



CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The minutes of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) meeting held **Wednesday, September 18th, 2024**. This meeting was held virtually using Zoom Webinar.

- **CMMPO Members Present:**

1. Steve Woelfel – MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, designee to MassDOT Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt
2. Ann Sullivan – MassDOT Highway Division District #3, designee to MassDOT Highway Division Administrator Jonathon Gulliver
3. Joshua Rickman – WRTA Administrator
4. Bob Hassinger – designee to CMRPC Commission Chair
5. Betsy Goodrich – designee to City Manager Eric Batista
6. Shelby Marshall – Westborough, Northeast Subregion Representative
7. Jesse Limanek – Sutton, Southeast Subregion Representative
8. Rich Eichacker – Warren, West Subregion Representative

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

1. Derek Shooster, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
2. Joshua Barber, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

- **Guests:**

1. Monica Tibbits-Nutt, MassDOT Secretary & CEO
2. Sarah Bradbury, MassDOT District #3
3. Chris Klem, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
4. Barry Lorion, MassDOT District #3
5. Jared Grigg – Spencer, West Subregion Alternate
6. Daryl Amaral, MassDOT District #2
7. Amanda Bazinet, VHB
8. Isabel McCauley, MassDOT District #3
9. Francine
10. Jeff Bridges, Spencer
11. Nick Burnham, WRTA

12. Peg Dean, Southbridge

- **CMRPC Staff**

1. Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director – Transportation
2. Janet Pierce, Executive Director
3. Kevin Krasnecky, Project Manager – Transportation
4. Rich Rydant, Director of MPO Activities – Transportation
5. Zack Blais, Principal Planner – Transportation
6. Yahaira Graxirena, Project Manager – Transportation
7. Connie Mellis, Project Manager – Transportation
8. Nathan Lewis, Assistant Planner – 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.

Agenda Item #2 – Welcome & Opening Remarks from MassDOT Secretary & CEO

The Secretary and CEO of MassDOT, Monica Tibbitts-Nutt, introduced herself for the first time to the CMMPO group and provided some welcoming and opening remarks to the group. Following that, there were a few questions and comments.

Francine commented that WRTA buses do not have good accessibility for the visually impaired, particularly on the steps to get on the buses compared to other buses that have stripes on each step. Josh Rickman replied that the WRTA would look into this and make improvements where necessary. Francine also asked if the WRTA would be expanding bus access to Holden. Josh Rickman also replied that the WRTA are currently looking into that and possibly implementing access to Holden within the next year or two.

Jared Grigg asked about the expansion of east-west rail planning. Steve Woelfel replied that there is emphasis on the planning of this rail access at the state level, and that it may be good to have a presentation on this at a future meeting. Monica Tibbitts-Nutt also confirmed Mr. Woelfel’s answer and said it would be worthwhile to have a presentation on this regarding the state’s planning efforts.

There were no other questions or comments for the MassDOT Secretary and CEO.

Agenda Item #3 – Approval of July 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the July 17, 2024, meeting of the CMMPO were considered for approval. Bob Hassinger motioned to accept the minutes and was seconded by Josh Rickman. A roll call vote was announced, and members voted to approve the minutes.

Steve Woelfel – Yes

Shelby Marshall – Yes

Ann Sullivan – Yes

Jesse Limanek – Yes

Joshua Rickman – Yes

Betsy Goodrich - Yes

Bob Hassinger – Yes

Rich Eichacker – Abstain

Agenda Item #4 – Opportunity for Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Agenda Item #5 – WRTA Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) Update

- **Potential Action:** Concurrence with WRTA Safety Targets

Nick Burnham from WRTA presented this item. The PTASP details safety processes and procedures for WRTA, utilizes existing safety practices, and includes transit-industry best practices. The framework includes the development of Safety Performance Targets, a Safety Management Policy, and the implementation of a Safety Committee (established in July 2022). The targets were last updated in 2022 and have been updated for 2023.

Mr. Burnham presented two tables that showed the differences between the 2022 and the updated 2023 Safety Performance Measures for both Fixed Route and Demand Response. With these updates, there are no increases in the performance metrics and the only changes were to the areas of total injuries and rate of injuries. The performance metrics for these areas are decreasing in the 2023 updates for both fixed route and demand response.

Following the presentation, Joshua Barber asked why there is a big difference between the system reliability between fixed route and demand response. Nick Burnham replied that this is because diesel buses for fixed routes require more maintenance than gas powered vans for demand response.

There were no other comments or questions.

Ann Sullivan made a motion and was seconded by Betsy Goodrich to concur with the updated WRTA Safety Targets. All members voted unanimously to concur with the updated WRTA Safety Targets.

Steve Woelfel – Yes

Shelby Marshall – Yes

Ann Sullivan – Yes

Jesse Limanek – Yes

Joshua Rickman – Yes

Rich Eichacker – Yes

Bob Hassinger – Yes

Betsy Goodrich - Yes

Agenda Item #6 – Title VI Program

Yahaira Graxirena presented this item. The purpose of the Title VI Program is to define the program’s policy, compliance requirements, protected populations, processes and procedures, and methodologies and analyses. The protected populations defined in the Title VI Program are minorities, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), low-income, older adults, disability, and zero-vehicle households.

Since the release of the Title VI Program for public review and comment there were a few comments and suggestions received by staff. The MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights suggested a LEP 4-factor analysis, commented on staff trainings, and suggested detailed procedures. Also, during the Federal Certification Review, suggestions included detailed data by race and national origin and including a Disparate Impact Analysis.

