

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO)

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, February 24, 2021 – 12:00 p.m.

Attending:

Voting Members:

Bryan Pounds, MassDOT, representing Acting MassDOT Secretary Jamey Tesler
Frank Suszynski, representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver
Theresa Park, MVPC Executive Director
Joseph Costanzo, MVRTA Administrator
Pedro Soto, representing the City of Lawrence
John Pettis, representing the City of Haverhill
Jerry Klima, Salisbury, representing MPO Subregion #1
Robert Snow, Rowley, representing MPO Subregion #2
John Cashell, Georgetown, representing MPO Subregion #3
Paul Materazzo, Andover, representing MPO Subregion #4

Others Present:

Anthony Komornick, MVPC	Connie Raphael, MassDOT District 4
Mary Kay Beninati, MVPC	Derek Shooster, MassDOT Planning
Betsy Goodrich, MVPC	Andrew Shapiro, North Andover
Chris Timmel, FHWA	Rebecca Oldham, Groveland
Brian Fallon, MassDOT	John Hendrickson, Stantec
Andrew Port, Newburyport	Alex Loncarevic, VHB

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order

Bryan Pounds called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and asked Tony Komornick to conduct a roll call vote of members attending the virtual meeting. Mr. Komornick then announced that eight members were present and that there was a quorum. *{Note: John Pettis arrived in time to vote on the Adoption of Minutes and Paul Materazzo arrived in time to vote on the Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Proposed Amendments to the MVMPO FFYs 2021-2025 TIP}*.

Agenda Item No. 2: Opportunity for Public Comment

Bryan Pounds asked if there were any members of the public present who wished to speak to the MVMPO. No one came forward to do so.

Agenda Item No. 3: Adoption of Minutes of the January 27, 2021 Virtual MVMPO Meeting

Vote: Robert Snow motioned to approve the January 27, 2021 MVMPO

meeting minutes. Jerry Klima seconded the motion.

The motion to accept the January 27, 2021 MVMPO Meeting Minutes passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0.

Agenda Item No. 4: Status of Ongoing and FFYs 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Projects

a. Status of TIP Roadway and Bridge Projects

Connie Raphael reported the following project updates.

FFY 2021 Projects:

- The bids on the South Broadway and Mount Vernon Street Intersection Project in Lawrence were opened yesterday and Aqualine Utility, Inc. appears to be the low bidder.
- The estimated cost of the Route 110/Route 108 Intersection project in Haverhill has increased slightly as has the cost of the Andover/Tewksbury Highway Lighting Project.

Other

- The cost of the Reconstruction of Route 1 project has increased by \$11 million to \$17,514,254.

Joe Costanzo alerted Frank Suszynski and Connie Raphael to the fact that there are holes in the decking of the I-495 NB Bridge before Exit 48. Frank said that he would alert the Bridge Section about this situation.

b. Status of Transit Projects

FFY 2021 Projects:

Joe Costanzo reported the following:

- The MVRTA signed a purchase order with Gillig in January for the replacement of nine model-year 2009 buses that will be delivered in 2022, noting that MPO Flex money had been used to help with this purchase.
- An order has been placed for 16 new Type E2 vans that will be delivered by the end of June 2021 that will replace 16 model year 2015 vehicles.
- The MVRTA has received 14 bidders for replacing the model year 2008 security system at the McGovern Transportation Center.
- Automatic passenger counters are being installed on all MVRTA fixed route buses and commuter coaches and will be operational by the end of April.
- We are replacing a supervisory vehicle that will be delivered in March,

made a bulk purchase of tires for vans, and acquired upgraded diagnostics software for transmissions and engines.

All these projects will be wrapped up by the end of June.

Anthony Komornick reported that the MPO will have just enough FFY 2021 Target funding available to cover the cost increases to the Haverhill Route 110/108 and Groveland Community Trail projects as they are now being shown in eSTIP. This is something that the MVMPO will likely have to address in the coming months. Bryan Pounds stated we typically wait for final PS&E for projects to make changes to the TIP because costs often change with that submission.

