

Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization Docket January 10, 2024

Item 4 – Performance Measure I, Safety

Context: Per federal legislation, state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are required to establish performance measures and associated targets to be used in assessing the transportation system and programming of federal aid projects. The first of these measures, so called *PM1*, tracks transportation network safety through the following measures:

- Number of fatalities
- Fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Number of serious injuries
- Serious injury rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries

Discussion: During the meeting, staff will provide an overview of PM1 for review and MVMPO adoption.

Proposed Action: Adopt MassDOT's proposed statewide PM1 performance target.

Item 5 – FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #2: MeVa Updates

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. TIP projects for the region are separated into two elements based on type of federal aid: Highway and Transit. Many TIP projects are derived from the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority's Program of Projects, which are submitted to MassDOT for approval on use of state match through the statewide Capital Improvement Program. Changes to the CIP/TIP are submitted to the MassDOT Rail & Transit Division for approval before being presented to the MVMPO Board for review and inclusion.

Discussion: The proposed amendment to the FFY24-28 TIP includes multiple changes which are summarized below:

- The number of transit buses being purchased has increased from 8 to 14. This change addresses two critical needs: (1) In order to better address the needs of transit riders, MeVa has utilized additional

MassDOT operating assistance to significantly increase the frequency, span and days of service, resulting in a need for increased equipment; and (2) due to an issue starting in 2025 with the lack of availability of Cummins Engine that meet the CARB standards, MeVa is ordering some buses 1 year early.

- A project for acquiring crossover SUVs to be used in paratransit revenue service has been added. This will allow MeVa to be more nimble in deploying right-sized vehicles based on rider need and number of passengers in the vehicle.
- The budget for the McGovern Project has been increased to add scope to the project for sandblasting and painting the metal beams on the first floor, as determined necessary following a full assessment of current conditions.
- The design for the Admin/Maintenance facility expansion has been decreased and split into a feasibility study with preliminary design moved in FY25.
- The planning projects have been removed, along with a reduction in preventative maintenance in order to reprogram those funds into the expanded projects above. This will not result in a reduction in planning or preventative maintenance activity, but rather to accurately reflect how federal funding is utilized for each element of the TIP/STIP.

Staff received two comments during the 21-day comment period, summarized below:

- On December 13 at 11:36am, Mr. Thomas Riley (who did not list an address or municipality) emailed MVMPO staff noting that most buses in Haverhill seem underutilized, and posed a question about whether smaller buses may be more economical from an operations perspective.
- On December 20, MVMPO staff contacted Mr. Michael Bleiweiss who attempted to join the Zoom meeting for public hearing #2 but could not due to a posting error. At 11:26 Mr. Bleiweiss stated that he would like to advocate for an east-west route through Methuen along Route 113 and/or Pelham Street. Mr. Bleiweiss commented that this would allow users to travel across Methuen without having to go to terminals in Haverhill and Lawrence. Mr. Bleiweiss stated that he met with Mr. Berger who advised him to try riding the bus system

Both comments are included as attachments to this docket.

Additionally, staff has updated the attached revisions report to show the correct 80 percent match for project #RTD0010754.

Proposed Action: Approve the proposed amendment.

Item 6 – FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #3: 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 cycle, the Merrimack Valley was the recipient of several awards, which must be amended onto the TIP:

- Merrimack Valley Transit – Travel Ambassador Program (\$125,000)
- Northern Essex Elder Transport (NEET) – Driving for Health and Wellness (\$38,000)
- Groveland – Demand Response for Transportation to Groveland for 60+ Residents (\$5,000)

Proposed Action: Open the 21-day comment period for the proposed amendment.

Item 7 – Con’t Discussion of Unprogrammed FFY24 Balance

Context: FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #1 resulted in a net balance of \$7,133,383 in FFY24, which must be obligated by September 30, 2024. Previously, the Board indicated a desire to retain approximately \$200,000 per year to facilitate a small capital purchase program, leaving \$6,933,383 unprogrammed in FFY24.

