



## Merrimack Valley Transportation Committee

December 9, 2021, 1 p.m.

### Minutes

**In attendance:** John Cuneo (Haverhill), Frank Suszynski (MassDOT District 4), Bob Serabian (Haverhill), Tony Collins (Andover), Nio Mendez (MVRTA), Mayor Fiorentini (Haverhill), Rick Taintor (Newburyport), Juliet Walker (Newburyport), Donna Musumeci (Newburyport), Martha Leavitt (Lawrence/MVTMA), Andrea Leary (MVTMA), Brian Fallon (MassDOT District 4), Andrew Herlihy (Haverhill), Mary Kay Beninati (MVPC), Tony Komornick (MVPC), Jerrard Whitten (MVPC), and Betsy Goodrich (MVPC)

#### **Public Participation Plan Update and Outreach**

Mary Kay Beninati and Betsy Goodrich provided an overview of public participation, methods used, Public Participation Plan update and requested input on improving outreach. Suggestions provided by participants:

- Use social media to post the hearings, etc. on Facebook, LinkedIn. Procopial company uses social media platforms to get input.
- Tony Collins said that Andover has a commission on Diversity, Equity, and inclusion that may be a good group to meet with. Perhaps provide education on what has happened with transportation historically in the Merrimack Valley.
- Add school systems to the list. Livable Streets sends notices to Newburyport schools which then send the notices out to the parents.
- Make sure that Councils on Aging, Coastal Trails, and Newburyport Livable Streets are on outreach list.
- Make it Haverhill Program in Mt. Washington – Pete Boucher
- Business expansion: Make sure Chamber is on the list. Some businesses are not part of the Chamber, but try to figure out how to reach those businesses. Transit oriented development related to business. This week, John Cuneo helped someone starting at Amazon who was on the third shift. Struggling with how to get him to his job. He is getting an e-bike, but winter is upon us.

- Be targeted about approaching who is underrepresented. A strategy for one may be different for another. Schools may be great in one community, but not another. Think about the message. If you send out the message, how will they know what to do with it. Often work with organizations entrenched in the community that you are targeting outreach to. Engage board members and committee members to help with these connections. Be strategic with outreach on TIP projects to target those communities impacted.
- Martha: work with adult learning center. She will connect us with the person who they worked with for the Pa'Lante project. John said he could help with connections in Haverhill. Share with MVRTA.
- Publish the bus and train schedules in the paper and pub relation campaign to tell people. Maybe in Eagle Tribune once a month in community calendar.
- With regard to the Dam project, the best way to reach people was to pound the pavement. It's easy to post at the rail station, but you need to put someone there to hand stuff out. For example, a board member at Community Action would go on the buses and survey riders about topics, not just about bus transportation.

### **Transportation Safety** Tony Komornick

MVPC is tabling the discussion until the next meeting because of issues with crash data. The high crash location list is not ready to present.

### **UPWP** Tony Komornick and Betsy Goodrich

- Tony reviewed those studies that are still being wrapped up. Will be bringing revised MPO MOU to this group in the future.
- Study ideas for FFY2022:
  - Storey Avenue west of the Three Roads intersection to carry on the analysis of the ideas for the Three Roads.
  - City of Haverhill has requested help with improving access to the old paperboard site.
- Study ideas for FFY 2023
  - Approached by North Andover and Middleton to work in conjunction with MAPC to look at bike/ped improvements along Rt 114 from N.A. to Danvers. This would continue work being designed for Rt. 114.
  - Tony Collins: Andover is interested in having us look at Elm Street. It's up for paving soon so it is a good time to look at a redesign. 2 pedestrians recently killed on crosswalks on that roadway. 35 mph roadway. Needs to be studied.
  - Quite a bit of business development and would like to see a survey conducted on transportation needs. Rt. 97 on north side of I-495 and also the Amazon site in North Andover. Also Hilldale Avenue. Nio reported that they have been in touch with Amazon about the site in North Andover.

- Betsy commented that bikeability needs to be addressed on Rt. 125. John C.: Range is broader for cycling now that e-bikes are being used.
- Mayor Fiorentini asked about protected bike lanes and how we might be able to look at that.
- Betsy talked about the CTPS Community Connections program to provide capital project funding to help communities implement. We will be working with this group about how to create that program.
- Juliet added that it would be helpful to provide design assistance similar to the Shared Streets.
- Could the MPO put together a design guide. Not a prescriptive design guide, but rather a community-level resource.
- Transportation infrastructure money coming: EV charging locations in the region. Betsy mentioned that MVPC received a planning grant to map out existing and identification of additional ones.

**TIP** Tony Komornick and Mary Kay Beninati

- Requested update on the Rt 110/108 intersection. Frank S. said the project has been advertised and work will likely begin in the Spring.
- Tony K reviewed the TIP amendment to increase the cost to resurface Route 1 in Newburyport and Salisbury.

**Transit Needs Discussion**, Niorka Mendez, MVRTA

Nio Mendez provided the following updates:

- She announced that the MVRTA is going fare free as of March 1, 2022. Commuter bus and Ring and Ride services are excluded. It is a two-year pilot funded by federal recovery funds. This is an extension of the free fare routes in Lawrence, which increased ridership as a result of this change: Route 34 +32.9%; Route 37 +32.5%; Route 85 +112.1%.
- Another MVRTA goal is to implement bus stops.
- Bus on Shoulder service for the Boston Commuter bus will start January 3, 2022. MVRTA is also working on rebranding the system to make it inviting. They have hired a company out of Colorado that focuses on transit rebranding.
- Mayor Fiorentini asked for data on impact of free fares in Boston. He would like to know more information on the economic impact and ridership increases. Betsy found a news article that reported ridership increases, but will look into getting additional information on this topic for the next meeting. He would like to see a program to clearly tell people where to take the bus and when it comes. Right now, it is really hard for people to know flagging down the bus is difficult. He really likes the project on Rt 110 @ Lowell Ave. Did that project increase ridership? Nio mentioned the Transit App. Nio also mentioned that bus stops don't have to impact parking. Betsy asked about the use of QR codes at bus stops.

- Commuter Rail: In response to Bob Serabian's information request, Betsy contacted MassDOT/MBTA and received an email stating that the MBTA has applied for CIP funds to implement hourly clockface service. Many competing projects, but this is heartening that they are seeking funding to improve service.

### **2:25 p.m. Announcements and New Business**

- Nio asked if MVPC could help with the traffic light problem at Union Street and Canal Street. Betsy mentioned that MVPC had looked at that problem and contacted the City to fix the problem. This is still a problem. Tony mentioned that MVPC had identified a problem with the signal equipment/signal timing. We can go back and see if that is still the case.