



SRPEDD

Southeastern Regional Planning
& Economic Development District

THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP)

2020 UPDATE

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Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization





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Individuals seeking additional information or wishing to file a Title VI/Nondiscrimination complaint may contact the SRPEDD Title VI/Nondiscrimination Coordinator at the contact information here. All such complaints must be received, in writing, within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory occurrence. A complaint may be filed with the following:

Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO)

Title VI Coordinator

SRPEDD

88 Broadway, Taunton, MA 02780

Phone: 508 824-1367 or dial 711 to use MassRelay

Email: lcabral@srpedd.org

The MassDOT Title VI Specialist

MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3800, Boston, MA 02116
Phone: 857-368-8580 or 7-1-1 for Relay Service.
Email: MassDOT.CivilRights@state.ma.us

The MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights – Investigations Unit

Assistant Secretary of Diversity & Civil Rights, MassDOT
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3800, Boston, MA 02116
Email: odcrcomplaints@dot.state.ma.us

Massachusetts Public Accommodation Law (M.G.L. c 272 §§92a, 98, 98a) and Executive Order 526 section 4 also prohibit discrimination in public accommodations based on religion, creed, class, race, color, denomination, sex, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, gender identity and expression, and veteran’s status, and SRPEDD and the SMMPO assures compliance with these laws. Public Accommodation Law concerns can be brought to SRPEDD’s Title VI / Nondiscrimination Coordinator or to file a complaint alleging a violation of the state's Public Accommodation Law, contact the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) within 300 days of the alleged discriminatory conduct.

The SMMPO is equally committed to implementing federal Executive Order 12898, entitled “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” In this capacity, the SMMPO identifies and addresses disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. The SMMPO carries out this responsibility by involving minority and low income individuals in the transportation process and considering their transportation needs in the development and review of the SMMPO’s transportation plans, programs and projects.

English: If this information is needed in another language, please contact SRPEDD’s Title VI Coordinator by phone at (508) 824-1367.

Portuguese: Caso esta informação seja necessária em outra idioma, favor contar o coordenador em Título VI do SRPEDD pelo telephone (508) 824-1367.

Spanish: Si necesita esta información en otro idioma, por favor contacte al coordinador de SRPEDD del Título VI al (508) 824-1367.

Haitian / French Creole: Si yo bezwen enfòmasyon sa a nan yon lòt lang , tanpri kontakte Koòdonatè Tit VI SRPEDD a pa telefòn nan (508) 824-1367.



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Introduction

In accordance with state and federal requirements and to ensure early, inclusive, accessible and continuous public participation and input to the planning process for transportation decision making, the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO), in its role as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) region, has developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP). The SRPEDD region consists of 27 communities; the cities of Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton and the towns of Acushnet, Berkley, Carver, Dartmouth, Dighton, Fairhaven, Freetown, Lakeville, Mansfield, Marion, Mattapoisett, Middleborough, North Attleborough, Norton, Plainville, Raynham, Rehoboth, Rochester, Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea, Wareham and Westport.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is developed with the ultimate goal of allowing every person in the region the opportunity to become active participants in the Continuous, Cooperative and Comprehensive (3C) metropolitan planning and decision-making process guiding every issue, project, program or service. The PPP is adaptable and guides the SMMPO in its public participation efforts in creation of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and various transportation studies. The PPP is an essential element with the distribution of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Metropolitan Planning funding, and with Federal Transit Administration Section 5303 and Section 5307 grants to the regional transit agencies, Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) and Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA). In these public participation efforts, the SMMPO adheres to the principles of Environmental Justice and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act as part of the 3C metropolitan planning process as relating to transportation systems and facilities.

These efforts will, in no way, exclude persons who are low-income, minority, Limited English Proficient (LEP) or have a disability. The goal of the PPP is to ensure that all persons, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, gender, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, ancestry or ethnicity, sexual orientation or veteran's status have an equal opportunity to participate in the SMMPO's decision-making process.

This plan is designed, in part, to develop partnerships with, and enhance the participation in the transportation planning process, by groups and individuals of traditionally underrepresented populations. Staff activities include, but are not limited to, targeted communications with local media outlets; conducting meetings at times and locations that are accessible and on transit routes; the routine translations of public outreach materials, including meeting materials and surveys; and the availability of SMMPO documents in non-technical, web-based or other easily accessible formats as necessary and appropriate for purposes of obtaining input and comment. To this end, the SMMPO

also solicits, to the maximum extent possible, the input of all interested parties in the development of this Public Participation Plan.

This plan was designed to be fluid and adaptable and allow for constant change and improvement. There may be occasions where the circumstances may not allow for absolute compliance with stated protocols but every effort will be made to uphold the standards set here.

