

MEETING MINUTES
Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO) Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Attendees:**Voting Members:**

Derek Krevat, representing MassDOT Secretary Jamey L. Tesler
Brian Fallon, representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver
Jerrard Whitten, Executive Director MVPC
Noah Berger, Merrimack Valley Transit Authority (MeVa)
John Pettis, representing Haverhill
Dan McCarthy, representing City of Lawrence
Neil Harrington, Salisbury, representing MPO Subregion #1
John Cashell, Georgetown, representing MPO Subregion #3
Paul Materazzo, Andover, representing MPO Subregion #4

Others Present:

Patrick Reed, MVPC	Christine Lindberg, Haverhill
Tony Collins, MVPC	Annabel Shein, MassDOT
Tim Paris, MassDOT District 4	Andrew Wang, MassDOT
Josh Levin, MassDOT District 4	Jerry Klima, Salisbury
Frank Suszynski, MassDOT D4	Roger Woodbury

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order

Derek Krevat called the meeting to order at 12:02pm and stated that he was representing Transportation Secretary Jamey Tesler. A quorum was confirmed via roll call.

Agenda Item No. 2: Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Krevat paused to solicit comments from the public and noted that the chat function could also be used to provide comments. There being no comments, Mr. Krevat moved to item No. 3.

Agenda Item No. 3: Adoption of Minutes for November 30, 2022 Meeting

Mr. Krevat asked for the group to approve last meeting's minutes. Mr. Pettis made the motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Whitten. There being no questions or comments on the minutes, Mr. Reed called the roll. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Agenda Item No. 4: Status of FY2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program
Projects: Highway and Transit Projects**

Mr. Paris (MassDOT District 4) reviewed projects. Mr. Paris indicated that there were several project updates, including minor changes to some estimates. Mr. Paris proceeded to discuss the highway project updates:

- 605304 (Haverhill Bridge Replacement at Bridge Street over the Merrimack River and B&M Railroad): slight cost increases.
- 608029 (Newburyport Intersection Improvements at Route 1): minor updates to cost estimates.
- C609466 (Haverhill Bridge – 495 over the Merrimack River): cost estimates updated.
- 612002 (Lawrence Community Day Arlington Improvements [Safe Routes to School]): cost estimates updated.
- 608095 (North Andover Corridor Improvements on Route 114 between 125 and Stop and Shop Driveway): received a new advertisement date of September 2025.
- 606522 (Andover Bridge Rehabilitation I-495 over State Route 28, I-495 over B&M Railroad, and I-495 over Route 28 Northbound): 100 percent design completed; estimates updated.
- 610924 (Lawrence Roadway Reconstruction on Amesbury): total federal participation cost (TFPC) updated.
- 610658 (Methuen Intersection Improvements are Riverside Drive and Burnham Road): new advertisement date of 2023.
- 602202 (Salisbury Reconstruction of Route 1, Lafayette Road): 100 percent design completed; estimates updated.

Mr. Krevat opened the floor to Noah Berger, MeVa Administrator, to provide an overview of transit projects. Mr. Berger began with items in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Mr. Berger stated that MeVa had received its 35 buses. Mr. Berger commented that the buses have rear destination signs, which is a key highlight. The buses also include new seat designs that are comfortable, stain resistant, and MeVa color-branded. The buses also include lug nut indicators to show whether buses' lug nuts are trued are not. Mr. Berger mentioned that MeVa is still working on the van order, and that MeVa is hoping to avoid purchasing vans that require steps, instead option for low-floor van vehicles to assist passengers. Mr. Berger mentioned that MeVa may need to engineer the low floor vans itself. MeVa has received its supervisory vehicle. Mr. Berger noted that miscellaneous costs cover minor capital needs. Mr. Berger continued, noting that MeVa has additional planning funds this year and that MeVa met with MVPC to determine how to best use planning funds. Mr. Berger noted that MeVa completed an initial project scope for the McGovern center, including reconfiguration fo the ground floor to create a bus hub. MeVa envisions the ground floor to support up to 12 buses at one time, and that no other vehicles will be use/access the ground floor. Mr. Berger noted that the plan includes renovation of the existing retail space and will be an incubator space.

