



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2024

5:30 p.m.

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Present: Rama Balakrishna (Chair), Zhengyu Huang, Franny Osman, Paula Walsh,

Absent: There is currently one open position on the committee

Select Board Representative: Jim Snyder-Grant

Invited guests: Niru Valankar - Council of Aging Liaison, Chris Brandon-potential new member, and Dave Merberg from Nashoba Regional Greenway

1. Opening

Chair Rama Balakrishna opened the meeting at 5:32 p.m.

2. Regular Business

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

- a. The September 2023, October 2023, January 3, 2024, and January 24, 2024, meeting minutes were reviewed, edited and a motion by Franny Osman, seconded by Paula Walsh and unanimously approved by Roll Call.

3. New/Special Business:

A. Engineering update: No update available

- B. Franny Osman shared that she will be leaving the Transportation Advisory Committee as she will be assuming a new role as editor of the newly created Acton Newspaper. The committee thanks Franny for her many years of service to Acton and specifically to this committee. Her experience and expertise have been invaluable.

C. Sidewalks:

a. Franny expressed frustration at the slow response time to obvious safety issues. For example, the request for a sidewalk on Faulker Road made by a visually impaired resident pre-pandemic. The town ran a study, but no action has occurred.

b. Rama sent a list of sidewalk projects to QinRui Pang, the Town Engineer, asking for an update on which sidewalks have been completed. He is still waiting for her response.

c. Rama spoke with members of the old sidewalk committee to gather additional information on which criteria were used to establish the rankings and tier designations for the current sidewalk list, but they could not recall the specifics. Members of TAC will research if there are established criteria being used elsewhere that can be used by Acton to reassess the outstanding sidewalk projects.



D. Traffic Calming

a. Dave Merberg commented that he observed vehicles not slowing or stopping on Central Street. Discussion occurred around who best to report the issue to as it appears to require both enforcement of the speed limit (police) as well as traffic calming projects (engineering). It was decided both should be informed. Dave Merberg, Nashoba Regional Greenway representative, is familiar with the roadway and added that he has observed cars entering from Route 2 at an elevated speed. Rama will draft a letter on the concerns.

b. The proposed Traffic Calming Policy drafted by Engineering will again be shared with TAC for immediate review and consideration. Comments should be emailed to QinRui Pang in the Engineering Department.

E. Nashoba Regional Greenway: Dave Merberg from NRG gave a brief background on NRG and current status. NRG was originally conceived by Franny Osman and Gary LaCroix and brought together representatives from Acton, Concord, Maynard, etc. with the common goal of improving the biking trails connecting the towns. Over time, some towns have become less active than others but there is still interest by several towns in continuing to work together. There has been some concern that NRG overlaps with the work conducted by MassPIRG. The group had been working toward applying for funding to perform a design study for signs along the bike trails. One town must assume responsibility for submitting the application and the Maynard representative volunteered, however, due to a medical issue requiring them to take time off, the application deadline of February 1, 2024, could not be met. NRG cannot apply until February 1, 2025.

F. Select Board Updates:

a. Budget: Due to a large budget gap, the Select Board has been working on creating an alternative budget in the event, the requested 2 ½ override does not pass. Due to a change in the health care costs by ending the current health care trust and joining a larger health care trust, the town will have savings sufficient to keep the transportation funding level regardless of whether the override passes.

b. Goals: The Select Board reviewed their Short- and Long-Term goals and they acknowledged that not much has been accomplished in terms of transportation. Unfortunately, no additional debt will be accrued to complete all the sidewalk projects in either 2024 or 2025. Despite the financial challenges, transportation and sidewalks remain long term goals for the Select Board.

c. ARPA funds: Franny asked whether the \$40,000 in ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds awarded to the town had been spent yet. If not spent, could the funds potentially be used for a micro transit pilot program?

G. Council on Aging: The Reading Program for Seniors reading from kindergarten to third grade students will begin this Spring. It was recommended that the COA contact Julie Pierce, director of Economic Development, to inquire about using the Senior Van to help transport seniors back and forth to the schools for this program.

H. The Annual Report for TAC was completed by Franny and Rama.



I. Franny encouraged TAC members to consider attending some of the regional [REDACTED] transit group meetings as well as to go to the BostonMPO.org website for information on regional transit service activities. Franny will forward links to some upcoming meetings for MAGIC and RTAC.

At 7:14 pm, A motion to close the meeting was made by Franny Osman and seconded by Paula Walsh. Roll call was done, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Acronyms:

ADA= Americans with Disability Act

ARPA= American [COVID-19] Recovery Program Act

Boston MPO= Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization, the part of MassDOT that disburses federal transportation funds

BAG= Bicycle Advisory Group (formed January 2021)

CMAQ= Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

COD= Commission on Disabilities

COVID= Novel Coronavirus 2019 causing a worldwide pandemic in 2020

CTPS= Central Transportation Planning Staff, within the Boston MPO, within MassDOT

**Landline= a signage and wayfinding project to connect communities by bike and pedestrian, by MAPC and MassTrails of MassDOT.*

MAGIC= Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination, which is our 13-town subregion of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

MAPC= Metropolitan Area Planning Council

MassDOT=Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MBTA= Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

NRG=Nashoba Regional Greenways Coalition

SATSAC= South Acton Train Station Advisory Committee

TAC= Transportation Advisory Committee

TMA= Transportation Management Association