

**PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)**  
**Draft Minutes of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Zoom Meeting**  
**Tuesday, November 26, 2024, 10:00 A.M.**

Organization Members Present

David Mohler, MassDOT OTP  
Mark Moore, MassDOT Highway District 1  
Walter Gunn, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
Douglas Slaughter, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority  
Joshua A. Garcia, Mayor of Holyoke  
Mark Gold, Longmeadow Selectboard, Sub-Region 4  
Michael McCabe, Mayor of Westfield  
Gina-Louise Sciarra, Mayor of Northampton

Alternate and Ex-Officio Members

William Dwyer, Chairman of the Pioneer Valley Joint Transport Committee  
Kimberly Robinson, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
Sandra Sheehan, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority  
Joshua Barber, Federal Highway Administration  
Kirstie (Hostetter) Tirandazi, Federal Transit Administration

Guests

Laura Hanson, MassDOT Highway District 2  
Mark Berman, East Longmeadow DPW  
Derek Shooster, MassDOT OTP  
Diane Rossini-Smith, Easthampton DPW  
Sarah Cannamela, MassDOT Highway District 2  
Stephanie Weyer, Toole Design  
Van Kacoyannakis, VHB  
Daryl Amaral, MassDOT Highway District 2  
John Broderick, South Hadley DPW  
Ben Breger

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PVPC Staff Present

Andrew McCaul, Senior Transportation Planner II  
Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager  
Dana Roscoe, Principal Planner/Transportation Manager  
Rana Al-Jammal, Principal Transportation Planner  
Jeff McCollough, Principal Transportation Planner

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome, and Opening Remarks

The Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting on November 26, 2024, was called to order at 10:00 a.m. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was noted.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting Held on October 22, 2024

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY MARK GOLD, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 22, 2024, METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MEETING. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

3. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

4. Review, Discussion, and MPO Endorsement of FFY 2025 TIP Amendment No. 1

A. McCaul presented details of Amendment No. 1 to the FFY 2025 TIP, which incorporates adjustments discussed at the prior meeting of the MPO. The amendment includes cost increases to three programs, as follows:

- An increase from \$5,760,000 to \$9,344,780 for the West Springfield-Chicopee pavement and bridge preservation project
- An increase from \$8,625,000 to \$13,315,887 for Agawam roadway resurfacing, bridge deck resurfacing, and related work on Route 57
- An increase from \$5,698,764 to \$7,179,281 for the Hadley bridge replacement project on Bay Road

A. McCaul noted that MassDOT revised the amendment to include \$1,271,314 of HIP-BR on the project and \$8,048,365 of NHPP-I. One public comment has been received and will be addressed in the final document, and the amendment was recommended to the MPO for approval.

The transportation planners stated they were satisfied with the MassDOT comments and that the listed allocations were correct.

Concern was expressed that the increases were substantial but have not undergone the same vetting process as the base funding. A. McCaul noted that the West Springfield and Agawam projects included additional work, and the costs of the additional items are detailed in the amendment submission. He acknowledged that some cost increases were a result of identifying specifics of the projects and updates to the scope of work. The Hadley project was bumped from a prior year and the cost increase was a result of rising costs over the timeframe. Concern was raised regarding what the incentive is for project designers to have all elements of a project included in the initial submission for approval, if there is an option to receive approval for a smaller scope of work then amend the project. It was noted that there have been changes to state regulations that affected project specifications.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY DOUGLAS SLAUGHTER, TO APPROVE FFY 2025 TIP AMENDMENT NO. 1. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH FIVE IN FAVOR AND TWO AGAINST FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

5. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval to Release FFY 2025 TIP Amendment No. 2

A. McCaul reviewed Amendment No. 2 to the FFY 2025 TIP to add funds for four SS4A grants as follows:

- \$400,000 for the Chicopee initiative to plan and implement Complete and Safe Streets for All
- \$197,850 for the Holyoke comprehensive safety action plan
- \$1,250,000 for the PVPC regional safety action plan and demonstration project
- \$250,000 for the Westfield SS4A Planning and Demonstration Grant

A. McCaul noted that the grants must be added to the federal 3C documents to make the funds available to the municipalities, and sought approval to include these items in the transportation improvement program to be released to the public for the required 21-day review period. A. McCaul asked that the MPO provide conditional approval for the items to advance if no specific comments are received that would jeopardize the advancement of the items.