Mr. Berger continued to discuss projects that are not on the TIP. MeVA received FTA funding to support planning for a post-COVID transit network. Mr. Berger stated that MeVA received funds to build two solar powered ferry vessels to provide transit along the Merrimack River. Mr. Berger noted that formerly, each river-adjacent community in the Merrimack Valley supported travel through provision of ferry docks, so there is historical precedence for the proposed service. The vessels are anticipated to be somewhere between 20 and 27 feet long. Mr. Berger provided a few examples of solar powered vessels. The grant provides opportunities to test these facilities without impacting bus services. Mr. Berger stated that MeVa is about two to three years out from implementation.

Mr. Berger noted that in April, MeVA will be providing updated service routes, which will straighten out existing routes to make service more efficient and attractive. The first changes will be in Newburyport, Amesbury, and Salisbury. Mr. Berger invited all to attend a tour of the new routes. Mr. Berger stated that MeVA will be updating bus route numbers for the purposes of

simplification to increase the number of single digit routes. Mr. Berger noted that the 32 will be the number 2, the 33 will be the number 3 and the 34 will be the number 4, and so on.

Mr. Krevat asked if the ferry award needed to be added to the TIP. Mr. Berger noted that the award is in the FY24 element but mentioned that he could work with MVPC and MassDOT to add it to the TIP in FY23 if needed.

Agenda Item No. 5. UPWP Adjustment #2 – Add New MPO Staff to Contract

Mr. Krevat opened the floor to Mr. Reed for a proposed UPWP amendment. Mr. Reed noted that the proposed UPWP amendment would add him to the contract at \$67.03/hour. Mr. Reed noted that as the program moves to add staff positions, it will bring more holistic financial updates to the Board about the status of the current FY23 budget. Mr. Whitten made the motion to endorse the UPWP adjustment, which was seconded by Mr. Berger. The motion was approved unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 6. TIP Amendment #1: Addition of Two Highway Projects to the TIP

Mr. Reed provided an overview of two proposed TIP amendments that represent earmarks provided in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation for the Border to Boston Trail. The amendments fund design for two separate segments of the trail. There being no questions, Mr. Pettis moved to open the 21-day comment period for the amendment, which was seconded by Mr. Whitten. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 7. TIP Amendment #2 – Addition of Two Transit Projects (Operating) to the TIP

Mr. Reed provided an overview of two discretionary grant awards proposed for a TIP amendment. The two federal aid awards are part of the 5310 program, which are distributed to local recipients via a competitive state grant program. The two awards are for operating local Council on Aging (COA) transit (Groveland Council on Aging [\$9,000] and Northern Essex Elder Transport [\$25,000]), and are matched by the state, which will provide the full 50 percent necessary for the federal award. Mr. Berger made a motion to release the amendment for the 21-day comment period, with a second by Mr. Pettis. Mr. Berger clarified that though the award is listed in the MeVa service area, MeVa is not the recipient. Mr. Krevat noted that the eSTIP software is likely responsible for the report text and agreed that MeVa is not a recipient of the award. Mr. Krevat acknowledged a question in the chat from Roger Woodbury requesting to know where the amendment public hearing notice will be posted. Mr. Reed responded that he will post the meeting links online and that the MPO would be happy to also receive any written comments or comments at next month's MPO meeting, which will include a hearing. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 8. Endorsement of the Title VI Plan

Mr. Reed provided an overview of the public participation process for the MPO's Title VI document, which is the document that provides policies, procedures, and complaint information related to federal and state anti-discrimination law. Mr. Reed noted that the MPO did not receive any public comments during its 21-day comment period. Mr. Pettis made a motion to endorse the Title VI Plan, which was seconded by Mr. Whitten and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 9. Performance Measure 1 (PM1) – Safety

Mr. Reed noted that each year, the state looks at performance targets per federal surface transportation legislation. Mr. Reed noted that the ask today would be for the MPO to endorse MassDOT's proposed statewide targets. Mr. Reed noted that the safety targets are simply targets, but that MassDOT and the region have a continued goal of zero injuries and fatalities on their road networks. Mr. Reed noted that the statewide targets for fatalities for the state is 355 fatalities. Mr. Reed noted that the region's share of statewide fatalities has historically been between 2.75 and 8.25 percent. As such, the region would be ideally working toward a goal of under 19 fatalities, maintaining the ultimate goal of zero fatalities.

Mr. Reed stated that MassDOT normalizes its crash totals by vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The reduction in VMT impacts the fatality rate denominator, and as such there has been an uptick in the five-year average fatality rate. Mr. Reed noted that across a five-year average the region is sitting at the calendar year target of .59 fatalities per 100 million VMTs.

