

Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.

The following members were in attendance:

Stephen Woelfel-----Representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Acting MassDOT Secretary, **Chair**
Richard Bilski-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Daniel Aguiar-----Representing Paul Coogan, Mayor of Fall River
Jamie Ponte----- Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford
Jay Pateakos-----Representing Shauna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton
Jacob Vaught-----Town of Somerset
Sarah Hewins-----Town of Carver
Alan Slavin-----Town of Wareham
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
Raissah Kouame-----MassDOT
Derek Krevat-----MassDOT
Andrew Wang-----MassDOT
Colleen Pekarul-----MassDOT/Safe Routes to School
Bonnie Roalsen-----MassDOT/Safe Routes to School
David-----LakeCAM TV
Judy Richard-----Member of the public
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD
Jon Gray-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda September 19, 2023
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes August 15, 2023

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 Fall River-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
Town of Carver -----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Yes
Town of Wareham-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

2. Approval of Minutes – August 15 2023 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)

Chairman Woelfel requested a motion to approve the minutes from the August 15, 2023 SMMPO meeting. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Sarah Hewins. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Abstain
Town of Carver -----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Yes
Town of Wareham-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSENTION.

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

Shayne Trimbell announced that SRTA held a public meeting in New Bedford last Thursday for service changes that SRTA is evaluating and proposing for the city of New Bedford. This is the second public hearing this year and second round of services changes. A series of changes was implemented in August that affected Fall River, and this is the other half of the SRTA system. SRTA staff are currently reviewing comments received and proposals and making potential modifications. Mr. Trimbell will have more to report about what changes to expect at next month’s meeting. Mary Ellen DeFrias announced that GATRA is aiming to launch Sunday service starting in mid-October with some additional funds that were received from the state. This will include 4 routes in Attleboro, 4 routes in Taunton, and a few of GATRA’s high performing routes across the rest of the region. The routes will be running Saturday service on Sundays to start. As more drivers are hired, GATRA hopes to roll out full Sunday service by January.

5. 2024 Regional Transportation Plan ([Link](#) - Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

Jackie Jones reminded the group that the regional transportation plan is the long-range transportation plan that assesses the current transportation system and its needs and forecasts what the region could look like in the future. It provides recommendations on how to get the transportation network to achieve the goals stakeholders have set and how to best serve the region's needs. It did not receive many comments during the public comment period, but MassDOT did provide some comments. This included formatting adjustments, adding additional greenhouse gas analysis for projects in outer years, adding more information about the MPO structure, adding a project scoring table and list of acronyms, and referencing the SMMPO’s public participation program. SMMPO staff held a public meeting on September 12, for the RTP and the Regional Bicycle Plan. SMMPO staff conducted an additional internal review and made some minor revisions. Ms. Jones asked the body to endorse the final RTP for signature by the Acting Secretary of MassDOT.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on the Regional Transportation Plan and seeing none asked for a motion and second to endorse the RTP. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Daniel Aguiar. 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
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- Town of Carver -----Yes
- Town of Somerset-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes

SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. 2024 Regional Bicycle Plan ([Link](#) - Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

SRPEDD Transportation Planner Jon Gray reminded the group that the 2024 Regional Bicycle Plan is a planning document to help advance local bikeways in the region. Mr. Gray discussed the major takeaways from public input received via email and the September 12 public meeting. They included:

- Sarah Hewins Carver Select Board member suggested incorporating bike routes identified in communities' open space and recreation plans and Complete Streets prioritization plans as additional route recommendations in the RBP. Staff will be adding these routes into the RBP's recommendations.
- A suggestion was made for SRPEDD to create a bikeway planning and funding guide for local advocates to better understand programs, policies and regulations related to bikeway planning. Nathaniel Roberts of Bike Fall River discussed the need for creating a network of inner-city bike lanes and infrastructure to support bike parking, with a special emphasis on high comfort and infrastructure on major city arteries through the city of Fall River in particular.
- There was a general comment about shifting the thinking in Southeastern Massachusetts about bikes as a strictly recreational vehicle to more of a viable commuter option.
- There were comments related to creating better ways to visualize commuter data and identify potential commuter trips in the region that could be more easily made by bike.
- There was a concern about MBTA commuter rail trains, particularly through the Attleboro and Mansfield stations, not allowing bikes during peak hours for those wanting to bike to commuter rail stations and in Boston.
- There was a comment about having the city of Fall River explore bringing in a local bike shop as it is a large city without any at the moment and this could benefit the local bike way and current/future cyclists.
- Support was expressed for Fall River's Bedford Streets shared use path project that had been proposed in earlier years.
- Support was expressed for opportunities to share equipment for bikeway development and construction. A comment was made about better understanding the resources provided to local DPW and public transportation officials on Complete Streets planning processes.
- Several local advocates, including Bonnie DeSousa, voiced comments about getting buy-in from local officials on bikeway safety, reducing speed limits, and general planning for bicycle transportation. Bonnie DeSousa, a member of the Friends of Mattapoissett Rail Trail, stated that a local official didn't see a need for local bikeway improvements because they have not seen many riders out on the roads, without specifically citing any

