

MVMPO – March 27, 2024: Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Steve Woelfel, alternate, representing Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation
Brian Fallon, alternate, representing MassDOT Highway Division Administrator
Jerrard Whitten, representing MVPC
Bonnie Mahoney, alternate, representing MeVa Chair
John Pettis, alternate, representing City of Haverhill
Dan McCarthy, alternate, representing City of Lawrence
Niel Harrington, representing Subregion 1
Robert Snow, representing Subregion 2
Vacant, Subregion 3
Paul Materazzo, representing Subregion 4

Others Present

Derek Krevat, MassDOT
Derek Shooster, MassDOT
Tim Paris, MassDOT
Andrew Wang, MassDOT
Miranda Briseño, MassDOT
Josh Levin, MassDOT
David Fields, Newbury
Kristen Grubbs, Newbury
Jerry Klima, Salisbury
Kathleen Lambert, Haverhill Jennifer Dunlap, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Patrick Reed, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Tony Collins, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Jonah Williams, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Elizabeth Maldari, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
Rick Taintor, Newburyport Livable Streets
Sheila Taintor, Newburyport Livable Streets
Kirsti Hostetter, Federal Transit Administration Region 1

Item 1. Call to Order

Mr. Reed called the meeting to order at 12:00.

Item 2. Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Woelfel asked for public comment, there being none, he moved to adopt the meeting minutes.

Item 3. Adoption of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Mr. Woelfel asked for an adoption to approve the meeting minutes 1. Bonnie 2. Dan The motion passed unanimously.

Item 4. FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #5: Highway Project Updates

Mr. Woelfel then introduced TIP Amendment # 5. Mr. Reed explained changes to the following projects:

- Andover – Lawrence bridge rehab was paid fully in '23 and therefore moved off the list for '24.
- Haverhill – Basiliere Bridge Replacement: Project will shift in schedule by two months; results in the need to move program year.
- Haverhill 0 Methuen I-495 Bridge Replacement: Cost increase of \$87 million.
- Georgetown – Boxford – Border to Boston Trail: Shift in readiness determination due (ROW)
- Lawrence -Roadway Reconstruction on Amesbury Street: Conversion of federal program for Coronavirus Relief and Response Supplemental Act is now funded by Surface Transportation Block Grant Funds.

Mr. Reed then mentioned the two public comments announced at the hearing on March 22, 2024. One from Brent Bergeron of Salisbury who attended but did not make any comments and Kate Cook of the Recreation Path Committee (Georgetown) who commented that the Committee does not advocate for any changes related to the amendment but wanted to make a connection in the event future coordination may be necessary. Mr. Reed then introduced that they would like to close the 21-day comment period. Mr. Woelfel requested a motion which was made by Bob Snow and seconded by Paul Materazzo.

The motion passed unanimously.

Item 5. ACTION ITEM: FFY24-28 TIP Adjustment #1

Mr. Reed reminded the board of the February approval of two FTA flexes one of \$1,858,400 to purchase four low-floor 29' buses and \$1,786,400 to upgrade six 35' buses slated for purchase to eGen Flex Hybrid rather than diesel (of ten total slated for purchase).

Mr. Reed announced that the proposed adjustment would be to increase costs to 2,233,000 and 2,32,000 respectively due to match requirements, explaining that the CMAQ 80-20 match program and that previous totals only showed 80% not total amount. Mr. Reed stated that this would leave a remainder of 2,577,383 for FFY24. Mr. Reed said that this motion required a vote. Mr. Woelfel asked for any comments and there being none, then asked for a motion. The motion was made by Mr. McCarthy and seconded by Mr. Pettis. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 6. FY 25-29 TIP Development Process

Mr. Reed introduced the agenda item to provide an overview of the TIP Development Program for FFY 2025-2029. Mr. Reed shared a slide summarizing a breakdown of the proposed program for FFY 25-29 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) by municipality. He explained that there was a proposed total of 513,886,383 with a significant portion of funds going to Haverhill due to the Basiliere Bridge project and that

there were a few other high cost projects programmed in Methuen, Andover and North Andover explaining their significant shares. Mr. Reed also explained that Lawrence showed zero dollars, but this was because they had projects in the previous years. Mr. Reed then explained the combined project is in collaboration with Tewksbury on a 495 project.

