

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO)

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, May 25, 2022 – 12:00 p.m.

Attending:

Voting Members:

Dave Mohler, representing MassDOT Secretary Jamey L. Tesler
Frank Suszynski, representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver
Noah Berger, MVRTA Administrator
Jerrard Whitten, MVPC Executive Director
John Pettis, representing the City of Haverhill
Dan McCarthy, representing the City of Lawrence
Jerry Klima then Neil Harrington, 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	Derek Krevat, MassDOT
Mary Kay Beninati, MVPC	Tim Paris, MassDOT District 4
Betsy Goodrich, MVPC	Brian Fallon, MassDOT District 4
Jim Terlizzi, MVPC	Cassandra Ostrander, FHWA
Tony Collins, MVPC	Jacob Kaminsky (Rep. Devers)
Kathleen Lambert, MVRTA	Mallory Strain, (Rep. Vargas)
Rick Taintor, Newburyport	Josh Levin, MassDOT District 4
Andrew Shapiro, North Andover	Andrew Levine, Newburyport
Brian Keating, Methuen	Orlando Pacheco, Georgetown
Alex Loncarevic, (VHB)	

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order

Dave Mohler called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and stated that he was representing Transportation Secretary and CEO Jamey Tesler. Mr. Komornick then announced that eight members were present and that we had a quorum. **(Two more members joined later – Dan McCarthy representing Mayor DePeña of Lawrence and Neil Harrington representing MVMPO Subregion #1. Jerry Klima voted for Mr. Harrington for Agenda Item #3.)**

Agenda Item No. 2: Opportunity for Public Comment

Dave Mohler 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 April 27, 2022 Virtual MVMPO Meeting

Vote: Robert Snow motioned to accept the April 27, 2022 Virtual MVMPO Meeting Minutes. John Pettis seconded the motion.

The motion to accept the April 27, 2022 Virtual MVMPO Meeting Minutes passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0 (Jerry Klima representing Neil Harrington for MPO Subregion #1).

Agenda Item No. 4: Status of Ongoing and FFYs 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Projects

a. Status of TIP Roadway and Bridge Projects

Tim Paris of MassDOT District 4 reported on the following changes in the status of MassDOT projects in the MVMPO region:

- Newburyport – Route 1/Merrimack Street Intersection Improvements Project: Ad date changed to 2/6/2027.
- Lowell-Dracut-Methuen-Resurfacing & related work on Route 110: The new project manager is Herrio Lamothe.
- Amesbury – Riverwalk Connector to Salisbury Point Ghost Trail: Ad date has been changed to 11/28/2026.
- North Andover – Route 114 Corridor Improvements: Project Design is at 75%. Mr. Paris noted that there is an error in the cost estimate that is shown in the project status table that we are looking at that will need to be corrected.
- Georgetown/Boxford – Border to Boston Rail Trail: Project is at 75% Design.
- Andover I-495 bridges over Rt 28 and MBTA Railroad: Ad date is now 1/7/2023.
- Methuen Intersection Improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road: Project is at 75% with an Ad date of 1/6/2024, a TFPC of \$1,984,509, and a Total Construction Cost of \$1,827,973.
- Rowley – Safety Improvements at Route 1, Central and Glen Streets Intersection: Project is at Final Design, with a new Ad Date of 8/20/2022.

Ongoing Construction Projects

- Haverhill – Bradford Rail Trail Extension: Total Construction Cost changed to \$1,552,936.
- North Andover Intersection Improvements at Route 125 and Massachusetts Avenue: Total Construction Cost has changed to \$5,120,550.

b. Status of Transit Projects

Noah Berger reported that he had good news that the MVRTA has received Shared Streets Grant funding for 18 new bus shelters; 14 in Lawrence and 4 in Amesbury. He then thanked MVPC, Lawrence and Amesbury for helping secure this grant.

He next reported that the City of Methuen was also successful in receiving a grant for Lower Broadway which also includes shelters and streetway betterments.

Noah Berger said that the TIP project to make improvements to the MVRTA Administrative Building is almost complete and largely consisted of roof repairs.

The Riverbank Stabilization project is moving ahead although the scope had to be expanded due to some unforeseen problems. This is a very important project as it impacts the storage and maintenance of the MVRTA's vehicles.

The MVRTA Advisory Board recently approved its FFY 2023 budget. Mr. Berger noted that there were many uncertainties associated with this budget and cited the potentially large increase in diesel costs as just one example. On the labor side, the MVRTA's Collective Bargaining Agreement included a year one raise of 15.78%, but years 2 to 5 will only go up 2.5%. Noah said that these contract terms are looking favorable given recent trends in the industry.

