

MVMPO – November 29, 2023

Members Present

Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Secretary of Transportation
Steve Woelfel, representing Acting Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt
Brian Fallon, representing Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver
Jerrard Whitten, MVPC Executive Director
Kassandra Gove, Chair of MeVa Advisory Board
James Fiorentini, Mayor of Haverhill
Dan McCarthy, representing Mayor of Lawrence
Neil Harington, representing Subregion 1
Robert Snow, representing Subregion 2
John Cashell, representing Subregion 3
Paul Materazzo, representing Subregion 4

Others Present

Patrick Reed, MVPC
Derek Shooster, MassDOT STIP Coordinator
Elizabeth Maldari, MVPC
Tony Collins, MVPC
Jonah Williams, MVPC
Jenifer Dunlap, MVPC
Niorka Mendez, MeVa
Timothy Paris, MassDOT
Matt Coogan, Town of Boxford
Jerry Klima, Town of Salisbury
Rick Taintor, City of Newburyport
Bonnie Mahoney, MeVa Transit
Noah Berger, MeVa Transit
Kathleen Lambert, City of Haverhill
John Pettis, City of Haverhill

Item I. Call to Order

Secretary Tibbits-Nutt called the meeting to order at 12:00pm, on November 29, 2023. Mr. Reed called the roll and quorum was attained.

Item 2. Chair's Opening Remarks

Secretary Tibbits-Nutt welcomed all to the MVMPO meeting. She welcomed an opportunity to discuss transportation and all aspects of planning with the MVMPO members and staff. Secretary Tibbits-Nutt referenced her visit to MeVa and the role that regional transit plays as a lifeline of transportation. She emphasized the importance of transportation investments that improve quality of life and grant access to many. She also mentioned the importance of specific projects in the region such as, the Basiliere Bridge reconstruction, Route 114 reconstruction in North Andover, Safe Streets and Roads for All, Reconnecting communities Grants, and the Salisbury Route 1 Project. She also pointed out the goals around climate resiliency included in the region's Metropolitan Transportation Plan - MV Vision Plan. She mentioned that the state has established the first climate and resiliency planning plan. The plan is not just about electric vehicles but involves other mitigation measures like watershed restoration. She stated that we will not be experiencing the worst of this climate crisis today, but we need to make a change now for the future.

Secretary Tibbits-Nutt stated that roadways need to be better handled for the flooding predicted this winter. MassDOT is committed to being there when communities need them.

Secretary Tibbits-Nutt then concluded and introduced Mr. Whitten

Item 3. Host's Opening Remarks

Mr. Whitten made opening remarks about where MVPC's programmatic focus has been and how we align with the Healy-Driscoll administration. He mentioned that this is the first time we have had to meet the secretary and warmly welcomed the Secretary of Transportation to the region. Mr. Whitten then introduced Mr. Reed.

Mr. Reed then introduced himself and gave a quick overview of the MVMPO process and Federal aid process. Mr. Reed then introduced a few of the projects in the region and an overview of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation. Mr. Reed made a metaphor for the funding to be like "regifting". Mr. Reed demonstrated that there were two types of funding: appropriation and discretionary.

Mr. Reed then provided an overview of the funding flow between TIP, MTP, and UPWP. Mr. Reed also offered members insight into how a project can be added to the TIP, detailing the scoring process, the readiness of a project which is assigned by MassDOT, MTP and MVMPO vote. Mr. Reed explained the August Redistribution Process.

Item 4. Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Woelfel called for public comments. There being no comments, Mr. Woelfel moved to item 5.

Item 5. Minutes

Mr. Woelfel called for solicited approval for the October 25, 2023, meeting minutes. Mr. Snow made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Whitten seconded. The meeting minutes passed unanimously with Secretary Tibbits-Nutt and MeVa Board Chair Cassandra Gove abstaining.

Mr. Woelfel then moved to Item # 6 an update to the Active Transportation Plan - MV Moves.

Item 6. Active Transportation Plan Scope

Mr. Collins then began a presentation to share the scope of work to complete an updated ATP. He noted the last plan, which was completed in 2014.

Mr. Collins explained that the idea is to create comfortable paths in the region to enable people to use active transportation for recreation, commuting, or any other purpose.

