



MASSACHUSETTS RECREATIONAL TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD

ANNUAL MEETING - MINUTES

June 8, 2021

Remote Meeting

4:00 – 6:15pm

Members Present with Representation:

Tom Chamberland, Chair - Local Land Trust/Non-Profits

Bill Boles – Mountain Biking

Tim Craig – Youth Corps

Joe Geller – Rail Trail Users

Becky Kalagher - Equestrian

Bridget Likely – Hiking

Ben Phelps – All Terrain Vehicles

Larry Tucker – Snowmobiling

Mike White – 4-Wheel Drive Clubs

Dick Williamson – Bicycling/Rail Trails

Liaisons:

Amanda Lewis – DCR MassTrails

Libby Knott – DCR MassTrails

Scott Morrill – EOEEA OHV Coordinator

Other Attendees:

Casey Campetti – Environmental Protection Specialist, FHWA

Kelly Cash – Founder, Trail Riders Association of Massachusetts

Meeting Minutes:

Welcome

- Approve Minutes from January 12, 2021 Meeting
Tom asked for a motion to accept, which was made by Mike and seconded. A verbal vote was taken among members present. Minutes from January 12, 2021 were unanimously accepted.

MassTrails Update

- Amanda provided a brief update on the 2021 grant round award announcements. The internal DCR process was fast this year and the grants received their earliest approval ever; likewise, the Governor approved the awards in one day. We are simply waiting on an event date in order to move forward with the awards announcement.
- We received approval to quietly inform state grant awardees to start their contracting since those awards are bound to the fiscal year and have a shorter contract period than the RTP grants.
- We have sent all our regulatory information to our FHWA liaison and are awaiting approval from Mass Historic.

2021 Grant Review

The board discussed various issues that arose during this year's grant review and grantee application processes. Modifications were discussed, as appropriate, in the following areas:

- **Application** feedback / potential changes:
 - Libby will investigate whether the application backend allows for pop up information boxes. These could help provide additional information or links to resources for applicants as they work through the application questions. As an alternate solution, Libby will create a FAQs Powerpoint that will walk applicants through the application questions, providing guidance, resources, and grant writing assistance along the way. If this suffices, then the online application backend will remain as is. Additionally, Amanda pointed out that there is a brief explanation already under each application question that applicants should avail themselves of.
 - Incomplete required fields – score deduction or weighting: Dick suggested that scoring weights should be advertised much like they are in a similar MassDOT application process. However, Tom cautioned that we then run the risk of applicants only completing (or significantly answering) those questions that carry the most overall weight. It was pointed out that this may significantly help with applicants better understanding the implications of youth involvement in their projects.
 - Vague, inaccurate, or missing budgets: the onus is on the applicant to follow the directions that we have thoughtfully created. The process provides resources and guidance to applicants before they finally submit their application. If they do not supply something that is required, members can adjust review scores and make note of why the application scored that amount. Ultimately, we do not want grantees who cannot follow instructions and complete forms. Throughout the duration of the award there are innumerable forms they will need to submit (contract documents, grant agreements, progress reports, reimbursement requests). If an applicant is already not supplying information at the time of application, this is not an organization that we want to work with because it will be too difficult. Libby will add a third tab to the budget worksheet with instructions. This may help applicants understand the importance of accurately completing and submitting an accurate budget.
 - Amanda noted that there is an application section/question down the line that pairs up with the scoring rubric. If applicants thoughtfully work through the process, their answers will fare well. If not, then the scores reflect their efforts. We have received many, many wonderful applications versus the poorly written / inadequately completed ones so the “system” is working. We can certainly tweak, but ultimately it is up to the applicants to put their best foot forward.
 - Joe pointed out that MARTAB members whose organizations apply for a grant have an advantage over other applicants in that the board members know how the scoring rubric is applied to application answers.
 - Character limits were discussed for many fields so that the applicants do not run on and on when answering, strongly supporting more concise and thoughtful answers. Libby will discuss with Amanda where we believe the best use of this is within the application. Certainly, some questions do not require a lengthy answer and could possibly be truncated at a certain character count.
 - It was suggested we add links to important resources (U.S. Forestry Accessibility Guidelines, EJC map, common trail construction costs, etc.) within the application itself. We can investigate this, but the downloadable application guidelines already have a number of resources. It is ultimately up to the applicant to use them.
 - Grant amount exceeding award limits: how can we guide applicants to ask for award amounts within our established maximums? This is complicated by the fact that we use one application for two programs with very different maximum award amounts. Libby will investigate a way to guide applicants in their award ask, as well as having a distinguishing element within the application itself (e.g., check box for state versus federal award, or similar) that helps an applicant determine which

type of grant they are applying for, and thus the maximum asks allowed. Amanda clarified that the RTP award maximums are \$50K for a trail with local impact, and \$100K for a trail with regional impact.

