

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Zoom Meeting
Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 10:00 A.M.

Organization Members Present

Stephen Woelfel, MassDOT OTP
Mark Moore, MassDOT Highway District 1
Walter Gunn, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Joshua A. Garcia, Mayor of Holyoke
Roger Fuller, Chesterfield Selectboard, Sub-Region 5
Gina-Louise Sciarra, Mayor of Northampton
Sandra Sheehan, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
James Whalen, Town of Holland
Michael McCabe, Mayor of Westfield

Ex-Officio/Non-Voting Members

William Dwyer, Town of Hadley
Stephen Thor Johnson, Town of Southampton
Anthony Jones, Federal Highway Administration

Guests

Ben Breger, Bowman Consulting
Daryl Amaral, MassDOT Highway District 2
Derek Shooster, MassDOT OTP
Dianne Rossini-Smith, City of Easthampton
Laura Hanson, MassDOT Highway District 2
Mark Berman, Town of East Longmeadow
Michelle Scott, MassDOT
Timothy Keane, Town of Longmeadow
Earth Day Representative, Northampton
Anne Teschner, Public

PVPC Staff Present

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

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

The Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting on April 22, 2025, 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 March 25, 2025

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY SANDRA SHEEHAN, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 25, 2025, METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MEETING. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

3. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

4. 2026 to 2030 MassDOT Capital Improvement Plan

Michelle Scott presented the MassDOT Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) development process, noting that the CIP is a rolling five year plan that funds planning, construction, and capital maintenance. The development of the plan is iterative, influenced by federal policy, governor office's priorities, and MassDOT's *Beyond Mobility* plan, and is funded by federal, state, MassDOT and other locally provided sources. It was noted that components within the CIP overlap with the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP).

M. Scott reviewed the CIP development timeline, which began in October, 2024, and will conclude in June, 2025. The draft CIP will be approved for public comment on May 21, 2025, and released for public comment between May 22, 2025, and June 11, 2025. It was noted that the MassDOT Board of Directors are responsible for approving the draft release and the final CIP will be voted upon at their June 18, 2025, meeting. Further details on the CIP development are available at www.mass.gov/capital-investment-plan-cip.

M. Scott reviewed the proposed fiscal year 2026 to 2030 CIP spending by division, with a total cost of approximately \$18.4 billion. Investment will be made in the *Beyond Mobility* priority areas of safety, travel experience, reliability, resiliency, supporting clean transportation, and destination connectivity.

The various program partnerships with municipalities were reviewed, including Chapter 90 funding which, as the largest CIP program, currently contributes \$200 million per year and may be increased to \$300 million through pending legislation.

Specific road and bridge investment for the Pioneer Valley Region include bridge replacements in Chicopee, Holyoke, Monson, Palmer, Springfield, and West Springfield, and road reconstruction in Northampton, Springfield, and Williamsburg. Other investments will be made in Palmer and Pioneer Valley for climate resiliency and in Belchertown and Southampton for active transportation improvements.

5. FFY 2025 Transportation Improvement Program Amendment

Andrew McCaul reviewed the proposed federal fiscal year 2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment No. 4 explaining that the amendment addresses readiness and cost issues of five regionally prioritized projects and one discretionary grant funded project.

Section 1A / Regionally Prioritized Projects

- Remove Northampton (609286) Downtown Complete Street Project (route 9) \$16,473,207 from FFY 2025. Project is proposed to be funded in the FFY 2026-2030 TIP (A/C 2026, 2027, 2028)
- Add Chicopee / South Hadley Route 33 resurfacing and related work for \$10,310,790 (STBG). \$5,792,470 in statewide funding in FFY 2026 for a total cost of \$16,103,260.
- Add Chesterfield (608886) Reconstruction of North Road and Damon Pond Road. Move A/C fund from FFY 2027/2028 to FFY2025/2026. A/C \$5,000,000 (FFY 2025) and \$6,290,549 (FFY 2026)
- A/C Longmeadow (608881) Resurfacing and Intersection work on Longmeadow Street and Converse Street. \$7,774,555 (FFY 2025) and \$5,000,000 (FFY 2026)
- Increase cost of Holyoke (609065) – Resurfacing and related work on Cabot and Race Street from \$5,493,366 to \$9,225,500

Section 1B / Earmark or Discretionary Grant Funded Projects

- Increase cost of Northampton (608869) Bridge Replacement – Old Springfield Road over the Mill River from \$5,497,283 to \$8,771,523.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY JAMES WHALEN, TO RELEASE THE DRAFT FFY 2025 TIP AMENDMENT NO. 4 FOR 21-DAY PUBLIC REVIEW. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

6. Draft FFY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program Release

Gary Roux reviewed the development schedule for the draft Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for federal fiscal year 2026, which outlines transportation planning tasks for the year. He noted that the draft 2026 UPWP budget is approximately 1.5% higher than that of 2025. In addition to federal funds, transportation funding is provided by the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, local sources, and the Safer Streets for All grant.

G. Roux outlined three local project requests. He emphasized that the UPWP development is based on guidance from MassDOT and federal bodies. Key products include local studies, vulnerable roadway user safety studies, and two transit related surveys.

G. Roux reported that the MPO has received approval for MassDOT to redirect \$90,000 of previously obligated funds to complete a Pioneer Valley Transit Authority economic impact assessment, and to upgrade the audiovisual equipment in the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's large conference room.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY JAMES WHALEN, TO RELEASE THE DRAFT FFY 2026 UPWP FOR 21-DAY PUBLIC REVIEW. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

7. Draft FFY 2026 to 2030 Transportation Improvement Program

A. McCaul reviewed the development schedule for the draft federal fiscal year 2026 to 2030 TIP, noting that public comments will be accepted from April 25, 2025, through May 15, 2025. A formal public hearing on the draft TIP is scheduled for May 14, 2025, at the Joint Transit Committee, with the goal of formal MPO approval at the May 27, 2025, meeting.

A. McCaul explained that the Project Universe includes 42 projects with total funding of approximately \$430 million. He reviewed the projects for 2026 through 2030, noting that the plan reflects MPO and JTC's preference for option No. 2 as presented at the previous meeting. Multiple construction season projects have funding dispersed accordingly to fully commit available funds each year. Two major bridge reconstruction projects, each valued at approximately \$200 million, will be funded over multiple years.

Joshua A. Garcia expressed concern about the timing of the Maple and High Street project in Holyoke and emphasized that he could not support a motion to release the TIP for public review unless the project was moved forward. A. McCaul noted that it would not be feasible to schedule the project advertisement earlier based on the current design; however, it could be moved ahead depending on the annual status update for each project.

James Whalen noted that several projects have been shifted since the last report and asked for clarification. A. McCaul explained that changes were primarily due to available funding. Derek Shooster added that managing the TIP is particularly challenging, as fiscal constraint and project readiness must be considered. Federal funds cannot be obligated for projects that are not construction ready as the funds could be recaptured. Readiness considerations include right of way acquisition, environmental permitting, sufficiency of design plans, and MPO priorities.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY SANDRA SHEEHAN, TO RELEASE THE DRAFT FFY 2026 TO 2030 TIP FOR 21-DAY PUBLIC REVIEW. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH TWO OPPOSED FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

Stephen Woelfel requested that A. McCaul contact the two members opposed to the motion before the final vote to answer any outstanding questions. He advised that the opposing communities contact MassDOT to discuss their concerns.

8. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval of Annual Green House Gas (GHG) Self Certification

A. McCaul explained that the following endorsement is and acknowledgement that the MPO certifies that the Transportation Improvement Program and Air Quality Conformity Determination for the 2024 Long Range Transportation Plan is in compliance with all applicable requirements in the State Regulation 310 CMR 60.05: Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for Transportation

Michael McCabe departed the meeting prior to the vote.

