

Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.

The following members were in attendance:

Stephen Woelfel-----Representing Gina Fiandaca, MassDOT Secretary and CEO, *Chair*
Richard Bilski-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Cathleen DeSimone-----Mayor of Attleboro
Daniel Aguiar-----Representing Paul Coogan, Mayor of Fall River
Jamie Ponte-----Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford
James Howland-----Representing Shaunna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton
Robert Espindola-----Town of Fairhaven
Kevin Dumas-----Representing Diana Bren, Town of Mansfield
Mark Germain-----Town of Middleborough
Lloyd Mendes-----Town of Somerset
Alan Slavin-----SRPEDD Commission Chair
Stacy Forte----- Representing MaryEllen DeFrias, GATRA Administrator
Shayne Trimbell-----Representing SRTA Administrator Erik Rousseau

The following were also in attendance:

John Cogliano-----Blue Apple Bus
Dana Hanson-----Office of Congressman Auchincloss
Kaylyn Lockyer-----City of Attleboro
Raissah Kouame-----MassDOT
Derek Krevat-----MassDOT
Derek Shooster-----MassDOT
Andrew Wang-----MassDOT
Michelle Ho -----MassDOT
Barbara Lachance-----MassDOT
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Lilia Cabral-Bernard-----SRPEDD
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD
Jon Gray-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda May 16, 2023
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes April 18, 2023
FFY2023-2027 TIP Proposed Amendment #3
RTP CHST Library Listening Sessions Flyer
SMMPO 2023 Self-Nomination Form
SMMPO Info and Election Bylaws
Final SMMPO Bylaws

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chairman Stephen Woelfel called the SMMPO meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Ms. Andrea Duarte asked all MPO members and designees to please unmute themselves so she could call the roll for attendance. She then called the complete roll of MPO members, with the following being present at the time of the roll call:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Attleboro-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
Town of Middleborough-----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

2. Approval of Minutes – April 18, 2023 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)

Chairman Woelfel requested a motion to approve the minutes from the SMMPO meeting from April 18, 2023. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Daniel Aguiar. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Attleboro-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Abstain

City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
Town of Middleborough-----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Abstain
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS.

3. Public Comments

Chairman Woelfel invited members of the public to make comments. There were no comments presented.

4. Regional Transit Authorities Report – RTA Updates

Stacy Forte reported that GATRA is moving along with several projects with no further updates at this time. Shayne Trimbell reported that SRTA has several proposed route changes that will affect service in Fall River. The proposed changes resulted from recommendations of the comprehensive operations assessment and aim to help improve the efficiency of operations and eliminate service that is underutilized. Lloyd Mendes asked which routes in Fall River were being slated for service changes, to which Mr. Trimbell responded that all routes except for Route 14 going into Somerset would have some changes, and that the proposed changes are available on SRTA’s website. (www.srtabus.com/publichearings/)

5. FFY23-27 TIP Proposed Amendment #3 – Highway & GATRA (Materials Attached, Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

Jackie Jones summarized Amendment #3 on the FFY2023-27 TIP which was released for public comment at the last SMMPO meeting. The amendment involves corridor improvements in New Bedford on County Street from Nelson Street to Union Street which increased in cost from \$11 million to \$14 million; the cost increase was covered by statewide funds and does not affect Regional Target Funds. The Marion shared use path construction project was moved to FFY2025 due to readiness, but does not affect Regional Target Funds because it is funded by statewide funds. On the transit side, an adjustment was made to add a state match for a GATRA vehicle replacement project that the federal share had been previously programmed for. There was a public meeting held to discuss this Amendment #3 on May 4 but no public comment was received.

The Chair asked if there were questions, and seeing none, asked for a motion and second to endorse Amendment #3. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Jamie Ponte. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes

MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Attleboro-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
Town of Middleborough-----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. FFY Draft FFY24-28 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse, Inclusive of Certification of the SMMPO Planning Process and the Certification of the Global Warming Solutions Act)

Ms. Jones reminded the group that the draft FFY2024-28 TIP was released to the public at the last SMMPO meeting in April and that since then MassDOT provided some minor comments mostly related to formatting. SRPEDD received six letters of support related to programming the Taunton River Trail Project. SRPEDD held a public meeting for the TIP on May 4 but did not receive any comments there.

Ms. Jones briefly listed all the other pieces that go into the TIP document in addition to the project lists, which members are voting for when they endorse the TIP. It includes an equity analysis that describes how projects and funding are distributed throughout the region to different populations. There is a greenhouse gas emission analysis which evaluates projects' impacts on greenhouse gas emissions. The TIP also discusses project evaluation criteria, information on project development, and an analysis of how the projects connect to previous planning that SRPEDD and other agencies have done. There's a description of projects' funding categories, financial plans, and information on the processes that the SMMPO body and SRPEDD engage in such as requirements for amendments versus adjustments. The full document is available on the SRPEDD website.