Discussion: During its November meeting, the Board discussed potential options for the unprogrammed federal aid, including:

- A. Waiting to take action until after MassDOT’s “readiness” determinations in February;
- B. Considering a request by Merrimack Valley Transit to flex FHWA funds to FTA to program \$1,858,400 for the restoration of MeVa’s preventative maintenance budget by shifting costs to purchase buses to meet growing demand;
- C. Considering support for additional MeVa capital needs that advance toward electrification (see attachment);
- D. Considering the programming of funds to support small ongoing projects;
- E. Considering the addition of funding to advance the Lawrence to Manchester Rail Trail, currently programmed on the statewide side of the TIP; and
- F. Considering the use of funds to support the design of projects.

At the November meeting, MassDOT Deputy Executive Director of the Office of Transportation Planning, Steve Woelfel suggested that communities should work with MPO staff to present projects at a future meeting that could be considered for funding.

Several milestones must be achieved in MassDOT’s workflow process for a small project to be eligible for federal aid for construction:

- A project must be entered into MaPIT system;
- A project must be reviewed and approved by MassDOT’s Project Review Committee, which will assign the project a number;
- A project must have all its design work complete; and
- A project must have all its right-of-way/title work and any necessary environmental assessment work complete prior to advancement.

MassDOT’s last Project Review Committee was held on December 14. No new committee meetings will be held before February’s readiness determination process.

Staff recommends the following actions:

- Program MeVa's requested \$3.6 flex to FTA now;
- Communities wishing to have projects considered for use of FFY24 should submit all known information to MPO staff for inclusion in the MPO's readiness submission to MassDOT. Any project to be considered must, at minimum, be entered into MassDOT's MaPIT system;
- In February, staff will receive recommendations from MassDOT about the feasibility of any new projects being candidates for FFY24 funds. At the same time, staff will determine whether any existing projects may potentially slide forward or must slide backward; and
- Staff will bring findings to the MVMPO Board, which may guide further discussion of the unprogrammed funds.

Proposed Action: If it be the pleasure of the MPO Board, vote to open the 21-day comment period relevant to programming the Flex to FTA request of Merrimack Valley Transit (MeVa).

Item 8 – FFY24 UPWP Amendment #1: Follow-Up on 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 most 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 items listed below.

- **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.

MassDOT approved requests to fund the first four of the MPO's requested priorities. Support for priorities five and six was not provided at this time. Table 1 on the following page describes the high-level cost estimate of each item.

Action: Amend the FFY2024 Unified Planning Work Program to add additional resources for priorities 1-4, as detailed above.

Table 1

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

Attachments:

A. TIP Revisions Report

B. Comments on proposed TIP Amendment #2

C. MeVa's FTA Flex Request for Use of Programmed Funds



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						
Mobility Assistance Program						
MVRTA011670 : Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MeVa) - Merrimack Valley Travel Ambassador Program						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Mobility Assistance Program-SCA	12/20/2023	\$0	\$25,000	\$25,000	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Mobility Assistance Program-5310	12/20/2023	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	
MVRTA011671 : Northern Essex Elder Transport (NEET) - Driving for Health & Wellness						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Mobility Assistance Program-5310	12/20/2023	\$0	\$38,000	\$38,000	
MVRTA011672 : Town of Groveland - Demand response for transportation to Groveland residents over the age of 60						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Mobility Assistance Program-ETF	12/20/2023	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	
Operating						
RTD0010754 : Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Preventative Maintenance for service						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Operating-5307	11/20/2023	\$3,053,820	\$2,096,551	-\$957,269	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Operating-SCA	11/22/2023	\$763,450	\$524,138	-\$239,312	
RTD0010757 : Merrimack Valley MPO Short Range Transit Planning						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Operating-5307	11/20/2023	\$80,000	\$0	-\$80,000	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Operating-LF	11/20/2023	\$20,000	\$0	-\$20,000	
Revenue Vehicle Program						
MVRTA011638 : MVRTA - Purchase 8 small SUVs for Paratransit Revenue Service.						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Revenue Vehicle Program-5307	11/20/2023	\$0	\$360,000	\$360,000	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-Revenue Vehicle Program-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$0	\$90,000	\$90,000	
RTA Facility & System Modernization						



TIP Revisions Report
Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

MVRTA011637 : Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY - Phase 1 Feasibility study for expansion of maintenance buildings & relocation of fuel island.

Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-5307	11/20/2023	\$0	\$434,479	\$434,479
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$0	\$108,620	\$108,620

MVRTA011639 : MVRTA - Project to upgrade our access control security badge system at our Admin/Maintenance facility.

Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000
-----------	---	------------	-----	-----------	-----------

RTD0011302 : Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - METROPOLITAN PLANNING

Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-5307	11/20/2023	\$54,860	\$0	-\$54,860
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$13,715	\$0	-\$13,715

RTDTBD14 : Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - 5339 Bus & Bus Facility Discretionary: Expansion of Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority Bus Maintenance Facility & Possible New Bus Hub at Bradford CR Station

Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-OF	11/16/2023	\$3,840,000	\$0	-\$3,840,000
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-DRTACAP	11/16/2023	\$960,000	\$0	-\$960,000

T00114 : MVRTA- Rehabilitate and Renovate McGovern Transportation Center - add scope for sandblasting and repainting, as well as electrical conduit for bus births.

Adjustment	Description	11/20/2023	MVRTA- Rehabilitate and Renovate McGovern Transportation Center	MVRTA- Rehabilitate and Renovate McGovern Transportation Center - add scope for sandblasting and repainting, as well as electrical conduit for bus births.	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-5307	11/20/2023	\$800,000	\$1,500,000	\$700,000
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Facility & System Modernization-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$200,000	\$514,285	\$314,285



TIP Revisions Report Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

Type	Value Changed	Date of Change	Former Value	New Value	Variance	Comments
RTA Replacement Facilities						
RTD0011308 : MULTI-YEAR: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY - to include CPS						
Amendment	Description	11/15/2023	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY	MULTI-YEAR: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY - to include CPS		
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Replacement Facilities-5307	11/15/2023	\$1,055,000	\$0	-\$1,055,000	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Replacement Facilities-RTACAP	11/15/2023	\$263,750	\$0	-\$263,750	
RTA Vehicle Replacement						
MVRTA011636 : Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 3 model year 2012 29' Gillig and 1 model year 2012 35' bus with 4 new 29' buses delivered in late CY24/FY25.						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-5307	11/20/2023	\$0	\$1,858,400	\$1,858,400	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$0	\$232,300	\$232,300	
MVRTA011640 : MVRTA - Replacement buses - match only. Federal programmed in FY23.						
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$0	\$1,175,000	\$1,175,000	



TIP Revisions Report Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

Type	Value Changed	Date of Change	Former Value	New Value	Variance	Comments
RTD0010753 Multiple: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 6 model year 2011 and 4 model year 2012 35' buses with 10 new 35' buses delivered in late CY24/FY25; added funding for increased qty and costs.						
Amendment	Description	11/20/2023	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 8 model year 2012 35' buses delivery 2024 8 of 8; added funding for increased cost in FY24.	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 6 model year 2011 and 4 model year 2012 35' buses with 10 new 35' buses delivered in late CY24/FY25; added funding for increased qty and costs.		
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-5307	11/20/2023	\$2,480,940	\$4,705,600	\$2,224,660	
Amendment	2024: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$2,480,940	\$588,200	-\$1,892,740	



TIP Revisions Report

Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

Type	Value Changed	Date of Change	Former Value	New Value	Variance	Comments
Federal Fiscal Year 2025						