Agenda Item No. 5: Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Proposed Amendments to MVMPO FFYs 2021-2025 TIP

- a. Proposed Amendments to add Section 5339-Funded MVRTA Transit Projects to FFY 2021; Remove MVRTA Riverbank Stabilization Project from FFY 2021

Anthony Komornick reported that last month the MVMPO released a series of transit amendments for the Fiscal Year 2021 element of the TIP for Public Review and Comment. There were eight amendments proposed, seven of which were Section 5339 funded projects that the MVRTA wanted to implement, and the other amendment was the removal of the Riverbank Stabilization project because it was not believed that that project could go forward in 2021.

Joe Costanzo then briefly reviewed the seven proposed new, small-scale transit projects that would be implemented using FTA Section 5339 funds. He noted that all these projects addressed MVRTA transit security issues. These projects need to go forward quickly so that the funding can be spent by June 30th when the match (RTACAP) expires.

Mr. Costanzo then explained that at the January meeting he had reported that the NEPA Review process for the Bank Stabilization project was not going to be completed in FFY 2021. Since FTA could not approve a grant request for the project until the NEPA process was completed, it was a good idea to propose deleting it from the FFY 2021 Transit Element. However, the MVRTA recently received a communication from FTA Region One that they should be able to approve the NEPA review in FFY 2021 and that he will be in a position of filing a 5307 grant in FFY 2021 and have it approved by FTA sometime in mid-September.

He then requested that the MVMPO endorse the seven Section 5339 funded amendments as described, but not delete the Riverbank Stabilization so that it

stays on the TIP and the STIP.

Vote: There was a motion made by Joe Costanzo to approve the proposed amendments as presented with the comment from the MVRTA that we will not be endorsing the deletion of the Riverbank Stabilization project. This motion was seconded by Jerry Klima.

This motion passed by a 10 to 0 roll call vote.

Agenda Item No. 6: Discussion of Status of Candidate Target Projects for inclusion in MVMPO Draft FFYs 2022-2026 TIP

Mr. Komornick started by informing members that MVMPO Target funding levels for FFYs 2022-2025 will be the same as those shown in the current TIP and that the FFY 2026 Target figure will drop slightly from the FFY 2025 level. In addition, there will be less funding available for statewide projects in the new TIP than is shown in the current TIP.

Anthony Komornick then presented the project scores that are based on the MPO's Transportation Evaluation Criteria that had been updated at a recent meeting of MVPC and MassDOT staff.

Bryan Pounds asked the scores shown are out of what possible score? Mary Kay Beninati answered the highest project score possible was 18.

Paul Materazzo asked why Route 133 only received a score of 1.2 for Community Effects and Support when the project has ample support from the community and the town? Mary Kay Beninati answered that the project did get full credit for community support, but there are four other factors that are scored in that section.

Mary Kay Beninati then went over a FFYs 2022-2026 Regional Target projects list that was based on "TIP Readiness Day" information. Mary Kay pointed out that the region has almost \$9.5 million in Target funding available in 2022 if anyone can have projects ready to advertise by September 30, 2022. Based on project readiness, the only target project in 2022 is Lawrence Intersection Improvements at Merrimack Street and South Broadway (Route 28).

Projects expected to be ready in 2023 are Lawrence Intersection Reconstruction at Marston Street & East Haverhill Street, Methuen Intersection Improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road, and Salisbury Reconstruction of Route 1 (Lafayette Road), now with an \$11 million increase in cost.

The North Andover Route 114 Corridor Improvements project, with its increase in cost, uses the entire regional Target for the final three years of the TIP (FFYs 2024-2026 and is AC'd over 4 years, still needing just over \$2,000,000 in FFY 2027.

Bryan Pounds explained what items are considered in TIP Readiness Days discussions. MassDOT staff, with input from MPO staff, first considers the current FFY to see how project development is progressing and makes recommendations as to when projects can be advertised for construction. Mary Kay's list is based on the project programming recommendations that came out of TIP Readiness Days, but these recommended project advertising dates can change. The MPO will not be making decisions on project programming until next month's meeting.