D. Roscoe clarified that the grants have already been awarded, and the amendment was to acknowledge receipt of

**Commented [TR2]:** Please confirm this is the correct presenter.

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**Commented [TR4]:** Please confirm speaker

the funds. D. Mohler further clarified that the amendment will be released to the public for comment and will be approved by the MPO on the condition that no negative public comments are received. If negative comments are received, the item will be brought to the MPO again in December.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY DOUGLAS SLAUGHTER, TO RELEASE FFY 2025 TIP AMENDMENT NO. 2 TO THE PUBLIC FOR A 21-DAY REVIEW PERIOD, AND CONDITIONALLY APPROVE THE AMENDMENT IF NO NEGATIVE PUBLIC COMMENTS ARE RECEIVED FROM THE PUBLIC REVIEW. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITH ONE ABSTENTION FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

6. Review and Discussion of the Update to the PVMPO Title VI Report

J. McCollough reviewed the PVMPO Title VI annual report and provided an overview of MPO Title VI activities, noting that no complaints were received over the last year and there are no issues outstanding or pending. He noted that the MPO works with MassDOT to complete the annual report. In 2024, additional training for staff was provided, and complaints procedures were updated. The review also analyzed how work-program tasks and funding were distributed throughout the region. A demographic review assessed spoken languages in the region.

All updates were documented on the new Title VI website for the MPO.

[x] noted that the MPO will be asked to review the self-certification documents in the spring, and the update will be submitted to MassDOT by the end of the calendar year. The MPO will be asked to endorse the update after comments from MassDOT have been received.

**Commented [TR5]:** Unsure who was speaking; based on the PVPC website staff list he looked like Douglas Hall, but Mr. Hall was not on the attendee list. Please confirm.

7. Presentation on the Economic Impact of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)

K. Robinson shared the results of the PVPC's economic impact analysis, which was completed by the UMass Donahue Institute. She reviewed the PVPC's structure and scope, noting that it was created by the Massachusetts State Legislature in 1963 to act as the regional planning agency for Hampden and Hampshire Counties, and now supports 43 communities with funding and technical assistance.

Donahue Institute's analysis found that the PVPC provides \$5,375 of economic activity for each \$1 paid by community members, and \$83 of activity for each \$1 in grants. Overall, the PVPC creates \$629 million in economic value and supports 2,200 jobs annually. The PVPC currently has approximately 48 employees and in the last fiscal year accomplished 156 projects.

8. Review and Discussion of the Discretionary FY24-26 PROTECT Grant

[x] noted that the PVPC received a solicitation from the MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning asking for projects that could be incorporated into the statewide resilience improvement plan, which would allow a community to apply for funding under the PROTECT Grant. A requirement for receiving implementation funds is to be part of an adopted resilience improvement plan. The next application deadline is February 24, 2025.

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[x] provided the MPO an overview of the application process and timeline for the PVPC, with the aim to send a solicitation request to all 43 member communities the week of December 2, 2024. Staff will work with the JTC to complete a prioritized project list to submit to MassDOT at MassDOT's December and January meetings, and the MPO will be asked to approve the list at its January 28, 2025, meeting.

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9. Project Status Update: Northampton Downtown Complete Street Project

A. McCaul provided a project update, noting that the 2025 federal fiscal year started on October 1, 2024. The PVPC has three projects approved for funding with its regional discretionary funds with advertising dates of May 3, 2025, June 28, 2025, and August 16, 2025. All projects must be advertised by the end of the federal fiscal year, which is September 30, 2025.

S. Weyer presented a status update on the Northampton Downtown Complete Streets project. The project involves reconstruction of Main Street in downtown Northampton from building face to building face and extends approximately 0.4 miles. The purpose of the project is to address safety concerns, improve accessibility and waiting space for transit, attract business investments, create loading spaces, increase space for planting trees, and improve subsurface utilities, with a goal to improve safety and access for all, promote a vibrant downtown, and create a functional, enduring, and sustainable streetscape.

With a proposed advertising date of September 13, 2025, the updated project schedule aims to reach a 100% submittal date by March 28, 2025, have acceptable ROW plans by April 29, 2025, complete appraisals from May to mid-July, and obtain municipal approvals by August 14, 2025. The TIP amount will be \$29,677,629 with funds to be split over 2025, 2026, and 2027.

It was noted that the project cost has decreased, and that during the public comment sessions there were complaints from business owners. G-L. Sciarra stated that while it is not possible to accommodate all stakeholders, with ongoing communication the municipality has been successful in working with business owners to find strategies to mitigate their concerns and find ways to drive business to the downtown area during construction. She noted that while there are concerns, people are also excited about what the project will bring to the area.