Mr. Reed noted that the state also looks at incapacitating injuries and that the regional share of incapacitating injuries has grown over time, which merits further tracking by the MPO in upcoming calendar years. The regional target would be less than 291 incapacitating injuries—with an ultimate goal of zero—in order to support the statewide target of 2,569 incapacitating injuries for the calendar year. The target is also normalized into a rate based on 100 million VMTs traveled. The region is sitting right below the statewide target of 4.25 incapacitating injuries per 100 million VMTs.

The state also looks at nonmotorist severe and fatal injuries as people walking and biking are a roadway's most vulnerable roadway users (meaning they are the likeliest to have severe or fatal outcomes in a crash). Mr. Reed noted that the region and state are both seeing an uptick in nonmotorist severe and fatal injuries because there are increasing numbers of pedestrians and bicyclists using the transportation network. This creates a higher probability that there will be an opportunity for crashes. For the region to do its share, the Merrimack Valley would need to have less than 18 severe injuries and fatalities to support the state target.

Mr. Reed briefly discussed how the MPO will work to meet these targets. From a planning perspective, this means continuing road safety audits, looking at project evaluation and scoring to emphasize the importance of projects that support vulnerable roadway users, and working on projects, including SS4A. On the implementation side there is a need to recognize funding tradeoffs to be sure that we are supporting the needs of vulnerable roadway users.

Mr. Krevat asked for a motion and second to endorse the statewide safety performance targets. Mr. Whitten made the motion to endorse, which was seconded by Mr. Pettis. The motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 10. Performance Measure 2 (PM2) – Bridge & Pavement Performance Measures

Mr. Krevat introduced Jack Moran from MassDOT's Highway Division to present the Performance Measure 2: bridge and pavement performance measures. Mr. Moran began by noting that the second performance measure deals with the infrastructure condition of roadways and bridges within the federal performance management system.

Mr. Moran stated that for pavement, monitoring is broken into the interstate and non-interstate national highway system (NHS). Mr. Moran stated that the non-interstate NHS is primarily owned by MassDOT, but that about 30 percent is owned by local municipalities. For both, staff track percent the percent of good condition vs. percent poor condition. There is a minimum condition threshold for the interstate side dictating that states must not have more than five percent of roadway in poor condition. There is no equivalent threshold on the non-interstate side. Federal legislation requires the use of a national pavement condition index. MassDOT has historically used a composite index known as Pavement Serviceability. A composite index takes various forms of distress, including ride, rattling, rutting, cracking, and raveling and aggregates these into a single measure. The federal measure does this as well. Mr. Moran noted that MassDOT is working to develop a correlation between the PMI (Pavement Management Index, federal) and PSI (Pavement Serviceability Index, state) measures.

On the bridge side (National Highway System only), Mr. Moran stated the measure incorporates the size of the bridge. This is an important factor related to liabilities and long-term investment needs as bridge size informs the cost of refurbishment and rehabilitation. The measure is calculated by taking the sum of an area in a particular condition state over the overall area of national highway bridges (approximately 29,000,000 square feet).

Mr. Moran paused for questions. There being none, he continued to show the 2019 and 2021 target performance measures vs. actual monitoring findings. Mr. Moran noted that the non-interstate conditions were determined by IRI, a different index, due to data limitations. Mr. Moran stated that IRI is a limited measure, particularly in urban communities with utility castings.

Mr. Moran discussed the regional distribution of interstate lane miles, which are entirely MassDOT owned, as well as the distribution of non-interstate lane miles by region. Mr. Moran cited MassDOT's road inventory file as the source for these items. Mr. Moran stated that 11 percent of the interstate system in Massachusetts (which is MassDOT owned) falls within the Merrimack Valley. Mr. Moran stated that there are 235 non-interstate lane miles of pavement, and these are located within the Merrimack Valley, and 85 of those are owned by municipalities rather than the state. Mr. Moran noted that PSI data are not available at the regional level. Mr. Moran pointed out the condition disparity between the percentage of state owned non-interstate pavement quality and municipal owned non-interstate pavement quality for lane miles included in the National Highway System. Mr. Moran highlighted the state's Municipal Pavement Program as means to help support pavement improvements on municipal-owned National Highway System roadways.

Mr. Moran displayed a table showing the targets for good condition pavement for the interstate NHS. 2023 and 2025 targets are held constant at 70 percent “good” lane miles, with the state’s rate of percent good decreasing marginally between 2019 and 2021. Mr. Moran noted that the state is setting a more aggressive target for percent poor, which is being set at 2 percent.

