

Minutes of the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) Meeting

Wednesday, October 10, 2019

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

60 Congress Street, 2nd Floor Large Conference Room

Springfield, Massachusetts 01104

Present were:

Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Glenn Barrington	General Mgr., Transportation Services	Douglas Ellis	City Engineer, Chicopee
Elizabeth Botelho	DPW Superintendent, City of Chicopee	Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Randy Brown	Southwick DPW	Jeff Hoynoski	MassDOT District 2
Paul Burns-Johnson	PVTA Manager-Planning & Analysis	Betsy Johnson	Walk/Bike Springfield
Dan Call	Westfield Columbia Rail Trail	Van Kacoyannakis	Civil Engineer, VHB
Matt Chase	VHB	Bob Peirent	Engineer, Holyoke
Michelle Chase	Town Engineer, Agawam	Danny Rebelo	Sr. Proj. Engineer, Beta Group, Inc.
Mark Cressotti	City Engineer, Westfield	Jason Skeels	Town Engineer, Amherst
Jim Czach	West Springfield DPW	Steve Williams	Belchertown
Nick Dines	Town of Williamsburg		
Michael Dionne	Commission for the Blind (MCB)		
PVPC Staff			
Rana Al-Jammal	Senior Planner Specialist	Khyati Parmar	Senior Transportation Planner
Patrick Beaudry	Manager of Public Affairs	Gary Roux	Principal Transportation Planner
Andy McCaul	Senior Transportation Planner	Louise Sullivan	Admin Support
Jeff McCollough	Senior Transportation Planner		

1. Introductory Remarks

Jim Czach opened the JTC meeting at 10:23 a.m. and he asked everyone to introduce themselves. Mr. Czach welcomed and congratulated Kim Robinson, newly appointed Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) Executive Director, and she remarked that she was pleased to be in attendance.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Mr. Czach asked for a motion to approve the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) minutes of the September 11, 2019 meeting.

MOVED BY PAUL BURNS-JOHNSON OF THE PIONEER VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY, SECONDED BY RANDY BROWN OF THE CITY OF SOUTHWICK, TO APPROVE THE JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (JTC) MEETING MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2019 MEETING. ALL IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED, THE MOTION CARRIES.

Mr. Czach then moved to take up agenda item 3.

3. Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan – Update

PVPC Principal Transportation Planner Gary Roux announced that now that the Regional Transportation Plan has been completed PVPC staff has been focusing on its draft Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan. Mr. Roux explained that the Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan is being developed in line with the Massachusetts Freight Plan which was completed in early 2018. He stated that the Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan advances the Massachusetts Freight Plan by identifying regional freight needs and providing an overview of existing regional freight conditions including the freight network and barriers to the efficient movement of freight such as weight-restricted bridges, low clearance underpasses and congestion bottlenecks. More importantly, Mr. Roux underscored that the Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan will be assessing the potential of moving freight in the Pioneer Valley more efficiently and with greater safety.

Mr. Roux explained that the Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan summarizes regional freight data sources and then develops recommendations and goals that will enhance regional freight distribution. He noted the Plan will be able to assess the freight benefits of existing Transportation Improvement Projects and identify potential future freight planning tasks. Moreover, the Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan will provide an opportunity for outreach and collaboration with regional freight providers.

Mr. Roux then displayed a map that identified the freight routes consisting of major roads, the National Highway System, active railroads, and critical urban and rural freight corridors. At this point, Mr. Roux introduced Senior Planner Specialist Rana Al-Jammal. Ms. Al-Jammal directed the JTC members' attention to the PowerPoint slide entitled *Truck Volumes on Regional Interstates*. Ms. Al-Jammal stated that trucks comprise the major freight carrying vehicles in the Pioneer Valley region. She explained that by using 2018 actual and projected truck counts provided by MassDOT through their online traffic count site, PVPC staff were able to calculate the percentage of truck volumes on regional interstates. Ms. Al-Jammal reported that traveling west to east on Route 90 beginning in Blandford, the percentage of trucks is 21%. She noted that truck volume increase wherever interstates intersect. Ms. Al-Jammal pointed out that sections of Westfield, West Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee and Northampton have the highest percentage of truck volumes at 16%. Also at 16% is Interstate 291 south of Exit 2A and between Exit 3 and Exit 6.

