

Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force

Minutes of January 10, 2007 at SEED Corporation, Taunton at 4:00 PM

Present:

John Bullard, Vision 2020
Rep. Tony Cabral
Ray Ledoux, BAT
Diana Shearstone, TACC
Ray Nascimento, New Bedford Chamber
Marc Draisen, MAPC
Jennifer Soares
Edgar Adams, Roger Williams Univ.
Gloria Craven, Craven & Ober
Karen Winger, OCPC
Stephen Smith, SRPEDD
Greg Guimond, SRPEDD
Roland Hebert, SRPEDD

Robert Carney, Dartmouth
Marc Rousseau, Easton
David Colton, Easton
Jim Hartnett, Fall River
Richard McCarthy, Raynham
Lou Gitto, Stoughton
Jill MacLean, New Bedford
Rachel Bain, EOT/Planning
Pat Ciaramella, OCPC
Bill Clark, OCPC
Nancy Durfee, SRPEDD
Louise Daley, SRPEDD

1. Call to Order

John Bullard opened the meeting at 4:05 PM.

2. Acceptance of Minutes

It was VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the minutes of November 15, 2006.

3. Massachusetts Transit Fund Proposal – State Representative Antonio Cabral

Representative Cabral presented a new version of his Bill that would create a Mass Transit Fund, a segregated fund, of \$2.1B in special obligation bonds administered by the Treasurer. The Fund creates a Statewide Fund as well as Project Accounts for transit projects in the State. The new version, to be filed today, places one cent of the existing gas sales tax into a Statewide account for transit, rather than two cents. It also creates a greenhouse emissions fee. A third difference from the prior Bill is that the existing RMV fees surplus would go to the regional transit authorities for the first five years and then be put into the Mass Transit Fund.

Roland Hebert praised the Bill and the changes to it; however, he is strongly opposed to taking any gas tax away from the \$1B in unfunded highway projects and asks instead that the gas tax be increased and half of the increase be used for rail. Representative Cabral will not recommend a gas tax increase. He estimates \$7.5M a year could be obtained from New Bedford/Fall River DIFs. John Bullard agreed it is unrealistic to get improvements and not pay for it. Representative Cabral cited projects elsewhere that are being bonded and paid for by DIFs. He also noted that other states are looking at

privatization of highways. The Legislature has asked the MBTA to do a feasibility study and cost analysis of double tracking from Braintree to Boston and getting rid of the South Boston Postal Annex. He noted that the Sierra Club is supportive of creating a separate commuter rail authority with bonding authority. This idea is not in his Bill.

4. Managed Growth Alternatives – Progress report

Nancy Durfee gave a presentation on work SRPEDD has done for the towns of Dighton, Somerset, Swansea and Westport. If the Task Force approves of the methodology she will continue to do this work for the remaining communities in the Study Area. This work looks at growth impacts, particularly in communities without stations. In an earlier report, Marijoan Bull showed that commuter rail will not cause significant growth as the region is already growing. It will, however influence where growth is happening and it presents an opportunity to channel growth. The purpose of this task is to maximize the beneficial impacts and minimize the negative impacts of growth.

2004 land use maps show what is already developed, what is permanently protected and what could be developed in the future. A 2030 growth projection done by the Woods Hole Research Institute shows uncontrolled growth to 2030. Ms. Durfee identified priority development areas and priority protection areas derived in consultation with the communities. The identification of these areas is based on SRPEDD's work in 1997 with the communities, open space plans, master plans and interviews with local conservation agents/committee chairs. Biocores, areas of Natural Heritage Endangered Species Habitat, and aquifers were important GIS layers used in this task. The end result will be a map and plan for managed growth in southeastern Massachusetts in the study area.

Lou Gitto asked if there were a way to avoid the many curb cuts that are created with development along roadways. Mark Rousseau asked if this work will be followed up with policy recommendations. Greg Guimond said that SRPEDD has had a model curb cut bylaw for years. It is just a matter of educating communities. The completed work for the Task Force will include recommendations for each community.

5. Analysis of proposed station locations and TOD Suitability

This agenda item was postponed to the next meeting.

6. Future Meetings

March 14, 2007 – Greg's presentation

May 9, 2007

7. Adjournment

Mr. Bullard adjourned the meeting at 5:55 PM.