data, or making the connection that existing infrastructure hasn't encouraged potential riders in that community.

- Will Gardner of the Fairhaven Livable Streets Committee would like to advance lightweight demonstration projects that are low cost, easy to quickly implement and can better inform decision makers on the viability of different types of roadway improvements. Mr. Gardner was also concerned about ensuring that future improvements on Route 6 genuinely accommodated bike travel and he proposed reducing roadway design speeds in Fairhaven to 25 mph or less.
- Gail Rodriguez, Chair of Westport Bike and Walking Path Committee shared some examples of projects to advance bike recycling and tune up to provide underserved cities better access to bikes.
- Steve Ouellette, Vice Chair of the Westport Board of Selectmen, expressed general support for the South Coast Bikeway route through Westport and stated that the town is seeking funding for this route.
- Alan Slavin, member of the Wareham Board of Selectmen suggested SRPEDD staff connect with the Wareham Open Space Committee regarding trail connections into Wareham's Minot Forest area.

The Chair asked if there were any questions for Mr. Gray and seeing none asked the body for a motion and second to endorse the 2024 Regional Bicycle Plan. 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
City of New Bedford-----Yes
Town of Carver -----Yes
Town of Somerset-----Yes
Town of Wareham-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. MassDOT Update on FFY2023-2027 TIP Projects

Richard Bilski provided updates on FFY2023-2027 TIP Projects as follows:

- 608535 NEW BEDFORD- CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS AND RELATED WORK ON COUNTY STREET, FROM NELSON STREET TO UNION STREET: BID OPENINGS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 7, 2023
- 603796 MANSFIELD- BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, BALCOM STREET OVER THE WADING RIVER: BID OPENINGS SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 19, 2023
- 609433 ATTLEBORO- NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH- MEDIAN CABLE BARRIER INSTALLATION ON I-95: BID OPENINGS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 17, 2023
- ATTLEBORO BRIDGE REMOVAL ON THE I-195 RAMP OVER 10 MILE RIVER : BID OPENINGS SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 26, 2023
- 612743 MIDDLEBOROUGH BRIDGE PRESERVATION I-495 OVER ROUTE 105 AND MBTA: BID OPENINGS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER 24, 2023
- 608563 SWANSEA- IMPROVEMENTS ON ROUTE 6 (GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC HIGHWAY) AT GARDNERS NECK ROAD: IS AT 100% DESIGN AND WAITING FOR THE PS&E
- 608753 TAUNTON- CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS AND RELATED WORK ON BROADWAY (ROUTE 138), FROM PURCHASE STREET TO JACKSON STREET (PHASE 2): IS AT 100% DESIGN WHICH IS UNDER REVIEW.
- 610647 WAREHAM - CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS ON ROUTE 6 AT SWIFTS BEACH ROAD: IS AT 25% DESIGN, THE 75% DESIGN SUBMISSION WAS RECEIVED AND IS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW.
- 606527 NEW BEDFORD- SUPERSTRUCTURE REPLACEMENT, I-195 (EB & WB) RAMP C & F OVER ST 18, COUNTY STREET, STATE STREET, MASS COASTAL RAILROAD, PURCHASE STREET, WELD STREET, INCLUDES REPLACING N-06-046, I-195 (EB) RAMP F OVER WELD STREET: FINAL BTC 25% UNDER REVIEW
- 605311 MARION- WAREHAM- BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, WAREHAM STREET (US 6) OVER WEWEANTIC RIVER: IS AT 25% DESIGN, WAITING FOR DESIGN PUBLIC HEARING, IT'S GOING TO BE A DESIGN BUILD PROJECT
- 609518 FAIRHAVEN- LEROY WOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS (SRTS): AT 75% DESIGN AND AWAITING THE 100% DESIGN SUBMISSION
- 607871: DARTMOUTH- CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS ON ROUTE 6, FROM FAUNCE CORNER ROAD TO HATHAWAY ROAD: AWAITING THE 75% DESIGN SUBMISSION
- 612268 MANSFIELD CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS ON CHAUNCY STREET FROM ROUTE 140 TO COPLAND DRIVE: 75% DESIGN SUBMISSION IS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW
- 606715 LAKEVILLE- RECONSTRUCTION AND RELATED WORK ON RHODE ISLAND ROAD (ROUTE 79), FROM THE TAUNTON CITY LINE TO CLEAR POND ROAD: AWAITING 100% DESIGN SUBMISSION
- 609255 MANSFIELD - CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS AND RELATED WORK ON SCHOOL STREET, FROM SPRING STREET TO WEST STREET: AT 25% AND AWAITING 75% DESIGN

