

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MVMPO)

Virtual Meeting

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 – 12:00 p.m.

Attending:

Voting Members:

Dave Mohler, MassDOT, representing MassDOT Acting Secretary Jamey L. Tesler
Frank Suszynski, representing MassDOT Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver
Anthony Komornick, Acting MVPC Executive Director
Joe Costanzo, MVRTA Administrator
John Pettis, representing the City of Haverhill
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:

Mary Kay Beninati, MVPC	Connie Raphael, MassDOT District 4
Betsy Goodrich, MVPC	Tim Paris, MassDOT District 4
Cassandra Ostrander, FHWA	Brian Fallon, District 4
Leah Sirmin, FTA	Bryan Pounds, MassDOT Planning
Chris Timmel, FHWA	Derek Shooster, MassDOT Planning
Kathleen Lambert, MVRTA	Michelle Ho, MassDOT Planning
Andrew Shapiro, North Andover	Rebecca Oldham, Groveland
Alex Loncarevic, VHB	Jean Enright, North Andover
Rick Taintor, Newburyport	Dom (Unknown)

Agenda Item No. 1: Call to Order

Dave Mohler called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. stating that the meeting was being held remotely according to Governor Baker's Executive Order related to the Covid pandemic and asked Anthony Komornick to conduct a roll call vote of members attending the virtual meeting. Mr. Komornick then announced that seven members were present (Mr. Snow arrived in time to vote on the Adoption of Minutes from the April 28th MVMPO meeting and Mr. Harrington arrived in time to vote on the adoption of Amendment #16 to the MVMPO's FFYs 2021-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)).

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 the April 28, 2021 Virtual MVMPO Meeting

Vote: Joe Costanzo motioned to approve the April 28, 2021 MVMPO Meeting Minutes. Paul Materazzo seconded the motion.

The motion to accept the April 28, 2021 MVMPO Meeting Minutes passed by a roll call vote of 8 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:

For the Andover/ Tewksbury Highway Lighting project at I-93/I-495, bids were opened and the contract awarded to the apparent low bidder, Coviello Electric, which is awaiting a Notice to Proceed.

The Groveland Community Trail project is at Final Design and waiting to be advertised in July.

The Final Design is in for the Haverhill Route 110/108 Intersection project with a new estimated cost of \$3.376 million, which is higher than the amount programmed in the TIP. We may be proposing to amend that cost at the next MPO meeting in June.

FFY 2022 Projects:

There is a new bridge superstructure and substructure repairs project for bridges in Haverhill, North Andover, and Lowell. This includes a project for the I-495 bridges over Sutton Street and the MBTA in North Andover, the I-495 NB and SB over Amesbury Street in Haverhill, and I-495 NB and SB over Amesbury Line Road in Haverhill. This Bridge Maintenance Project will be advertised next winter.

b. Status of Transit Projects

FFY 2021 Projects:

Joe Costanzo reported that the 5339 Grant for the seven security projects were approved in April, the projects are underway and should be completed

by the end of June.

The order has been placed for buses to replace nine 2009 buses, we now expect to see those in January 2022 rather than in April or May of 2022.

Joe also noted that the passenger safety improvements on River Street are underway and that the buses are already using the turnouts, which improves passenger safety.

Frank Suszynski said that work on the project should be completed in about two weeks.

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

- a. Proposed Amendment to Revise the Estimated Cost of the Groveland Community Trail Project in FFY 2021

Tony Komornick stated that the proposed Amendment to the TIP was released last month for public review and comment. The proposed Amendment is to increase the cost of the Groveland Community Trail project by about \$970,000. There is enough target funding to cover the cost increase, but this change does have an impact on the Route 110/108 project that is about \$1.4 million dollars over what is currently programmed. There would not be enough regional target funding to cover all that increase.

Vote: Joe Costanzo motioned to endorse the proposed amendment to increase the cost of the Groveland Community Trail project in FFY 2021 of the MVMPO's FFYs 2021 to 2025 TIP. Paul Materazzo seconded the motion.