- Tom and other members wanted to step through the actual application. The link is disabled after the grant round closes but Amanda will send a link / reactivate it for members' use in reviewing the current application format.
 - Mike pointed out that snowmobile clubs do not typically score well within the accessibility requirements, but their trails allow mobility impaired individuals access to recreation. Can that be considered when scoring ADA compliance points? Tom pointed out that the rubric is clear in that zero points are given for simply meeting the minimum accessibility requirements because our program **requires** any project to do just that. Points on the rubric are only given to those projects that exceed the minimum accessibility requirements.
 - Amanda asked that our OHV MARTAB members to help with outreach and education to increase the quality of OHV applications. We have received over the years many carefully submitted applications. Lately, however, the quality of the applications received has been worrisome. It is on us to help groups rise to the opportunity. Scott reported that he is providing a training to OHV groups to do exactly this. It was suggested that he could ask one of our successful OHV grantees to participate and provide "real world" experience. Larry said he would be happy to help with this. Kelly also offered her assistance.
- **Review** process feedback / potential changes:
 - Reviewers' scoring spreadsheets will be modified. Header columns and rows will be frozen to aid in scrolling through the sheet while scoring applications.
 - Likewise, nomenclature between the scoring sheet and the grant application files will match for easier reference between the two.
 - To alleviate any confusion about Buy America, Environmental Justice Communities, U.S. Forestry trail accessibility requirements and standards, as well as other general grant review topics and tools, we will dedicate a good portion of our January 2022 meeting to all these so that the information is fresh in everyone's mind when starting the grant review process.
 - With regards to the EJC viewer, several members would like to discuss coming to a consensus on how to apply this information to the rubric (i.e., points for being in an EJC, points for proximity, points for connectivity via regional trail network, etc.). We will discuss this further at our January 2022 meeting.
 - Members were reminded that after the grant review day, if they decide to change the score given to any of the applications they reviewed, we allow a 48-hour period to do so. This helps significantly if, while reviewing, you have difficulty scoring a particular aspect of the applicant but gain clarity during the grant review discussion.
- How to ensure ADA and Buy America requirements are understood and followed:
 - In addition to what was outlined above, Amanda is working on updating the Buy America process to ensure compliance and understanding before contracts are endorsed.
 - As to ADA, as many prompts and guidance resources will be made available as possible to help applicants understand the implications of the MassTrails Program requirements. This already exists in links provided but we can try to enhance even more.
- State agency member's role during grant review:
 - We will touch on this in October, but review in depth at the January meeting so that everyone is clear on the roles of members and state agency liaisons, especially regarding the conflict of interest. Please review the current Bylaws section on Conflict of Interest prior to both meetings. Come prepared with

questions.

MARTAB Membership

- Filling vacancies
 - Kelly Cash joined the meeting. She recently founded the Trail Riders Association of Massachusetts, a non-profit geared to 2-wheeled, motorized trail use. Kelly was referred to us by Mike White and has an interest in joining MARTAB. Tom and/or Libby will follow up and provide Kelly with nomination papers, answer any questions she may have, and provide additional information to her for consideration in joining.
 - We will review terms, appointments, and re-appointments for each member at our October meeting, as well as vote on new chair and vice chair holders.
 - We have several vacancies on the board. If you know of an individual who may be interested in joining, or an organization that you'd like us to reach out to in order to see if they have a representative that would like to join, please get us contact information. You can send to Amanda and Libby for follow up. She will send out a list of current vacancies.
- Dick O'Brien Thank You, and recognition of service
 - Our intention was to honor Dick O'Brien at this meeting during the field trip portion. Since that was not held due to COVID, we did not have the opportunity.
 - It was suggested that perhaps we can recognize Dick at the RTP grant award ceremony. Tom will happily present to Dick, if we are allowed to add this to the event agenda. Amanda will check on whether it is possible and if we can have the Governor sign a proclamation. This process typically needs a state senator or representative to initiate. We can look into the process.
 - If not possible, we should schedule a field trip for later this summer, or early fall and honor Dick and his service then.

Other Business

- Education Grants Process
 - Amanda reviewed the original idea of having a separate round for Education Grants. However, the workload is an obstacle for the team to manage during the proposed May time frame. That coincides with one of our busiest times of year as we prepare to close out our fiscal year in June. Often, May is chock full of closing out grants as well as putting together the regulatory information for the current grant round.
 - It seems to make more sense from a resources management standpoint to pair the process back up with the regular grant round.
 - Tom will put together a subcommittee to come up with recommendations on process and timing. Bridget and Mike will join in the effort, as well as Amanda. We will revisit the topic at our October meeting.
- RTP Award – any interest, nomination
 - Amanda and Libby do not have the capacity to take the lead on this. If anyone has a completed RTP grant in mind that they would like to nominate please feel free to do so. We can supply data and perhaps images if we have any, to help support any nomination. Libby will send the link out again. Nominations are due by June 30.
- Future MARTAB meetings

It was determined to keep our fall and winter meetings virtual, with potentially holding the review and annual meeting in person. There are great benefits to remaining virtual with regards to no travel being required, nor out-of-pocket expenses asked of each member (e.g., gas, tolls). Likewise, attendance is apt to be easier through the convenience of a virtual platform. We will plan at least one in-person field trip

for later this summer, or early fall; a winter field trip was discussed as well. Proposed meeting dates will be on Tuesday (except the annual review, which is on Saturday):

- Fall – October 12, 2021
 - Winter – January 11, 2022
 - Spring – Grant Review Meeting, March 12, 2022
 - Summer – Annual Meeting, June 7, 2022
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- E-Bike regulation update
There is no DCR E-Bike update that we are aware of, but since the National Park Service has formalized their regulations, we believe a state initiative will be released soon. Bill reported that he attended a recent meeting and Commissioner Montgomery confirmed that Class 1 E-Bikes will eventually be permitted anywhere bicycles are permitted. We will disseminate any additional information as it comes to us. In the meantime, up-to-date information related to the regulation process can be found at Mass Bikes, here: www.massbike.org/ebikes.

Meeting Adjourned – 6:15pm