Ms. Jones provided a summary of the project lists for each year. Many projects that were originally programmed in FFY2024 were moved to FFY2025 due to delays in readiness. The two remaining 2024 projects are the Taunton corridor improvements and related work on Broadway through 138 and the Wareham corridor improvements on Route 6. There is a large remaining balance of 14 million in FFY2024. SRPEDD is expecting the projects that are currently

programmed will increase in costs and eat up some of that surplus. SRPEDD is also working with MassDOT and the regional transit authorities to identify projects that will utilize this remaining balance and will amend the project list accordingly when the FFY2024-28 TIP becomes active in the next federal fiscal year which starts in October 2023. Ms. Jones reiterated that readiness is key and the faster municipalities get projects ready, the better chances they will have in moving up on the TIP. The Mansfield Route 106 project was picked up by statewide funds and is no longer reflected in SRPEDD's Regional Target Funds for FFY2026. There is a balance of \$320,000 in FFY2026, that will also very likely get eaten up by cost increases. FFY2027 is very similar to the current FFY2023-27 TIP, Attleboro Route 123 corridor improvements were added to this year. In FFY2027, there is a remaining balance of \$2,843,000; not many proposed projects are less than that amount, particularly as costs increase each year, but SRPEDD is hopeful to have smaller projects that might be eligible for these funds in the future.

The project list for FFY2028 includes the Wareham shared-use path, which was moved out from FFY2025, the Taunton River Trail, and the New Bedford corridor improvements on Tarkiln Hill Road and Ashley Boulevard. The project lists for GATRA include renovating the Attleboro commuter rail station, vehicle purchases, renovations, and a solar project. The SRTA project lists include acquiring vehicles, replacing old equipment, and renovation and rehabilitation of SRTA facilities. Ms. Jones stated a minor change was made since the release of the draft FFY24-28 TIP to the public; an ex-officio SMMPO member, Jeff McEwen, was replaced by Joy Singh of FHWA. Ms. Jones read the certification of the SMMPO Transportation Planning Process in addition to the Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for Transportation into the record.

The Chair asked for a motion and second to endorse the draft TIP as detailed by Ms. Jones. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Lloyd Mendes. There were no other questions so the Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Attleboro-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
Town of Middleborough-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Draft FFY24 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Presentation (Roll Call Vote Needed to Release to 21-day comment period)

Lisa Estrela-Pedro gave the group a brief overview of the draft FFY2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) document that SRPEDD staff developed and is asking the body to release to a 21-day public comment period. Ms. Estrela-Pedro told the group that the draft FFY2024 UPWP is available for download on the SRPEDD [website](#) and the link would be emailed following the meeting. The UPWP is required for the SMMPO to administer Federal Highway and FTA planning funds. It is updated annually and will commence on October 1, 2023 and will go through September 30, 2024. It includes a scope of work for what the SRPEDD Transportation staff will be working on in the coming year. It also includes detailed deliverables, who is going to perform the work, the timeframe for completing the work, and the cost. The UPWP is built on guidance from the BIL which builds upon the FAST ACT and MAP-21 in strengthening our highways, supporting MassDOT's safety agenda, promoting alternative modes of transportation, improving healthy sustainable transportation, creating jobs, and supporting our economic growth, as well as addressing climate change and promoting equity for all modes of transportation. The funding for the FFY2024 UPWP is approximately \$1.7 million.

There are three elements to the UPWP. There are tasks that use up more funding and in which SRPEDD staff spends more time on, for example, the 3C tasks, Data Management and GIS, as well as Management Systems and Environmental Coordination. In Element 1, Management and Support of the Planning Process, the 3C item includes technical assistance to the SMMPO, JTPG, SRPEDD Commission, and SRPEDD communities. It also includes reviews of MEPA documents, and staff training and support. Under the Public Participation task, SRPEDD staff conducts outreach and support for the JTPG and the SMMPO, in addition to providing updates on transportation issues via social media and other outlets. Under the Environmental Justice task, SRPEDD conducts annual Title VI reporting, maintains the geographic database on EJ and Title VI populations, conducts the equity analysis for the TIP. Under the UPWP task SRPEDD staff develops its work program on an annual basis and reviews tasks frequently to ensure deliverables are being produced. Under the TIP task, staff develop the Transportation Improvement Program. Some additional items that SRPEDD is including in the UPWP this year under the TIP task include creating a TIP workshop that will be held in person, and updating SRPEDD's TIP evaluation criteria. In the past, SRPEDD convened a body of stakeholders to help update criteria and plan to do this again.