Jerry Klima said that Neil Harrington said that the sewer project along Route 1 in Salisbury is going to be done earlier than expected, with final paving in August of 2022 and inquired if the Route 1 Reconstruction project could be advertised in 2022. Frank Suszynski replied that that project will not be able to go in 2022 because there is a lot of environmental permitting. Bryan Pounds cautioned that any cost increases are not yet official until they are approved at OTP.

Jerry Klima then asked if having one project absorb more than three years of regional target funds is that the right policy or should some of that funding come from somewhere else? Joe Costanzo echoed this concern. Bryan Pounds said that decision is entirely up to the MPO. He noted that the Route 114 project had increased in cost by approximately \$10 million and it would be helpful if we could hear from the District what is behind this cost change. Frank Suszynski said that he had just received a report on this project and has not had a chance to look at it yet. The District will review it and report back to the MPO.

Tony Komornick noted that next month we will have more information about the Statewide projects and the transit projects that will be considered for inclusion in the document.

Agenda Item No. 7: FFY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program

Anthony Komornick noted that the MVMPO was informed that it would have \$941,381 available to conduct state and federally funded highway and transit planning activities in FFY 2022. That amount is approximately \$33,000 less than the amount that was available to the MVMPO in FFY 2021. He noted that this was largely due to a reduction in the amount of federal transit planning funds that will be coming into the state.

Mr. Komornick then referred to MassDOT and USDOT Guidance on the development of the UPWP and focused on the recommendations made by MassDOT for data collection activities that they would like to see included in each MPO's UPWP. These include such items as making greater use of the CONVEYAL tool to measure accessibility, providing MassDOT with information on the status of Asset Management programs in the region, mapping the impacts of Climate Change on our region's transportation network, and mapping the location of MVRTA transit routes and route marker signs.

He said that we will also be developing a list of the Top 100 Crash Locations for intersections and corridors in 2022, and that MVPC is already mapping the locations of Priority Development Areas that are identified in its Priority Growth Strategy. We also have information on the location of 43D and TDI districts in the region that we will make available to MassDOT. MVPC has also prepared a Regional Housing Production Plan that includes information on where affordable housing units in the region are located. Mr. Komornick noted that MVPC has information on the locations and condition of sidewalks in many of our communities and that we have information on the legal speed limits that have been adopted in a few of our cities and towns.

In addition to these data collection and reporting activities, Mr. Komornick said that the MVPC would likely be updating its Priority Growth Strategy, which was last done in 2014. MVPC was also still soliciting suggestions from stakeholders and local officials on transportation studies or analyses that they would like to see included in the document.

Joe Costanzo asked what has become of the recommendations made in the River St/Lowell Ave Road Safety Audit that was completed a few years ago. He said that this was a very busy area for traffic and for transit use. Mr. Komornick stated that MassDOT has been developing options for making improvements in this area, and we could check with them to see where this matter stands.

Theresa Park stated that we are looking at how we do land use and transportation planning and, along those lines, we will be hearing a presentation by DHCD at tomorrow's monthly planners meeting where we will hear about the new Housing Choice legislation.

Bryan Pounds asked what the plan was for releasing the Draft UPWP and Tony responded that he hoped to have the Draft UPWP ready for release in April along with the Draft TIP, but that timeframe might slip back a month.

Agenda Item No. 8: Other

Tony Komornick said that the MVMPO is going to be the subject of a Planning Certification Review. He has been talking to Leah Sermin and Chris Timmel and it appears that the Review will take place in the latter half of May. We will probably be asking for your participation, likely at the end of May.

Theresa Park announced that this was her last MPO meeting as she has accepted a position at Mass Development and will start there in the middle of March.

Bryan Pounds said on behalf of MassDOT staff, that Theresa has been a great partner and has provided excellent public service both at the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and the City of Lawrence.

Derek Shooster announced that the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Winter Program has its last round of funding available. Communities have until Friday, March 5th to submit applications.

Agenda Item No. 9: Adjourn

Vote: Robert Snow made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Theresa Park seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously, with no objections, by voice vote.

The meeting was Adjourned at 1:06 pm.

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