

Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, June 20, 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*
Pam Haznar-----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
Jay Pateakos-----Representing Shaunna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton
Robert Espindola-----Town of Fairhaven
Kevin Dumas-----Representing Diana Bren, Town of Mansfield
Marie Clarner-----SRPEDD Commission Chair
MaryEllen DeFrias ----- GATRA Administrator
Shayne Trimbell-----Representing SRTA Administrator Erik Rousseau

The following were also in attendance:

Dana Hanson-----Office of Congressman Auchincloss
Jenna Massoud----- Office of Congressman Auchincloss
Alan Slavin-----Town of Wareham
James Howland-----City of Taunton
Joshua Barber-----FHWA
Raissah Kouame-----MassDOT
Derek Krevat-----MassDOT
Barbara Lachance-----MassDOT
Richard Bilski-----MassDOT
Shaun Handy-----MassDOT
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD
Jennifer Chaves-----SRPEDD
Grant King-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda June 20, 2023
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes May 16, 2023
FFY2023-2027 TIP Proposed Amendment #4

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 New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes

Ms. Duarte then announced that there are three new SMMPO members and gave them a chance to introduce themselves. Marie Clarner, new SRPEDD Commission Chair, Jay Pateakos, new designee representing Taunton Mayor O’Connell, and Joshua Barber the SMMPO’s new FHWA Administrator designee briefly introduced themselves to the group. The Chair announced that Pam Haznar will be retiring and leaving MassDOT at the end of June and allowed attendees to say a few words to Ms. Haznar.

2. Approval of Minutes – May 16, 2023 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)

Chairman Woelfel requested a motion to approve the minutes from the SMMPO meeting from May 16, 2023. The motion was made by Jamie Ponte and seconded by Robert Espindola. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Abstain
- City of Attleboro-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Abstain
- 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

Mary Ellen DeFrias announced that GATRA ridership is continuing to rebound. Shayne Trimbell announced that SRTA is developing service plans in the event that state contract assistance funding remains flat or declines. At this time is unknown how much of the Fair Share Amendment funds will be available and whether they will be one-time funds better suited for capital projects or sustainable funds to support operations. SRTA service changes in Fall River will go into effect in August, and SRTA will be holding a public engagement process this fall for the New Bedford Bus Service Evaluation.

5. FFY23-27 TIP Amendment #4 (Highway & Transit, Materials Attached - Roll Call Vote Needed to Release to 21-day Comment Period)

Lisa Estrela-Pedro explained all of the highway and transit changes for FFY2023 of the FFY2023-2027 TIP in Amendment #4, which includes cost increases, cost changes and grants awarded for vehicles through the Community Transit Grant Program. Ms. Estrela-Pedro asked the group to refer to the FFY2023-2027 TIP Proposed Amendment #4 handout for more detail.

The Chair asked if there were questions, and seeing none, asked for a motion and second to release the TIP Amendment #4 for a 21-day public comment period. The motion was made by Daniel Aguiar and seconded by Marie Clarner. 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 Mansfield-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA----- -Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. FFY2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) (Link- Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro said she provided an overview of the FFY2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and all its elements at previous SMMPO meetings when the document was released for public comment. She stated that during the comment period comments were received from MassDOT pertaining to grammatical corrections, formatting, and clarification on the requirement to spend 2.5 % or roughly \$28,000 of the SMMPO’s UPWP budget on complete streets activities. She followed up by stating that all changes had been incorporated into the document. During the UPWP’s 21-day public comment period, SRPEDD hosted a public meeting that had one attendee, and comments were also previously received from the town of Rochester regarding its upcoming corridor study.

The Chair asked for a motion and second to endorse the FFY2024 UPWP. The motion was made by Daniel Aguiar and seconded by Marie Clarner. 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 Mansfield-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. 2023 Coordinated Human Services Transportation (CHST) Plan (Link- Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

Jennifer Chaves briefly summarized public input that was received during the Coordinated Human Services Transportation (CHST) Plan’s 21-day public comment period, which included requests to include more detail about unmet mobility needs of seniors in the region’s rural communities and cost-effective strategies to meet these needs, and revisions to the mapping of some Title VI populations in the region. Paper copies of the CHST Plan were provided to community stakeholders upon request, including Sturdy Memorial Hospital staff.

The chair asked for a motion and second to endorse the 2023 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. The motion was made by Robert Espindola and seconded by Marie Clarner. 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 Mansfield-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. Regional Transportation Plan Survey Results Update

Ms. Estrela-Pedro presented an overview of the Moving Forward 2050 public survey results, which was part of the community outreach efforts of this year’s Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The survey was distributed to town halls, libraries, and councils on aging across all SRPEDD communities. It was promoted at SRPEDD meetings, community events, and on SRPEDD’s social media. It received 976 responses, 42% of which were individuals over the age of 65 and 32% of which were 45-64 years old. 92% of survey respondents reported using their own vehicle in a typical week. When asked about their perfect transportation system, 54% of respondents included “reliable, convenient and affordable transit” in their top 3 choices, 48 % of respondents included less congested roads, 46% included more alternative transportation options, and 46% included safer transportation in their top 3 choices. When asked what they would spend transportation funds on, 81% of respondents stated fixing local roads, and 41% stated adding and fixing bike lanes and sidewalks. When asked what would convince them to use bus transportation, respondents provided answers such as bus stops closer to home, better bus stop accessibility, more reliable and frequent service, free fares, more destinations along the routes, an inability to drive, and greater clarity about services and how to use them. Survey responses showed that during the Covid-19 pandemic 62% of respondents drove less, 20% walked or bicycled more, and 27% did not experience changes in travel patterns. Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that a complete overview of survey results will be published in the draft RTP, which will be presented to the SMMPO in August.

9. Other Business

Ms. Estrela-Pedro informed the group that there will be a design public hearing for the Wareham - Corridor Improvements over Route 6 at Swifts Beach Road project on June 21st at 6PM virtually. Chairman Woelfel announced that this year's MassDOT Moving Together conference will be held on Wednesday, October 4, 2023. He asked SMMPO members to do their best to attend the next 2-3 SMMPO meetings over the summer since there is still business to be conducted which includes endorsement of the Regional Transportation Plan.

10. Date and Time for Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on July 18, 2023, at 1:00 pm, held virtually.

11. Adjourn

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Robert Espindola made the motion and Pam Haznar seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:37 PM.