In Element 2, Regional Data Collection, Modeling and Analysis activities, SRPEDD will continue to maintain all of its data, including land use, crash, and park and ride lots data. Under the Regional Modeling tasks, SRPEDD staff will continue to update its model which will be used to assist with corridor studies, and providing traffic growth rates that are often requested by

consultants. SRPEDD will continue the Traffic Counting program. Under Pavement Management, SRPEDD will continue to serve federal aid-eligible roads which is done on a three-year rotating basis. Under Performance Measures, SRPEDD will continue to monitor regional and statewide targets. Under the Community Technical Assistance task, SRPEDD will continue to take requests as they come in from SRPEDD communities and will complete them based on the availability of our SRPEDD staff. Usually, SRPEDD has been able to meet all of the requests.

Element 3, the Transportation Plan Activities and Studies element, is the meat of the UPWP. Under the Management Systems task, SRPEDD Transportation staff usually assist SRPEDD's Comprehensive Department in doing traffic analysis for some of its studies. This year, SRPEDD will be conducting a corridor study of Route 28 through Middleborough, Rochester, and Wareham. Under the Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning task, SRPEDD staff will be updating the Regional Pedestrian Plan and will be launching a bicycle parking program similar to what SRPEDD has done in the past, where communities will have the opportunity to purchase bike racks. Under the ITS task, SRPEDD staff will continue its efforts with coordination with other stakeholders as well. In the Environmental Coordination and Climate Change Resilience, SRPEDD's Environmental department will convert what was previously SRPEDD's GRIP inventory into a database to assist in project development and implementation. Under Mobility Management and Regional Transit Support, SRPEDD is looking to revive what some may have known in the past as SERCCOT, the Southeast Regional Coordinating Council on Transportation, to help inform stakeholders about transit needs in the region and address these needs. SRPEDD is aiming to have the SMMPO release the draft FFY2024 UPWP for a minimum 21-day comment period on May 16. Ms. Estrela-Pedro told the group to email herself or anyone in the transportation department at any time with questions or comments about the document. SRPEDD will be hosting a public meeting to gather input on the draft FFY2024 UPWP and is aiming to have the UPWP document endorsed at the next SMMPO meeting on June 20.

The chair asked for a motion to release the draft FFY2024 UPWP to a 21-day comment period. Who made the motion and the second? There were no further questions or comments so the Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- City of Attleboro-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
- Town of Middleborough-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Somerset-----Yes

SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

GATRA-----Yes

SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. Draft Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan (Roll Call Vote Needed to Release to 21-day comment period)

Andrea Duarte presented an overview of the draft 2023 Coordinated Human Services Transportation (CHST) Plan to the group, which is available on the SRPEDD [website](#). The CHST Plan, which is updated every 4 years, identifies current transportation providers and services in the SRPEDD region, and includes transportation options that are listed in GATRA’s Ride Match regional directory of private/public/non-profit transportation services. The Plan identifies unmet transportation needs and service gaps for seniors, people with disabilities and people with low incomes. It defines some potential strategies to address the unmet needs which are used as evaluation criteria for organizations/RTAs/municipalities applying for federal 5310 funding, and it identifies priorities for the funding of grant proposals in the SRPEDD region.

The CHST Plan was developed with input from human services and community organizations and agencies, transit providers, and the public. SRPEDD’s CHST public engagement process included: the ongoing collection of information since the last plan was released in 2018; meetings and agency surveys with varying involvement from 50 organizations and agencies who were willing to participate; an unmet transportation needs public survey; 4 public meetings in May to present the draft CHST Plan and gather feedback; and a meeting to present the draft CHST plan to the group of 50 stakeholders. Ride Match and GATRA and SRTA’s 2021 comprehensive service assessments also helped identify service gaps and regional needs.

The 25 respondents to the agency survey identified medical and employment-related trips as the types of trips with the highest unmet need, and Taunton, Dighton, Fairhaven, and Mattapoissett as the communities with the highest unmet need. Respondents to the agency survey, largely representing Taunton, New Bedford, and North Attleborough, and the majority of whom were seniors and/or low-income, stated that they needed to travel beyond their RTA area and their city/town but had difficulty doing so; the areas they reported having the most difficulty getting to were Boston, Fall River, Providence, and Taunton. Also, 42% stated that they missed work or were unable to get/accept a job due to a lack of transportation; and 23% stated that they missed a doctor appointment due to lack of transportation.

