryover

Context: Metropolitan Planning (PL) is an apportioned federal funding program that supports Metropolitan Planning Organizations, funding staff, studies, and research included within a region's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Unobligated PL funds may carryover across years; however, in Massachusetts, the state's annual PL contracts prohibit carryover of unobligated balances. Due to a large remainder of unspent PL, the state is reconsidering this practice. MPOs were informed in September of 2023 that they may submit requests to MassDOT for use of previous years' unobligated balances.

Discussion: MVPC has historically spent the majority of its PL funding; however, MVPC has also taken a conservative approach to maximizing fund usage to account for potential year to year deviations in our provisional overhead rate vs. our actual rate. This has resulted in several years where funds remain unspent. Additionally, unexpected use of fringe benefits, retirements, and other staffing departures have resulted in occasional unanticipated remainders. As MassDOT has allowed MPOs to request access to previous years' funds, MVPC has submitted requested support for the following items:

- **Priority 1 – Trail Counter Installation:** MVPC purchased fixed trail counters in FFY23 and requests additional support to install these counters to ensure expeditious deployment. This request is in the public interest and ensures the immediate impact of federal aid expended in FFY23.
- **Priority 2 – Additional ArcGIS Pro License:** MVPC requires an additional perpetual ArcGIS license for its program manager to ensure efficient sharing and optimization of spatial materials. In FFY23, MVPC paid a contractor to develop point in time vector files. Improving internal access will optimize the use of these new spatial materials.
- **Priority 3 – Additional Fare Free Support (Contractor Support):** In FFY24, MVPC proposes to complete a Fare Free Analysis report in support of Regional Transit Authority MeVa. Based on the scope, needs appear to exceed budget. We request additional support to fund a contractor to undertake business case analysis for the region's fare free program.
- **Priority 4 – Additional Active Transportation Plan Graphic Support (Contractor Support):** In FFY24, MVPC will finalize the first phase of its Active Transportation Plan. MVPC seeks additional graphic

production support to help deliver planning concepts in a consumable manner for member communities. Graphics will be specifically tied to locations (vs. general concept designs, which are available from various other sources such as NACTO, FHWA, and MassDOT).

- **Priority 5 – Ferry Boat Planning & Business Plan Development (Contractor Support):** Regional Transit Authority MeVa received a grant to develop a solar-powered ferry. Additional planning support is necessary to hire an expert with ferry-boat experience. MVPC will rely on the selected contractor to examine and inventory needs—such as marina needs—identify operating constraints (such as navigable speeds) and develop a manageable business plan for future deployment.
- **Priority 6 – Docked Bikeshare Business Plan Assessment & Development (Contractor Support):** MVPC is interested in understanding the benefits of a docked bikeshare program, but acknowledges that such a program would require significant operating resources, including operating subsidies. MVPC wishes to contract with an external party to understand and assess existing business models, as well as develop an optimal business plan for the region, were it to enter the bikeshare space.

The letter to MassDOT regarding these priorities and their assumed associated costs can be viewed in the attachments.

Action: Receive the update.

Docket Attachments

- A. TIP Revisions Report – FFY24-28 TIP Adjustment #1 – Community Transit Grants
- B. TIP Revisions Report – FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #1 – Salisbury Reconstruction of Route 1; Methuen Improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road; Border to Boston Design Earmarks Amendment 1
- C. MeVa Letter to MVMPO Regarding Use of FFY24 Funding
- D. MVPC Letter to MassDOT Regarding Use of Previous Years' Metropolitan Planning Program Balances



TIP Revisions Report
Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

Type	Value Changed	Date of Change	Former Value	New Value	Variance	Comments
Federal Fiscal Year 2024						
RTA Vehicle Replacement						
MVRTA011613 : MVRTA - Capital 5310 Vans (2 Type A Vans)						
Adjustment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-GOBOND	10/27/2023	\$0	\$31,422	\$31,422	
MVRTA011614 : MVRTA - Capital 5310 Vans (1 Type E)						
Adjustment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-GOBOND	10/27/2023	\$0	\$21,200	\$21,200	
MVRTA011615 : MVRTA - Capital 5310 Vans (6 LF)						
Adjustment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-GOBOND	10/27/2023	\$0	\$223,987	\$223,987	
MVRTA011617 : MVRTA - Capital 5310 Van Type A (5310 Carryover)						
Adjustment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-GOBOND	10/30/2023	\$0	\$15,721	\$15,721	
MVRTA011618 : MVRTA - Town of Rowley - Buy Replacement Van (5310 Carryover)						
Adjustment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-GOBOND	10/30/2023	\$0	\$15,314	\$15,314	



