



HARVARD TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

Gabriel Medjanis called the meeting to order at 7:30pm virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, under M.G.L. Chapter 30A S20 and Code of the Town of Harvard Chapter 125

Members Present: Stacia Donahue, Bruce Leicher, Gabriel Medjanis, Jim Lee, Rene Turnheim, Suzie Allen, Kara Minar

Others Present: Brad Harris – Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC); Christopher Ryan (Director of Community and Economic Development)

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Donahue motioned to approve meeting minutes for 3/30/21, 6/30/21 and 7/15/21 as amended. Leicher seconded. Roll call vote – unanimously approved.

- *Christopher Ryan to post minutes to TAC website.*

Discussion of Recent and Ongoing Transportation Initiatives

Trails: Depot Road to Lancaster County trail has been regraded by the Parks & Recreation Commission in collaboration with the Snowmobile club.

Through the Nashoba Greenways Coalition Bruce Leicher met with Devens Redevelopment Authority Planner and a Parks & Recreation Commission (P&R) member to review connections to Devens. P&R and Devens would like to see the trail at the end of Old Mill Road to Red Tail connect to Devens. The Old Mill Road to Red Tail trail might be something we can make a grant application for with Devens. It would be nice to include signage.

- *Mr. Leicher and Mr. Ryan will continue discussions with Devens about next steps on Old Mill Road to Red Tail Trail connector.*

Complete Streets Update: Mr. Ryan reviewed applications that are being made under the Complete Streets program. In review of the applications, Kara Minar noted that the Fairbanks sidewalk might need to be reviewed further as there's potential opposition to removal of the old brick sidewalk in front of the Old Library.

Mr. Ryan noted that reviewing these Complete Street grant proposals in the public forum would be good at this point to get some preliminary understanding and public support for some of the applications. Mr. Ryan reviewed a map and sketch provided by Tim Kilhart (DPW) for what DPW would like to apply for with respect to sidewalks in the center. Mr. Leicher asked when we could review possible projects in the public forum. Mr. Ryan noted that we would work to form groups for a public review of the list and projects. Ms. Minar suggested that TAC should review the list first to come up with the priorities before going to a larger group.

- *Mr. Ryan to compile list of Complete Streets possible grant application project from DPW for future review with TAC.*

Park and Ride Lot: Mr. Ryan noted not much progress on this front other than there is some interest from the 203 Ayer Road property owner to get some access to the Rt. 2 easement (DOT land). However, there is some potential reclamation of wetlands to get the 203 Ayer Road into compliance with Conservation Commission requirements.

Another possible site would be behind the Dunkin Donuts parcel to get to the Route 2 easement, but the property owner is not excited about this option.

Discussion Transportation Plan Project with MRPC

Mr. Ryan reviewed the Climate Action Plan that is in process with the Climate Resiliency Working Group (CRWG) which has a line item to improve and make more equitable access to transportation as a key item in the Climate Action Plan.

Brad Harris (MRPC) reviewed the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant that is in progress right now. MRPC is working on the Master Plan update to the Transportation chapter. This meeting serves as the kick off meeting for the plan update. Specific tasks were reviewed. Harvard TAC will handle organization and presentation of the plan while in process to the public for input and engagement.

Mr. Harris noted that updated traffic counts will not be performed under the project at this time due to staffing at MRPC and the ongoing pandemic. Mr. Leicher noted that Ayer Road is the primary concern for the Town of Harvard as the truck traffic does seem to be on the increase. Last traffic count was in 2018 for Ayer Road from MRPC. The TIP engineers for Ayer Road had counts from 2019. Mr. Harris noted that Devens was required to do robust traffic counts in the past, but he had not seen anything lately. Ms. Minar noted that every five years we get a traffic update from Devens and that there has been an update recently, however she was not aware if it included updated traffic counts. Several TAC members expressed concern about going forward without these updated traffic counts.

- *Mr. Ryan will check with TEC to see if traffic counts can be updated thru the TIP.*
- *Ms. Minar will check the Devens 5-year plan to see if it included updated traffic counts.*
- *Mr. Harris will go back to his team and other RPA (Regional Planning Authorities) to see if there's anything available already out there for the region that is more up to date than 2018/2019.*

Mr. Ryan asked about being included in a MART shuttle route or having a dedicated MART shuttle as part of the plan review. He noted we're an MBTA community so we'd like to use those funds to add a shuttle for our town. Mr. Harris noted the town needed to come up with pick up locations.

Mr. Harris said that every TIP project now needs to incorporate Complete Streets elements, so whenever we can group the 2 together, it would help to get more funding. He noted that Complete Streets funding and TIP funding are now starting to work together more often.

- *Mr. Ryan requested that MRPC provide a specific list of what they need from TAC with a firm deadline so the TAC could meet the goals.*

Jim Lee asked if we could get a copy of the DPW 5-year plan so that we can try to align our goals with what DPW's goals might be.

Mr. Harris noted that we should also be looking for emission heavy areas as there could be funding under emission reduction projects. Areas of congestion would be good to identify as they would have climate impact as well as safety/traffic impact.

- *Mr. Ryan will be laying out a timeline for meetings so that we can plan our portion of the work and will relay that to MRPC for incorporation into the planning.*

Update on Ayer Road TIP Project

Comments are still with the State and it's now looking like the public hearing will be pushed out until February 2022. Harvard's Ayer Road TIP is still slated for funding in 2026. Mr. Harris noted that Harvard just needs to move forward to get to the 100% mark – then it would be easier for us to get bumped up in the lineup for funding. Mr. Ryan asked if any of the recent Federal funding would help. Mr. Harris noted that he is not aware of any funding coming to our region as of now. Mr. Leicher asked about the status of the comments we had at the last meeting. Mr. Ryan was unsure where it was left with TEC and DPW. He suggested that we could produce a memo to Select Board or DPW asking for additional review to be formally address. Rene Turnheim suggested that we produce a bulleted list of what we expect to see picked up in the TIP project. The group agreed that this was a good path forward.

- *Mr. Ryan will produce a bulleted list of TAC comments to the TIP that need to be formally responded to by the TIP team.*

Discussion of MBTA Representative Appointment

Mr. Leicher volunteered for the position and the Select Board has already approved the appointment. The group was in approval of this appointment.

Other Business

Stacia Donahue and Mr. Ryan made a request for review and support of bylaws heading to Fall Town Meeting from Planning Board; Scenic Road, Erosion Control, and Senior Housing elements are all on the list.

Adjournment:

Mr. Lee motioned to adjourn. Ms. Minar seconded. Roll call vote was unanimous. Adjourned at 9:00pm.

Next meeting TBD.

Signed: Stacia Donahue
Stacia Donahue, Clerk