

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE
Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO)
Tuesday May 21, 2019
Held at SRPEDD
88 Broadway Taunton, MA 02780

The following SMMPO Members were in attendance:

Steve Woelfel	Representing Stephanie Pollack, Chair, Secretary and CEO, MassDOT
J.R. Frey	Representing Jasiel F. Correia II, Mayor of the City of Fall River
Alan Slavin	Representing the Town of Wareham
Jamie Ponte	Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of the City of New Bedford
Fred Cornaglia	Representing Thomas Hoye, Mayor of the City of Taunton
Pam Haznar	Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Joanne LaFerrara	Representing Frank Gay, GATRA Administrator
Shayne Trimbell	Representing Erik Rousseau, SRTA Administrator

The following were also present:

Paul Mission, SRPEDD	Lisa Estrela-Pedro, SRPEDD
Jen Chaves, SRPEDD	Lilia Cabral-Bernard, SRPEDD
Charlie Mills, SRPEDD	

Handouts:

- I. FFY 2019-2023 Proposed TIP Amendment #3
- II. CIP Meeting Flyer

1. **Call to Order and Introductions:** The meeting was called to order at 1:03 PM by Chairman Steve Woelfel, after which attendees introduced themselves.
2. **Public Comments:** Chairman Woelfel opened the floor to give an opportunity for the public to address the SMMPO. No public comments were made.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** Chairman Woelfel asked if everyone had reviewed the minutes from April 16, 2019. A motion was made to accept the minutes of the April 16, 2019 meeting of the SMMPO into the record. The motion was seconded and APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.
4. **FFY 2019-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) –**
 - a. **Amendments to the FFY 2019-2023 TIP, (Materials Attached, Vote to Approve)**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro began highlighting the amendments that were proposed at the last SMMPO meeting and were released to a 21-day public comment period. She mentioned that prior to the public meeting, SRPEDD received comments from MassDOT that were changes to the original amendment that had gone out. Ms. Estrela-Pedro went on to discuss those changes.

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i. Route 123 Corridor, Norton – Cost Increase

Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained that the Norton project originally had a cost estimate of \$7.2 million but it has since decreased by \$623,000.

ii. Kings Highway Corridor Improvements, New Bedford – Cost Increase and Additional Funding Source

Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained that the New Bedford project originally had a cost increase of \$945,000 and is now up to \$1.8 million. Ms. Estrela-Pedro also explained that the Seekonk project that previously had a cost increase no longer has that increase and remains the same. Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained that with the cost increases SRPEDD went over their target funds for FFY2019. MassDOT picked up \$168,100 with roadway reconstruction STP funds to make up the difference. Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained that there were no comments at the meeting so she is asking the SMMPO body to approve this amendment. A motion was made to approve the amendments. The motion was seconded and APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

iii. Performance Based Planning (PM1, PM2, PM3 and TAM targets) language

Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained that the Performance Based Planning language was a part of the amendment and presented at the last meeting. It is currently in the new TIP and is being amended into the FFY2019-2023 TIP that went out for public comment. Mr. Steve Woelfel clarified the reason this is happening is because FTA will not approve anything unless the Performance Based Planning language was included and that is included as part of the approved amendment.

5. Discussion of the DRAFT FFY 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program – (Vote to Approve)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro discussed the Draft FFY 2020-2024 and explained that it was released for a 21-Day Public Comment period. Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained that MassDOT provided comments and a copy was included as a handout.

The comments by MassDOT include:

- Updates to the text and links, one of which included reference to the latest PPP out to a 45-day public comment period
- Earmarks that were on the earmark list that have since been programmed needed to be removed
- There was requests for additional information for SRPEDD's performance measures trends to accompany the graphs.

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- MassDOT also requested administrative language to define significant cost change. It is something that SRPEDD will not address at this point until it is brought to the JTPG.
- Some comments were provided on some accessibility issues and Ms. Estrela-Pedro is hoping that SRPEDD can receive some software updates that can address these accessibility issues.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained that a public meeting was held on May 8, 2019 and no comments were received. In addition, a presentation was provided to the JTPG on May 8, 2019 where they were informed about all projects in the TIP and all projects that were forced to be programmed in a later year. Ms. Estrela-Pedro asked if there were any questions in regard to the FFY 2020-2024 TIP. There were none. A motion was made to approve the FFY 2020-2024 TIP. The motion was seconded and APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

A question was raised about the implications of defining significant cost change.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained the amendment procedure and MassDOT's 10% threshold to treat projects as adjustments when they fall below that threshold.

Ms. Pam Haznar clarified that the only time that it is really an issue is if the project has a significant cost increase at the end of the year when there is no SMMPO meeting scheduled.

Mr. Paul Mission passed around three signatory pages; one validating the FFY 2020-2024 TIP, one showing that SRPEDD adhered to all rules and regulations that are set forth by the transportation legislation and one that was a part of the Global Warming Solutions Act showing that SRPEDD adhered to all the proper analysis for air quality.

6. Presentation of the FFY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - (Vote to release for 21- day public comment)

Mr. Paul Mission explained that the Unified Planning Work Program is the guidance in dictating what SRPEDD works on throughout the Fiscal Year. It follows the guidelines set forth by the Long Range Transportation Plan, as well as other legislation including Map-21 and the FAST Act. The UPWP is building upon various legislation that have been in place for years.

Mr. Mission went through the UPWP and explained the funding sources saying that it is a combination of Federal Highway and Federal Transit funding sources.

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The breakdown of funding:

- 80% - FHWA-PL Contract
- 80% - FTA 5303
- 20% - MassDOT Contract
- 100% - 5307 – GATRA and SRTA

The UPWP is developed to support the JTPG, MPO, MassDOT, and our RTA's GATRA and SRTA.

There are four elements to the UPWP:

- Management and Support – Having enough funds to support the transportation planning discussion and the programming that is done including the TIP and public outreach.
- Regional Data Collection – Provides the ability to collect the information to do regional modeling. The traffic count program comes out of this section and SRPEDD completes between 100 and 150 traffic counts per year as well as turning movement counts. This section also provides funding for Community Technical Assistance. An example of this was evident in the North end of New Bedford when a TMC was requested at an intersection to see if it warranted a signal.
- Transportation Planning Activities – This includes many of SRPEDD's regional transit studies. It focuses on studies that are brought in specifically from the RTP. SRPEDD intends to support all other recommendations from the RTP. Management Systems is one of the sections where we look at traffic and safety management that are identified in the RTP. SRPEDD is on course to finish the Route 6 study. SRPEDD also participates in Road Safety Audits throughout the region. The Bicycle and Pedestrian section allows us to understand the East/West and North/South flow of off-road bicycle facilities across the region. There is a section that looks at intermodal freight and ITS to solve traffic congestion with ITS. SRPEDD is continuing with Flood Mitigation, and SRPEDD has been collecting data on vulnerable areas for flooding.
- Technical Planning – SRPEDD supports GATRA and SRTA with transit planning. SRPEDD supports that through data collection with NTD as well as making recommendations for transit needs.

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In general, this work program supports many of our transportation staff. Mr. Mission explained that the UPWP also supports the comprehensive planning department as well as other aspects of planning within the office. Mr. Mission then went around the room introducing all SRPEDD Staff members and their role in Planning Activities within the office. Mr. Mission mentioned that the Draft UPWP is available on the SRPEDD website and copies are available upon request.

Chairman Woelfel asked for a motion to release the Unified Planning Work Program out to a 21-day comment period. A motion was made and seconded UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Pam Haznar asked about the timeline for the Route 6 Corridor Study and if it will be included in the 2020 UPWP.

Mr. Mission stated that it will be included and that SRPEDD is looking to have it completed by the end of the calendar year. Mr. Mission also stated that SRPEDD is finding it difficult with the public outreach effort to brainstorm alternatives along the corridor. There is a myriad of ideas to try and come up with one-or-two ideas that can get presented to the public.

Ms. Haznar clarified that she is not aware of any sections of pavement improvements that are needed but she suspects that some paving will need to be done in Mattapoissett to prepare for the winter.

Ms. Haznar also stated her desire for SRPEDD to complete a study on Route 28 in Wareham. She is aware that SRPEDD is busy with the RTP but with the area around the interchange there is a lot of development and MassDOT is anticipating more development. It would be beneficial to have a more comprehensive study completed to address these issues. Ms. Haznar also noted that on a lot of the corridor projects MassDOT will be doing better coordination with Transit Agencies. Ms. Haznar also asked about bridges and culverts and asked how SRPEDD is looking at those specific conditions.

Mr. Mission clarified that staff is doing a visual inspection to reveal if there is a buildup of sediment or the flows have begun to be impeded. Mr. Mission clarified that it is mostly a visual inspection to see the flow of sediment. Mr. Mission also stated that Mr. Bill Napolitano has begun to study full moon and new moon tidal surges which was noted a few years ago at the Providence Road Bridge and a few others across the region. Mr. Mission also mentioned that Mr. Napolitano has found that Dams have started to be an issue, specifically in Swansea.

Ms. Haznar requested that if any important information is found to let MassDOT know.

A discussion ensued on Culvert's, bridges, and environmental programs across the region.

7. Regional Transportation Plan –

a. Status on development of the plan

Mr. Mission discussed the status of the RTP and mentioned that the main text sections will be updated forthcoming so it can be released for review and public comment come June 2019.

b. Discussion of Socio Economic Factors and Travel Patterns

Mr. Mission explained that one chapter in particular that is important for developing the RTP is the Trends section. It provides insight into the trends and understanding of travel patterns. Through the US Census and the ACS data we are seeing interesting, unsurprising trends. SRPEDD saw population growth between 2000 and 2010 increasing about 3% and through 2010 and 2015 population growth has increased about 1%. It seems that the recession in 2008 has kept SRPEDD in more of a recovery stage.