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY WALTER GUNN, TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL GREEN HOUSE GAS (GHG) SELF CERTIFICATION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

9. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval of Annual Self Certification of the 3C Planning Process

A. McCaul explained that the following endorsement is and acknowledgement that the MPO certifies that its conduct of the metropolitan transportation planning process complies with all applicable requirements, which are listed below, and that this process includes activities to support the development and implementation of the Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan and Air Quality Conformity Determination, the Transportation Improvement Program and Air Quality Conformity Determination, and the Unified Planning Work Program.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY MAYOR GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA, TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL SELF CERTIFICATION OF THE 3C PLANNING PROCESS. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

10. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval of Annual Title IV Self Certification

For the Board's information, Jeff McCollough confirmed that the Pioneer Valley MPO complies with federal civil rights, statutes, executive orders, and regulations that ensure the transportation needs of underserved populations are considered, and opportunities exist to participate in MPO activities. J. McCollough also confirmed that all required translation of vital documents has been completed and is available on the website. He further confirmed that there are currently no Title IV complaints for the Pioneer Valley MPO.

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

District One provided updates on several projects. The bridge preservation project in Cummington is in the final design phase, with the revised design underway to address Department of Environmental Protection comments regarding stormwater mitigation measures. The Huntington Bridge preservation project has reached 75% design, with the 100% design due by the end of April, 2025. In Williamsburg, MassDOT just recently completed its 75% design review for the reconstruction of Mountain Street, with a slight project cost increase. Additionally, the Chesterfield project for the reconstruction of North Road and Damon Pond Road is awaiting permit approval from the Office of Dam Safety within the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Approval is anticipated by summer, 2025, after which plans, specifications, and estimates (PS&E) will follow. Municipal right-of-way certification is expected in August, 2025.

District Two provided updates focused on project status and timelines. Project No. 60881, the Long Meadow Street resurfacing, is currently at the PS&E stage. Environmental clearance was received on March 3, 2025, and the right-of-way certificate was issued on March 12, 2025. Review comments were completed on March 7, 2025; PS&E comment responses are pending. Project No. 609065, the Holyoke Cabot Street and Race Street resurfacing project, is also at the PS&E stage, with environmental clearance completed. A revised PS&E is expected at the end of April 2025. For Project No. 610768, the Notice to Proceed (NTP) was issued to A.J. Virgilio Construction for approximately \$1 million; construction commencement is awaited. The bid for multi-district Project No. 613606 was awarded to Rifenburg Contracting Corporation on April 8, 2025, for \$1.68 million. The NTP was issued on April 15, 2025, with construction commencement awaited. For Project No. 60875, the 25% design review comments for the South Hadley reconstruction of Main Street were completed on April 16, 2025. A design public hearing is scheduled following review of right of way submissions. For Project No. 609061, Chicopee intersection improvements, the revised PS&E (Version 2) was due on April 18, 2025, and the right-of-way plan review has been completed.

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

Sandra Sheehan reported that the PVRT is in the process of finalizing its 2026 budget, considering the recently issued housing budget, and the pending senate budget. The PVRT supports Amendment No. 1640, filed by Representative Natalie Blay, which seeks to increase the operating budget by \$13 million with \$3 million from the Community Commonwealth Transportation Fund and \$10 million from Fair Share to meet contractual obligations and offset rising service costs. She noted that March, 2025, ridership has increased by 28% over March, 2023, and April 1, 2025, was identified as the largest post-COVID-19-pandemic single day ridership.

S. Sheehan noted that the PVRT is working with the consultant ACOM, hired by MassDOT, for the preparation of the comprehensive regional transportation plan, which is updated every five years and will guide PVRT services. S. Sheehan announced that the proposed service between Peacefield and Northampton has been named the 413 Link and is scheduled to begin in August, 2025.

13. Other Business

The next MPO meeting is scheduled for May 27, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

There being no further discussion, a motion was called to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED BY SANDRA SHEEHAN, SECONDED BY WALTER GUNN, TO ADJOURN TODAY'S METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 10:59 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the April 22, 2025, Meeting

1. Metropolitan Planning Organization April 22, 2025, Presentation