- 608750 PLAINVILLE - RECONSTRUCTION OF SOUTH STREET (ROUTE 1A), FROM SHARLENE LANE TO EVERETT STREET AND RELATED WORK: AT 25% DESIGN AND AWAITING REVISED 25% DESIGN PLANS
- 607440 MATTAPOISETT- CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS AND RELATED WORK ON MAIN STREET, WATER STREET, BEACON STREET AND MARION ROAD: WAITING FOR INTERIM 25% PLANS WHICH ARE UNDER REVIEW
- 610798 NEW BEDFORD- INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT MOUNT PLEASANT STREET AND NASH ROAD: AWAITING THE PRE 25% SCOPING MEETING
- 609193 NORTON- INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT WEST MAIN STREET (ROUTE 123), NORTH WORCESTER STREET AND SOUTH WORCESTER STREET: DPH WAS HELD IN MARCH, AT 25% DESIGN
- 613095 ATTLEBORO CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS RT123 FROM LATHROP ROAD TO THATCHER STREET : PRC WAS APPROVED IN DECEMBER
- 608530 MIDDLEBOROUGH - RECONSTRUCTION AND RELATED WORK ON WAREHAM STREET AND WOOD STREET: AWAITING 25% DESIGN SUBMISSION
- 608586 DARTMOUTH- CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS ON DARTMOUTH ST AND PROSPECT ST: AT 25% AND STILL WAITING REVISED 25% SUBMISSION
- 610927 WESTPORT - INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT ROUTE 177 AND ROBERTS ROAD/TICKLE ROAD: AT 25% AND AWAITING 75% DESIGN SUBMISSION
- 612268 MANSFIELD CHAUNCEY STREET 106 IMPROVEMENTS, PHASE 2: PRC WAS APPROVED THIS SUMMER

Discussion ensued about the two projects in Wareham, Mr. Slavin requested that MassDOT update him on the status of these projects due to potential traffic issues with a nearby 40B housing development of 100+ units that will be online in the next few years.

8. Other Business

Ms. Estrela-Pedro announced that MassDOT is expanding the Vulnerable Road Users Program, and that there is additional funding for Vulnerable Road Users safe passing signs. Local officials can submit the application forms and install the signs themselves. She stated that MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces grant program is now accepting applications until October 31. There is a federal NOFO open for Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility that is due November 13. Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that SRPEDD is hiring for several positions in the Transportation, Environmental, and Homeland Security departments, and job descriptions can be found on the SRPEDD website. She encouraged the group to share these job postings with their networks.

Chair Woelfel announced that registration for this year's [MassDOT Moving Together conference](#) has reached 1250 which includes both virtual and in person attendees. The conference is now sold out of in person registrations at 1100. This is the first time the

conference has sold out 3-4 weeks in advance. Virtual registration is still open. He announced that the Lieutenant Governor will be doing the morning keynote speech and Acting Secretary Monica Tibbits-Nutt will do the afternoon keynote speech.

9. Date and Time for Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on October 17, 2023, at 1:00 pm, held virtually as of right now.

10. Adjourn

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Alan Slavin made the motion and Sarah Hewins seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:29 PM.