The top three communities in the region for population growth are: Dartmouth, Middleboro and Wareham.

There has been some housing growth that has followed a similar path. SRPEDD was able to look at the building permits from 2000-2005 and noticed that they were issuing about 2,000 building permits during that time frame. After the recession SRPEDD noticed that the building permits between 2008-2015 went down to less than 700/year. After 2008, the number of issued building permits has remained stagnant. Ultimately, the growth that occurred at the beginning of the decade seems to have significantly tapered off.

The employment sector was looked at as well and prior to 2008 Southeastern Massachusetts had strong employment. The recession in 2008 significantly decreased the amount of available employment, but SRPEDD is beginning to see that it is slowly creeping back.

The top three employment communities in the region are: Dartmouth, Raynham and Wareham.

The largest growth sector in employment is the healthcare and social assistance sector, the second was retail, the third was manufacturing, a combination of food service was fourth and educational assistance was fifth. By comparing population, housing and employment at one point, SRPEDD was looking at a 6% increase in housing but the more alarming figure is the <1% increase in the employment sector. Many of these changes are due to families being smaller in size, the baby boomers are retiring and looking to move to warmer states or New Hampshire. There is a smaller work force which results in a smaller employment sector.

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About 31% of people live in the region and commute out of the region. About 54% live and work in the region. So at this point SRPEDD remains a bedroom region.

Mr. Mission mentioned that the most alarming trend is commuters using Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV). SRPEDD remains reliant on the SOV. SRPEDD has had many of the same problems for years and with the advent of South Coast Rail how will that promote residents to reduce the SOV and use a transit service like South Coast Rail. Mr. Mission mentioned that unless things change, traffic congestion to the North will continue. Since 2010, people using the SOV to get to work is about 85% up 5% from the previous census. Another alarming trend is it takes people almost a full minute longer to get to work which has been a steady trend since the 90's.

It is important to try and combat the growing problems that the region has faced for the past few decades to combat Urban Sprawl. There has been a slight increase in the City of New Bedford, however it would be nice to see the trend hit the other three cities of the region. Our Regional Transportation Plan is very similar to what it was 4 years ago.

Ms. Haznar asked about the 85% SOV numbers and believes that there needs to be a Public Private Partnership in place to combat this growing trend.

Mr. Mission explained the feature on WBZ that showed the "Middlesex 3" where businesses in the Burlington area developed a shuttle service as a perk for employees to get to work. If the model shows positive signs it is something that SRPEDD could explore in the areas within the region. Mainly, the Myles Standish Industrial Park, New Bedford and Fall River to see if it is something feasible. Mr. Mission explained that the automobile is the most viable and convenient form of transportation in order to get from Point A to Point B.

Mr. Shayne Trimbell raised a question regarding the journey to work. He noted that the taxi, bicycle, and work from home has grown quite a bit. He wanted to know which sector has grown the most because that could affect how we view our road network.

Mr. Mission stated that he will go back and look but he believes that the work from home is probably what has increased the most. He clarified that the ACS does not always break out the data into specific sectors.

c. Discussion of Projects for Inclusion to the Plan

We have been able to identify a number of highway projects that need to be included in our plan as well as the statewide modeling effort for Air Quality. We are looking for this body to review this list and get back to us with any comments that you may have prior to the release of the RTP.

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Ms. Pam Haznar stated some of the projects have already been constructed.

Mr. Mission explained that they needed to be included in order to be coded into the traffic model by MassDOT OTP.

Ms. Haznar stated that some of the projects provided on the list were not approved projects so they are just in anticipation of something happening. Mr. Mission clarified that if there are any other projects that need to be included to let him know so they can send the list to CTPS who will be doing the coding. Mr. Mission clarified that the list says Highway projects but if there are any other Transit Authority improvements like maintenance garages, and things like that should also be listed.

8. Other Business

There will be a CIP meeting in Fall River. Meetings will be going on through early June and the CIP will be posted either today, May 21, 2019 or tomorrow, May 22, 2019.

Mr. Mission explained the MPO election process and stated that materials have went out to all of the towns. Nomination forms have gone out to all Board of Selectman, 4 nominations were returned and they will be due in the first week of June. The nominations will then be brought to the Commission.

Mr. Mission explained the bill that is being filed in congress to provide \$90.5 million in base funding specifically for Regional Transit Agencies.

9. **Date, Time, Place for Next Meeting:** The next SMMPO meeting is scheduled for June 18, 2019 at 1:00 PM in the SRPEDD Office.

10. **Adjourn:** There was a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY. The meeting adjourned at 1:58 PM.