

MVMPO – January 10, 2024

Members Present

David Mohler, representing Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt
Brian Fallon, representing Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver
Jerrard Whitten, MVPC Executive Director
Kassandra Gove, Chair of MeVa Advisory Board
Melinda Barrett, Mayor of Haverhill
Daniel McCarthy, representing Mayor of Lawrence
Neil Harrington, representing Subregion 1
Robert Snow, representing Subregion 2
John Cashell, representing Subregion 3
Paul Materazzo, representing Subregion 4

Others Present

Patrick Reed, MVPC
Elizabeth Maldari, MVPC
Tony Collins, MVPC
Jonah Williams, MVPC
Jenifer Dunlap, MVPC
Timothy Paris, MassDOT
Kathleen Lambert, City of Haverhill
Jerry Klima
Bonnie Mahoney, MeVa Transit
Noah Berger, MeVa Transit
John Pettis, City of Haverhill
Josh Levin, MassDOT
Andrew Wang, MassDOT
Chris Klem, MassDOT
Miranda Briseño, MassDOT
Raissah Kouame, MassDOT

Item I. Call to Order

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 12:00pm, on January 10, 2024. Mr. Reed called the roll and quorum was attained.

Item 2. Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Mohler called for public comments. There being no comments, Mr. Mohler moved to item 3, adoption of the previous meeting's minutes.

Item 3. Adoption of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Mr. Mohler called for approval of the Nov 29, 2023 meeting minutes. Mr. Whitten made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Materazzo seconded. The meeting minutes passed unanimously.

Mr. Mohler then moved to Item # 4 Endorsement of Annual Performance Measure 1 - Safety.

Item 4. Endorsement of Annual Performance Measure 1 – Safety

Mr. Reed introduced the next agenda item, Endorsement of Annual Performance Measure 1 – Safety, and explained that 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. He went on to explain that the first of these measures, *PM1*, tracks transportation network safety. Mr. Reed then introduced Mr. Williams who presented this material.

Mr. Williams introduced the metrics tracked in PM1:

- 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

Mr. Williams then presented data for these metrics for the Merrimack Valley region and provided an overview of the 2024 statewide targets of:

- ≤377 fatalities
- ≤61 fatalities per 100,000,000 Vehicle Miles Traveled
- ≤2,708 incapacitating injuries
- ≤4.36 incapacitating injuries per 100,000,000 Vehicle Miles Traveled
- ≤445 combined non-motorist incapacitating injuries and fatalities

Throughout his presentation, Mr. Williams emphasized that both at the statewide and regional level, the overall goal is to continue to advance toward zero deaths and serious injuries. Mr. Williams concluded by stating that the recommended action was to adopt the statewide Safety Performance Measure targets for Performance Measure 1 (PM1) for CY24.

Mr. Mohler requested a motion to adopt the 2024 Statewide PM1 Targets. Mr. Snow made the motion and Mr. Whitten seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Mohler then moved to item 5.

Item 5. ACTION ITEM: FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #2: MeVa Updates

Mr. Reed introduced Item #5, Amendment #2 to increase rolling stock, purchase paratransit SUVs and increase the cost for the McGovern Center project to accommodate beam rehab, and a decrease in administration facility costs. Mr. Reed also noted that the preventative maintenance cost matching amount was updated.

Mr. Reed noted that two comments were received more generally regarding MeVa bus service. Mr. Riley commented advocating for the use of smaller buses and Mr. Bleiweiss commented advocating for an east-west bus route in Methuen. Mr. Berger responded to these comments. In regard to the first comment, Mr. Berger clarified that ridership in Haverhill is continually growing and buses are often full with riders and that MeVa is considering increasing the frequency of the route 13 bus. Mr. Berger responded to the second comment stating that he had met with Mr. Bleiweiss in the past and that the route he was advocating for was a route that had previously been operated and was discontinued. He stated that further analysis was needed to understand if there is demand for this type of route.

Following Mr. Berger's comments, Mr. Reed stated that the proposed action was to approve FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #2. Mr. Mohler called for a motion to approve the amendment. Mr. Snow made the motion and Mayor Gove seconded. Mr. Reed called the roll and the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Mohler then moved on to agenda item 6.

Item 6. ACTION ITEM: FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #3: Community Transit Grants

Mr. Reed then introduced FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #3: Community Transit Grants, and explained that these are discretionary grant awards for transit services for the elderly, disabled and veteran populations. He explained that the Merrimack Valley was the recipient of three awards, \$125,000 for MeVa for a Travel Ambassador Program, \$38,000 for Northern Essex Elder Transport for their Driving for Health and Wellness Program, and \$5,000 for the Town of Groveland for demand response services for individuals who are 60 and older. Mr. Reed introduced the proposed action of opening the 21-day comment period for this amendment.

Mr. Mohler asked for a motion to release the amendment for the 21-day comment period. The motion was made by Mayor Gove (MeVa) and seconded by Mr. Whitten. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Mohler then moved on to Item # 7.