This plan will also change and adapt over time as necessary, based on ideas and feedback from the public and from our staff, as well as from occasions or circumstances for public participation that may arise. This plan will be evaluated and will consider characteristics of participation with an emphasis on the success obtained in engaging traditionally underrepresented populations. The 2020 Public Participation Plan is available on the SRPEDD website.

THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

What is SRPEDD?

The Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) is a public regional planning agency established by state legislature, Chapter 40B, sections 9-19, serving four cities and twenty-three towns in southeastern Massachusetts. SRPEDD is governed by a Commission made up of the chief elected official or designee, and a Planning Board official or designee from each of the 27 municipalities in the region, plus six at-large members representing the interests of low-income and minority groups in the region.

SRPEDD has no legislative or regulatory authority, but has advisory powers and is authorized to prepare plans, conduct studies, and provide assistance to cities, towns and agencies and to make recommendations. SRPEDD also serves as technical and support staff to the Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG) and the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) for Southeastern Massachusetts.

What is the SMMPO?

The Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) is responsible for transportation policy and federal resource allocation decisions in the region. The SRPEDD Commission is one of thirteen signatories in the SMMPO. Other signatories include the mayors of each of the region's 4 cities (Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton), selectmen from four of the region's 23 towns, the Administrator of the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA), the Administrator of the Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA), the Highway Administrator of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Transportation Secretary and

CEO of MassDOT. The SMMPO meets when there are sufficient business items to warrant a meeting, but must meet a minimum of once a year.

The principal responsibilities of the SMMPO include the development of a 25-year long range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the southeastern Massachusetts region, including the cities of Attleboro, Fall River, Taunton, and New Bedford, that is financially constrained and within the projected federal funds available. They also oversee planning activities that include the scope of planning activities and work tasks such as the five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), tasks included in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and related planning studies and projects deemed necessary to address transportation issues in the area.

Local transportation needs are re-evaluated annually. Based on this evaluation and giving consideration to production schedules and funding constraints, project priorities are established and made part of the SMMPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In addition, the TIP is forwarded to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for inclusion into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) further programs these projects, in priority order. By Federal and State law, all regionally significant multi-modal transportation improvement projects (regardless of funding source) must be included in and be consistent (to the maximum extent feasible) with the SMMPO's TIP and long-range Regional Transportation Plan in order to be eligible for Federal-aid and State funding. Therefore, the SMMPO's Transportation Improvement Program is the primary plan that guides all state and federally funded transportation improvements in southeastern Massachusetts.

The SMMPO is the body that is responsible for Transportation Planning Program Development. This includes the following:

- Endorses the **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**—a fiscally constrained program of federal highway, state and transit funding; including amendments to the TIP;
- Endorses the **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**— the scope and cost of work tasks of the SRPEDD transportation staff for the coming fiscal year;
- Endorses the **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**—a comprehensive inventory and assessment of the region's highway and transit resources and needs, including air quality conformity;
- Endorses the **Public Participation Plan (PPP)**;
- Certifies the planning process; and
- May endorse special studies conducted by SRPEDD when necessary.

What is the Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG)?

The Joint Transportation Planning Group is the advisory committee to the SMMPO for all transportation related issues. Voting members of the JTPG include the chief elected officials from each SMMPO community in the region or their designees; and all at-large SMMPO Commissioners that represent low-income and minority persons and groups. Non-voting members include FHWA; FTA; MassDOT; SRTA; GATRA; transportation interest groups; neighborhood groups; any interested member of the public; and SMMPO transportation staff. The JTPG is the forum for public involvement in transportation plans and programs, including the TIP, the RTP and all transportation studies. SRPEDD acts as technical and support staff to the JTPG.

The JTPG responsibilities include:

- Prioritizing the list of projects within each TIP funding category;
- Advising the SMMPO regarding endorsements of the TIP, UPWP and RTP; and
- Voting to make adjustments to the TIP.

The JTPG generally meets on the second Wednesday of each month at the SRPEDD office. Notice of all regular meetings will be publicized at a minimum of 2 weeks in advance by distribution of the meeting notice and agenda to the mailing list of members and other interested parties. Meetings are posted on the SRPEDD website and on SRPEDD's Facebook page and by Twitter. Individuals may be placed on the mailing list by request, and shall be sent notice of regular meetings, by e-mail or postal mail at least 2 weeks before the meeting.

The Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)

The two regional transit authorities, SRTA and GATRA, each have an Advisory Board. The Boards are composed of the chief elected official from member communities or their designee. In addition, each transit authority has Consumer Advisory Committees (CAC) that serve as an open forum for consumer issues related to transit. GATRA's CACs meet on the third Thursday of the month in Attleboro or Taunton, the third Wednesday of the month in Plymouth and the last Wednesday of the month in Wareham. SRTA has a Demand Response CAC and a Fixed Route CAC. Each meets quarterly in either Fall River or New Bedford. All meetings are open to the public.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In order for the region to receive federal and state transportation funds, SRPEDD must complete and receive SMMPO endorsement of the following documents:

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the official programming document that lists all transportation projects in the region by federal funding category, including roads, bridges, transit and alternative projects such as bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. It is prepared annually and includes projects for a five-year period. All federally funded projects must be in the Annual Element of the TIP, with an assigned regional priority, before federal funds are authorized.

