

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of the Metropolitan Planning Organization Zoom Meeting
Tuesday, April 28, 2026, 10:00 A.M.

Organization Members Present

William Dwyer, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Roger Fuller, Chesterfield Selectboard
Joshua A. Garcia, Mayor of Holyoke
Michael McCabe, Mayor of Westfield
Mark Moore, MassDOT Highway District 1
Gina-Louise Sciarra, Mayor of Northampton
Derek Shooster, MassDOT OTP
JM Sorrell, Chair of PVTA
Aaron Vega, WesternMass EDC
James Whalen, Holland Selectboard

Alternates/Non-Voting/Ex-Officio Members

Salem Derby, Easthampton
Stephen Thor Johnson, Westhampton Selectboard
Kimberly Robinson, PVPC Executive Director
Sandra Sheehan, Administrator of PVTA

Guests

Daryl Amaral, MassDOT Highway District 2
Colin Bergmann, VHB
Gwenda Bod, City Councilor, Northampton Ward 1
Arnav Chatterjee, MassDOT
Don Darnell, Northampton
Bill Dwight, Northampton
Connie Englert, UMass Transit
Wendy Foxmyn
Patrick Gabridge, City Councilor, Northampton
GLN
Laura Hanson, MassDOT Highway District 2
Tina Ingmann
Lily Kaufman, MassDOT
Timothy Keane, Longmeadow
Deb Klemer, City Councilor, Northampton Ward 2
Laurie Loisel, City Councilor, Northampton Ward 2
Dani McKahn
Carolyn Misch, Northampton
Benjamin Muller, MassDOT
Jim Nash, Northampton
Rich Parr, MPG
Plgeis
Kit Sang, Resident, Northampton
Josh Silver, Florence
Sam Taylor, MassDOT OTP

PVPC Staff Present

Rana Al-Jammal, Principal Transportation Planner
Carl Jackson, Principal Transit Planner
Geoffrey Klafeta, Transportation Planner

Andrew McCaul, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning
Jeffrey McCollough, Chief Transportation Planner
Gary Roux, Director of Transportation Planning

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

The Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting on April 28, 2026, 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 24, 2026

MOVED BY GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA, SECONDED BY WILLIAM DWYER, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 24, 2026, METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MEETING AS PRESENTED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

3. Public Comments

Jim Nash spoke in support of the Picture Main Street project, citing its alignment with Northampton's Sustainable Northampton Plan and decades of public planning focused on walkability, bikeability, accessibility, and downtown density. He emphasized the project's connection to zoning reforms and strategic planning and urged MPO support.

Don Darnell spoke in favor of full TIP funding for Picture Main Street. He highlighted the project's role in addressing aging infrastructure, improving accessibility and safety, expanding walkable space, replacing failing trees, and strengthening Northampton's economic resilience by coordinating necessary infrastructure work with public realm improvements.

Josh Silver expressed strong support for the project, noting national trends affecting downtown retail and stating that many Northampton residents are eager to see the project move forward without further debate or delay.

Bill Dwight, former Northampton city councilor and council president, emphasized that major community projects often generate debate, but that Picture Main Street is among the most important improvements undertaken in Northampton. He noted that safety concerns initiated the project and warned against losing the opportunity due to decision paralysis.

Deb Klemer voiced support for the project, stressing that infrastructure replacement is unavoidable due to failing water pipes. She noted that opposition is limited, no viable alternatives have been offered, and that when residents are fully informed, they largely support the project's benefits, including ADA compliance and safer crossings.

Patrick Gabridge spoke in support of the project based on personal experience navigating downtown Northampton. He described current conditions as unsafe and difficult for all users and stated that the project would improve safety and accessibility without worsening congestion.

Stephen Thor Johnson asked that updates be provided later in the meeting regarding Southampton projects, including East Street reconstruction, Safe Routes to School on Pomeroy Meadow Road, and the Manhan Rail Trail.

Laurie Loisel stated that while opponents may be more vocal, there is substantial support within Northampton for Picture Main Street. She described the project as an essential infrastructure investment and emphasized the importance of supporting downtown vitality and accessibility.

Wendy Foxmyn, former town administrator and regional municipal manager, spoke in support of the project from the perspective of traffic safety, pedestrian and bicycle planning, and regional experience. She stressed the project's safety benefits and positive impact on downtown businesses.