Mr. Reed then shared a table to show the scenarios and reminded the board that “readiness” was a score from MassDOT and that it wouldn’t make sense to program a project before the project was scored as ready. Mr. Reed also explained that the “TEC Score” or Transportation Evaluation Criteria Score which is an additional readiness score that helps make decisions about prioritizations between one project and another which scored similarly in the Readiness score. Mr. Reed reminded that we are in the process of updating the TIP Scoring process and that the goal is to have MVPC support communities to look at TIP score but we are doing a phase-in system so previous projects will retain their previous TIP score but that we are looking at how to migrate scores into new system with the new scoring system meant to be accessible to each municipalities.

Mr. Reed then explained that moving forward we would use the new scoring system. Mr. Reed then introduced Mr. Williams to explain the new scoring system and tool.

Mr. Williams then explained that the new TEC scores will be made based on goals outlined in the MVMTP. Mr. Williams asserted that we aligned our scoring with the funding categories based on factors affecting these categories. For example, looking at the Safety goal, we using the HIN and Vision Zero Plan, If the projects employed any newer or innovative safety improvements, or implemented designed speed reduction tools. Another goal for “Mode Shift” is looking to promote personal mobility and transit projects, ATP expansion of routes. The goal of “State of Good Repair” assigns points for updates to traffic signals, culverts. The “Economic Vitality” portion looks at downtown activity centers, local business oriented areas. Development Strategy and connectivity for freight. For “Land Use or Housing” we added points for proximity to subsidized housing and if the community has met it’s housing goals. Finally, “Resiliency” looks at adding additional points if it is in priority preservation areas, areas prone to flooding or renewable energy.

Mr. Williams then introduced additional scoring criteria; while equity wasn’t in its own category, the MTP emphasized the equity portion and would add additional points for projects in equity focus areas. Additional points would also be given to communities where a project had advanced less than one regional target TIP project in the past five years. MVPC would also add points if they were involved in the review of plans and would assign negative points for inadequate engagement with MVPC.

Mr. Williams shared the online Scoring Application Tool. Mr. Williams then explained step by step how the tool works. Starting with a line drawn on a road in Haverhill to use as an example, he showed how questions will auto-populate. Some based on geographic location, others about the different scoring criteria as explained in the last section of the presentation. Mr. Williams showed in his example how responding to questions generates a score for the project.

As part of the example Mr. Williams showed that the Route One Project in Salisbury scored highly because of its presence on the High Injury Network, however if it was not on the network it would lose a number of points. Mr. Williams also shared how projects could be entered into the process to receive a score and paused for questions. Mr. Woelfel confirmed that there were no questions.

Mr. Williams then began explaining that larger projects tend to have higher scores since they have more opportunities to fit more of the criteria and this opens a discussion about normalizing the scoring and to acknowledge that smaller projects while not scoring highly, could still add a lot of value to the region. Mr. Williams also explained that information is constantly being collected and will need to be streamlined to reduce the number of times that a community would need to enter a project, for example, reducing inputs such as MapIt. Mr. Woelfel then asked for any questions. Mr. Materazzo asked if the MBTA housing community TIP point reduction be something we have considered? Mr. Williams noted that we had discussed this at length. Mr. Reed explained that within our values, we did talk about it extensively and acknowledged that it is important to support the potential for growth as is the intent of the law. We also determined that we want to support existing density and that we wanted to further support existing subsidized housing and then encourage growth secondarily. Mr. Reed also noted that part of the discussion circled on data sources to feed the information. Mr. Williams then shared his screen to show how Question 23 asks about exclusionary zoning and that if feasibility and zoning requirements are met, the project is within a .25 mile of subsidizing housing or has met .5% housing production plan has been met at least once in the past 5 years, it would gain points. Mr. Williams explained that he had used Residency data and that these criteria are how we integrate housing scoring. Mr. Reed noted that it makes sense to support new growth but want to prioritize existing density existing today.