The project prioritization process combines an exchange of information and evaluation at meetings of the JTPG. The JTPG is an advisory group and meetings are open to the public. Anyone can attend and offer feedback and comments on any of the projects or on any part of the process. Evaluation criteria for projects include: Community Impact & Support, Maintenance & Infrastructure, Safety & Security, Mobility / Congestion, Livability / Sustainable Development and Environmental & Climate Change.

The TIP is amended and adjusted as necessary with amendments requiring a public meeting, a 21-day public comment period and a process of public notification. The process of public notification can include various methods such as public postings via city and town clerks, postings on SRPEDD's website, e-mail notifications, press releases, and social media. The 21-day public comment period may be abbreviated by a vote of the SMMPO under what may be considered extraordinary circumstances. Adjustments are voted on and recommended to the SMMPO during the JTPG process. An adjustment requires a notice to be included in the mailed agenda of a JTPG meeting.

The annual TIP is recommended by the JTPG to the SMMPO for endorsement. Upon SMMPO approval, following a process of public notification including a public comment period and public meeting, the TIP becomes part of the Statewide TIP (STIP), which must be approved by the FTA, FHWA and EPA before funds are obligated for TIP projects.

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes the scope and cost of work tasks of the SMMPO transportation staff for the upcoming fiscal year. All public participation for the UPWP is through regularly scheduled meetings of the JTPG and the SMMPO, including the invitation to communities to suggest needed planning studies.

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a comprehensive review of all modes of transportation within the SMMPO's region, identifying all transportation facilities and including the needs for improvements. The RTP provides short-range and long-range guidance to local elected officials, the JTPG and state and federal implementing agencies. The RTP, which is updated every 4 years, also makes recommendations for transportation improvements for the next 25 years and contains air quality analyses and financial constraints. There is extensive public outreach conducted for the development of the RTP and a public notification process for the 21-day public comment period. The

RTP is endorsed by the SMMPO following the comment period. This comment period may be abbreviated by a vote of the SMMPO under what may be considered as extraordinary circumstances.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is designed to ensure early, inclusive, accessible and continuous public participation and input to the planning process for transportation decision making, with the ultimate goal of allowing every person in the region the opportunity to participate in the planning process guiding every issue, project, program or service. Special efforts are made to reach the traditionally underserved, including LEP, minority and low-income persons. A process of public notification, including a 45-day public comment period is required for the PPP. This process includes a wide distribution of the draft document and posting on our website with a request for comments and feedback.

Federal Transit Administration Section 5303 Grants is a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) based formula grant program for urbanized areas providing funds to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to carry out the transportation planning process; SRPEDD is the recipient of Section 5303 funds as the regional planning agency providing staff assistance to the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO).

In accordance with USC 49 Section 5303, paragraph i, subsection 6, the SMMPO has prepared a public participation plan that complies with the requirements set forth in that the public is provided an opportunity to comment on the development of transportation plans; public meetings are held at accessible locations at times that are convenient to the public; visualization techniques are used to describe the plan; and all materials are made public through an electronically accessible format.

Federal Transit Administration Section 5307 Grants is a formula grant program for urbanized areas providing capital, operating, and planning assistance for mass transportation. Both SRTA and GATRA receive Section 5307 funds. Prior to the Regional Transit Authorities preparing and forwarding grant applications to the FTA and to the state, details of the anticipated grant are published in the TIP. The public process for Section 5307 grants are included with the process completed for the TIP, including adjustments, amendments and public comment.

In accordance with the Planning Rule and Circular C 9030 1E, dated January 16, 2014, which streamlined the Public Hearing Requirements for FTA Section 5307 grants, the public involvement process for the development of the TIP satisfies the public hearing requirements for SRTA and GATRA's routine 5307 grants. For FTA projects that are not routine, i.e. Section 5307 applications that require an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), additional public involvement as presented in the joint FHWA/FTA environmental regulations, 23 C.F.R. part 771, will be required by FTA for grant approval.

Major Transportation Studies are conducted to address an issue or need, at the request of a community or as a result of prior planning completed by SRPEDD staff, such as the 100 Most Dangerous Crash Locations. Transportation studies address safety, congestion or other issues. Transit studies address ridership, fares and related issues. Major studies customarily involve comprehensive outreach efforts, including door-to-door contact, Constant Contact e-mail blasts and social media, as well as public meetings. All of these efforts disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion and comment, and also garner support or consider objections from the neighborhood and community. A second public meeting is often held to present the draft study. (Transit data analysis studies do not require initial public meetings.)

