

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
Noah Berger, 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
Matthew Coogan, Subregion 3
Paul Materazzo, representing Subregion 4

Others Present

Rebecca Oldham, Subregion 3
Derek Krevat, MassDOT
Derek Shooster, MassDOT
Tim Paris, MassDOT
Andrew Wang, MassDOT
Miranda Briseño, MassDOT
Michelle Scott, MassDOT
Josh Levin, MassDOT
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

Call to Order

Steve Woelfel called the meeting to order at 12:00pm. Patrick Reed took the roll call.

Opportunity for Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Adoption of Previous Meeting's Minutes

The motion to adopt the previous meeting minutes on March 27 was made by Mr. Whitten. The motion was seconded by Mr. Snow. All were in favor. Ms. Oldham abstained.

ACTION ITEM: FFY25-29 Transportation Improvement Program

Mr. Reed reviewed the TIP scenarios and a summary of the potential release for public comment. Mr. Reed reviewed highlights in the TIP. The total apportionment comes to just under \$514 million - \$73 million of which is regional target funding. The program includes a reserve for design funds and a reserve for the Newburyport bikeshare pilot program. The state projects \$440 million for bridge work.

Mr. Reed stated that there are still edits to be made as staff awaits receipt of information from the MBTA regarding projects and updates to funding.

Mr. Materazzo made the motion to release the TIP for a 21-day public comment period. Mr. Whitten seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

CIP Development and Relation to TIP/STIP (MassDOT)

Michelle Scott (MassDOT), manager of capital planning, presented information regarding the CIP development and its relation to the TIP/STIP. The CIP is a rolling 5-year plan for investments throughout the commonwealth. The CIP has a nested framework with three major priorities – Reliability, Modernization, and Expansion. The major funding sources for the CIP include federal, state, MassDOT, and other sources. Federal aid and state matches are most of the funding sources for the CIP. Like the STIP, the CIP is fiscally constrained. The CIP and the STIP follow different timelines – the CIP captures when spending begins and follows over the lifetime of the project.

Ms. Scott stated that there are certain factors that shape the CIP, such as the rollout of the BIL and the new formula programs that are included in the surface transportation authorization act. The CIP is also shaped by travel patterns, feedback from the public, a focus on climate and resilience, and MassDOT's Beyond Mobility plan.

Ms. Scott stated safety, climate stewardship, asset management, and partnership with municipalities are investment focus areas.

Ms. Scott noted that CIP development occurs over a 9-month period with a finalized CIP by June 2024. There are upcoming opportunities for feedback between May 16 and June 7. There will be a public hearing in the Merrimack Valley on May 30. There are also ways to provide feedback online.

Mr. Materazzo asked a question about how the state is thinking about reimagining commuter rail stations to better serve the new 3A compliant zoning districts being adopted in the region. Ms. Scott responded

by stating the MBTA has their own CIP that they are developing with specific investments in the rail program. She also stated that MassDOT's Office of Transportation Planning works closely with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. Mr. Woelfel stated that MassDOT would follow up with Mr. Materazzo with more information.

Mr. Coogan followed up with a similar comment stating that adjacent small towns that must comply with 3A do not have pedestrian or transit infrastructure and that he welcomes state support for infrastructure that supports housing in walkable communities.

ACTION ITEM: FFY25 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Reed presented information regarding the UPWP. He stated that the UPWP sets the agenda for transportation program staff. There are four tasks with eighteen subtasks. The four tasks are program management, data collection, transportation planning, and other planning support. The total estimated budget is \$1.4 million. Major deliverables include federal certification documents. Other important items coming up include a call for projects to access design funds on the TIP, implementation of automatic trail counters, carry-over pavement management program, active transportation plan phase 2, supporting MeVa, project scoping, two collective purchases, and MPO procedures.

Mr. Reed stated that the UPWP also includes facilitating an MPO retreat, implementing the new TIP scoring tool, reviewing TIP projects, and writing grant applications. There are pending edits to the UPWP, such as formatting the budget page and the endorsement narrative.

Mr. Snow made the Motion to release the UPWP for a 21-day public comment period. Mr. Coogan seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

MassDOT Beyond Mobility (MassDOT)

Mr. Krevat presented information regarding MassDOT's Beyond Mobility plan. Mr. Krevat stated that the plan is out for public comment through May 31. Beyond Mobility is the state's second state-wide long-range plan. Beyond mobility is part of a larger planning effort, MassDOT@15, which also includes the strategic business plan and the Transportation Funding Task Force. Beyond Mobility is part of the strategic planning and sets a framework for future planning efforts.

Mr. Krevat stated that Beyond Mobility relies heavily on public feedback to understand the current challenges facing residents and members of the state-wide community. Out of public feedback, high level themes were developed. One theme was the need and desire to get around without a car. Connected to that is the need to access transit by other modes of transportation. For non-English speakers who provided input, wayfinding and access were high priorities. Mr. Krevat stated that they took what they heard and synthesized them into the structure of the plan. The outcome is a structure with six priority areas: Safety, Reliability, Supporting Clean Transport, Destination Connectivity, Resiliency, and Travel Experience. There are over 100 action items across the six areas.

Mr. Krevat stated MassDOT created a webpage to track progress and is currently taking comments on the draft plan.

Status of Ongoing and FFYs 2024-2028 TIP Projects

Status of Transit Projects

Mr. Berger presented information on the status of on-going transit projects. Mr. Berger stated that the largest capital project, the reconfiguration of McGovern Transportation Center, is ahead of schedule. He anticipates the completion in time for the September bus schedule.

Mr. Berger stated that MeVa is amid transition to low-floor cutaway vans with the same colorful MeVa markings.

Mr. Berger stated that drivers are currently testing mirrorless mirrors that fill the gaps and blindspots of the buses.

Mr. Berger stated that Elizabeth Maldari (MVPC) will be giving a presentation on age-friendly design to make spaces friendly for seniors and those with mobility challenges.

Status of TIP Roadway and Bridge Projects

Mr. Paris reported that Lawrence bridge replacement 612074 – didn't have it on the sheet, but now has it approved and listed. Mr. Paris also reported project number 612158 – bridge replacement Methuen rail trail has a new ad date.

Other Business

Mr. Reed welcomed Rebecca Oldham and Matt Coogan to the MPO as designee and alternative for subregion 3.

Adjourn

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Coogan. The motion was seconded by Mr. Whitten.