Mr. Reed then explained the TFPC amount accounts for inflation and noted that some had been adjusted by the State. Mr. Reed explained that the Lawrence-Manchester Rail Corridor is being considered for additional regional target support and that the MPO Board may consider in the future. Mr. Reed explained that the North Andover 114 project is creating a log jam with state-wide support. Mr. Reed also noted that the Georgetown project had slipped to 2026. The North Ave Haverhill project was accelerated to 2027. Mr. Reed then noted a few smaller projects that had been programmed were on target and that the 133 Andover project is pushed to 2029 because of the high project costs. The Groveland – Salem Street Dam was not yet scored but left on the list to keep in on folks' radar. Mr. Reed then explained that the Design/Capital Purchase Reserve would support the design for smaller projects. Mr. Reed also noted that design would still require a local match. Mr. Reed also explained that the Bikeshare pilot in Newburyport is requesting reserve funds.

Mr. Taintor introduced himself and affiliations with the MPO board and Newburyport Livable Streets. Mr. Taintor then introduced the bikeshare program noting it would be small to begin with, but will thoughtfully connect the MBTA Station, Parker River Refuge, downtown, etc.. Mr. Taintor shared a map and noted that there is potential to connect with adjacent communities. Mr. Taintor then explained that a bikeshare program in the Newburyport area will be successful for two reasons; 1. For its service to

tourists and residents and 2. Because it will provide a good, safe way for people coming into the region to explore the coastal trails. Mr. Taintor explained the process to create the bikeshare noting their research into comparable bikeshares. Mr. Taintor indicated the Minuteman Bike Share in Concord and Acton as a great case study for a simple solution to facilitate the bike share due to flexible parking station which uses a concrete pad and geofencing for low impact. Another case study that Mr. Taintor shared was Susque Cycle in Harrisburg PA noting that they were operated by the Regional Planning Commission and that the vendor seems to specialize in small bike-share programs. Mr. Taintor noted that while they would go through the public procurement process, there are small bikeshare vendors with experience who could work with us.

Mr. Taintor showed a chart with a preliminary bike-share program budget and that they anticipated a 3-year pilot. They received a cost estimate from one vendor and looked at expected user counts for the purposes of budgeting and planning. The initial estimation is \$2,200 turnkey cost per bike for start-up and operating costs. Mr. Taintor walked the board through the rest of the cost breakdowns on the chart.

Mr. Taintor noted that like all other public transportation systems, bike shares do not pay for themselves with user fares, the approximate offset of use would be 11% therefore the rest of the accommodations would need to come from municipal support, grants, and private sponsorships. Mr. Taintor also noted the possibility of a Shared Streets and Spaces grant.

Mr. Taintor then invited questions. Mr. Woelfel asked if he is proposing CMAQ for more than 5 years because it would not be eligible. Ms. Hostetter then noted that there was no longer a time limitation on CMAQ funding. Ms. Briseñor then mentioned that Bikeshare applications can request capital cost funding from CMAQ and recommended that Mr. Taintor work with MVPC staff to enable that.

Mr. Woelfel then asked for any other questions, there being none, Mr. Woelfel asked if there were any other communities who wanted to present. Mr. Reed said that the only other project was the Groveland project but would be discussed at another time.

Mr. Reed then asked for guidance from the board regarding concerns for the programming reserve or timeline to bring them forward, since the next meeting will bring a formal list. There were no other comments.

Mr. Reed then introduced the FFY 25-29 Proposed Statewide Projects and asked, for questions on the state-wide side of the portfolio. There being none they were able to move forward to the transit portfolio and Mr. Reed asked Ms. Mahoney if she had any comments on the MeVa side. Ms. Mahoney said that the project to reconstruct the maintenance area; HPAC would move forward but any other things would fall under discretionary funding. Ms. Mahoney also noted that next year they will have new radios and a few other things for FFY 25-26.

Mr. Reed then introduced the next steps for the MVMPO meeting to vote on the TIP development process and explained that those items will eventually be baked into the STIP. Mr. Reed asked for questions and there being none he moved along to Item 7.

Item 7. General Program Updates

Mr. Reed then introduced two projects updates, first introducing Mr. Collins to discuss the Active Transportation Plan.

Mr. Collins shared a timeline for the Active Transportation Plan showing the task list and path forward noting the initial meeting of the Active Transportation Committee which was attended by Pete Sutton and Derek Shooster. Mr. Collins explained that they had discussed prioritization factors and will start to prioritize the projects and will conduct some site visits to the locations of the top two regional projects, reuniting in June to prioritize the top two projects.

Mr. Collins then shared the overview of the project timeline and explained that they had done a user count on all the trails in the region, done intercept surveys and abutters surveys to do a few write-ups on takeaways on the public engagement.

Mr. Collins then explained how the data they have in the GIS network to create concept projects that will be reviewed in the Active Transportation Committee. Mr. Collins then noted that all the information is available through the MVMoves Engagement module to have all the information in one place and that he would love everyone's feedback and to note if there is anything missing and asking folks to rank the projects.

Mr. Collins invited questions.

Mr. Reed then introduced Ms. Maldari and the Vision Zero Plan/SS4A update.

Ms. Maldari explained that the plan is guided through three vital questions beginning with "where have fatal and injury crashes occurred?" which is supported through the Trends-Based High Injury Network. The next question "Where are fatal and injury crashes likely to occur?" is generating the work from our technical consultant, BETA to create a predictive analysis which identifies areas with contributing roadway characteristics and AADT to identify high-risk areas. The final question "How can we eliminate future fatal and injury crashes?" uses the wholistic, Safe Systems Approach to find context-appropriate safety strategies.

Ms. Maldari gave an overview of the public engagement that had occurred to-date and identified how this will guide the prioritization scheme and action items. Ms. Maldari then shared a slide with a draft index explaining the different components of the plan and how each chapter would address the Who, Where, & How of the plan.

Item 8. Status of Ongoing and FFYs 2024-2028 TIP Projects

Ms. Mahoney explained that there are a few things to work out before the McGovern Train Station will be ready, but it is progressing well and should be complete by end of April. Ms. Mahoney also noted that there are no changes to the bus routes until September, but they will add additional cameras and bus board signs that show ETAs, but are in the process of working it out. Ms. Mahoney highlighted that the 13 bus will be doubling service but that there will be no service on Sunday in observation of Easter. Ms. Mahoney also noted appreciation to the City of Newburyport and Anna Jaques Hospital for their cooperation on bus stop improvements. Ms. Mahoney also noted that they had released a RFQ for design retainer.

Mr. Paris then provided updates on MVMPO TIP project changes.

- #605304 – Haverhill Bridge Replacement had changes to total contract cost which was eliminated.
- #608788 Haverhill HWY Reconstruction – Cost increase of \$4million
- #612074 – Lawrence Bridge Replacement; cost increase of \$1million
- #612002 – Lawrence Community Dat Arlington Improvements; Roadway reconstruction on Sidewalks and Curbing had a change in project manager and cost increase of \$3million.
- #607540 – Boxford border to boston trail has a new TFPCC and a decrease in total contract cost by \$200k.
- #602202 – Salisbury reconstruction of route 1 had a TIP decrease of \$9.5million

Item 9. Other Business

Mr. Woelfel asked for any other business. Mr. Reed announced that Mr. Coogan would like to take over the vacancy for Subregion 3. Groveland affirmed his appointment, Georgetown had not yet responded and The town of Merrimac Select Board took a no position on this item simply because they did not know Mr. Coogan but affirmed otherwise and that he would likely be appointed pending confirmation from Georgetown.

Item 10. Adjourn

Mr. Woelfel requested that they move to adjourn, noting the next meeting would be held on April 24th, 2024. Mr. Reed noted that they intended the next meeting to be in-person due to the alternating nature of each meeting between virtual and in-person. Mr. Woelfel requested a movement to adjourn which was so made by Mr. Pettis and seconded by Mr. Whitten.