

PIONEER VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Minutes of the Virtual Meeting held on Tuesday, February 27, 2024

MPO Members Present

Stephen Woelfel	Deputy Director of Planning, MassDOT, representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, MassDOT Secretary and CEO
Paula Simmons	District 2 Engineer, representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Division Administrator
Walter Gunn	Chair – Pioneer Valley Executive Committee
Douglas Slaughter	Chair Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Advisory Board
Joshua A. Garcia	Mayor City of Holyoke
Michael McCabe	Mayor City of Westfield
Gina-Louise Sciarra	Mayor City of Northampton
Mark Gold	Select Board Member Town of Longmeadow
Joshua Barber, William Dwyer,	Community Planner, Federal Highway Administration (Ex-Officio) JTC Chair, Hadley (Ex-Officio)

Guests Present

Daryl Amaral,	District Planner, MassDOT Highway District 2
Ben Breger,	Assistant District Planner, MassDOT Highway District 2
Jeff Burkott,	Planner, City of Holyoke
Chris Klem,	OTP, Regional Planning Coordinator, MassDOT
Derek Krevat,	Manager of MPO Activities, MassDOT Highway District 2
Linda Leduc,	Director of Public Works, Belchertown
Geoff McAlmond,	Director of Public Works, Town of Ware
Mark Moore,	Project Development Engineer, MassDOT Highway District 1
Ben Murphy,	Highway Surveyor , Town of Monson
Carl Rossi,	Director of Public Works, City of Holyoke
Christopher Ryan,	Commissioner, Wales Road
Sandra Sheehan,	Administrator (Ex-Officio), Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
Matthew Smith ,	Chesterfield Highway
Aaron Vega,	Director of Planning, City of Holyoke
Jacqueline McCreanor,	Resident, Northampton
Van Kacoyannakis,	VHB

PVPC Staff Present

Andrew McCaul,	Senior Transportation Planner II
Carl Jackson,	Principal Planner
Gary Roux,	Principal Planner / Traffic Manager
Dana Roscoe,	Principal Planner / Transportation Manager

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Announcement of Quorum

The Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting on February 27, 2024, was called to order at 10:00 a.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was noted.

2. Approval of the January 23, 2024, Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting Minutes

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY MICHAEL MCCABE, TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 23, 2024, METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MINUTES. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

3. Public Comments

Jacqueline from Northampton expressed concerns that many residents and surrounding community members strongly oppose the Picture Main Street project as it currently stands. Over 2,000 signatures have been signed to the petition to stop the project. The proposed redesign does nothing to mitigate the many serious issues identified during the August 2020 failed experiment downtown. The same safety, traffic, parking, and accessibility issues persist. The planning department refused to cost out a trial run with concurrent safety, traffic, parking, and accessibility studies. Northampton residents are concerned about the lack of safety features in the current design plan, where vehicles, cyclists, and cars would come together at more than nine crosswalks downtown, and battery-assisted bicycles are speeding along faster than ever. Jacqueline noted that city council members verbally attacked residents for presenting an alternative, amended design plan at the Northampton City Council meeting on November 16, 2023. Northampton residents strongly urged the members to reject the Picture for Main Street project, as there were too many unresolved issues hanging in the balance.

4. Endorse TIP Amendment No. 2

Andrew McCaul presented the proposed changes to the Transportation Improvement Program, including cost increases for the Worthington project (609287) which experienced a \$4 million dollar cost increase. MassDOT agree to cover \$3million of the cost increase using statewide funding, the remaining \$1million dollars was covered using the remaining regional target funds. Additionally, changes included \$3.8 million funding from the carbon reduction program (CRP) for the PVTA electrification project, and Increase cost of Amherst / Hadley (613218) Route 116 Resurfacing and Related Work from \$5,442,091 to \$ 7,429,193.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY MARK GOLD, TO ENDORSE THE PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AMENDMENT NO. 2. THE MOTION WAS CARRIED OUT UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

5. Endorse UPWP Amendment No.1

Gary Roux presented Amendment No. 1 for the 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to include a new Electric Vehicle Charging Assessment and Deployment Plan for the Pioneer Valley Region. MassDOT has approved the use of \$60,000 in unspent PL Funding for the development of this plan. The Plan will:

- Update PVPC's December 2017 report, "Pioneer Valley Electric Vehicle Charging Station Plan/Guide"
- Develop model bylaws/ordinances for regional communities on requirements for EV infrastructure.
- Prepare a Public Charging Prioritization Plan to optimize the number of public charging stations.
- Develop a public engagement strategy to increase awareness and identify community barriers and opportunities.
- Develop recommendations for the region consistent with the Commonwealth's Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY DOUG SLAUGHTER, TO APPROVE ENDORSING THE PROPOSED UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) AMENDMENT NO. 1. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

6. FFY 2025-2029 TIP Development

Andrew McCaul presented the TIP and UPWP Development schedule and the updated Project Ranking which will be used to updated the 2025-2029 scenarios that staff will present at the March MPO meeting. The project ranking included the projects currently programmed in FFY 2024 for the purpose of showing how cost increases for highway projects are impacting all program years of the TIP. Mr. McCaul provided an update to the MPO on current staff activities related to TIP, mentioning multiple scenarios for funding and potential creative solutions to accommodate cost increases.

7. UPWP Updates

G. Roux provided updates on the UPWP, highlighting the Green Infrastructure Best Management Practices Technical Memo and the Regional Vehicle Roadway User (VRU) Safety Report. The Joint Transportation Committee was requesting locations for safety studies, ideally in areas without recent planning or design activity, to advance shorter-term recommendations for increased safety. The data collection for these studies would occur in April or May 2024, with consideration for the impact on school pedestrians and bicyclists, and delay until September 2024 if necessary. G. Roux discussed the region's transportation planning activities, including the development of the Draft Transportation Improvement Program and the work program for the federal fiscal year 2025. He mentioned that the region has a limited budget available for planning assistance, which typically focuses on advancing studies that increase mobility, address safety, and improve intersections or corridors.

8. District One and District Two

D. Amaral provided District Two project updates, including Springfield, and surrounding areas, including road reconstruction, and resurfacing projects.

District One provided updates on various MassDOT projects, including bridge replacements and reconstructions.

9. PVTA

Ms. Sheehan shared PVTA's ridership recovery and service adjustments. She highlighted that ridership increased by 10% due to service enhancements and fare-free weekends. In addition, she provided information on workforce changes planned for the spring bid, weekend service additions in Ware and Palmer, as well as future route modifications related to five college routes.

10. Other Business

The date of the next Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting will be held on March 26, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. The Secretary will chair the meeting, and the FHWA Administrator will attend the meeting in person.

11. Adjournment

There being no further discussion, Mr. Woelfel called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY MARK GOLD, TO ADJOURN THE FEBRUARY 27, 2024, METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 10:46 A.M.

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at this February 27, 2024, MPO Meeting:

- Metropolitan Planning Organization February 27, 2024, Meeting Notice and Agenda
- January 23, Meeting Minutes
- List of Participants
- TIP Amendment No.2
- UPWP Amendment No.1
- FFY 2025-2029 TIP Development
- UPWP Updates
- PVTA Updates