Mr. Roux stated that PVPC staff intends to focus on truck volumes on arterial roadways and state-numbered routes at a later date. Mr. Roux then introduced Senior Transportation Planner Khyati Parmar to talk about the freight safety data. Ms. Parmar stated that the Federal Vehicle Configuration safety data provided by MassDOT for calendar years 2016 -2018 identifies locations and areas where there have been safety problems. In response to Bob Peirent's question regarding what qualifies as a truck, Ms. Parmar pointed to the Vehicle Configuration chart provided by the Department of Transportation illustrating types of vehicles used in the freight safety data and she noted that passenger cars are excluded from this analysis. Ms. Parmar reported that based on this Vehicle Configuration chart, there were 2,777 commercial vehicle crashes within our region including 11 fatal crashes and 452 non-fatal injury crashes during calendar years 2016 - 2018. She added that most crashes happened in the urban core cities. Ms. Parmar asked the JTC members to contact her or Mr. Roux if they had any questions or comments regarding freight safety data.

Mr. Roux then called the JTC members' attention to the PowerPoint slide entitled *Speed for I-91 between CT-MA State Border*. Mr. Roux indicated that the purple and orange lines on the chart represent the average travel speeds for trucks for two different week days in October of 2018. He noted the discrepancies in truck travel speed between the two days. On his next slide, Mr. Roux displayed a summary of this same speed data in proximity to the exits along the I-91 corridor in the Pioneer Valley. He then noted the slow truck travel speeds from 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM between Exits 17 and 18 as a result of a traffic event that was creating congestion in this area. Mr. Roux explained that additional sources such as regional travel time data will be useful to provide information on the location, duration and severity of congestion in the region. A final map was presented on Draft Freight Problem Areas. Mr. Roux reviewed the contents of the map with JTC and asked for their assistance in reviewing the draft map, particularly to identify the locations of low clearance railroad overpasses. PVPC has defined a low clearance overpass as a structure that does not provide at least 13' 6" of vertical clearance between the overpass and the roadway. He added that the draft Freight Problem Areas Map will be emailed to the JTC members and he asked them to review the map with respect to their communities with regard to low bridge and RR overpasses, freight bottlenecks and other freight problem areas they may have identified. Mr. Roux also requested the JTC members to forward to him at gmroux@pvpc.org any regional freight provider or distributor contact information they may have. He urged the members to send in any comments or questions regarding the Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan by November 1, 2018.

Mr. Czach thanked Mr. Roux and he moved on to agenda item #4.

4. PVMPO Federal Certification Review – Update

PVPC Principal Transportation Planner Gary Roux noted that every four years, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in collaboration with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission conduct a review of the planning process for the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVMPO). Mr. Roux reported that as a result of the completion of the Federal Certification Review conducted back in the spring, a draft action plan has been developed. Mr. Roux called the JTC members' attention to the document entitled *Planning Certification Review Action Plan for the Pioneer Valley MPO*. Mr. Roux explained that the final report of the Transportation Planning Certification Review of the PVMPO identified several recommendations and one corrective action.

Mr. Roux stated that one of the federal requirements is to develop and publish a complete listing of obligated projects within 90 days after the close of the federal fiscal year. He underscored that the listing should indicate whether each project listed in the TIP was obligated. The listing should also include the approved amount programmed in the TIP, the total amount obligated, and the remaining balance for each TIP highway and transit project. Mr. Roux indicated that the other recommendations, for the most part, involve ways to improve the PVMPO's planning process. He pointed to Recommendation/Corrective Action #6 which recommends that the PVMPO needs to decide whether or not the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) should be added as a non-voting, ex-officio member of the MPO and also added to the JTC as a non-voting member or at the very least be included in the decision-making process in some way. Mr. Roux noted that this will be a MPO decision which would require modification of the MPO's Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU).

Mr. Roux emphasized that the FHWA and the FTA have stipulated that the MPO should complete a written evaluation to assess the public's involvement in the strategies and techniques being used by the MPO to ensure its

Public Participation Plan (PPP) is appropriate for future outreach efforts. Mr. Roux added that the MPO needs to update its website to properly reflect the most recent information on Environmental Justice. The website must also include a list of Title VI accomplishments and strategic goals for the upcoming year and be updated annually.