TIP Revisions Report Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

Type	Value Changed	Date of Change	Former Value	New Value	Variance	Comments
RTA Replacement Facilities						
RTD0011308 : MULTI-YEAR: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY - to include CPS						
Amendment	Description	11/15/2023	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY	MULTI-YEAR: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY - to include CPS		
Amendment	2025: MVRTA-OT-RTA Replacement Facilities-5307	11/15/2023	\$0	\$400,000	\$400,000	
Amendment	2025: MVRTA-OT-RTA Replacement Facilities-RTACAP	11/15/2023	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	
RTA Vehicle Replacement						
MVRTA011636 : Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 3 model year 2012 29' Gillig and 1 model year 2012 35' bus with 4 new 29' buses delivered in late CY24/FY25.						
Amendment	2025: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$0	\$232,300	\$232,300	
RTD0010753 Multiple: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 6 model year 2011 and 4 model year 2012 35' buses with 10 new 35' buses delivered in late CY24/FY25; added funding for increased qty and costs.						
Amendment	Description	11/20/2023	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 8 model year 2012 35' buses delivery 2024 8 of 8; added funding for increased cost in FY24.	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - Replace 6 model year 2011 and 4 model year 2012 35' buses with 10 new 35' buses delivered in late CY24/FY25; added funding for increased qty and costs.		
Amendment	2025: MVRTA-OT-RTA Vehicle Replacement-RTACAP	11/20/2023	\$0	\$588,200	\$588,200	



TIP Revisions Report

Merrimack Valley

STIP: 2024 - 2028 (A)

Type	Value Changed	Date of Change	Former Value	New Value	Variance	Comments
Federal Fiscal Year 2026						
RTA Replacement Facilities						
RTD0011308 : MULTI-YEAR: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY - to include CPS						
Amendment	Description	11/15/2023	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY	MULTI-YEAR: Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority - ENG/DESIGN - ADMIN/MAINT FACILITY - to include CPS		
Amendment	2026: MVRTA-OT-RTA Replacement Facilities-5307	11/15/2023	\$0	\$480,000	\$480,000	
Amendment	2026: MVRTA-OT-RTA Replacement Facilities-RTACAP	11/15/2023	\$0	\$120,000	\$120,000	

Patrick Reed

From: MVPC Transportation Program
Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 1:07 PM
To: Thomas Riley; MVPC Transportation Program
Subject: RE: Upcoming Hearing Suggestions

Good afternoon, Mr. Riley:

Thank you for submitting a comment regarding FFY2024-2028 Amendment #2. We will include it in the record and the comment will be noted at the January 10, 2023 MVMPO Board meeting. Merrimack Valley Transit (MeVa) staff will be available at that meeting to address the comment.

Thank you,
Patrick

From: Thomas Riley <vze215ad@verizon.net>
Sent: Wednesday, December 13, 2023 11:36 AM
To: MVPC Transportation Program <transportation@mvpc.org>
Subject: Upcoming Hearing Suggestions

My only suggestion based on my observation is , at lease in Haverhill , most busses seem basically empty ! Why aren't smaller ,more economically buses used instead of Large Empty ones ?

Patrick Reed

From: Patrick Reed
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2023 8:58 AM
To: Michael Bleiweiss
Subject: RE: MVMPO Public Hearing - MeVa Updates

Good morning, Michael,

Ah ha! Thank you for letting me know. I went to double check what happened based on your email. It looks like the Zoom links were flipped-flopped, not just in the article, but in our noticing as well. We will need to do a better job double-checking those (or figure out a way to have multiple sessions with only one access link). I will also check with our IT team on the phone.

Zoom lets MVPC know when attendees try to join a meeting. You were the only one who tried to join. I am glad we were able to connect, although trying to track down someone's contact is neither efficient nor sufficient. I need to do a better job on this front. I hope you accept my sincere apologies.

Thank you for your comments about proposed Amendment #2. MeVa is represented at the MPO by the transit authority's Advisory Board Chair, which is currently Mayor Gove of Amesbury. MeVa Administrator Noah Berger is also present at these meetings to provide the MPO updates about MeVa. When we receive comments on amendment proposals, we state them for the record at the MPO. Your comment will be noted in the action's record and will be provided to the Board prior to the Board voting on the proposed amendment.

If you would like to discuss further, please let me know a good time to connect, and I will reach out to you via phone.