TIP Revisions Report
Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

Type	Value Changed	Date of Change	Former Value	New Value	Variance	Comments
Federal Fiscal Year 2024						
Section 1A / Regionally Prioritized Projects						
Intersection Improvements						
610658 Methuen: METHUEN- INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT RIVERSIDE DRIVE AND BURNHAM ROAD						
Amendment	2024: Merrimack Valley-CON-Intersection Improvements-STBG	10/18/2023	\$2,020,503	\$2,475,124	\$454,621	
Amendment	2024: Merrimack Valley-CON-Intersection Improvements-TAP	10/18/2023	\$0	\$191,016	\$191,016	
Roadway Reconstruction						
602202 Multiple: SALISBURY- RECONSTRUCTION OF ROUTE 1 (LAFAYETTE ROAD)						
Amendment	2024: Merrimack Valley-CON-Roadway Reconstruction-STBG	10/18/2023	\$7,665,815	\$504,643	-\$7,161,172	
Section 1B / Earmark or Discretionary Grant Funded Projects						
Earmark Discretionary						
S12862 Newbury: NEWBURY - BORDER TO BOSTON TRAIL DESIGN OF BOARDWALK SECTION AT THE PARKER RIVER						
Amendment	2024: Merrimack Valley-DGN-Earmark Discretionary-HPP	10/19/2023	\$0	\$312,500	\$312,500	
S12863 Boxford: BOXFORD - BORDER TO BOSTON TRAIL DESIGN						
Amendment	2024: Merrimack Valley-DGN-Earmark Discretionary-HPP	10/19/2023	\$0	\$312,500	\$312,500	
Section 2B / State Prioritized Modernization Projects						
Roadway Reconstruction						
602202 Multiple: SALISBURY- RECONSTRUCTION OF ROUTE 1 (LAFAYETTE ROAD)						
Amendment	2024: Statewide-CON-Roadway Reconstruction-HSIP	10/18/2023	\$2,543,975	\$0	-\$2,543,975	



Kassandra Gove, Chair
Myra Ortiz, Vice Chair
Kathleen Colwell, Secretary
James Ryan, Treasurer
Noah S. Berger, Administrator

November 15, 2023

Mr. Patrick Reed, AICP
Transportation Program Manager
Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
160 Main Street
Haverhill, MA 01830

Dear Patrick,

As was discussed during the October MPO meeting, there is approximately \$6.8 million in unprogrammed funds available for possible projects, which may include buses for MEVA. MEVA is therefore requesting \$1,858,400 in federal funds to be matched in FY24 and FY25 RTACAP funds from MassDOT to purchase four 29' Gillig BRT Style Low Floor transit buses.

MEVA is amending our FY24 TIP element to change the bus line from eight 35' buses to ten 35' buses and increasing that amount from \$4,961,880 to \$5,882,000. MEVA also needs another four 29' buses. MEVA has programmed our 5307 funds to purchase these buses now, but cuts were made to our Preventative Maintenance (PM) line item to do so. MEVA needs to order these buses now as there is an issue with availability of Cummins Diesel engines in 2025 and beyond due to CARB standards. Receiving the increased number of buses in 2024 will keep our fleet in a State of Good Repair until 2027.

Receiving the \$1.8M in unprogrammed funds will allow MEVA to restore our PM budget and provide carryover for potential overprogrammed projects needed in FY25. Without these additional funds these much-needed projects will have to be delayed to FY26 or later. The demand for MEVA's service continues to rise with our ridership reaching 40% above pre-pandemic levels. Keeping our fleet up-to-date allows MEVA to meet this growing demand.