Mr. Roux noted that the Pioneer Valley MPO was not aware of a recognized Native American tribe that has interests in the region. The Stockbridge-Munsee Tribe has a MOU with the FHWA and MassDOT. He said that the PVPC has started to include them in the Regional Planning Process and the development of the RTP. Mr. Roux pointed out that member communities may also need to perform outreach to this tribe as part of their project development process.

Mr. Czach thanked Mr. Roux and he moved on to agenda item #5.

5. JTC Membership — Freight Provider Representation

Mr. Roux explained that just as a representative from the pedestrian community and a representative from the disabled community were added to the JTC's membership, there is now a recommendation from the recent Certification Review to add a member from the freight community. Mr. Roux underscored that feedback from the JTC members would be appreciated. Mr. Czach interjected saying that once a list of the freight companies is compiled, they can be contacted and this recommendation can be further discussed at the next JTC meeting. Mr. Czach once again asked the JTC members to provide Mr. Roux with the names of any freight companies they have.

Mr. Czach then moved on to agenda item #6

6. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Project Status

PVPC Senior Transportation Planner Andy McCaul announced that as of September 30th, Fiscal Year 2019 ended and MassDOT succeeded in advertising all of the TIP projects in the region. Mr. McCaul reported that the TIP process begins again as of October 1st and he called the JTC members' attention to the handout entitled *FFY 2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Project Status (10-9-19)* delineating current projects programmed in FY 2020. He pointed out that there are 12 highway projects and of those 12, there are six local discretionary dollar projects and six projects which are bridge, interstate maintenance or statewide-funded projects. Mr. McCaul said he will continue to provide monthly updates on the FY2020 TIP project status to the JTC. He reminded the members that there are two separate funding categories: highway and transit; and he commented that there needs to be better monitoring of the transit category. Mr. McCaul indicated that he will be speaking with MassDOT District One and District Two to ensure that their projects' design status has also been updated.

Mr. Czach then moved on to agenda item #7

7. Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) – Current Activities

Mr. Burns-Johnson reported that the Loop has been approved by the PVTA Advisory Board subject to MGM's continued funding and the PVTA is in the early stages of developing its next Five-Year Capital Plan. Also, the PVTA Paratransit Riders Committee has begun to discuss safety issues.

8. Other Business

Jeff McCollough announced that the *2019 Moving Together Conference* is scheduled for Thursday, October 24th, from 7:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel in Boston. Mr. McCollough encouraged the JTC members to attend because it is a great opportunity to network with those from the bike/pedestrian and transportation organizations and communities. He reported that there will be an assortment of vendors at the conference along with workshops related to all aspects of planning. The cost is \$100 and Mr. McCollough is researching the possibility of sponsorships for students.

Mr. Roux reported that MassDOT's I-90 Interchange Study to determine whether there should be another interchange between Exits 2 and 3 on the Massachusetts Turnpike will have an Open House on Thursday October 10th. The Open House will be held at the Blandford Town Hall beginning at 6:30 p.m. with the presentation to begin at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Roux further reported that one of the three potential locations for an interchange, the Otis location, was formally eliminated leaving two remaining alternatives: the existing rest area located between Exits 2 and 3 and the MassDOT maintenance area in Blandford.

Mr. Czach pointed out that there are copies of the Valley Flyer Schedule on the back table and copies of the 2019 Moving Together Conference scheduled for Thursday, October 24th, at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel.

9. Adjourn

Mr. Czach asked if anyone had any other business and there being none, he called for a motion to adjourn.

MOVED BY PAUL BURNS-JOHNSON OF THE PIONEER VALLEY TRANSIT AUTHORITY, SECONDED BY MARK CRESSOTTI OF THE CITY OF WESTFIELD, TO ADJOURN THE JOINT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE (JTC) MEETING AT 11:20 A.M. ALL IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED, THE MOTION CARRIES

Relevant Documents Distributed at this October 9, 2019 JTC Meeting:

- *Joint Transportation Committee October 9, 2019 Meeting Agenda*
- *Minutes of the September 11, 2019 Joint Transportation Committee Meeting*
- *Planning Certification Review Action Plan for the Pioneer Valley MPO*
- *2020 Pioneer Valley Region Transportation Improvement Program*
- *Amtrak Valley Flyer Schedule*
- *Register Today for the 2019 Moving Together Conference*
- *Massachusetts' E-Bike Law: An Act Relative to Electric Bicycles*