Mr. Collins demonstrated multiple types of pathways and how to actively make people slow down through nodes and convergences. He showed an example of a node at the intersection of Old East Marsh Trail and the Ghost Trail in Salisbury. Mr. Collins showed how to enhance space using geographic context and engagement with the public. Mr. Collins explained that we have been taking snapshots from trail counters to generate and analyze data. This is integrated with the public engagement portion. He stated that short surveys of path users and conversations have been combined with data analysis to create path profiles.

Mr. Collins shared a timeline of the process and how MVPC has created contact lists which will be used to form the active transportation committee. Eventually these community members will join members of the MPO and MassDOT to create priorities.

Mr. Collins stated that leftover funding will be used to assist with the design of the highest priority project. We are identifying funding sources and new opportunities to make this a reality. Mr. Collins concluded by sharing the overall vision is to create spines across the region to enable people to be connected to their destination and leave their cars at home and activate nodes where paths converge.

Mr. Woelfel asked for any feedback.

Mayor Fiorentini then asked if we have been in touch with those along the NH Seacoast Greenway in Portsmouth. Mr. Fiorentini also asked about the status of the Haverhill Rail Trail and Mr. Collins then explained that it has the potential to be identified as a State Priority Project. Mr. Shooster then stood up to share the STIP process which would mean that there is funding for an overlap between regional priorities and State priorities. Mr. Collins assured the Mayor that the State is aware of the project's potential to connect Haverhill to the Border to Boston.

Mr. Cashell then mentioned the challenge of completing the Border to Boston Trail because an abutter noticed a reversion clause in the title of land abutting abandoned railways. The town will need to acquire the signatures of 25 abutters because of the Historical Reversion Clause. Mr. Cashell asked if the state could fund the right-of-way to advance the trail connections. Mr. Woelfel mentioned they would follow-up with Mr. Cashell on how the state could assist.

Mr. Collins then mentioned that the project should be finished in July. Mr. Woelfel also mentioned that they should include Pete Sutton.

Mr. Woelfel then moved to item 7.

Item 7. ACTION ITEM: FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #2: MeVa Updates

Mr. Reed introduced Item #7, Amendment #2 to increase rolling stock, purchase paratransit SUVs and increase the cost for the McGovern project and a decrease in administration facility costs.

Mr. Berger then mentioned that a shift has been made to increase the vehicles which coincides with the expansion of services. Mr. Berger also mentioned that smaller vehicles for paratransit also make more sense and is aligned with the commitment to not buy any more non-accessible fleet vehicles.

Mr. Woelfel requested a motion. The Motion to approve was made by Mayor Gove (MeVa) and seconded by Mr. Snow.

The motion passed unanimously.

Item 8. ACTION ITEM: FFY24-28 TIP Adjustment #1: Community Transit Grants

Mr. Woelfel then introduced agenda item 8. Mr. Reed then explained that the award for the elderly, disabled and veteran populations was to be moved over and that it doesn't influence the regional plan.

Mr. Woelfel asked for a motion to approve. The motion was made by Mayor Gove (MeVa) and Seconded by Mayor Fiorentini.

The motion passed unanimously.

Item 9. ACTION ITEM: FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #1: Salisbury Reconstruction of Route 1; Methuen – Intersection Improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road; Border to Boston Design Earmarks

Mr. Reed introduced the changes to the timeline and costs of the projects listed in the amendment. Due to the changes, there will be an unprogrammed balance of \$6.1 million that the MPO can decide how to program. Mr. Reed also mentioned that there were no public comments.

Mr. Woelfel then asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Whitten (MVPC) made the motion. The motion was seconded by Mr. Snow . The motion passed unanimously.

Item 10. Discussion of Unprogrammed FFYs 2024-2028 Tip Projects

Mr. Reed mentioned that the board has the option to move some projects that are ready forward, and that there are other options. Mr. Reed stated that the MPO could flex the funds to FTA so that MeVa could program the funding. Mr. Reed mentioned that the MVMPO could use the funding for design of projects. There are nuances for design funding such as, the locality would be responsible, and that the town or city would pay for 20% of design cost. Mr. Reed also mentioned that with the design, there could be an issue with the town putting money into the design, but the project does not move forward. Mr. Reed stated that another option would be to put funding toward the Lawrence to Manchester Rail Trail, which is a state-wide project. If the region participates in this project, it will move faster. Mr. Reed then asked for a discussion - reminding members that they do not need to vote today. Mr. Fiorentini said he would like to wait until they are further along in the design process for the Haverhill, North Avenue project. Mr. Pettis mentioned that

the North Ave has been pushed back a few times. Mr. Fiorentini suggested waiting until after MassDOT's readiness assessment to make a decision.

