

MVMPO – September 25, 2024: Meeting Minutes

Voting Members Present

Derek Krevat, representing Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation Monica Tibbits-Nutt
Tim Paris, representing Highway Administrator Johnathan Gulliver
Jerrard Whitten, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC)
Noah Berger, representing MeVa Board Chair Mayor Cassandra Gove
John Pettis, representing Mayor of Haverhill Melinda Barrett
Neil Harrington, representing Region 1
Matt Coogan, representing Region 3
Paul Materazzo, representing Region 4

Others Present

Miranda Briseño, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Kathleen Lambert, Haverhill
Andrew Shapiro, North Andover
Patrick Reed, MVPC
Tony Collins, MVPC
Jonah Williams, MVPC

Item 1. Call to Order

Mr. Krevat called the meeting to order at 12:02 PM. Mr. Reed called the roll and quorum was established.

Item 2. Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Krevat asked for public comments. There were no public comments.

Item 3. Adoption of Previous Meeting's Minutes

Mr. Harrington made the motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Materazzo seconded the motion. The roll call vote was unanimously in favor of adopting the minutes.

Item 4. MV Vision Zero – Plan Endorsement

Mr. Reed reminded attendees that the MV Vision Zero plan had been released for public comment during the previous meeting. He provided an overview of edits made during the comment period that included updating the front matter, edits to graphics to include keys, making formatting updates, and revising wording for municipal lists. MVMPO staff held two public hearings. Mr. Reed provided an overview of comments received- Brent Bergeron of Salisbury attended and had no comments, Marianne Vasey of Newburyport commented to commend the work and acknowledged recent improvements in Newburyport. Town of West Newbury staff attended and provided a comment that they would like more time to review the plan with Town stakeholders and to provide input on Town priorities. They recommended that there be

additional time before voting to endorse the plan. Mr. Reed presented two options for how to proceed – endorse the plan as a living document or extend the public comment period for an additional 21 days.

Mr. Materazzo made the motion to extend the public comment period an additional 21 days and to bring the plan for endorsement at the October MPO meeting, Mr. Whitten seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 5. *MV Moves* – Plan Release for Comment

Tony Collins introduced *MV Moves*, the regional active transportation plan and provided an overview of the vision and goals of the plan. Mr. Collins provided an overview of conceptual greenways throughout the region to highlight the broader vision of the projects identified in the plan. The outset of the project involved assessing existing conditions through mapping and data analysis, intercept and abutters surveys, and path user counts. Mr. Collins then discussed steps taken to identify priority projects including developing an engagement module, forming an Active Transportation Committee, and tabling public events. He highlighted some of the assets and limitations of existing paths in the region and highlighted some of the results of the intercept and abutters surveys, including economic impacts of paths. Mr. Collins then shared some of the results of the path user counts and discussed how residential and destination density relates to their level of use. He then provided an overview of the next generation of projects identified in the plan: the River Street Corridor in Haverhill, the Canal Street Corridor in Lawrence, the Riverwalk extension in Amesbury, Shawsheen River Path in Lawrence, the Parker Street sidepath in Newbury, and the Georgetown to Groveland Connector. He discussed how the Active Transportation Committee ranked these projects, informed by project scores, and Haverhill River Street was the top ranked project, but the City of Haverhill was already pursuing a RAISE grant for this project. Canal Street was the next highest priority project. Mr. Collins talked about how the plan set aside funding for engagement, and conceptual design for the top priority, and MVMPO staff are working with Toole Design for the concept design. He also mentioned that the plan includes project materials tailored to MassTrails grant applications for project that would be a good fit for this grant program. Mr. Collins concluded by highlighting how the paths connect people to place.

Mr. Krevat called for a motion to release the plan for a 21-day public comment period. Mr. Whitten made the motion to release the plan for public comment and Mr. Harrington seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 6. Public Participation Plan – Value and Goals

Mr. Reed introduced the Public Participation Plan, a federally required document including Title VI and anti-discrimination language. The public participation plan also details how the MPO solicits public involvement, lists engagement approaches employed by the MPO, and discusses strategies to improve public involvement with the MPO. Mr. Reed discussed the values identified in the plan: safety and wellbeing, collaboration, innovation, flexibility, efficiency. He went on to discuss the goals identified in the plan and let the board know there would be additional updates and actions regarding the Public Participation Plan in future meetings.

Item 7. MVMPO MOU Update – Next Steps

Mr. Reed provided an overview of the purpose of the MVMPO MOU, a document that establishes the membership structure, and defines MVMPO staff roles and responsibilities. Mr. Reed discussed the purpose of reviewing the MOU including consideration of municipal representation on the board, formalizing appointees and alternates, and integrating a previously existing Joint Transportation Committee into the MVMPO membership. Mr. Reed discussed feedback provided so far, including desire from some communities to be more involved, and others saying they may have limited capacity to attend meetings. He went on to discuss comments about the role of advocates in the board. Mr. Reed discussed next steps, which include sending questionnaires for mayors and managers and current board members to fill out. Mr. Coogan asked for some more context regarding the structure of other MPOs, and information about population and staff size of member communities, and also connections between transportation and economic development and housing. Mr. Berger commented about what the goals of JTC would be and if these goals could be accomplished through the existing MPO structure and could training be provided to member communities aligned with these goals.

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

Mr. Berger provided an update on transit projects. MeVa service in Lawrence moved to the Senator Patricia McGovern Transportation Center on September 1st. MeVa also rolled out an extension of a route (route 14) and a new route (route 11). Mr. Berger commended MassDOT for recent grant opportunities, including for fare free service and interconnectivity between RTAs. MeVa has applied for a grant to increase frequencies on the route 24 bus.

Mr. Paris updated the board on highway projects. Project 612143 had a slight name change, project 608816 advertised earlier in September, and project 609466 advertised in June.

Mr. Berger acknowledged the loss of Methuen Mayor Neil Perry, and announced MeVa will be naming a paratransit vehicle after him.

Item 9. Other Business

Mr. Reed provided a brief overview of the schedule for FFY25 MPO meetings, including the possibility of holding an MVMPO retreat in January.

Item 10. Adjourn

Mr. Coogan made the motion to adjourn, and Mr. Materazzo seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm.