1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M. at the office of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), 40 Church Street, Suite 200, Lowell, MA. Attendees included:

Voting Members:

- Stephen Woelfel, MassDOT District 4 (Representing MassDOT Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack)
- Ron Keohane, Tyngsborough Board of Selectmen, NMCOG MPO Representative
- Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4 (Representing Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board, NMCOG Chair
- Tom Bomil, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Kevin O’Connor, Lowell Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board

Stakeholders and Other Attendees:

- Chris Timmel, Federal Highway Administration
- Leah Sirmin, Federal Transit Administration
- Constance Raphael, MassDOT District 4
- Derek Shooster, MassDOT Planning, MPO Liaison
- Timothy Paris, MassDOT District 4
- Paul Starratt, Westford Town Engineer
- Stephen Jahnle, Chelmsford Department of Public Works
- Ali Bent, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Graham Reich, Lowell Regional Transit Authority
- Kevin Hardiman, Tewksbury Town Engineer
- Chris Hayes, City of Lowell Transportation Project Manager
- Christine Bruins, Lowell National Historical Park
- Natasha Vance, City of Lowell Transportation Engineer
- Eric Salerno, Tyngsborough Town Planner
- Elizabeth Ware, Dracut Community Development Director
- Kelly Beatty, Chelmsford Resident, Dark Sky Association

NMMPPO Staff:

- Beverly Woods, Chris Curry, Justin Howard, Alicia Geilen, Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
2. NMMPO CERTIFICATION REVIEW – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SESSION

Chris Timmel, Federal Highway Administration, and Leah Sirmin, Federal Transit Authority, opened the meeting with a request for comments from the public as part of the NMMPO Certification Review, a Federal requirement to certify the planning process in the region which is required once every four years.

Members of the public and of the local communities spoke on behalf of NMCOG and the NMMPO. Paul Starratt, Westford Town Engineer, gave detailed examples of positive experiences in working closely with NMCOG, including traffic studies, redesigning of major intersections, improved traffic flow and reduced crash rates at specific locations, as well as a significant increase in town revenues due to easier access for local businesses. Natasha Vance, City of Lowell Transportation Engineer, Chris Hayes, City of Lowell Planner, Betsy Ware, Dracut Community Development Director, Stephen Jahnle, Chelmsford DPW, Ali Bent, LRTA, all echoed equally positive examples and offered their appreciation for the importance and the impact that NMCOG and the NMMPO have on their local transportation projects.

An onsite certification review will be held Wednesday, March 4th, to determine compliance for with federal requirements. Leah Sirmin stated that the review process is important as no federal dollars can be allocated without certification. Contact information for both Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Authority was provided to attendees. Comments will be accepted through March 6th.

Kelly Beatty, citizen of Chelmsford and member of Dark Skies, attended the session to speak to the stakeholders regarding roadway lighting. He expressed concern with the transition to LED lighting at a higher than favorable color temperature. He cited studies enforcing the premise that higher temperature lighting is a poorer choice for the environment. His organization would like to see exterior LED lighting at a 3000K or lower threshold. Kelly also requested MassDOT pay closer attention to roadway striping maintenance to avoid hazards and encourage safety. He will make contact with MassDOT to discuss best practices.

3. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 22, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

NMMPO members were provided with a copy of the January 22, 2020 minutes prior to the meeting. Based on a motion made by Kevin O’Connor and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the NMMPO voted to approve the January 22, 2020 minutes as presented. Tom Bomil abstained, as he was not present for the January meeting.

4. OPEN FORUM – OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMENTS FROM MPO MEMBERS, COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS AND PUBLIC

There were no additional comments.

5. STATUS REPORT ON TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) PROJECTS UNDER DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Connie Raphael updated the NMMPO regarding project information changes since the January 22, 2020 meeting:
Projects in design:

- Chelmsford – Intersection Improvements at Boston Road and Concord Road is approaching 100% design with an updated cost estimate of $2,756,226.74.
- Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Andover Street (Route 133) and River Road is at Final Design. The Ad date is March 14, 2020. The current cost estimate is $4,655,201.35.
- Westford – Bridge Rehabilitation Beaver Brook Road over Beaver Brook is at 25% design. The current cost estimate is $1,821,608.
- Westford – Bridge Replacement Stony Brook Road over the Stony Brook has a current cost estimate of $2,280,120.
- Lowell – Tewksbury Route 38 Intersection Improvements is at 75% design. The current cost estimate is $3,339,234.81.
- Westford – Rehabilitation of Boston Road is at 25% Design. The current cost estimate is now $8,479,858.80.
- Chelmsford – Improvements on Chelmsford Street (Route 110) is an approved project with a preliminary cost estimate of $10,950,000.

Projects under construction:

- Tewksbury – Intersection Improvements at Main Street, Salem Road and South Street: A Pre-construction conference was held on February 25th.

6. FFY 2020-2024 TIP UPDATES

a. TIP Adjustment 2: Self-Certification References Update

Justin Howard presented Adjustment 2, which involves an added narrative to the signatory pages on updated state regulations outlined in the Global Warming Solutions Act, and to add language on federal regulations for anti-lobbying restrictions. Members present signed the updated documents.


Justin Howard presented Amendment 2 to the MPO for consideration to release for a 21-day public comment period. This amendment includes programming $500,000 towards the Merrimack Riverwalk Extension project in Lowell. Chris Hayes updated the group on available project funding acquired since the previous meeting.

Based on a motion by Kevin O’Connor, seconded by Tom Bomil, the NMMPO voted unanimously to release Draft TIP Amendment 2 for a 21-day public comment period.

7. FFY 2021 UPWP and FFY 2021-2025 TIP DEVELOPMENT UPDATES

Justin Howard informed the group that NMCOG staff received financial information and guidance on development of the FY2021 UPWP and FFY 2021-2025 TIP documents. He presented the results of TIP Readiness Day, which includes preliminary recommendations on program years for all TIP eligible
projects in the region. He will present specific tasks included within the UPWP at the March NMMPO meeting. NMCOG staff is reaching out to the municipalities to identify tasks to be included in the next work program.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

MassDOT recently published a new Right of Way Guide Book for Municipalities in the Commonwealth. Frank Suszynski stated that these guidelines explain the ROW process during project design. Justin Howard will forward additional information to the communities.

A 2050 Roadmap to Address Climate Change in the Commonwealth Public meeting will be held at the Middlesex Community College Lowell Campus on March 23rd from 6:30-8PM. (Update: This meeting has been cancelled)

The MassDOT 2020 Transportation Innovation Conference will be held at the DCU Center April 7-8. Registration is currently open. (Update: This conference has been cancelled)

Frank Suszynski informed the group that surplus funds have been identified and dedicated to a resurfacing project in Billerica and Chelmsford on Route 3A from Floyd Street to 495 and will be completed this spring.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion made by Kevin O’Connor and seconded by Pat Wojtas, the MPO voted unanimously to adjourn at 2:45 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 25, 2020, 2:00 PM at the NMCOG offices. (Update: This meeting will now be held virtually in light of the Covid 19 emergency)