Mr. Berger then reported that the Authority is now renovating the Drivers Lounge, something that has not been done in 20 years. This is one of the incentives for driving for the MVRTA. He added that the MVRTA offers drivers \$27 per hour, pays 100% of insurance, and offers a retirement pension. He also noted that the more drivers that the Authority has, the more service that it can provide.

Mr. Berger concluded his remarks by reporting that since the MVRTA went fare-free on March 1st, ridership has increased by 44.9%.

Agenda Item No. 5: Discussion and Potential Action to Endorse Proposed Amendment #2 to MVMPO's FFYs 2022-2026 TIP

Mr. Komornick said that Proposed Amendment #2 calls for the use of available FFY 2022 Regional Target money to fund the now larger scope, Phase 2, of the Riverbank Stabilization project by transferring \$665,500 in Federal funds to FTA with a Transportation Development Credits match of \$166,375 for a total project

cost of \$831,875. He said that we received no adverse comments during the review and comment period.

Vote: Robert Snow motioned to endorse Proposed Amendment #2 to MVMPO's FFYs 2022-2026 TIP to add the Riverbank Stabilization Phase 2 project to FFY 2022 to use Regional Target funding to Flex to FTA. Paul Materazzo seconded the motion.

The motion to endorse Amendment #2 to MVMPO's FFYs 2022-2026 TIP to add the Riverbank Stabilization Phase 2 project to FFY 2022 Regional Target funding to Flex to FTA passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0 (Dan McCarthy arrived, John Cashell was absent for this vote and Neil Harrington arrived and voted for Salisbury).

Agenda Item No. 6: Discussion and Potential Action to Release Additional Amendment to MVMPO's FFYs 2022-2026 TIP for Public Review and Comment

Anthony Komornick stated that there is another potential amendment to consider, which is to move the Rowley intersection improvement project forward from 2023 where it is programmed using Statewide funds, to use available Regional Target funding in 2022. This option was discussed at last month's meeting, but it was decided that we should wait for the final design submission to determine if this change could be made. Frank Suszynski said that MassDOT has received the PS&E submission with a revised cost estimate of \$1,352,139 and the project is ready to be moved to a FFY 2022 advertising date.

Robert Snow asked when would construction start on the Rowley project if it is advertised in 2022? Frank Suszynski answered that procurement takes approximately 120 days, so the project would be awarded in the winter and construction would start in the spring of next year.

Vote: Robert Snow motioned to release for Public Review and Comment the Proposed Amendment to add the Rowley Safety Improvements at Route 1, Central and Glen Streets to FFY 2022 of the MVMPO's FFYs 2022-2026 TIP using available Regional Target funding. Jerrard Whitten seconded the motion.

The motion to release for Public Review and Comment the Proposed Amendment to add the Rowley Safety Improvements at Route 1, Central and Glen Streets project to FFY 2022 of the MVMPO's FFYs 2022-2026 TIP using available Regional Target funding passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0. (John Cashell was not present.)

Agenda Item No. 7: Discussion and Potential Action to Endorse the MVMPO's FFYs 2023-2027 TIP

Mary Kay Beninati said MVPC received comments from MassDOT. Staff has made the formatting changes that MassDOT suggested. Staff also updated the highway project list for changes that MassDOT made to the eSTIP during the review and comment period. These changes included increasing the cost of the Rowley Route 1 at Glen and Central Streets Safety Improvements project by \$21,354. Three Advance Construction bridge projects kept their total project costs, but funding was redistributed between the AC years, spending down sooner for the Andover Bridge Rehab I-495 over Route 28 and the MBTA tracks, Haverhill I-495 over the Merrimack River, and Haverhill Rt 125, the Basiliere Bridge, over the Merrimack River and the Basiliere Bridge will be AC'd over 3 years instead of 4. Funding for the Amesbury Riverwalk will now come from the Carbon Reduction Program instead of STBG (Surface Transportation Block Grant Program).

MassDOT has successfully incorporated the transit project list into the same electronic STIP, or eSTIP, platform that the highway projects are in. The new transit list from eSTIP currently lists each project twice, once for the Federal funding amount, and once for the non-federal matching funds.

The transit projects and funding have not changed from the Draft that went out for Public Review.

Vote: Robert Snow motioned to Endorse the MVMPO's FFYs 2023-2027 TIP. John Pettis seconded the motion.

