



CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the CMMPO Advisory Committee held **Wednesday, October 26, 2022**. This meeting was held virtually through Zoom.

CMMPO Advisory Committee Members Present:

- Adam Menard – Chairperson, Town of Auburn
- Chris Payant – Vicechair, Town of Westborough
- Sandy Amoakohene – City of Worcester DPH
- Sarah Bradbury – MassDOT District 3
- Daryl Amaral – MassDOT District 2
- Ethan Belding – Central Massachusetts Agency on Aging
- Jeremy Thompson – 495/Metrowest Partnership
- Karin Valetine-Goins – WalkBike Worcester

Ex Officio Member:

- Chris Timmel - FHWA
- Derek Krevat – MassDOT, Office of Transportation Planning
- Chris Klem – MassDOT, Office of Transportation Planning

CMRPC Staff Present:

- Yahaira Graxirena
- Kevin Krasnecky
- Eric Gemperline
- Rich Rydant
- Greer Jarvis
- Sujatha Krishnan
- Connie Mellis
- Zach Blais

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Agenda Item #1 – Around the Room Introductions

Chairperson Adam Menard opened the meeting at 3:00 PM. A roll call of CMMPO Advisory members was announced, followed by the rest of the attendees.

Agenda Item #2 – Approval of July 27, 2022 meeting minutes

Minutes for July 27, 2022, CMMPO Advisory meeting were considered for approval. Chairperson Menard entertains a motion to approve the July 27, 2022, meeting minutes. Vicechair Payant makes a motion to approve. The motion is seconded by Sarah Bradbury. The vote is unanimous in favor of approval except for Karen Valentine-Goins who was not present last meeting and abstained.

Agenda Item #3 – CMMPO Long Range Transportation Plan

Sujatha Krishnan provided a quick presentation on the upcoming timeline on the development of the CMMPO LRTP. This past July, staff internally kicked off the plan and began the development of the LRTP hubsite (website). In August, staff officially kicked off the plan and began intense public outreach that included tabling events and stakeholder interviews, among subregional infrastructure summits. In September the LRTP hubsite was launched, surveys were distributed, public outreach, and subregional infrastructure summits continued. The month of October concluded the bulk of public outreach and stakeholder meetings. In November and December, the LRTP will begin to be developed along with public outreach analysis and a public needs outline. In January 2023 staff will finalize socio-economic projections and develop alternative scenarios, as well as attend the yearly MARPA/TMG meeting. In February staff will work on the baseline and no-build modeling and drafting priorities for the plan's mode and planning areas. March will take priorities and build a model out to 2050 to understand scenarios. Projects evaluation, including EJ metrics will take place, along with financial planning. In April, staff will begin drafting projects, programs, and initiatives and hold a public meeting to discuss the plans draft priorities. Finally, in May staff will finalize the draft chapters. In June, staff will look to the MPO to release the LRTP and hold public meetings to review the draft plan. To wrap things up, staff will look for the MPO to approve the LRTP in July 2023.

- **Website**

Zack Blais provided a quick presentation on the LRTP hubsite.

The LRTP hubsite is organized based on the upcoming LRTP's Table of Contents. With this, there are several pages on the hubsite (i.e., Environmental, Asset Management, and Bicycle and Pedestrian) that house a plethora of information and data that will also be included in more depth in the fully developed LRTP.

On the Homepage the user can find an interactive calendar that is consistently updated with LRTP-related public events and how/where to attend those events. Also included are interactive social media cards for the CMRPC Facebook and Twitter account. The Homepage also features several buttons to sign up for updates about the LRTP, take the LRTP public survey, and navigate to the LRTP regional priorities map that users can express their priorities in the region using an interactive ArcGIS map.

Following this, Mr. Blais briefly reviewed a few other pages from the website to show the group what else the website has to offer. This includes information, data, maps, dashboards, reports, and so on. Mr.

Blais importantly pointed out the “Priorities” page, which houses the regional priorities interactive map. With this interactive map, users can drop points on a map of the region and express their priorities related to transportation and more. Using this map can help staff create an LRTP that reflects the needs and priorities of the people in the region.

Chairperson Menard asked if the link was available on the website, which Mr. Blais responded in the affirmative.

- **Outreach Activity Summary**

Yahaira Graxirena and Greer Jarvis presented on this item to provide a recap on the latest public involvement for the CMMPO LRTP.

Staff now wants to move forward from consulting the public to creating partnerships. This requires the individuals and organizations involved in the process to have a clear understanding of each other’s roles and expectations. To reach that requires the use of multiple methods, including surveys, community events, interviews, and targeted outreach.

Over the past few months staff have been busy attending 11 community tabling events. Some of these have been with joint efforts from CMRPC’s Imagine2050 and MassDOT Beyond Mobility. These events have been held at places like Polar Park, the WRTA Hub, Farmers Markets, and the Worcester Common. Additionally, over 100 surveys have been completed for use in the development of the LRTP.

Regarding virtual public engagement, staff hosted its Quarterly Meeting in September in which 19 delegates and 8 community guests attended. All attendees were asked 3 transportation-focused questions in smaller breakout groups. A variety of responses were given to each question from each group. Additional virtual engagement has included staff’s LRTP hubsite, in which the survey can be found and more information and data relating to the LRTP.

Staff have completed interactions with multiple stakeholders across the region. More stakeholder interactions are being planned as well. Staff have also successfully completed 6 subregional workshops. With that, 24 towns were represented, and a total of 48 people attended these workshops. All aspects of transportation were discussed at these workshops. Additionally, individual conversations have been held with Worcester, Uxbridge, and Boylston, as well as a conversation planned with Rutland on November 1.

There were no questions or comments.

