



CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The minutes of the Central Massachusetts Transportation Planning Committee Hybrid meeting held Thursday, October 27, 2022 in-person at the CMRPC Office and also using Zoom.

T-Committee Members Present:

1. Bob Hassinger, Grafton, Committee Chairperson
2. Rick Baker, Boylston
3. Dick Williams, Rutland
4. Otto Lies, Holden
5. Brian Pigeon, Worcester
6. Jeff Howland, New Braintree

CMRPC Staff Present:

1. Rich Rydant
2. Kevin Krasnecky
3. Zack Blais
4. Yahaira Graxirena

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Around-the-Room Introductions

Committee Chairperson Bob Hassinger opened the meeting at 6:02 PM and asked for around the room introductions.

Approval of the July 28, 2022 T-Committee Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the July 28, 2022 meeting were considered for approval. Dick Williams motioned to accept the minutes and was seconded by Otto Lies. All members voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

Opportunity for Public Comment

There were no public comments.

2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Kevin Krasnecky presented this agenda item to the members. Mr. Krasnecky provided the following updates to the FFY 2023 TIP Highway projects:

- **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 #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.
- **Project #612650:** Worcester – Project is currently at 100% design.
- **Project #610826:** Sturbridge – Project is currently at the PS&E design stage.

There were no comments or questions regarding this agenda item.

CMMPO Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Rich Rydant began this agenda item by discussing the timeline for the development of the 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 development of the plan and began intense public outreach that included tabling events, stakeholder interviews, and subregional infrastructure summits. In September the LRTP Hubsite was launched, surveys were

distributed, and public outreach continued through the subregional infrastructure summits and other events with targeted stakeholders. The month of October concluded with the wrap-up of most public outreach and stakeholder meetings. In November and December, the LRTP content will begin to be developed along with public outreach analysis and an identified public needs outline. In January 2023 staff will finalize socio-economic projections and develop alternative scenarios, as well as attend the yearly MARPA/TMG/MassDOT meeting. In February staff will work on the baseline and no-build modeling scenarios, and drafting screened priorities for the plan's mode and planning areas. During March, staff will use the identified priorities and create 2050 benchmark year scenarios for analysis. Projects evaluation, including EJ metrics will also take place, along with financial planning. In April, staff will begin drafting projects, programs, and initiatives and hold additional public meetings to discuss the plan's 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 yet another public meeting to review the draft plan. To wrap things up, staff will look for the MPO to endorse 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 various information and data that will also be included in LRTP document.

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 accounts. 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 where 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 included 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 living and working in the planning region.

- **Summary of Outreach Activities**

Yahaira Graxirena presented on this item to provide a recap on the latest public involvement activities for the development of the CMMPO LRTP. Staff now wants to evolve from simply engaging stakeholders through 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 goal 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 joint efforts with CMRPC's Imagine2050 regional plan and MassDOT's Beyond Mobility statewide transportation plan. These events have been held at places like Woo Sox Polar Park, the WRTA Hub in downtown Worcester, various Farmers Markets, and the Worcester Common. Additionally, over 100 LRTP surveys have been completed.

Regarding virtual public engagement, staff hosted the CMRPC Quarterly Meeting in September where 19 CMRPC delegates and 8 community guests attended. All attendees were asked three transportation-focused questions in smaller breakout groups. A variety of responses were given to the three questions from each group. Further, additional virtual engagement has included staff's LRTP Hubsite, in which the survey can be found as well as a host of more information and data relating to the LRTP.

Staff have also completed interactions with multiple stakeholders across the planning region and additional meetings are also being planned. 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 the workshops. Additionally, individual conversations have been held with the communities of Worcester, Uxbridge, and Boylston, as well as a conversation planned with the Rutland Select Board on November 1st.

- **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 related to the LRTP discussion.

Reconnecting Communities Program Grants Application Update

Ms. Graxirena also presented this agenda item. CMRPC staff worked with MassDOT, the City of Worcester, and VHB in a grant application for the new 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 the maximum \$2 million from the grant program for planning and initial design to begin the envisioned restoration of community connectivity. The study area applied for includes the portion of I-290 in Worcester that crosses through the neighborhoods of Green Island, Vernon Hill, and Union Hill. The facility intended to be replaced through this effort will be the Vernon Street bridge.

Staff conducted research for this grant application at the Worcester Public Library, Worcester Historical Museum, and through numerous newspaper articles. 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 newspaper 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 established neighborhood communities, destroyed businesses, and forcefully relocated individuals from where they lived.

There were no questions or comments.

Staff Updates

Rich Rydant noted that a number of Transportation staff will be attending the Moving Together conference on November 1, 2022 in Boston. Also, on October 31, 2022 a few Transportation staff will be attending a meeting with the town of Berlin to discuss the Route 62 Corridor Profile study. As mentioned, the LRTP stakeholder meetings are winding down. Staff will also be meeting with MassDOT Highway Division Districts #2 & #3 as well as the Office of Transportation Planning (OTP). Further, staff will meet with the Transportation Committee of the I-495 MetroWest Partnership on November 30, 2022.

New Business

There was no new business.

Next Meetings

- CMMPO Meeting – Wednesday, November 16, 2022 at 4:00 PM
- CMMPO Advisory Committee Meeting – Wednesday, November 30, 2022 at 3:00 PM
- CMTPC Meeting – Thursday, December 1, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Dick Williams and a second from Jeff Howland, the members unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:50 PM.