Gwenda Bod supported Picture Main Street, drawing on experience with Main Street redevelopment in Hudson, Massachusetts. She framed the project as both a safety and equity investment for Western Massachusetts, aligned with statewide climate and transportation goals.

Kit Sang spoke in favor of reclaiming public space for pedestrians and businesses by narrowing travel lanes and improving the overall downtown environment.

4. Review and Discussion of the Administrative Modification to the FFY 2026 Transit TIP – Inform MPO of Community Transit Grant Program Awards Received from MassDOT

Andrew McCaul explained that the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) and other transit providers received Community Transit Grant Program awards, including approximately \$600,000 in operational funding and 15 vehicles valued at just under \$2 million, largely for mobility services supporting older adults.

Derek Shooster clarified that, because the Section 5310 program is carried forward as a placeholder in the TIP, federal partners at the Federal Transit Administration allowed these awards to be processed as an administrative modification rather than a TIP amendment, which requires public notification but not an MPO vote.

5. Review, Discussion, and MPO Endorsement of the Required Annual Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Self-Certification

A. McCaul presented the required annual greenhouse gas self-certification, explaining that MPO planning activities address air quality and emissions through the UPWP, TIP, and long-range planning. It was agreed that the certification would be incorporated into the TIP documentation and considered as part of a future endorsement action rather than through a separate vote.

6. Review, Discussion, and MPO Endorsement of the Required Annual Self-Certification of the 3C Planning Process

A. McCaul reviewed the annual Continuing, Comprehensive, and Cooperative (3C) planning certification, confirming compliance with federal and state planning requirements and with MassDOT's contractual obligations.

7. Review, Discussion, and MPO Endorsement of the Required Annual Self-Certification of the FTA/FHWA Title VI Program

Jeffrey McCollough presented the FTA/FHWA Title VI program update, confirming compliance with federal civil rights statutes. He described how the MPO evaluates projects and funding distribution, maps investments, analyzes impacts on minority and low-income communities, and maintains a language access plan.

8. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval to Release Amendment No. 1 to the FFY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the Required 21-Day Public Review

Gary Roux presented Amendment No. 1 to the FFY 2026 UPWP, explaining proposed task changes related to PVTA surveys, updates to the travel time contour data digest, reallocation of funds within the Route 202 corridor study, and consultant support for transportation model updates. He noted that the Joint Transportation Committee recommended releasing the amendment.

MOVED BY JM SORRELL, SECONDED BY MICHAEL MCCABE, TO RELEASE AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO THE FFY 2026 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) FOR THE REQUIRED 21-DAY PUBLIC REVIEW. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

9. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval to Release the Draft FFY 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the Required 21-Day Public Review

G. Roux presented the draft FFY 2027 UPWP, outlining anticipated revenues and key work elements, including bicycle and pedestrian planning, freight and congestion management, safety planning, transit planning, and Title VI compliance. G. Roux confirmed that technical assistance for West-East Rail is included under regional transit planning tasks.

Members discussed whether the UPWP or regional/state guidance addresses the management of high-speed micromobility devices, such as certain classes of electric bicycles, on shared-use paths and bicycle trails. It was noted that the Massachusetts Legislature convened a Special Commission on Micromobility, which recently released a report reviewing existing laws and recommending regulatory approaches for micromobility devices on paths, sidewalks, and roadways. D. Shooster offered to share the report link with members.

MOVED BY MICHAEL MCCABE, SECONDED BY JAMES WHALEN, TO RELEASE THE DRAFT FFY 2027 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) FOR THE REQUIRED 21-DAY PUBLIC REVIEW. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

10. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval to Release Amendment No. 4 to the FFY 2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Required 21-Day Public Review

A. McCaul presented TIP Amendment No. 4, explaining the removal of the Williamsburg Mountain Street and Northampton Downtown Complete Streets projects from FFY 2026 due to schedule delays and the reallocation of funding to an I-91 pavement project and PVTA investments.

It was noted that Holyoke has a state-run Veterans' Home, not a federally funded VA hospital.

Gina-Louise Sciarra expressed strong support for PVTA bus replacement investments and transit facility upgrades, emphasizing their regional importance beyond Northampton.