- **Outreach Comments/Findings**

During the sub-regional workshops, the North subregion mainly focused on the topics of culverts and major infrastructure projects. The Northeast subregion focused on the lack of Chapter 90 funds, the need for asset management plans, and the need for a statewide trails plan. The Southeast subregion focused on trails, major infrastructure projects, transit services, and distribution center issues. The Southwest subregion focused on congestion, on-demand transit services, improving freight access to the Southbridge airport, roadway/intersection issues, and east-west commuter rail. The West subregion focused on the east-west commuter rail, lack of sidewalks in rural communities, and criteria in the TIP process/complete streets should consider urban and rural standards differently. There were several

consistent comments across subregions including distribution centers and heavy vehicle volume and electric vehicle charging stations.

There were no questions or comments.

Agenda Item #4 – MassDOT Equity Analysis of Transportation Impacts

This item was presented by Derek Krevat.

MassDOT has been having discussions regarding data on equity and how to represent equity in their LRTP. MassDOT has developed Regional Environmental Justice Plus (REJ+) criteria for communities to better capture equity from a transportation lens at the MPO block group level. An REJ+ community must meet the following:

- At least one of three EJ criteria must be true:
 - Annual Median household income \leq MPO 25th percentile
 - Percent of Minorities \geq MPO 75th percentile
 - Percent of Households with Limited English Proficiency \geq MPO 75th percentile
- At least one of the following three transportation criteria must be true:
 - Percent of Households with Zero Vehicles \geq MPO 75th percentile
 - Percent of Households with Disabilities \geq MPO 75th percentile
 - Percent of Seniors (65+ years) \geq MPO 75th percentile

The following thresholds were established for the CMMPO; A median household income of \$53,780, a minority population of 41%, limited English proficiency of 7%, disability of 33%, zero-vehicle households of 13%, and senior populations of 21%.

MassDOT will use the REJ+ data to perform “equity” checks on existing and potentially new performance measures, the data may also be uploaded to MassDOT’s Engage platform for project managers and others to use and understand equity populations within the vicinity of their respective projects, and the data will be shared with regional planning agencies for their consideration/use in regional LRTPs. The data will be available for viewing via a web-map.

Ms. Valentine-Goins asks if there was a relationship between the layers presented versus the required USDOT layers in the discretionary program. Mr. Krevat responds that there is a separate tool and that this tool is for statewide measures and is more of a planning tool.

Agenda Item #5 – CMMPO EJ Thresholds

Yahaira Graxirena presented this item.

An overview of Environmental Justice was provided for new members of the advisory committee. Three principles exist in EJ planning, a fair participation process, the avoidance and mitigation of disproportionately high and adverse health and environmental effects, and to prevent the denial of reduction in the receipt of benefits.

EJ population definitions traditionally include minority and low-income persons. Recently MPO's were required to look beyond these traditional categories and four additional criteria were added as a second level: linguistically isolated households, zero car households, population of older adults (age 75+), and populations with disabilities.

In Massachusetts meeting one or more of the four following thresholds are required to be an EJ community:

- Annual median household income is 65% or less of statewide annual median household income
- Minorities make up 40% or more of the population
- 25% or more of households identify as speaking English less than "very well"
- Minorities make up 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income

In 2015, new thresholds were developed for the LRTP using ACS 2019 5-year estimates data. For the new LRTP, CMMPO most decide on what thresholds to use. Current census data is being released slowly because of privacy concerns and regional thresholds have not been fully established. Having thresholds is an important aspect in equity planning as underserved communities can be more readily identified. Some strategies the CMMPO uses to avoid inequities include the TIP scoring and public outreach metrics. The CMMPO must decide to either create its own regional threshold or accept MassDOT's new thresholds that were previously presented by Mr. Krevat.

Ms. Krishnan added that for the last LRTP there was not enough criteria to accurately reflect EJ populations using the State data, so CMMPO created their own thresholds. Based off what Mr. Krevat presented, the State is now more inline with prior CMMPO thresholds and with the delay in census data it would make sense to follow MassDOT's lead.

Ms. Valentine-Goins and Chairperson Menard agrees with Ms. Krishnan about using the State-developed regional MPO numbers.

Agenda Item #5 – Reconnecting Communities Program Grants Application Update

Yahaira Graxirena presented for this item.

CMRPC staff worked with MassDOT, City of Worcester, and VHB in a grant application for the U.S. DOT Discretionary Grant Program "Reconnecting Communities". The program seeks to reconnect communities that were previously cut off from economic opportunities by transportation infrastructure. The group applied for \$2 million from the grant program for planning and initial design to begin helping to restore community connectivity. The study area applied for includes the portion of I-290 in Worcester that crosses through the neighborhood of Green Island, Vernon Hill, and Union Hill. The facility to be replaced will be the Vernon Street bridge.

Staff conducted research for this grant at the Worcester Public Library, Worcester Historical Museum, and numerous news article. Despite support for the initial construction of this section on I-290, there was considerable opposition from the local community as to what the impact of the project would be on the community. Ms. Graxirena shared multiple news articles, clippings, and images from that time period to help share the context of the pushback and show what the construction of the project did to the local community. In short, the project uprooted communities, destroyed businesses, and forcefully relocated individuals from where they lived.

Agenda Item #6 – Staff Updates

- Moving Together Conference
- Thriving Communities NOFO
- Culverts AOP NOFO

Agenda Item #7 – New Business

No Updates are available.

Agenda Item #8 – Adjournment

At 4:22 PM Chairperson Menard entertained a motion to adjourn. Mr. Payant made the motion to and was seconded by Ms. Amoakohene. The group voted unanimously to adjourn.

Meeting minutes prepared: Eric Gemperline, Transportation Associate Planner.