



## **CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

The minutes of the Central Massachusetts Transportation Planning Committee Hybrid meeting held Thursday, April 25, 2024 using Zoom.

### **T-Committee Members Present:**

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

### **CMRPC Staff Present:**

1. Rich Rydant
2. Kevin Krasnecky
3. Jeff Howland
4. Zack Blais

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### **Around-the-Room Introductions**

Committee Chairperson Bob Hassinger opened the meeting at 6:00 PM and asked for around the room introductions.

### **Approval of the March 28, 2024 T-Committee Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the March 28, 2024 meeting were considered for approval. Dick Williams motioned to accept the minutes and was seconded by Rick Baker. Members voted to approve the minutes, with one abstention from Otto Lies.

### **Opportunity for Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

- **Action Item:** Seeking recommendation concerning CMMPO endorsement of the Proposed Amendment #7 to the 2024-2028 TIP Highway Project Listing.

Kevin Krasnecky presented this agenda item. Proposed Amendment #7 included three changes to FFY 2024 of the highway list of the FFY 2024-2028 TIP. The proposed changes include:

#### **Highway**

- Project #608171, Uxbridge – Reconstruction of Route 122 (South Main Street)
  - Increase cost of project from \$10,624,014 to \$14,232,013.
- Project #608851, Hardwick & New Braintree – Bridge Replacement, H-08-003=N-07-002
  - Move project from FFY 2025 to FFY 2024 with new Total Project Cost of \$3,659,382.
  - Funding source will also change from STBG-BR-OFF to BROFF.
  - MassDOT Comment: Additional cost increase of \$841,042 occurred after amendment was released. The new total project cost is \$4,500,424.
- Project #608640, Sutton & Grafton – Bridge Reconstruction/Rehabilitation, S-33-004
  - Decrease project cost from \$12,380,610 to \$9,636,255.

Bob Hassinger asked how the changes for Amendment #7 affect the regional targets. Mr. Krasnecky responded by saying that the CMMPO approval of Adjustment #6 to shift regional target funds to statewide funds from the Webster project made room for the cost increase of the Uxbridge project. The cost increase of the Uxbridge project used the remaining regional target funding in 2024.

**On a motion from Dick Williams and a second from Rick Baker, the members unanimously voted to recommend endorsement of Proposed Amendment #7 to the 2024-2028 TIP Highway project listing.**

- **Action Item:** Seeking recommendation to the CMMPO regarding endorsement of the Draft 2025-2029 TIP.

Kevin Krasnecky presented this agenda item. Mr. Krasnecky reviewed the projects from both the draft highway and transit 2025-2029 project listings. The staff has also compiled a TIP draft document and technical appendix that includes other pertinent information for the TIP and all draft documents are posted on the CMRPC website.

Dick Williams asked how long the warranty period is for the new electric buses. Mr. Krasnecky said that information is not known by staff.

**On a motion from Dick Williams and a second from Otto Lies, the members unanimously voted to recommend endorsement of the Draft 2025-2029 TIP to the CMMPO.**

### **Environmental Consultation Presentation**

Rich Rydant and Zack Blais presented this agenda item. Mr. Rydant began reviewing the purpose of environmental consultation. Next, Mr. Rydant summarized the various data layers that staff has used over the years. The data layers are culverts, open space, flood zones, wetlands, as well as vernal pools & rare species habitats. Mr. Rydant noted that all these data layers and many more are included within MassDOT's Massachusetts Project Intake Tool (MaPIT), which is used to initiate eligible new improvement projects.

The West Brookfield Route 9 project (Phase III) was shown as an example for the environmental consultation process. Mr. Rydant summarized the details of the project and the proposed improvements. In addition, the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) program was mentioned as a TIP funding source for projects that improve air quality.

Next, Zack Blais took over to discuss the scope of electric vehicle (EV) work that staff has been doing. Completed work includes an EV survey distributed to the CMRPC communities, an Air Quality Module, and the sharing of EV grant opportunities. Current EV work includes creating and updating EV dashboards, EV charging station wayfinding app, and EV fact sheets. Future work opportunities include staff participation in the Clean Cities Coalition, compilation of an EV Toolkit, participation in the recently established statewide MPO Resilience Group, and, further, continue assisting communities with grant opportunities.

Lastly, Mr. Blais summarized some of the culvert work the staff has been doing. Staff collaborated with the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative in a grant to train individuals to assess culverts using the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative's (NAACC) established procedures. 16 individuals were trained and over 60 culverts were assessed. In

addition, CMRPC staff collected data for 41 culverts in Sturbridge in 2023. Staff plans to assess culverts in the host community of Berlin in 2024. Further, CMRPC staff assisted the town of Warren with a state Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grant to replace two culverts in the town of Warren. The grant was submitted and staff will likely hear about the results in the Summer of 2024.

Bob Hassinger noted that he has heard about issues regarding the adequacy of the power supply network necessary to accommodate numerous new EV charging stations. Mr. Blais said that he intends to investigate that topic further.

### **Staff Updates**

Rich Rydant provided updates on various federal grants. The Reconnecting Communities grant for the area between Vernon Hill and Kelley Square in Worcester was not selected and the Thriving Communities Grant targeting a number of Blackstone Valley towns was also unsuccessful. Staff are currently looking into other opportunities to fund these same proposed planning efforts. Another grant opportunity was just released from the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism. It is a competitive grant to improve facilities and destinations visited by in state and out-of-state travelers. Lastly, Mr. Rydant mentioned that May is bike month and there are a number of scheduled bike-related activities happening in the city of Worcester during the month of May.

### **New Business**

There was no new business.

### **Next Meetings**

- CMMPO Meeting – Wednesday, May 15, 2024 at 4:00 PM
- CMMPO Advisory Committee Meeting – May 22, 2024 at 3:00 PM
- CMTPC Meeting – Thursday, May 30, 2024 at 6:00 PM

### **Adjournment**

Upon a motion by Dick Williams and a second from Otto Lies, the members unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:54 PM.