Ms. Graxirena mentioned that the Title VI Program final document was not ready for this month’s meeting, therefore members did not want to vote to approve. The Action to approve the Title VI Program will be pushed to the October CMMPO Meeting after the comments have been incorporated into the final document.

Agenda Item #7 – 4-Year Non-SOV Targets Adjustment Update

- **Potential Action:** Approval of Updated Non-SOV Targets

Chris Klem presented this item to discuss MassDOT’s updated 4-year non-single occupancy vehicle (SOV) targets. The percentage of Non-SOV travel falls under Performance Measure (PM) 3 to help improve congestion of the transportation system. The metric for non-SOV travel is based on the percentage of people commuting to work using a mode other than a SOV (e.g. carpool, van, public transit, walking, biking, telecommuting).

A table was presented that showed the changes in the means of transportation to work by non-SOV between 2016 to 2022 in the Worcester Urbanized Area (UZA). While some means of transportation experienced decreases between 2016-2022, working from home has experienced a considerable increase.

Different charts were presented to show percentages of non-SOV travel in the Worcester UZA in 5-year bands from 2010 to 2025 using pre-COVID trends and projection from 2022, trends using the latest data if previous methodologies were applied, and the latest data and trends with adjusted methodology.

Finally, a table was presented to summarize the baseline figure percentage (2021), the 2-year target, the 4-year target, the mid-performance value (5-year ACS), and the new adjusted 4-year target. For the Worcester UZA, these percentage targets are:

- Baseline Figure (2021) – 23.4%
- 2-Year Target – 25.4%
- 4-Year Target – 26.1%
- **Mid-Performance Value (5-Year ACS) – 28.95%**
- **Adjusted 4-Year Target – 29.6%**

Betsy Goodrich made a motion and was seconded by Josh Richman to approve the updated 4-year non-SOV targets. All members voted unanimously to approve the updated 4-year non-SOV targets.

Steve Woelfel – Yes

Shelby Marshall – Yes

Ann Sullivan – Yes

Jesse Limanek – Yes

Joshua Rickman – Yes

Rich Eichacker – Yes

Bob Hassinger – Yes

Betsy Goodrich - Yes

Agenda Item #8 – CMMPO Federal Certification Summary

Sujatha Krishnan summarized the recently completed in-person CMMPO Federal Certification review that was held on September 10, 2024.

Ms. Krishnan briefly reviewed the agenda that was used to conduct the Federal Certification. Important topics included the TIP, congestion management, performance-based planning, complete streets planning, UPWP development, public outreach processes, and the overall transportation planning process.

There were no questions or comments following the presentation.

Agenda Item #9 – Age Friendly Progress Update Presentation

Yahaira Graxirena presented a 2024 status report on the Age Friendly Central Mass Action Plan.

The plan consists of four areas regionalized services, including housing, community and health services, communication and information, and transportation.

For transportation there are several goals as part of the plan and various work related to the achievement of those goals.

1. Expand transportation services in rural communities
 - a. CHNA9 Transportation Study
 - b. Blackstone Valley Transportation Needs Survey
 - c. Northborough Transportation Needs Survey
 - d. MicroTransit Suitability Analysis
 - e. Rural Transportation Dialogue
 - f. CMMPO Coordinated Plan
 - g. Town of Paxton joined SCM Elderbus service region
2. Invest in accessible, equitable, safe, and convenient multi-modal infrastructure
 - a. WalkFit Audits
 - b. Auburn Age Friendly Pedestrian Plan
 - c. Community Transit Grants – Shrewsbury, Sutton, Sturbridge
 - d. Close collaboration with MassDOT on VRU Assessment
 - e. Shared design checklist: Age & Dementia Friendly Design Considerations for Physical Infrastructure
3. Support financial sustainability and maintenance of localized and municipal older adult transportation services
 - a. WRTA Travel Training
 - b. WRTA Mobility Management Division
 - c. Digital Equity Training
 - d. MA Healthy Aging Collaborative shares funding opportunity
 - e. Technical Assistance provided by the MA Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office
 - f. Training – Easter Seals, MArTAP, NADTC
4. Bolster participation and recreational opportunities through transportation access
 - a. Town of Oxford – Inclusive Health Coalition
 - b. Food Policy Transportation Working Group
 - c. Town of Southbridge – CMMPO MicroProjects
 - d. Conversations with MA DPH & MA DCR about access to open spaces

Jared Grigg asked if staff are planning to reach out to towns Council on Aging (COA) to get involved in the planning process. Ms. Graxirena answered yes. Shelby Marshall commented that it would be helpful to include town managers in communications.

There were no other comments or questions.

Agenda Item #10 – Staff Updates

- CMMPO Northeast and West Subregion Representative Elections

Sujatha Krishnan announced that there would be CMMPO Representative Elections occurring for the Northeast and West Subregions. The Northeast Subregion election is on September 19th and the West Subregion election is on September 25th.

Agenda Item #11 – New Business

Yahaira Graxirena announced that there is a bicycle ride event occurring in the region on the Mass Central Rail Trail the weekend of the 21st.

Agenda Item #12 – Next Meetings

- CMMPO Advisory Committee meeting (virtual) – Wednesday, September 25, 2024, at 3:00 PM
- CMMPO meeting (virtual) – Wednesday, October 16, 2024, at 4:00 PM

Agenda Item #13 – Adjournment

Bob Hassinger made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Ann Sullivan. The meeting concluded at 5:15 PM.

Meeting Minutes prepared by: Zack Blais, Transportation Principal Planner