The motion to Endorse the MVMPO's FFYs 2023-2027 TIP passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0.

a. Certification of MVMPO 3C Planning Process

Anthony Komornick stated that related to the endorsement of the MVMPO's FFYs 2023-2027 TIP there is a need for the MPO to certify that it is following the federal 3C Transportation Planning Process and that it is meeting the requirements of the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act.

Vote: John Pettis motioned to Certify the MVMPO 3C Planning Process. Robert Snow seconded the motion.

The motion to Certify the MVMPO 3C Planning Process passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0.

b. MVMPO Greenhouse Gas Certification

Vote: Jerrard Whitten motioned to Certify the Greenhouse Gas Requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act. Robert Snow seconded the motion.

The motion to Certify the Greenhouse Gas Requirements of the Global Warming Solutions Act passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0.

Agenda Item No. 8: Discussion and Potential Action to Release MVMPO's Draft FFY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program for Public Review and Comment

Referring to the Draft FFY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program Task Funding Summary in the Meeting Packet, Anthony Komornick said that we will be increasing our spending on the Public Participation costs as we expand our efforts to support the Merrimack Valley Transportation Committee.

He then stated that Task 1.6 - Metropolitan Transportation Plan will be our most important task in the upcoming UPWP. It involves a comprehensive review of the transportation network. It is the most important document in the 3C Transportation Planning Process, reminding members that if you want to develop a TIP project, that project must also be included in the MTP.

As part of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, MVPC staff will assess the condition of the Non-interstate federal aid roadways in the region and estimate the cost to keep them in good condition. It is a major data collection effort on our part that will cost \$43,900, which is reflected in Task 2.2 – Regional Pavement Management Program.

The Congestion Management Process (CMP) task will include a full update of the CMP and the preparation of a new CMP report.

Many of the Transit Planning Tasks to be undertaken will be to support the MVRTA and include assisting the Authority in National Transit Database data collection, supporting its efforts to implement bus stops, and evaluating the Demand Response and Fixed Route System.

Additional studies focus on safety. South Union Street between Merrimack Street and Market Street appears as a MassDOT crash cluster and Regional Top 100 Intersection Crash Location.. It is also a bicycle Crash Cluster and is located in an Environmental Justice area.

The intersection of Main Street at I-95 in Salisbury is #7 on MVPC's Top 100 Crash Locations list and is a MassDOT crash cluster location.

Route 110 at Elm Street in Methuen is #40 on our Top 100 Crash Locations list and is in an EJ area, but it is not a MassDOT Crash Cluster.

Mr. Komornick also noted that MVPC would be looking at bicycle and pedestrian travel accommodations in the Route 114 corridor in North Andover from Willow Street to the Middleton Town Line.

Vote: John Pettis motioned to Release the MVMPO's Draft FFY 2023 Unified Planning work Program for Public Review and Comment. Robert Snow seconded the motion.

The motion to Release the MVMPO's Draft FFY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program for Public Review and Comment passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0.

Agenda Item No. 9: Grant Opportunity: Safe Roads for All Program

Jerrard Whitten said that the Safe Streets for All program has great potential to improve safety on the transportation network in the Merrimack Valley. This grant is not available to MassDOT and USDOT prefers that groups of communities work cooperatively in applying for funding.

Betsy Goodrich then made a brief presentation on the Safe Roads for All Program. She said that the purpose of this program is to reduce or eliminate fatalities and serious injuries and do it in a comprehensive way. She added that a community must have a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan to be able to apply for an Implementation Grant. Safety Action Plan applications are due September 15, with award announcements expected at the end of 2022 or the beginning of 2023. She also noted that MassDOT will be willing to consider providing the 20% match for the grant.

Echoing Mr. Whitten's comments, Ms. Goodrich emphasized that USDOT is encouraging the submission of joint applications that engage multiple jurisdictions in the same region. If this application were to be approved, MVPC would likely hire a consultant to implement the Action Plan. In addition, USDOT also wants to see leadership commitments as part of the application. MVPC staff will also present the joint application idea at the upcoming Regional Planning Directors and DPW Directors meetings.

Jerrard Whitten said that MVPC staff will spearhead the application process.

Agenda Item No. 10: Other

Betsy Goodrich announced that we will be launching our Metropolitan Transportation Plan, having the kick-off meeting during our regular MVTC meeting time on June 9th at

1 pm.

Anthony Komornick stated that the next MVMPO meeting is June 22.

Agenda Item No. 11: Adjourn

Vote: Robert Snow made a motion to adjourn the meeting and John Pettis seconded the motion.

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

The meeting was Adjourned at 12:48 pm.

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