

Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, August 15, 2023 at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.

The following members were in attendance:

Derek Krevat-----Representing Gina Fiandaca, MassDOT Secretary and CEO, *Chair*
Richard Bilski-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Daniel Aguiar-----Representing Paul Coogan, Mayor of Fall River
Jay Pateakos-----Representing Shauna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton
Kevin Dumas-----Representing Diana Bren, Town of Mansfield
Sarah Hewins-----Town of Carver
Alan Slavin-----Town of Wareham
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
Joshua Barber-----FHWA
Derek Shooster-----MassDOT
Barbara Lachance-----MassDOT
Shaun Handy-----MassDOT
Andrew Wang-----MassDOT
Jose Invencio & David----LakeCAM TV
Sean Flannelly-----Member of the public
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD
Jennifer Chaves-----SRPEDD
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD
Jon Gray-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda August 15, 2023
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes July 18, 2023
FFY2023-2027 TIP Proposed Amendment #5

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chairman Derek Krevat 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 Fall River-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes

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

Chairman Krevat requested a motion to approve the minutes from the July 18, 2023 SMMPO meeting. 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 Fall River-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Public Comments

Chairman Krevat 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 the Governor's recently released budget allocated additional funding for transit. GATRA is in the process of assessing how to add Sunday service throughout its communities, for a tentative mid-October start date. GATRA would prefer to roll out this service sooner but is having difficulty finding drivers to operate buses on Sundays. GATRA is currently beginning to look at expanding its fleet of electric vehicles. Shayne Trimbell stated that it was good news to see more transit funding coming in through the Governor's budget. SRTA, like GATRA and other transit authorities throughout the country, is also having difficulty hiring drivers, however. SRTA has not developed concrete plans for implementation of this additional funding until it has a better idea of what staffing will look like. SRTA will be implementing various route and schedule changes in Fall River on August 28 and expects to receive many calls and inquiries at this time.

5. Draft Regional Transportation Plan (Link - Roll Call Vote Need to Release to a Minimum 21-day Public Comment Period)

Lisa Estrela-Pedro stated that the draft 2024 Regional Transportation Plan, Moving Forward 2050 was released to the body on Friday August 11. She provided some additional financial highlights about the RTP. GATRA and SRTA receive funding for operations, maintenance, bus replacements, and capital improvements, but additional funding is still needed to help keep up with their bus replacement schedule and other capital and operation's needs. SRTA's capital needs include renovating and potentially relocating their former maintenance facility and replacing the New Bedford terminal. GATRA's capital needs include upgrading the Taunton terminal and maintenance facilities. On the highway side, beyond the existing FFY2024-2028 TIP, we are looking at having all community-initiated projects funded by 2030, but this does not factor in project increases and delays. MassDOT-initiated projects in the region could be completed by 2035 if these projects were programmed with regional target funding. Based on regional targets and forecasting out to year 2050, there are projected to be sufficient funds for initiated projects, although the process is lengthy.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that a major theme from meetings with municipal officials during the RTP process was the challenge of funding, mostly for smaller projects. Limited staffing capacity to apply for and manage grant funding and meeting grant eligibility criteria were two of the largest barriers identified to completing transportation projects. One example is communities having bridges that are slightly over the required size to qualify for MassDOT's Municipal Small Bridge Program, forcing these communities to apply for this funding through the TIP which escalates the design cost of the project. Many communities consistently expressed an urgent need for increased Chapter 90 funding, which is vital to an array of projects but still inadequate to meet communities' existing needs.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro informed the group that the RTP was discussed at the August JTPG meeting where the JTPG voted to recommend that the SMMPO to release the Plan to a minimum 21-day comment period. There will also be a public meeting to discuss the plan. She asked if there

were any questions and stated that comments on the Plan could be sent to any SRPEDD Transportation team staff member. She asked the body for a vote to release the draft RTP to a minimum 21-day public comment period. The Chair asked if there were any questions on the draft RTP and seeing none asked for a motion and second to release the draft RTP to a public comment period. The motion was made by Daniel Aguiar and seconded by Mary Ellen DeFrias. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
Town of Carver-----Yes
Town of Wareham-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Draft Regional Bicycle Plan Presentation (Link - Roll Call Vote Need Release to a Minimum 21-day Public Comment Period)

SRPEDD Transportation Planner Jon Gray gave a presentation on the draft 2024 Regional Bicycle Plan. He discussed various benefits and considerations for investing in bicycling infrastructure in the SRPEDD region, including equity and accessibility, public health, emissions reductions, economic development, safety, and connectivity. The Regional Bicycle Plan public survey yielded 435 responses. Some of its major themes were concerns about lack of bicycling safety on roadways being a barrier for cycling and the need for increased connectivity between various locations and types of amenities. Norton, Swansea, and Middleborough had the highest response rates. Mr. Gray provided an overview of the region’s existing and proposed bicycle network routes, including its various existing shared use paths. He emphasized the importance of coordinating bicycle infrastructure expansion with transit stations and bus routes. Mr. Gray stated that the Regional Bicycle Plan is available on the SRPEDD website and linked in today’s JTPG meeting agenda. Attendees can contact him if they have any questions about the Plan. Chair Krevat asked which data layer is being used for the proposed routes to which Mr. Gray answered that previous bicycle plans and meetings with communities informed this map layer, and SRPEDD is in the process of incorporating routes identified in Complete Streets prioritization plans into this layer as well. The proposed Southcoast Bikeway routes have been mapped for a while, but some other areas will need more feasibility analysis to identify best routes.

The Chair asked if there were any other questions and seeing none asked the body for a motion and second to release the draft 2024 Regional Bicycle Plan to a minimum 21-day public comment period. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Mary Ellen DeFrias. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
Town of Carver-----Yes
Town of Wareham-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. FFY23-27 TIP Proposed Amendment #5 (Transit, Materials Attached - Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro explained all the SRTA transit changes on the FFY23-27 TIP Proposed Amendment #5. It includes changes in operating costs, with receipt of \$11.7 million in state contract assistance funding, removal of system modernization with RTPA CAP and 5307 projects, and addition of fare collection upgrades. All of these were listed in the handout released with the agenda. Some of these changes consisted of additional funding sources that needed to be used before the year closes out. These changes were presented at the last SMMPO meeting and released to a 21-day public comment period. A public meeting was held on August 9 to discuss this amendment, and there were no comments at the meeting or otherwise. Ms. Estrela-Pedro asked the body to endorse this amendment.

The Chair asked if there were questions, and seeing none, asked for a motion and second to endorse FFY23-27 TIP Proposed Amendment #5 as presented. The motion was made by Mary Ellen DeFrias and seconded by Alan Slavin. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes

Town of Carver-----Yes
Town of Wareham-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. Other Business

Ms. Estrela-Pedro announced that this year’s [MassDOT Moving Together conference](#) will be held on Wednesday, October 4, 2023 at the Sheraton Boston Hotel. She announced that [the Safe Routes to School \(SRTS\) Program](#) will be holding an informational webinar on August 23, which is the opening date of this year’s SRTS grant application period. The SRTS Signs and Lines grant program application period will close on September 22nd and the SRTS Infrastructure Project grant application period will close on October 6th. Lastly, MassDOT will hold a virtual public hearing to present the design for the proposed ADA retrofits at various project locations in District 5; more info can be found at this [link](#).

9. Date and Time for Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on September 19, 2023, at 1:00 pm, held virtually. He urged all members to attend the September SMMPO meeting as the SMMPO will need a quorum to endorse the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan and Regional Bicycle Plan.

10. Adjourn

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Alan Slavin made the motion and Daniel Aguiar seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:31 PM.