The motion to endorse the proposed amendment to increase the cost of the Groveland Community Trail project in FFY 2021 of the MVMPO's FFYs 2021 to 2025 TIP passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0.

Agenda Item No. 6: Discussion and Potential Action to Endorse MVMPO's Draft FFYs 2022-2026 TIP

Mary Kay Beninati said that the Draft TIP went out to public review with the following projects.

For 2022 we have Lawrence Intersection Improvements at Merrimack Street and Route 28, Lawrence intersection Reconstruction at Marston Street and East Haverhill Street, and MVRTA Flex to FTA projects.

Joe Costanzo described the Flex to FTA projects for 2022. These include the replacement of six of eight model year 2011 buses with clean diesel buses and the replacement of the other two model year 2011 buses with hybrid buses. The buses would be ordered in January of 2022 and delivered in June of 2023. Three additional Flex to FTA projects are the repowering of five Model Year 2015 buses, the repowering of five Model Year 2016 buses, and upgrading the Authority's CAD/AVL and Automated Vehicle Announcement (AVA).

Mary Kay Beninati said the Statewide projects proposed in FFY 2022 are the completion of the I-495 bridge over the Merrimack River, which is currently under construction, and the resurfacing of Route 1 in Newbury, Newburyport, and Salisbury.

In FFY 2023 the Regional Target projects being proposed are the Methuen Intersection Improvements at Riverside Drive and Burnham Road, and the Salisbury Route 1 Reconstruction project that will now cost \$18.2 million and is a two-year Advance Construction (AC) project to be programmed over FFYs 2023 and 2024. The Statewide list in 2023 includes the first year of the Lawrence Manchester Rail Corridor Rail Trail project that now costs \$21.4 million dollars and therefore is being AC'd over two years, and the Rowley Safety Improvements at Route 1, Central and Glen Streets.

In 2024 the Regional Target projects proposed are the start of the four-year North Andover Route 114 project, now a \$35 million project, and the second year of the Salisbury Route 1 project. Statewide projects are year one of five of Rehabilitation of the I-495 bridge over Route 28 and the railroad tracks in Andover, the first year of a five-year replacement of the Basiliere Bridge, Route 125 over the Merrimack River and old railroad right of way in Haverhill, and the first year of four of the replacement of the I-495 bridge over the Merrimack River that is located just south of the bridge now under construction. FFY 2024 also contains the second year of the Lawrence - Manchester Rail Trail project.

In FY 2025, the North Andover Route 114 project would use all the Target funding. The Statewide bridges begun in 2024 would be in their second year, and the Georgetown-Boxford and the Georgetown-Newbury sections of the Border-to-Boston are also programmed. The Lawrence Community Day Arlington Improvements, which is a Safe Routes to Schools project, is also in 2025.

In 2026 the Route 114 project in North Andover again uses the entire Regional Target, and then some, with \$10 million dollars remaining for programming in FY 2027. The Statewide AC'd bridges continue in FY 2026 and an off-system bridge, Short Street over the Spicket River in Lawrence, is also included.

Mary Kay Beninati asked if anyone has any questions on the highway projects?

Joe Costanzo then reviewed the transit project list for the five years covered in the

Draft TIP. He noted that each year includes the common elements of programming 5307 funds, the Authority's major source of funding from Federal Transit for operating assistance, preventive maintenance and ADA operating expenses, state of good repair projects and the support of short range transit planning assistance from MVPC.

He noted that in FFY 2022 the Authority would be applying for the Flex Funds once they have been transferred to FTA to initiate those FFY 2022 Flex Funded projects described earlier and these projects should be underway in January 2022.

In FFY 2023 the Authority would receive delivery of eight Model Year 2011 buses that were ordered in 2022. There will also receive six Model year 2017 vans and one Model Year 2017 supervisory vehicle.

In FFY 2024 the MVRTA will see the delivery of eight buses to replace eight Model Year 2012 buses. He noted that there would not be any additional bus replacements in FFYs 2025 and 2026, but these would resume in FFY 2027 and continue regularly thereafter through FFY 2032.