Hopefully MVPC and the MPO will agree that this is a project worthy of these funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Noah Berger', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Noah Berger
Administrator



November 1, 2023

Mr. David Mohler, Director
 Office of Transportation Planning
 Massachusetts Department of Transportation
 Transportation Building - Room 4150
 Ten Park Plaza
 Boston, Massachusetts 02116-3969

Attention: Mr. Derek Krevat

Dear Mr. Mohler:

The purpose of this letter is to detail MVPC's priorities to use previously deobligated PL funds. The letter details our intended uses, anticipated costs, and provides a brief rationale for each proposed expenditure. Finally, each proposed use is prioritized to inform federal partners our perception of greatest need and use.

MVPC has historically spent the majority of its PL funding; however, MVPC has also taken a conservative approach to maximizing fund usage to account for potential year to year deviations in our provisional overhead rate vs. our actual rate. This has resulted in several years where funds remain unspent. Additionally, unexpected use of fringe benefits, retirements, and other staffing departures have resulted in occasional unanticipated remainders.

Table 1, enclosed herein, details MVPC's proposed uses by priority. Each priority list itemized costs and unit costs, where applicable. MVPC shows each item in an 80-20 percent proportion and assumes the state will support federal matching. Note that MVPC has previously requested concurrence on priority one on two separate occasions. Description and rationale for each priority follow:

- **Priority 1 – Trail Counter Installation:** MVPC purchased fixed trail counters in FFY23 and requests additional support to install these counters to ensure expeditious deployment. This request is in the public interest and ensures the immediate impact of federal aid expended in FFY23.
- **Priority 2 – Additional ArcGIS Pro License:** MVPC requires an additional perpetual ArcGIS license for its program manager to ensure efficient sharing and optimization of spatial materials. In FFY23, MVPC paid a contractor to develop point in time vector files. Improving internal access will optimize the use of these new spatial materials.
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Sincerely,



Jerrard Whitten
Executive Director

Encl. Table 1 – Itemized Proposed Expenditures by Priority

Table 1 – Itemized Proposed Expenditures by Priority

Priority	Item	Unit Cost	Units	Total Requested	80 Percent Federal Share	20 Percent State Share
1	Trail Counter Installation	\$4,316	15	\$64,747	\$51,798	\$12,949
2	Additional ArcGIS Pro License					
	Perpetual License	\$11,539	1	\$11,539	\$9,231	\$2,308
	Maintenance (Annual)	\$1,320	1	\$1,320	\$1,056	\$264
3	Additional Fare Free Support (Beyond Budgeted Project)					
	Business Case Assessment	\$35,000	1	\$35,000	\$28,000	\$7,000
4	Additional Active Transportation Graphic Support					
	Infographics/Illustrations	\$1,255	15	\$18,825	\$15,060	\$3,765
5	Ferry Boat Planning & Business Plan Development					
	Travel Time Assessment - Opportunities/Constraints	\$10,000	1	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$2,000
	Environmental Assessment - Opportunities/Constraints	\$10,000	1	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$2,000
	Travel Demand Assessment & Route Development	\$20,000	1	\$20,000	\$16,000	\$4,000
	Capital Needs Assessment - Floating Stock	\$10,000	1	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$2,000
	Capital Needs Assessment - Marina/Dock/Harbor & Maintenance Facilites	\$20,000	1	\$20,000	\$16,000	\$4,000
	Operations Needs Assessment	\$25,000	1	\$25,000	\$20,000	\$5,000
	Business Plan Development, incl. Fare Strategy	\$25,000	1	\$25,000	\$20,000	\$5,000
	NEPA/MEPA Documentation, EA/AA	\$12,750	1	\$12,750	\$10,200	\$2,550
6	Docked Bikeshare Business Plan Assessment & Development					
	Review of Existing Systems and Business Plans, incl. Capital and Operating Costs	\$20,000	1	\$20,000	\$16,000	\$4,000
	Comparison of Different Business Plans and Applicability to Merrimack Valley	\$20,000	1	\$20,000	\$16,000	\$4,000
	Assessment of Bikeshare Demand in the Valley	\$15,000	1	\$15,000	\$12,000	\$3,000
	Merrimack Valley Business Plan, incl. Build Out/Phase-In	\$25,000	1	\$25,000	\$20,000	\$5,000
	Total Requested			\$344,181	\$275,345	\$68,836