Mr. Reed said that the total funds were \$6.8 million.

Mr. Materazzo mentioned that it is a big lift for communities to obtain design funding and get the ball rolling. For Andover's Route 133 project, it would have been helpful if there was funding available and only had to ask the town to make a match. Mr. Whitten added that with the addition of the design process it would benefit the town/city to get the match from the community.

Mr. Whitten suggested that they wait until February and reiterated that we want to support MeVa. Mr. Berger shared that their capital funding is constrained, and this would free up funding.

Mr. Woelfel mentioned that on the design issue, MassDOT is different in that we provide local matches to the communities.

Mayor Gove mentioned that she spoke with her DPW director and came up with \$3 million in projects that are ready but have not yet been brought to the board yet. Mr. Woelfel suggested that if there are projects, they should wait until February and then bring them to the board.

Mr. Harrington asked about the "universe of projects". Mr. Reed said that the MTP is the universe but acknowledged that it can be amended, although uncommon. Mr. Harrington continued that many communities have some small projects which could be considered. Mr. Woelfel affirmed that may be a good idea.

Mr. Berger stated that MeVa would like to purchase hybrid buses and that the new generation of hybrids is impressive. If there is an opportunity to purchase, he would like to add that to the table as well.

Mr. Shooster mentioned that any Flex to FTA to be processing would be at the March MPO meeting. Mr. Shooster advised that they should not wait longer than February to introduce projects. Mr. Shooster also mentioned that for any projects that are shovel ready they should be brought to MassDOT District 4 to be evaluated for right of way, permitting, or public comment needs.

Mr. Woelfel said that motions should be brought forward during the January MVMPO Meeting to give all communities a chance to bring projects forward.

Item II. Status of Ongoing and FFYs 2024-2028 TIP Projects

Status of Transit Projects

Mr. Berger then thanked and acknowledged MeVa Chair Gove. Mr. Berger also thanked the board for enabling him and his team to do their work well and the good partnerships in the region. Mr. Berger then thanked Secretary Tibbits-Nutt. Mr. Berger gave a brief service update and mentioned they are 37.9% above pre-pandemic ridership numbers. Mr. Berger also mentioned that they have tripled ridership since going fair free and that complaints have decreased. Then Mr. Berger also mentioned that they increased drivers by

31.4%. Mr. Berger thanked Gov. Healy for the increase in the budget for regional transit and mentioned that they used the funding to extend service at night. Mr. Berger also thanked Mr. Snow for the move to increase service to the VA in Bedford. Mr. Berger mentioned that they have a new service to take vets from their homes in the Merrimack Valley to the VA Hospital. Mr. Berger also mentioned that the funds help keep their fleets in a state of good repair and that the Buckley service center will be moving to the McGovern depot in Lawrence. With regards to the Capital improvements, they are having their ceiling repaired.

Mr. Snow thanked Mr. Berger for his move to expand services for Vets. Mr. Snow explained that a lot of Vets fall through the cracks and the service MeVa provides is essential for providing the care they need.

Status of TIP Roadway and Bridge Projects

Mr. Paris then introduced himself and gave an overview of the new project: 61558 – Lawrence Bridge Replacement, Union Street over the North Canal.

There were minor changes to ad dates on several projects. Of note, #610924 – Lawrence reconstruction on Amesbury Street reached 100% design.

Item 12. Other Business

Mr. Whitten then announced that Mr. Fiorentini was the longest voting member and asked for a round of applause. Mr. Fiorentini then gave some words about his beginning and how much he enjoyed working with everyone.

December Meeting Date

Mr. Reed then reminded members the next meeting date will be amid holiday travel and suggested an early January meeting which would cover both December and January items. Mr. Reed said he would send out a poll to gain quorum.

Mr. Reed also mentioned that the agenda item to address PL carryover will be discussed at the next meeting.

Item 13. Adjourn

Mr. Woelfel called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Whitten made the motion. Mr. Snow seconded. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.