

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of the Joint Transportation Committee Meeting
Wednesday, August 13, 2025, 10:00 a.m.

Committee Members Present:

Alexis Hosea-Abbott, MassBike
Betsy Johnson, Pedestrian Representative, Springfield
Connor Knightly, West Springfield
Derek Krevat, MassDOT
Tom Kulig, Russell
Carmen Rosado, Stavros ILC Community Access Advocate
Charlie Rose, Worthington
Diane Rossini-Smith, Easthampton
Lily Wallace, MassDOT Highway District 2
Trevor Wood, West Springfield
Anne Capra, South Hadley
Connor Knightly, West Springfield
Sarah Cannamels, MassDOT Highway D2
Thomas Ruta, MassDOT Highway D2
Ben Breger, Bowman
Matt Chase, VHB

Commented [JD1]: Please confirm committee members present

PVPC Staff Present:

Carl Jackson, Principal Transit Planner
Jeffrey McCollough, Principal Transportation Planner
Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager
Rana Al-Jammal, Principal Transportation Planner
Khyati Parmar, Principal Transportation Planner
Geoffrey Klafeta, Transportation Planner

1. Call to Order

The August 13, 2025, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Joint Transportation Committee convened under the temporary chairmanship of Gary Roux due to the absence of an official chair. With only eight voting members in attendance, the Committee did not meet the quorum of 11 required to take any formal action. Consequently, all decisions were deferred to the September, 2025, meeting. Efforts to recruit a new chair are ongoing. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There was not a quorum, minutes tabled until September JTC meeting.

3. Public Comment

There was no comment.

4. Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) – Review and Recommendation to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to Endorse the Plan Currently Out for the 45-Day Public Review

Carl Jackson outlined an update to the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP). The 2025 update to the CPT-HSTP is designed to enhance transportation services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income populations. This plan is crucial for securing federal and state funding and aims to address

service gaps in rural and underserved areas. It is mandated by federal law to be developed through a representative process, providing a structured framework for transit project development. The draft plan is available online for public review and comment. Multiple listening sessions and upcoming meetings are scheduled to gather input from the public and stakeholders. The plan identified several key transportation needs, including limited fixed-route service in rural areas, restrictive paratransit options, unreliable medical and private agency transport, and insufficient senior van availability.

Preliminary recommendations focused on collaboration with regional transit authorities to expand flexible on-demand services, complete regional transportation projects, and develop an interactive transportation information website. Initial feedback from various community organizations has been supportive of these recommendations.

5. FFY 2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – Amendment No. 5 Project Status Update, Review and Recommendation to the MPO to Endorse the Amendment Currently Out for the 21-Day Public Review

Mr. Roux presented the recent amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that involves administrative cost adjustments for two significant projects to ensure timely advertising within the federal fiscal year. These modifications align the program with funding targets and prepare for future amendments. The Cabot and Race Street project in Holyoke experienced a reduction in costs by nearly \$3 million due to the exclusion of a bridge from the project scope, which was not ready on time. This adjustment ensures the project's advertisement within the federal fiscal year 2025. The reconstruction of North Road and Damon Pond Road in Chesterfield saw a decrease in costs by over \$3 million following updated plans and estimates that indicated a lower total participating cost than initially projected. These adjustments bring the program in line with the federal fiscal year 2025 target and create an additional \$2.8 million for fiscal year 2026, necessitating a separate amendment post-October. No public comments have been received on this amendment, and MPO approval is scheduled for August, 2025.

6. Local Early Actionable Planning (LEAP) Program – Presentation

Derek Krevat and Lily Wallace presented a new program by MassDOT's Municipal Planning and Support (MP&S) team that aims at assisting municipalities, especially rural and economically disadvantaged communities, in advancing transportation projects through technical support and consultant services. The program will connect municipalities with federal funding and offer help with navigating the state-level project development process. It focuses on jumpstarting projects and providing technical assistance.

Two pre-qualified architectural and engineering firms will be retained to perform early-stage design and conceptual planning tasks for infrastructure projects, with an annual capital plan of \$1 million and project funding ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Municipalities submit requests via an online form, which are reviewed by a committee including Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs). Approved requests are scoped with consultants for deliverables; if not approved, alternative assistance is explored. The program supports activities such as conceptual designs, alternative analyses, complete streets engineering and design, community-wide safety planning, federal grant application assistance, and traffic analysis, filling gaps in existing programs.