Both FFY 2025 and 2026 include the replacement of one supervisory vehicle.

Mary Kay then reviewed the comments on the Draft FFYs 2022-2026 TIP that were submitted to the MVMPO during the public review and comment period. Starting with the comments from FHWA, she noted that we had replaced the paragraph describing how Performance Targets were set and how Performance Measure data was collected, that the Performance Measures cited are now the same as those contained in MassDOT's mid-Performance Report.

Responding to FHWA's slight concern that many prioritized TIP projects are not contained in the region's 2020 Regional Transportation Plan or studies, she pointed out that both the Route 1 the Route 114 projects do appear in the RTP with the latter being initiated as a result of a MVPC Corridor Study. These two projects use all the Target funding for FFYs 2023-2026. Many smaller projects appearing in FFY 2022 were developed quickly to use available Target funding. The Route 108/Route 110 Intersection project in Haverhill and the South Broadway/Mt. Vernon Street intersection project in Lawrence also are identified in the 2020 RTP. Other projects, while not specifically identified in the RTP are consistent with 'Other Roadway Improvements' and 'Other Intersection Improvement' categories contained in the RTP.

Ms. Beninati then noted that the MPO had received comments from the Town of West Newbury requesting that the Middle Street Bridge replacement project be added to the TIP and that three intersection projects be added as well. She reported that MVPC had previously investigated the possibility of adding the Middle Street Bridge to the TIP but had determined that it was ineligible to be

added. She also said that the three proposed intersection projects had not yet been approved by MassDOT, but that MVPC would assist the community in preparing the Project Need Forms and Project Initiation Forms that must be submitted to MassDOT for these projects to be considered for approval.

Vote: Robert Snow made a motion and John Pettis seconded the motion to endorse the MVMPO's Draft FFYs 2022 to 2026 TIP.

The motion to endorse the MVMPO's Draft FFYs 2022 to 2026 TIP passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0.

Agenda Item No. 7: Discussion and Possible Action to Release MVMPO's Draft FFY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program for Public Review and Comment

Anthony Komornick highlighted a few of the UPWP tasks that are important and that he has not talked about at previous MPO meetings.

Under Task 1.6 we will begin the process of developing the MVMPO's 2024 Regional Transportation Plan or the Metropolitan Transportation Plan as noted in federal planning rules. MVPC staff will participate on MassDOT's socio-economic projections committee with projections going out to 2050. As part of this process, MVPC staff will collect data on developments from communities to input into MAPC's MassBuilds utility. This information will be used to project land use and as an input into the statewide transportation model, which is also the region's travel demand model.

Under Task 2.3 we will be providing MassDOT with geo-referenced data from our region in a number of subject areas that were discussed at previous MPO meetings including asset management, economic development, affordable housing, and resiliency.

Task 2.9 is Transportation and Livability for which MVPC will be updating the transportation section of our Priority Growth Strategy. The MPO uses the Priority Growth Strategy in scoring projects for the TIP and RTP.

Under Task 3.2 – Transit Planning, MVPC will be using our new, geo-coded inventory of subsidized housing in the region to determine how far away these units are from bus routes. This information will be used by the Authority to potentially modify its existing routes to better serve the people that live in these facilities since they are often transit dependent. MVPC staff will also assist the Authority in summarizing the data from the Automatic Passenger Counting Technology the MVRTA is implementing. The MVRTA is seeking certification for using this technology for reporting to the National database. This is an easier and less costly way to collect the data and he noted that this technology has been used by transit authorities across the country for this purpose.

Under Tasks 3.3-3.7, MVPC We will be conducting highway road safety studies. These

include four Road Safety Audits:

- Lawrence – Hampshire Street at Center Street
- Lawrence – Merrimack Street at Parker Street
- Methuen – Woodland Street at Elm Street
- Haverhill – South Main Street at Boston Road

These locations were selected based on the MassDOT Crash Cluster list. Three of these intersections are already signalized.

