



## CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The minutes of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) meeting held **Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022**. This meeting was held virtually using Zoom.

- **CMMPO Members Present:**

1. Steve Woelfel, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
2. Ann Sullivan, MassDOT Highway Division District #3, designee to MassDOT Highway Division Administrator Jonathon Gulliver
3. Robert Hassinger, designee to CMRPC Commission Chair
4. Brian Pigeon, designee to acting City Manager Eric Batista
5. Shelby Marshall – Westborough, Northeast Subregion Representative
6. Jesse Limanek – Sutton, Southeast Subregion Representative
7. Dennis Lamarche – Oxford, Southwest Subregion Representative

- **CMMPO Ex-Officio Members Present:**

1. Chris Klem, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
2. Chris Timmel, FHWA

- **Guests:**

1. Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District #3
2. Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District #2
3. Mary Arata, Berlin
4. Miranda Briseño, MassDOT
5. Greg Russel, VHB
6. Dori Vecchio, Blackstone

- **CMRPC Staff Present:**

1. Sujatha Krishnan – Transportation
2. Kevin Krasnecky, Project Manager – Transportation
3. Yahaira Graxirena, Project Manager – Transportation
4. Zack Blais, Associate Planner – Transportation
5. Faye Rhault – Transportation

6. Greer Jarvis – Transportation

7. Rich Rydant – Transportation

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### **Agenda Item #1 – Introductions**

CMMPO Chair Steve Woelfel opened the meeting at 4:00 PM. A roll call of CMMPO members was announced, followed by the rest of attendees.

### **Agenda Item #2 – Approval of August 17, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the August 17, 2022, meeting of the CMMPO were considered for approval. Bob Hassinger motioned to accept the minutes and was seconded by Dennis Lamarche. A roll call vote was announced, and members present voted unanimously to accept the minutes.

Steve Woelfel – Yes

Jesse Limanek – Yes

Ann Sullivan – Yes

Dennis Lamarche – Yes

Bob Hassinger – Yes

Brian Pigeon – Yes

### **Agenda Item #3 – Opportunity for Public Comment**

There were no comments from the public.

### **Agenda Item #4 – Results of the CMMPO North Representative Election**

Kevin Krasnecky presented for this item.

On September 27<sup>th</sup>, staff hosted the CMMPO election meeting for the North subregion Representative. Five (5) Selectboard members from the towns of Barre, Holden, Paxton, Princeton, and Oakham were present at the meeting.

Following a discussion amongst attendees, the newly elected North Representative is Stephanie Mulroy from the Town of Holden, and the newly elected North Alternate is Kirk Huehls from the Town of Paxton.

There were no questions or comments.

### **Agenda Item #5 – FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program**

- **FFY 2023 Highway Projects Update – D2 and D3**

First Ann Sullivan presented projects updates from District 3:

- Project #602659: Charlton/Oxford – This project has been advertised. The Notice to Proceed (NTP) is expected on November 8, 2022.
- Project #608873: Spencer – The 100% design plans are currently under review. The Right-Of-Way (ROW) and environmental permitting are moving forward.
- Project #609219: Holden – 100% Design is due October 21, 2022. At a recent special town meeting the ROW was approved. Environmental permitting and ROW work will continue.
- Project #612650: Worcester – Project is at 100% design.
- Project #610826: Sturbridge – Project is currently at the PS&E design stage.

There were no questions or comments for District 3 project updates.

Daryl Amaral presented project updates from District #2:

- Project #605035: New Braintree – The project design is progressing on two different tracks, highway and culvert. The highway design is at 100% and the culvert PS&E are due on October 31, 2022. The expected ad date is May 20, 2023.
- 2024 West Brookfield route 9 resurfacing is currently at 100% design and the PS&E is due on March 19, 2023.

There were no questions or comments for District #2 project updates.

#### **Agenda Item #6 – Potential STIP Actions**

There were no STIP actions.