Item 7. Continued Discussion of Unprogrammed FFY24 Balance

Mr. Reed reminded participants that the MVMPO was the recipient of August redistribution funding for the Salisbury project that resulted in a balance of \$6.8 million or \$7.1 million depending on whether the MPO decides to retain funding for a capital purchase program. Mr. Reed reminded participants of the discussion regarding options for use of the unprogrammed funds at the November MPO meeting: applying additional funds towards the Lawrence to Manchester rail trail, purchase of additional buses for MeVa, and potential use of funds for design, and resources for smaller projects. Mr. Reed explained that based on discussions with MassDOT staff, the likely outcome is that only projects with an assigned project number and project manager would be able to be programmed in FFY24.

Mr. Reed provided an overview of the actions that could be taken in the meeting. The actions being a motion to send MeVa's request for \$1,858,400 for the purchase of four low-floor 29' buses, and \$1,786,400 to upgrade six 35' buses from diesel to hybrid for a 21-day comment period, providing additional support for the Lawrence to Manchester Rail Trail, or waiting for readiness days to take action.

Mr. Mohler asked for questions or comments on the possible actions then asked Mr. Berger if action needed to be taken during this meeting, or if actions could wait until after readiness days in February. Mr. Berger explained that funds must be obligated in FFY24 and that funds are considered obligated when transferred from FHWA to FTA. He went on to outline how knowing MeVa had the funds would accelerate the purchase of the buses, given the long lead time for purchasing a transit bus. Ms. Mahoney added that the approval of the funds to upgrade the six diesel buses would be necessary before they could purchase these buses, she went on to say that the manufacturer had offered to move their order up. Ms. Lambert commented that there is a long lead time for funds transferred to FTA to become available to MeVa and that the last time they had excessive funds it took 6-8 months for the funds to be transferred. She went on to say that the funds would need to be available in order to purchase the buses and suggested the action should be moved to public comment. Mr. Whitten asked if moving the action to the comment period would preclude the board from taking a different action after readiness days. Mr. Mohler answered that theoretically, results of readiness days could be presented during the February MPO meeting when MeVa's requests could also be approved. Mr. Reed responded that there would be sufficient time, given that the next meeting is scheduled for February 28th, and that MeVa's request could be released for comment period and could be approved or denied, should a different course being warranted, at the board's discretion. Mr. Mohler proposed that a motion could be made for the \$1,786,400 to be released for the comment period. Mayor Gove answered that she would like to make the motion for both requests (\$1,858,400 and \$1,786,400) to start this process. Mr. Mohler responded that this was the discretion of the board.

Mayor Gove made the motion to release both flexes to FTA for the 21-day comment period. Mr. Whitten seconded the motion. Mr. Reed called the roll. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Mohler then moved on to Item 8.

Item 8. FY24 UPWP Amendment #1 Follow-Up: Previous Years' Carryover

Mr. Reed provided an overview of PL funds and the possibility of using previous year's carryover funds. Mr. Reed went through the requests made to MassDOT for use of these funds. The priorities being:

- Trail counter installation
- An additional ArcGIS Pro License
- Additional contractor support for the Fare Free Project
- Additional Active Transportation Plan graphics support
- Ferry boat planning and business plan development
- Bikeshare business plan assessment and development

He explained that the first four priorities were approved. Ferry boat and bike share planning were not approved, but pursuing a local match for these priorities could be a possibility. Mr. Reed stated that the proposed action was to open the 21-day comment period comment period for the approved priorities.

Mr. Mohler called for a motion. Mr. Whitten made the motion. Mr. Cashell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Mohler then moved to next item, Status of Transit Projects.

Status of Transit Projects

Mr. Berger talked about how MeVa began Sunday service, and despite snowy weather, service was successfully provided. He talked about how MeVa would also begin service on some holidays. Mr. Berger talked about an event to acknowledge the beginning of service to the Bedford VA. Mr. Berger provided an overview of progress on the relocation of Lawrence bus service to the McGovern Transportation Center and the selection of a construction contractor. Mr. Berger concluded by thanking the board for approving the action earlier in the meeting.

Status of TIP Roadway and Bridge Projects

Mr. Paris then introduced himself and gave an overview of project updates. A new project was added: 613588 – Lawrence Bridge Replacement, Union Street over the North Canal. The Boxford-Merrimac-Peabody bridge replacement project is 33% complete. The 100% design has been received for the Lowell-Dracut-Methuen resurfacing on 110. Project 608930 The Lawrence to Manchester Rail Trail has reached 100% design. Project 610658 Methuen Intersection improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road has minor cost increases. 610923 Lawrence Intersection Reconstruction at Marston Street and East Haverhill Street and 609509 Lawrence Intersection Improvements at Merrimack Street and South Broadway had minor cost increases.

Item 10. Other Business

Mr. Mohler asked if there was any other business and asked for the date of the next meeting. Mr. Reed explained that the next meeting would be February 28 at the MVPC office and asked if there were any concerns with meeting in person on that date. Mayor Gove mentioned there would be an MMA meeting that day but that it should still work given that the other meeting is virtual.

Item 11. Adjourn

Mr. Mohler called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Materazzo made the motion. Mr. McCarthy seconded. The meeting was adjourned.