The fifth safety study will be performed at the Grove Street and Woodland Street intersection in Merrimac, which is on the road from Route 110 to the Town athletic fields. Town officials hope to improve safety for pedestrians and bicycles at this intersection.

Focusing on the Climate Change Task, he noted that MVPC will be expanding our analysis in response to the State enacting legislation that calls for the reduction in Greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030, and 85% by 2040. MVPC will be looking at the status of electric vehicle travel in the region including the siting of electric charging stations, the number of electric vehicles registered in the region and other measures. The State of Massachusetts has indicated that it wants no new internal combustion engines sold in the State by 2035. These monitoring efforts will help us determine how well our region is doing compared to the rest of the state in achieving this goal. In addition, we will be holding training workshops on renewable technologies, conversion of vehicle fleets and begin assisting communities in developing Net-Zero plans.

Mr. Komornick noted that planning studies devoted to the development of projects account for 34.46% of the Draft UPWP spending and that FHWA recommends that number to be at least 33%.

Vote: John Pettis made a motion and Frank Suszynski seconded the motion to release the MVMPO's Draft FFY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program for Public Review and Comment.

The motion to endorse the release of the MVMPO's Draft FFY 2022 Unified Planning work Program for Public Review and Comment passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0.

Agenda Item No. 8: Other

Frank Suszynski announced that Connie Raphael will be retiring in mid-June. He thanked her for her 37 years of public service at MassDOT and her work with the MPOs and communities. Tim Paris will be taking over her role at MassDOT District 4.

Anthony Komornick announced that his reign as Acting Executive Director is coming to

an end and that on June 9th, Jerrard Whitten will become MVPC Executive Director. Derek Shooster stated that the Virtual Public Meeting on the CIP for the Merrimack Valley and Northern Middlesex regions is this evening. You can find more information at [Mass.gov/CIP](https://www.mass.gov/CIP).

Agenda Item No. 9: Federal Planning Certification Review Public Listening Session

Leah Sirmin made a brief PowerPoint presentation on the Certification Review. She said that Federal Law requires that FHWA and FTA certify the planning process in Urbanized Areas. The Merrimack Valley is in the Boston Urbanized Area. Certification takes place every four years to ensure compliance with the FAST Act and other Federal requirements. The last Certification Review for the Merrimack Valley was in August of 2017.

The process involves several steps starting with a desk review of documents such as the RTP and TIP. Then we meet with MVMPO staff, MassDOT staff and the Regional Transit Authority to discuss key topic areas. Consideration of input from MPO members, stakeholders and the general public is what we are looking for today. We would like your input on questions like can you easily access planning documents? Is it easy to participate in the process? Do community officials get technical assistance and support from the MPO in the selection and programming of projects? In addition to your input today, you can also submit comments in writing by June 4.

We anticipate having a final certification determination made within 60 days after the review is completed and will be documented in a Certification Review Report. She said that there are three possible outcomes from the Certification Review. USDOT can totally Certify the process, can Certify the process with specific Corrective Actions, or it can Not Certify the planning process, which is a very rare occurrence and would involve funding restrictions.

Chris Timmel emphasized that USDOT is focusing on the planning process itself and not the projects. It is about the 3-C Process – Continuing, Cooperative and Comprehensive and who is involved in the process – the MVPC, MassDOT, MVRTA, elected officials, FHWA, FTA, Stakeholders, and the public.

USDOT is looking at the key elements of the process, the UPWP annual listing of planning activities which goes to the development of the long term RTP and shorter term TIP for projects, and the PPP part of the process to insure public input.

Dave Mohler asked if anyone wants to speak on behalf of the process or the staff – whether favorable or not? He asked that members please take the time to make comments on how well or not the process works. It is very important that we get your

input so email Chris or Leah with your comments.

The next meeting will be June 23 where we may release a TIP Amendment for Public Review and Comment and to Endorse the UPWP.

Agenda Item No. 10: 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 12:54 pm.

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