The overall unmet need for alternative transportation modes continues to increase. As Southeastern MA populations continue to age, the need for transportation services to and from medical appointments, especially longer distances, is rapidly increasing. Survey respondents reported having trouble getting to hospitals and medical facilities in Brockton, Boston, Taunton, Cape Cod, Fall River, Foxboro, and Providence. Some municipalities have no options for long-distance medical transportation (programs that have volunteer drivers for medical appointments reported having major driver shortages, and some towns had drivers but no ADA accessible vehicles). There are large gaps in transit service to jobs in suburban areas, especially large industrial parks (such as those in Taunton and New Bedford). The lack of connections between cities and towns is a major barrier for riders. There's an urgent need for better connections between RTAs, between gateway cities, and between transportation providers. Some connections identified as need in surveys/meetings were: Fall River to Taunton; Taunton to Brockton; Fall River to Brockton, Taunton to Providence, Fall River to Providence, and several others. There is also an unmet need for expanded transit service in early morning and evening hours during the week and Saturday/Sunday and for more frequent service across all types of transportation trips.

Medical and employment-related transportation options continue to have the most unmet need in the SRPEDD region. This has serious implications for health and economic stability and mobility of the region's residents and communities. Ms. Duarte stated that while this region is very car dependent, the region is also home to residents whose quality of life is severely impaired by lack of access to a car or reliable, safe, and affordable alternative transportation.

Travel training and education about existing services continues to be important, and an area for improvement and increased coordination. Many people aren't aware of transportation services they qualify for from their healthcare plan for medical appointments or how to navigate them. Some were not aware about how GATRA's bus flagging system works and didn't know they could flag the bus down to get on/off where there are no stops. SRPEDD's RTP meetings with town officials this year showed that some officials were not aware that certain transit services exist in their municipalities or about the general needs for transit/alternative transportation services among their residents.

Ms. Duarte stated that SRPEDD is asking the SMMPO for a vote to release the CHST draft to a 21-day comment period. SRPEDD will continue to hold public and stakeholder meetings relating to CHST-identified issues and the draft will be updated with comments that are received. SRPEDD aims to release the final 2023 CHST Plan in July.

The Chair asked for a motion to release the draft 2023 CHST Plan to a 21-day comment period. Jamie Ponte made the motion and Jim Howland seconded. There were no further questions or comments so the Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Attleboro-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
Town of Middleborough-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

9. Other Business

John Cogliano of Blue Apple Bus Company provided an update and presentation about the Mansfield to Boston bus service. This service has been in operation since November 2022 and has moved a total of 5,298 passengers, which he remarked is impressive for a new service. This service has received CMAQ funds and costs \$1.3 million, including fares. Mr. Cogliano stated that Blue Apple Bus Co. hopes to increase frequency to 20 roundtrips per day to and from Logan Airport to attract more ridership. A question was asked about how much would fares for this service increase if it did not receive CMAQ funds again, to which Mr. Cogliano responded that the Company hopes to keep fares at \$22 per adult and \$7 per child. A question was asked about viability of riders using the commuter rail instead of this service, to which Mr. Cogliano responded that the commuter rail does not operate between midnight and 4 am, and many riders prefer not to take two legs. This service will take more cars off I-495 and benefits airport employees. A question was asked about whether the Company has analyzed the service’s impact to the park-and-ride facility and parking lot adjacent to the Mansfield station since the service started; Mr. Cogliano responded that riders who leave their car overnight tend to park in the private lots and many get dropped off, so there has not yet been any noticeable impact on these lots.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro reminded SMMPO members to return their self-nomination forms by June 15. There are two SMMPO members whose terms will expire at the end of July, Mr. Espindola

from Fairhaven and Mr. Germain from Middleborough. Elections for these two seats will take place at the June SRPEDD Commission meeting.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro reminded the group that SRPEDD Transportation staff has been holding community listening sessions in May as part of SRPEDD's process for updating the 2023 Regional Transportation Plan and Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. The remaining open houses will be held on the following dates at these locations: Fall River Public Library, May 17th, 4:30-7:30pm; Taunton Public Library, May 23rd, 4-7pm.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro informed the group that MassDOT, together with SRPEDD, will be hosting a public meeting via Zoom on May 31 at 6:00 PM to discuss MassDOT's 5-Year Capital Investment Plan (CIP). It is an opportunity to learn about how MassDOT is spending its funds and voice any concerns. The registration [link](#) was sent following the meeting.

9. Date and Time for Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on June 20, 2023, at 1:00 pm, held virtually.

10. Adjourn

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Lloyd Mendes made the motion and Jim Howland seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 2:12 PM.