The importance of meeting all projected dates on the project was highlighted, and the MPO confirmed that they will help in any way possible.

10. Updates from MassDOT Highway District One and District Two Officials on Relevant Transportation Issues and Projects of Interest to the Pioneer Valley MPO Members

[y] provided the district update report for District One. For 2024, two projects were advertised: the Worthington reconstruction of Route 143, on July 13, 2024, and the Cummington bridge preservation, on August 31, 2024. Both are in the construction phase. Cummington received a notice to proceed on November 20, 2024. In 2025, for the Huntington Project, the designer is expected to have submitted 75% of the design by December 30, 2024. In 2026 and 2027, two municipal projects are being tracked: 75% design submitted is expected for the Williamsburg reconstruction of Mountain Street by December 20, 2024, and final design and final ROW plans are anticipated for the Chesterfield reconstruction of North Road and Damon Pond by mid-February, 2025.

D. Amaral provided the district update report for District Two. For Project 608163, the low bid was \$10.6 million, by Morais Concrete. For Project 610652, the contract was awarded to Morais Concrete with a notice to proceed issued on November 21, 2024. For the Ludlow Bridge replacement project, the contract was awarded November 20, 2024, to Tully Construction Corp.; notice to proceed is pending.

**Commented [TR8]:** The speaker was introduced as Peter but was not on the provided attendance list. Please confirm.

Project 608881 is scheduled to be advertised on May 3, 2025. Design is at 100% and review comments have been completed. A PS&E submission is due in December from the municipality's designer. Project 609065's design is at 100% and review comments have been completed. Comments resolution was held on September 4, 2024. The PS&E submission is due December 22, 2024. Project 609286 has a current TFPC of \$29.6 million; 5% was received in mid-March, review comments were completed in mid-April, and the next milestone is the 100% design submission due March 28, 2025.

Project 608785 is at 25% design. The submission from 2019 and functional design review were completed on September 11, 2024, and the design justification review for comments was completed on November 21, 2024. A revised schedule from the consultant is awaited. Project 609061's design is at 100%. The submission was received on June 7, 2024, and review comments were completed September 5, 2024. The next milestone is the PS&E submission, due on December 17, 2024.

M. McCabe asked for a status update on the 10/202 corridor and the Route 2 corridor, specifically the projects north of the Southampton Road school, and requested that the update be independent of Project 612600. D. Amaral confirmed that he would provide an update on the specific projects without reference to the larger batch of projects in the region.

11. Updates from PVTA Administrator Sandra Sheehan on Relevant Transit-Related Issues and Projects of Interest to the Pioneer Valley MPO Members

S. Sheehan provided the PVTA update. Per a decision of the Massachusetts Legislature, most of the regional transit authorities are fare-free. PVTA went fare-free November 1, 2024, and expects to remain fare-free through June 30. The end date of the program will be extended into August if there are remaining funds. Ridership continues to increase and was up 14% in September and 12% in October year over year. Weekend ridership is up significantly, with an increase of 32% on Saturdays system wide, and 36% on Sundays. Changes to the system completed in March and May allowed for enhanced service. On the paratransit system, ridership is up 12%. The recovery rate is at 93.5% of 2019.

Additional project updates were highlighted:

- Service between Amhurst and Greenfield has been added.
- A grant application was submitted to MassDOT and funding received for service between East Hampton to Southlake.
- Phase 1 of the Cottage Street facility is substantially complete, and six electric chargers have been upgraded from 16kw to 180kw to charge up to three buses per charger and allow a total of 18 buses to charge simultaneously. Phase 2 of the project will expand the facility to accommodate a pay booth and additional parking, and upgrade to an additional pantograph 20 chargers. Phase 2 will go to bid in January, 2025.
- Construction is underway at the UMass transit facility to expand the maintenance area.
- A purchase is in process to purchase additional electric and hybrid buses to expand the fleet.

S. Sheehan reviewed additional route adjustments and the impact on ridership and people's perception of the service.

12. Other Business

There being no further discussion, D. Mohler called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY DOUGLAS SLAUGHTER, TO ADJOURN TODAY'S METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 10:51 A.M.

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Respectfully Submitted,  
Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the November 26, 2024, Meeting

1. Metropolitan Planning Organization November 26, 2024, Meeting Agenda
2. Metropolitan Planning Organization November 26, 2024, Presentation