The program prioritizes rural communities, gateway cities, and areas with similar needs, but does not restrict eligibility strictly to these designations. It operates on a rolling basis and is not a grant program but a service to advance projects. A request form is available on Grant Central, designed for ease of completion. Over 25 requests have been received, with significant representation from western Massachusetts. The team of four staff members is geographically divided to support different regions.

Ms. Wallace confirmed that NGOs or 501c3 organizations cannot directly apply for the grant, as it is limited to municipal projects. However, NGOs can collaborate with municipalities to work on community projects and assist in

the application process. Ms. Wallace added that although only municipalities can officially submit applications through Grant Central, organizations like regional planning agencies or NGOs can fill out the forms on behalf of a town with municipal approval, easing capacity constraints. Projects focusing solely on engineering and design, such as improving bus stop crossings in Springfield, are appropriate for this pilot grant program, potentially facilitating further city or state funding for implementation.

7. 2025 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan – Update

Jeffrey McCollough provided the Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan update that encompasses a thorough data collection process, extensive public engagement, and the formulation of strategies aimed at enhancing bicycling and walking infrastructure and safety. The initiative places significant emphasis on community input and prioritizes strategies that the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) can directly influence to support local efforts. The development of the plan commenced with the creation of a vision statement and the naming of the plan, resulting in the "Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan," which was guided by input from the Bike Ped Complete Street subcommittee.

A comprehensive inventory of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and shared-use paths was conducted throughout Pioneer Valley, with all collected data made accessible via a dedicated website that is regularly updated. The public engagement strategy employed a multifaceted outreach approach, including focus groups, municipal meetings, and collaborations with local organizations such as Walk Bike Springfield and Friends of the Columbia Greenway. During Bay State Bike Month, multiple events were held in May, featuring interactive activities such as a spinning wheel vote to gather public feedback on bicycling and walking challenges. Both online and paper surveys supplemented this. Community input was further collected through an online wiki map, which allowed residents to pinpoint specific concerns. This resulted in over 350 responses, alongside 140 survey responses, all of which informed the plan's recommendations and strategies. The current focus is on prioritizing these recommendations. The team is finalizing the recommendations chapter and seeking further input through a SurveyMonkey survey to prioritize strategies that the MPO can impact. Broad participation is encouraged before the draft is released publicly.

8. Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) – Update

The Safer Streets and Roads for All program has achieved a significant milestone with the selection of a preferred consultant team, led by VHB, and the commencement of contract negotiations. This advancement facilitates the development of the Regional Safety Action Plan and includes a demonstration project that will review all regional traffic signals. This initiative strategically positions the project for future funding opportunities under the grant program.

9. Regional Critical Freight Corridor Update

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is in the process of updating its regional critical freight corridors, which are designated routes eligible for federal funding under the bipartisan infrastructure law. The designation criteria and mileage limits stipulate that rural corridors must be publicly accepted roads within official urbanized areas, with Massachusetts permitted up to 300 miles of rural and 150 miles of urban corridors. Presently, under half of these miles are designated statewide, with the regional area having about 23 rural and 10 urban miles designated thus far. Designations prioritize roads that provide critical access to freight facilities and industrial uses, particularly those connecting to the interstate system. The selection of urban corridors is complex due to the numerous candidate roads, but emphasizes major industrial access.

The current corridors are depicted in purple and orange on the map, with rural routes generally being longer. Community feedback is sought to identify additional corridors by the end of October for submission to MassDOT in November. Designation allows eligibility for federal funds that can support improvements benefiting truck movement and overall safety, including pedestrian infrastructure such as sidewalks, although funding amounts are limited. Designation does not create new truck routes where trucks are currently prohibited; many designated routes are existing state-numbered roads where trucks are already permitted. Concerns about increased truck traffic on local roads were acknowledged. Considerations such as Complete Streets and input from bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups will be factored into final corridor recommendations to ensure corridor appropriateness and community support.

10. Other Business

The next JTC meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. Participants were encouraged to partake in the bicycle and pedestrian lane survey and the virtual public participation event on August 20, 2025, for the coordinated public transportation human services plan.

There is a need for new MPO alternate members in Sub Area 3 (including Northampton, East Hampton, Amherst, Hadley, Easthampton) and Sub Area 4 (covering smaller communities such as Belchertown, Palmer, Monson, Holland, Wales, and Long Meadow). Interested locally elected officials were invited to discuss the role with staff.

Mr. Roux expressed enthusiasm about the new pvpc.org website, highlighting its improved functionality and design, and encouraged members to explore it.

11. Adjournment

There being no further discussion, Mr. Roux adjourned the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,