#### **Agenda Item #7 – Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**

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 wrap-up 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.

There were no questions or comments following the presentation.

- **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 engaging in public involvement to creating public 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 a number of consistent comments across subregions.

There were no questions or comments.

#### **Agenda Item #8 – 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.

There were no questions or comments.

#### **Agenda Item #9 – SRTS Infrastructure Grant Opportunities Presentation**

Miranda Briseño, from MassDOT, presented for this item.

There are two different grant programs under the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure Grant program. One is the Signs and Lines Grant and the other is the SRTS Infrastructure Grant.

For SRTS Infrastructure Grant Program, funding can range between \$200,000 to \$2 million for projects. There have been 39 projects completed since the Program’s inception. Currently, 33 projects are in progress. For 2022-2023, there will be 8-10 projects awarded. For Signs and Lines Grants, funding is up to \$6 thousand and approximately \$4 thousand in additional benefits. There have been 16 projects completed since program inception and there will be up to five projects awards in 2022/2023.

Eligible applications for the SRTS Program include K-12 schools (or school campuses) that have been a partnership with the non-infrastructure SRTS Program for at least 6 months (as of 10/3/22), receive public funding, and are committed to ongoing SRTS activities. Schools that represent diverse socio-economic communities are especially encouraged to apply. Projects that may be funded include transportation, construction, and capital improvement projects. These projects should improve safety and/or increase the number of children walking/biking to school; be located within 2 miles of a K-12 school/school campus; and be within the public way or a bicycle/pedestrian pathway. K-12 students must be the primary beneficiaries and projects must be ADA accessible.

Projects will not be funded if they require recurring costs, pavement maintenance, travel lane improvements, and school bus improvement projects.

Eligible project examples include sidewalk improvements, traffic calming, crossing improvements, and bicycle facilities.

Under the SRTS grant, costs for design and construction are covered with no match required. Project cost estimates vary based on project size:

- Small Project Budget (\$250K or less)
- Medium Project Budget (\$250K - \$800K)
- Large Project Budget (\$800K - \$1.5M)

These infrastructure projects should also consider compliance with the latest standards. They must be accessible to all, including persons with disabilities, per the ADA Accessibility Guidelines. They will have to meet requirements described in the MassDOT Engineering Directive, “Controlling Criteria and Design Justification Process for MassDOT Highway Division Projects”. They will have to meet objectives of the SRTS Program and include accommodations for people walking and biking, including sidewalks on both sides of the streets, marked or separated bike lanes, shared use path, a connection to a complete street network nearby the partner school, and share-the-road arrows (sharrows) do not qualify as a true bicycle facility under this directive.

Lastly, Miranda shared a timeline of the Grant Program.

There were no comments or questions.

#### **Agenda Item #10 – Staff Updates**

- **Moving Together** – Steve Woelfel reminded the group that registration is closing for the Moving Together Conference, and it is coming up on November 1, 2022.

Sujatha Krishnan reminded the group that there will be a virtual LRTP meeting tomorrow. The Zoom link is on the CMRPC website.

#### **Agenda Item #11 – New Business**

Chris Klem announced that tomorrow at 6PM MassDOT will be hosting a live Virtual Public Meeting for the Statewide LRTP, Beyond Mobility. The meeting will introduce the project, discuss the scope of work, deliverables, and timeline, as well as provide summary results of the first public survey.

Chris Timmel announced that FHWA is looking for MPO partners and staff to solicit ideas for technical assistance, open until November 4, 2022.

#### **Agenda Item #12 – Next Meetings**

- CMMPO Advisory Committee meeting (virtual) – October 26, 2022 at 3:00pm
- CMMPO meeting (virtual) – November 16, 2022 at 4:00pm

**Agenda Item #13 – Adjournment**

Bob Hassinger made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Ann Sullivan. The meeting concluded at 4:00 PM.

*Meeting Minutes prepared by: Zachary Blais, Transportation Associate Planner*