MOVED BY JM SORRELL, SECONDED BY GINA-LOUISE SCIARRA, TO RELEASE AMENDMENT NO. 4 TO THE FFY 2026 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) FOR THE REQUIRED 21-DAY PUBLIC REVIEW. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

11. Review, Discussion, and MPO Approval to Release the Draft FFY 2027 to 2031 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Required 21-Day Public Review

A. McCaul reviewed the development of the draft FFY 2027 to 2031 TIP, including scenario analysis, regional discretionary funding, statewide investments, and transit funding. The funding distribution reflects a financing mechanism used when projects are shifted due to readiness and scheduling constraints, and later-year allocations do not necessarily delay construction. If the project is ready earlier and funds are available, the MPO may be able to accelerate funding through a future TIP action, such as converting future-year funds.

Michael McCabe advocated for the Exit 31 project in Westfield, noting his long-standing involvement with the MPO and expressing hope that the project could be programmed in a future year if funding allows. D. Shooster confirmed

that the primary constraint remains project readiness, specifically reaching the 25% design milestone, but noted that design is advancing and staff will continue tracking the project's progress.

James Whalen asked whether the Route 32 project in Monson could be advanced to an earlier funding year, given the discretionary funds available in the draft TIP. D. Shooster confirmed that the project is currently at the 25% design stage and cannot be advanced until it reaches the final design stage. He added that if the project advances significantly and funding gaps remain, the MPO could consider it in a future update. Multiple readiness milestones would need to be achieved before such a move could occur.

12. Updates from MassDOT Highway District 1 and District 2 on Relevant Transportation Issues and Projects

MassDOT Highway District 1 reported that the Huntington Bridge preservation project on Route 112 over the CSX railroad and the Westfield River has reached 100% design and is under review, with ongoing coordination with CSX. The Williamsburg Mountain Street reconstruction project was rescheduled to advertise in FFY 2027 to reflect project readiness. The bridge replacement projects in Huntington and Russell were moved to FFY 2028 due to design progress, and one project will require a second public hearing because of right-of-way impacts.

MassDOT Highway District 2 provided updates on several projects, including the Chicopee intersection improvements project, which has completed environmental clearance and is expected to be advertised in May. The Northampton Downtown Complete Streets project is approximately 75% through utility and design development, with subsurface investigations underway. The Easthampton-Northampton shared-use path had been awarded, and a Notice to Proceed had been issued. Brief updates were also provided on projects in Springfield, South Hadley, East Longmeadow, and Westfield.

D. Shooster conveyed statewide program updates relevant to Southampton, noting that the William E. Norris Elementary School Safe Routes to School project and the Southampton Greenway Rail Trail project have both achieved recent 25% design submissions and are continuing to move forward.

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

Sandra Sheehan reported that ridership continues to increase, with March, 2026, ridership up five percent from March, 2025, and overall ridership approaching pre-pandemic levels. The PVTA expects approximately 10.4 million passenger trips in FY 2026 and routes with service improvements are seeing significantly higher ridership. S. Sheehan highlighted the strong early performance of the new Link 413 and B49 routes and announced upcoming service between Northampton and Southwick. She also provided brief updates on garage construction projects, delivery of new electric buses, and the PVTA's participation in transportation operations for FIFA World Cup events. It was noted that the PVTA Board anticipates renewing S. Sheehan's contract for an additional five years.

Concerns were raised about pedestrian safety and access to transit service near Western Massachusetts Hospital along Route 20 and East Mountain Road. S. Sheehan confirmed that the PVTA will follow up with Westfield regarding potential solutions.

14. Other Business

A presentation on the MassDOT Capital Improvement Plan will be given at the May 26, 2026, MPO meeting. The plan is expected to be released for public review later in May, 2026.

An Open Meeting Law complaint has been filed regarding a Joint Transportation Committee meeting. The issue has

been reviewed with legal counsel, and a formal response has been submitted to both the complainant and the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office.

G. Roux highlighted Bay State Bike Month activities and informed members of available funding opportunities, including the Safer Streets and Roads for All program and its upcoming application deadline.

The next MPO meeting is scheduled for May 26, 2026.

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

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, TO ADJOURN TODAY'S METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 11:23 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the April 28, 2026, Meeting

1. Metropolitan Planning Organization, April 28, 2026, Presentation