



CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the CMMPO Advisory Committee held **October, 25, 2023**. This meeting was held virtually through Zoom.

CMMPO Advisory Committee Members Present:

- Adam Menard - Chair, Town of Auburn
- Sarah Bradbury – MassDOT District 3
- Daryl Amaral – MassDOT District 2
- Karin Valentine-Goins – WalkBike Worcester
- Connor McCormack – Town of Millbury
- Joanne Clark – AARP
- Sandy Amoakohene – Worcester Department of Public Health
- Collin Reuter – Green Hill Park Coalition
- Benjamin Breger – MassDOT District 2 (Alternate)

Ex-Officio Members Present:

- Chris Klem – MassDOT OTP

CMRPC Staff Present:

- Sujatha Krishnan
- Yahaira Graxirena
- Kevin Krasnecky
- Eric Gemperline
- Rich Rydant
- Rob Raymond
- Adam Wriggins
- Zack Blais

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Agenda Item #1 – Around the Room Introductions

Chairperson Adam Menard opened the meeting at 3:02 PM. A roll call of CMMPO Advisory members was announced, followed by the rest of the attendees. During roll call all members of the Advisory Committee and staff were asked to introduce themselves as the Advisory board welcomes new members.

New members include:

Connor McCormack – Town of Millbury

Matt Benoit – Town of Douglas

Alex Salcedo – MassBike

Joanne Clark – AARP

Collin Reuter – Green Hill Park Coalition

Claudia Oliveria da Paiva – Latino Education Institute

Caleigh McClaren- Blackstone Watershed Collaborative

Benji Kemper – Center for Living and Working

Agenda Item #2 – Approval of June 28, 2023 meeting minutes

Minutes for June 28, 2023, CMMPO Advisory meeting were considered for approval. Mr. Menard entertains a motion to approve the June 28, 2023, meeting minutes. Ms. Bradbury makes a motion to approve. The motion is seconded by Mr. McCormack. The vote was unanimous in favor of approval.

Agenda Item #4 – Urbanized Area Boundaries Update

- **Potential Action:** Seeking recommendation to the CMMPO to update the Proposed 2020 Urbanized Area Boundaries

Rob Raymond presented this item.

Mr. Raymond presents a background on urbanized areas and why they are important to the CMMPO. Urbanized areas are calculated after every census based on population density, housing density, land use and an allowance for urban areas to jump over rural areas to form continuous urban boundaries. Urbanized areas are important for the formation of an MPO. When an urbanized area population reaches 50,000 people an MPO must be formed. When the urbanized area population reaches certain thresholds, such as 200,000 additional planning programs are required such as a congestion management process.

Major differences between the 2010 and 2020 urban area definitions are: the changing of the minimum threshold of 2,500 people to a threshold based on a base of 2,000 housing units or 5,000 people,

urbanized areas and urban clusters are no longer identified using a 50,000-population threshold, and the maximum jump distance decreased from 2.5 miles to 1.5 miles.

To help with the transportation planning process the federal highway administration allows for MPOs in cooperation with state DOTs based on the following boundaries. One of the main drivers of this is to reduce roadways from changing frequently between a rural and urban designation frequently over a short distance. Designation of rural and urban can affect funding opportunities available for a road such as the TIP.

In Massachusetts, the process of designating urbanized areas is started at the State level with MassDOT releasing proposed 2020 adjusted urban boundaries that largely follow the 2010 boundary with some adjustments on FHWA guidelines. The boundaries are reviewed by CMMPO staff and staff provides recommendations for inclusion.

Mr. Raymond asks if there are any questions on the urbanized area process or any areas that should be added. Ms. Krishnan adds that she has been involved in the smoothing process for 3 cycles and that MassDOT has been very diligent in making sure no urbanized areas were lost in the region. Funding and funding eligibility will stay the same for the areas with this process. There are no further questions. Chairperson Menard asks for a motion to approve the changes to MassDOT. Ms. Valentine-Goins makes the motion. The motion is seconded by Mr. McCormack. The vote was unanimous.