For non-interstate National Highway System roadways, the targets are set at 30 percent “good” for 2023 and 2025 and 5 percent “poor” for 2023 and 2025 targets.

Mr. Moran stated that bridges on the NHS are predominantly owned by MassDOT, and that only one bridge in the region of the total 124 in the Merrimack Valley are municipally owned. In terms of condition, Mr. Moran noted that the Merrimack Valley’s bridges have both a greater share of bridges classified as good as compared to the statewide percentages and a greater share of bridges classified as poor compared to the statewide percentages. Mr. Moran noted the double decker bridge on I-495 and the Basiliere Bridge account for a large share of the region’s share of the “poor” classification. Mr. Moran noted that the Basiliere Bridge is currently programmed for improvements.

Mr. Moran commented that the 2021 Bond Bill authorized what is known as the “Next-Gen Bridge Program,” a new GANS (Grant Anticipation Notes) authorization of \$1.25 billion for bridge replacement. Shortly after, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Legislation created the bridge formula program. The combined investment of these two sources is in the neighborhood of \$2.6 billion. Mr. Moran compared this level of investment to bridge investment 10 years prior priced at \$3.0 billion, noting the time value of money. This said, MassDOT plans to address a backlog in bridge refurbishment and replacement as well a significant increase in preservation work. Mr. Moran noted that some projects will be advertised in 2024 and 2025, and that improvements will be seen beyond 2025. Mr. Moran noted that the targets suggest the goal is to keep condition indicators static, which is largely in part due to the amount on investment intended for preservation/refurbishment.

Mr. Krevat asked for a motion to endorse MassDOT’s statewide pavement and bridge targets. Mr. Pettis made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Materazzo. The vote passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 11. Performance Measure 3 (PM3) – Reliability, Congestion & Emissions

Mr. Krevat proposed the group defer discussion about PM3 to future meetings to allow for additional time to cover the TIP. The group agreed.

Agenda Item No. 12. FY2024-2028 TIP Readiness Discussion

Mr. Reed provided an overview of the TIP Readiness, stating that the TIP readiness process allows parties in MassDOT right-of-way, MassDOT environmental, divisions etc. to weigh-in on potential programming years based on project progress to date. Mr. Reed noted that the region anticipates obligation authority in the ballpark of \$13.5 million in FY24 and will see slight increases through 2028, totaling approximately \$72 million across the five year cycle. Mr. Reed noted that the Route 114 Corridor Improvements project in Andover was previously anticipated

to absorb a significant share of regional target obligation authority in FY24; however, that per readiness day discussions, the project will likely slide into 2025. Mr. Reed indicated that this could potentially leave about \$2.9 million left to program in FY24. Mr. Reed also commented that there is currently about \$2.5 million in FY25, and a larger sum in 2028 left unprogrammed. Mr. Reed identified two projects in Lawrence that may be candidates to program in FY24.

Mr. Reed asked the group if they had any input on approaches to future TIP cycle discussions, highlighting the potential to fund the aforementioned Lawrence projects, capital purchase program, and flexes to MeVa. Mr. Reed commented that cost increases through the program are anticipated and that gaps could also be held to cover any additional cost updates. Mr. Fallon noted that there was still an intent for the Route 114 Corridor Project to meet an FY24 advertisement date. Mr. Klima asked if MassDOT had any action/guidance related to the MPO's letter requesting the state absorb additional project cost for the Route 114 project. Mr. Krevat discussed the state's fiscal constraint review process and programming process and noted that the state would provide information soon regarding the letter previously submitted by the MPO. Paul Materazzo requested the project scoring be made available and ranked to help understand where projects could potentially be programmed. Mr. Reed confirmed that this could be made available for the March meeting.

Agenda Item No. 13. Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Award Update

Mr. Reed provided an update on the SS4A grant award. Mr. Reed stated that over the course of the next year, staff would work with Federal Highway on grant ratification, which could take anywhere between six months and year. Mr. Reed noted that staff would initiate partner coordination with NMCOG to hit the ground running when the grant award funding becomes available.

Agenda Item No. 14. Other Business

Mr. Krevat solicited other business topics from the MPO. There being none, Mr. Krevat moved to the last item: adjournment.

Agenda Item No. 15. Adjourn

Mr. Whitten made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Materazzo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting ended at 1:15pm.