

## Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization Docket

October 30, 2024

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### Item 4: MV Vision Zero – Plan Endorsement

**Context:** Since 2017, 140 people have been killed and 1,080 people have sustained life-changing injuries in transportation-related crashes in the Merrimack Valley. All can agree that this is unacceptable and requires intervention. Vision Zero is a transportation planning policy approach that aims to eliminate roadway severe injuries and fatalities. Embracing Vision Zero requires all roadway users, managers, and designers to adhere to a safe systems approach—an approach that acknowledges that all humans are vulnerable, make mistakes, and share responsibility in preventing severe and fatal injuries. To do this, roadway managers and designers must be proactive in addressing unsafe roadway conditions and behaviors, and must also look to create multiple, redundant safety mechanisms to protect users if/when a particular other intervention fails.

**Discussion:** Over the past year, MVPC transportation program staff have worked with stakeholders, including municipal officials, members of the public, advocates, public safety officers, and state engineers to learn about safety perspectives and needs throughout the region, as well as provide education on the Vision Zero approach. This work was complemented by technical work, including the development of a crowd-sourced safety challenges map, a trends-based high injury network, and predictive risk-based network. Engagement and technical work informed MVPC's draft Vision Zero Plan, which was funded through the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) federal aid discretionary program.

In August, MVMPO staff provided an overview of the plan and the MVMPO Board opened the comment period. At its September meeting, the MVMPO Board approved an extension of the comment period to accommodate West Newbury's request for additional review time. Staff have coordinated further with West Newbury and incorporated edits based on their feedback. The Board will have the opportunity to endorse the plan at this meeting.

**Proposed Action:** Endorse the MV Vision Zero Plan.

## Item 5: *MV Moves*

**Context:** *MV Moves* – the active transportation plan – builds upon the work that has been completed by previous planning efforts and seeks to advance priority active transportation and place making projects – such as implementing pedestrian amenities (benches, lighting, public art) – that encourage mode shift, create pleasant recreational opportunities, and support economic development in our town and urban centers.

**Discussion:** Phase 1 of the project was released for public comment at last month’s meeting. This portion of the document focuses on the prioritization of concept projects to improve the region’s overall network. Phase 1 includes an existing conditions assessment. This assessment informed the plan’s prioritization process. Phase 2, which will focus on placemaking near active transportation nodes, will begin this federal fiscal year. Should it be the Board’s pleasure, the Board will take a vote to endorse the plan during its October meeting.

**Proposed Action:** Endorse the *MV Moves* Plan.

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## Item 6: FFY2025-2029 TIP Amendment #1

**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 splits 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 in the region) for programming and develops 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. From time to time, the Board exercises its authority to amend and/or adjust the TIP based on anticipated project cost changes, unexpected needs, or the arrival of new, ready projects.

**Discussion:** FFY2025-2029 TIP Amendment #1 proposes several actions:

- Newburyport - Bikeshare Pilot – add new project (regional target)
- Border to Boston Earmarks (Newbury, Georgetown) – change program year
- Haverhill - Basiliere Bridge – increase project cost by appx. \$34M due to 25% engineering estimate.
- Haverhill - Main Street Intersection Safety Demonstration Projects (SS4A) – add two projects in Haverhill based on their successful SS4A discretionary aid awards
- Lawrence - Safety Action Plan (SS4A) – add new project based on Lawrence’s successful SS4A discretionary aid award.
- Haverhill - Removing the Scars of Urban Renewal (Reconnecting Communities) – add new project based on Haverhill’s successful Reconnecting Communities application.

The enclosed TIP revisions report provides the financial details of each of the proposed actions.

Proposed Action: Open the 21-day comment period for proposed FFY2025-2029 TIP Amendment #1.

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## Item 7: FFY2025-2029 TIP Adjustment #1

**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 splits 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 in the region) for programming and develops 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. From time to time, the Board exercises its authority to amend and/or adjust the TIP based on anticipated project cost changes, unexpected needs, or the arrival of new, ready projects.

**Discussion:** FFY2025-2029 TIP Adjustment #1 proposes two actions:

- Vulnerable Road User Systemic Safety Projects Near Bus Stops – add new districtwide project (statewide TIP)
- Haverhill/Methuen I-495 Bridge Replacement over the Merrimack River - aligns the FFY25-29 program with changes made at the end of FFY2024 to include PROTECT funding on the project following August Redistribution.

Proposed Action: Approve the proposed adjustment.

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## Item 8: Public Participation Plan – Comment Release

**Context:** MVMPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP) is a federally required document that details how the Board and its staff engage the public in the transportation planning decision making process. The document states goals and values for participation, includes examples of various approaches for engagement, and depicts decision trees that help staff select appropriate engagement strategies relevant to a process or project. The document includes anti-discrimination assurances and explains how complaints can be made in the event a member of the public perceives that they have been discriminated against. The PPP also includes information about language access and accessibility to ensure all members of the public can be included in decision-making.

**Discussion:** Typically, the MPOs update their PPPs every 3-4 years. MVMPO last updated its PPP in 2017. Since such time, demographics have shifted in the region, new assurances have been developed, and virtual engagement practices have grown. These changes warrant PPP modernization. Additionally, beginning in early 2023, staff have discussed meaningful engagement, and look to improve public access to transportation processes rather than simply encouraging engagement during financial programming. The proposed PPP amendment addresses these needs. During the October MVMPO meeting, staff will expand upon the goals

and values presentation provided during the September meeting to discuss the substantial changes proposed in the subject PPP update.

The MVMPO Board should note that over the past two years, MassDOT has been in the process of updating its own statewide PPP. The statewide PPP's policies and practices often trickle down into regional MPO's PPPs. The state's PPP is currently under FHWA review. Staff anticipate that MVMPO's Board will need to address further updates to the regional PPP once the state's PPP is endorsed.

**Proposed Action:** Release the regional Public Participation Plan for the 21-day public comment period.

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Docket Attachments: TIP Revisions Report<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of the docket's development, the available TIP Revisions Report did not include Haverhill's 2<sup>nd</sup> SS4A Demonstration award. Staff are working with MassDOT to queue up the action in eSTIP that aligns with the board's anticipated October 30 action.