Thank you,
Patrick

From: Michael Bleiweiss <mcbleiweiss54@verizon.net>
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2023 11:26 PM
To: Patrick Reed <preed@mvpc.org>
Subject: RE: MVMPO Public Hearing - MeVa Updates

Hi Patrick,

I meticulously typed in the URL for Meeting #2 as printed in the newspaper article:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83523878127?pwd=JVVolqFS5HpHbPNjS5EGa-WAiSF1W1EK.1>

I then got a screen stating you were still in the 1:00 P.M. meeting.
I assumed that you had forgotten to leave that one.
I also called the listed assistance number and got a message it was not in service: (978)374-0519.

My main issue is advocating for an east-west cross Methuen bus along Rt. 113 and/or Pelham St. so that riders don't have to go to the Lawrence or Haverhill terminals and then transfer to get across town. After 2 years of my calls not being returned, I met with Noah Berger two months ago. He just suggested I try riding the bus system.

Sincerely,
Michael Bleiweiss
(978)689-2874

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject:MVMPO Public Hearing - MeVa Updates

Date:Thu, 21 Dec 2023 01:50:37 +0000

From:Patrick Reed <preed@mvpc.org>

To:michael@MichaelBleiweiss.com <michael@MichaelBleiweiss.com>

Good evening, Mr. Bleiweiss:

I'm Patrick, the transportation program manager with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. I am wondering if you may have tried to join our Zoom meeting this evening (Public Hearing #2 – MeVa Updates) but may have accidentally tried to join using the link for Public Hearing #1 (which was at 1pm) rather than public hearing #2, which began at 8:15? Unfortunately, Zoom does not let me toggle easily between meetings. I attempted to quickly start the previous meeting, but you were no longer in the waiting room when I attempted to toggle over.

I wanted to reach out to encourage you to submit any comments on the proposed amendment to me directly. Additionally, if you would like to setup a time to discuss the amendment, please let me know. Finally, if you are receiving this message in error, please accept my apologies.

Many thanks,
Patrick



Patrick Reed, AICP
Transportation Program Manager
Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
160 Main Street, Haverhill, MA 01830
Office: 978.374.0519 x15
MVPC.org | WeAreMV.com



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

December 14, 2023

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

Dear Patrick,

MEVA would like to update our previous request dated November 15, 2023 due to information that was discussed during the November MPO meeting and subsequent conversations since then. MEVA is 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. Additionally, we would like to request another \$1,786,400 to upgrade six of the ten 35' diesel buses to the new eGen Flex hybrid configuration.

MEVA put forward an FY24 TIP amendment 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, as well as adding the other four 29' buses for the amount above. MEVA programmed our 5307 funds to order these buses, 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.

However, there is additional information to consider now. MEVA received two Gillig in November that have the new Allison Transmission eGen Flex electric hybrid propulsion system. These new buses have many advantages over the older hybrid models MEVA has in our fleet, including a 25% improvement in fuel economy. "The system can travel in electric-only mode for up to 10 miles or 50 minutes before converting back to diesel propulsion. The electric-only mode can be utilized multiple times per route per day. The system's geofencing technology eliminates engine emissions and noise while loading and unloading passengers in dense pedestrian areas and in zero-emission zones and bus depots. The eGen Flex also can operate accessories such as air conditioning and electric heat at optimal efficiency with electric power."¹ These advantages have provided an opportunity for MEVA to bridge the gap to full

¹ <https://www.gillig.com/post/allison-transmission-gillig-introduce-first-bus-equipped-with-egen-flex-hybrid-propulsion-system>

electrification, which is still distant due to infrastructure challenges and ever-changing electric-bus technologies. The new total (federal and state together) for all 10 buses will change from \$5.8M to \$8,115,000 (rounded up).

Receiving the ~\$3.6M in unprogrammed funds will allow MEVA to upgrade our buses to have this revolutionary bus capability, as well as restore our PM budget and provide carryover for 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 over 50% above pre-pandemic levels this November. Keeping our fleet up-to-date allows MEVA to meet this growing demand.

Hopefully MVPC and the MPO will agree that these projects are worthy of these funds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Noah Berger", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Noah Berger
Administrator