Agenda Item #5 – E-Bike Pilot Program

This item was rescheduled for the next meeting.

Agenda Item #6 – NAACC Culvert Training Assessment

Zack Blais provided updates on a recent culvert training in the region.

CMRPC staff collaborated with the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative and Clark University on a grant to provide North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) culvert training to individuals in and around the CMRPC region. These individuals would be trained to complete the NAACC Lead Observer certification, giving them the ability to assess culverts and upload them to the NAACC database for scoring purposes.

As part of the grant, CMRPC were tasked with assisting with training preparation, which included gathering NAACC crossing codes and address of culverts in the training communities (Northbridge and Sutton); performing public outreach for the training opportunities; and providing an ArcGIS Online Survey123 NAACC Field Data Form for training assessments. CMRPC staff also attended the training as necessary, uploaded the completed training assessments to the NAACC database, and will assist with a presentation to the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Group.

In total, 16 individuals completed the NAACC Lead Observer certification training and received NAACC Lead Observer accounts on the NAACC website. This included four individuals from the CMRPC region

(Sturbridge, Northbridge, and Uxbridge), one individual from the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative, two individuals from VHB, and nine individuals from other communities outside of the CMRPC region (Lexington, Hopkinton, and Kingston). There were about 60 culverts assessed during the training and all the assessments have been uploaded to the NAACC database. The grant expires in December 2023.

Ms. Clark asks about culverts located in Worcester and Mr. Blais provides CMRPC's dashboard that shows all the culverts within the region and provides a link to the dashboard.

Agenda Item #7 – Staff Updates

- Federal Grants Update

Yahaira Graxirena announced several federal grant opportunities that CMRPC staff have been working on over the last few months. These have included the Safe Streets for All grant for CMRPC; a Rural & Tribal Assistance grant for the City of Gardner to complete the design of a pedestrian bridge over Route 140; assistance with a RAISE grant for the town of Southbridge; a Reconnecting Communities grant with the City of Worcester & MassDOT; a Thriving Communities Program grant for CMRPC in regards to the Blackstone River Bikeway; and an EV Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator Program grant for a few potential communities.

- Invitation of CMMPO Advisory Committee – Meet and Greet November CMMPO Meeting

Yahaira Graxirena announced that the CMMPO Advisory Committee would be invited to the November CMMPO Meeting at the MassDOT Plantation Street building to learn more about the CMMPO process, member actions, and how their recommendations make an impact.

Agenda Item #8 – New Business

Ms. Valentine-Goins mentions various programs including one by Recharge America that focused on EV's including E-bikes. On November 19, 2023, WalkBike Worcester is planning on observing a National Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims. On November 16 there is a public meeting for the Chandler Street Redesign project.

Ms. Valentine-Goins then asks a question if CMRPC has been in contact with Craig Della Pena of the East Coast Greenway because people have been asking about the region missing out. Ms. Graxirena mentions that we have met with Craig Della Pena and want to try to bring the East Coast Greenway to the region by getting MassDOT to support the Blackstone Bikeway has a priority trail and to create a spine trail connecting to the Mass Central Rail Trail to bolster the region's chance of attracting the East Coast Greenway.

Ms. Clark asks if the City of Worcester has any bike trails and about the Safe Streets for All action plan. Ms. Valentine-Goins responds that the City did receive a grant and is in the RFP process and that Worcester does not have a large or cohesive bike trail network.

Agenda Item #9 – Next Meeting

November 29, 2023, at 3:00 PM

Agenda Item #10 – Adjournment

At 3:45PM Chairperson Menard entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Cormack made the motion and was seconded by Ms. Bradbury. The group voted unanimously to adjourn.

Meeting minutes prepared: Eric Gemperline, AICP, Transportation Associate Planner