Public comments are incorporated into documents and presented to the SMMPO for acceptance. Substantive changes to the RTP or TIP, as a result of comments received, shall cause a revised document and additional comment period that follows the same procedure as the initial comment period. The SMMPO, at their discretion, may vote to abbreviate the standard 21-day comment period for the RTP, TIP and major amendments under what they consider to be extraordinary circumstances. For instance, a funding opportunity with a grant application deadline of fewer than 21 days (such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) would require a shortened public comment period. Federal legislation states that any modification to this Public Participation Plan requires a comment period of not less than 45 days.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION

ISTEA - 1991

The 1991 federal legislation known as the **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)** required States and MPOs to significantly expand opportunities for the public to become involved in the metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes. The Final Rule on Statewide Planning and Metropolitan Planning for ISTEA states: "The metropolitan transportation planning process shall include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs."

In addition, the Rule states that any modification to this public participation plan requires a comment period of not less than 45 days. A 21-day public comment period must be provided prior to the approval or revision of any plan. In addition, MPOs must seek out and consider the needs of those individuals and groups that have been traditionally underserved by transportation systems.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations must establish and periodically review and update public involvement processes. The process should assure early and continued public awareness of, and access to, the transportation decision-making process.

TEA-21 - 1998

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) enacted in 1998 reaffirms the requirement for public involvement opportunities and additionally requires that:

"before approving a long-range transportation plan [or the annual TIP], each metropolitan planning organization shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the long-range transportation plan [or the TIP]."

SAFETEA-LU – August 10, 2005

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. President Obama extended the funding for SAFETEA-LU through September 30, 2010 by signing the HIRE (Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment) Act on March 18, 2010. In March 2010 Congress extended the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) through the end of fiscal-year 2011, freezing funding at 2010 levels for transit and other programs through Sept. 30, 2011 and extended again to March 2012.

MAP-21 - July 6, 2012

MAP-21, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141), was signed into law by President Obama on July 6, 2012. Notable changes included a performance based planning process.

FAST Act – December 4, 2015

FAST Act, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (P.L. No. 114-94) was signed into law by President Obama on December 4, 2015. The SAFETEA-LU Act required the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to provide for consideration of projects and strategies that will serve to advance transportation planning factors. These factors were unchanged with the passage of MAP-21 but two factors were added with the FAST Act legislation, bringing the planning factors from eight to ten and are as follows:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;

3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate storm water impacts of surface transportation; and
10. Improve the transportation system to enhance travel and tourism.

GENERAL PROTOCOLS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The SMMPO's Public Participation Plan is designed with the ultimate goal of keeping the public informed and allowing every member of the public ample and varied opportunities to participate in the decision making process. This includes all on-going transportation related activities, including issues, projects, programs and services, on a continuous basis.

A first important step in public outreach is identifying the communities, populations or neighborhoods affected by the issue, project, program or service involved and then attempt to identify any Title VI and Environmental Justice components including minority, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or low-income populations in the study or service area. This will assist in developing a strategy to effectively reach all affected stakeholders.

These efforts include making all documents, publications and work products available electronically via SRPEDD's website, by making announcements for meetings and studies on its website, on SRPEDD's Facebook page and via Twitter, by the distribution of the SRPEDD newsletter and by utilizing

the list of over 500 e-mail contacts as needed, as well as other avenues of public outreach as the situation dictates.

SRPEDD also holds regular JTPG, as well as other public meetings concerning studies, projects, TIP amendments and other transportation and transit issues that provide opportunity for participation from any and all interested parties. Staff will be available to provide general and project specific information during normal business hours and after hours at the request of community interest groups with reasonable notice. Staff has been trained in the use of Language Line for callers who are Limited English Proficient and trained in taking calls from MassRelay, the service which makes calls from the hearing impaired possible through relay operators. The SRPEDD web site will be maintained in compliance with the ADA requirements for users with disabilities, as well as for users with Limited English Proficiency.

Public participation is an ongoing activity and an integral part of every planning effort, including one-time activities, such as intersection and corridor studies, and transit studies, and regularly repeated activities, such as the annual Transportation Improvement Program process and long range Regional Transportation Plan updates. A public outreach effort is initiated before the start of any new project to solicit feedback, garner support or consider objections. Any number of public participation techniques are utilized to disseminate information and to seek feedback from the public and can be adapted depending on the situation.

Each project, issue, program and service is unique and the same methods cannot necessarily be applied in the same way. It is best to choose methods for dissemination best suited for a particular issue, project, program or service and to use multiple and varied outreach methods and approaches to reach as many members of the public as possible. Some of these techniques include public meetings, open houses, media ads, mailings (both paper and electronic), press releases, the SRPEDD newsletter, flyers, brochures, surveys (both paper and electronic), informational posters, as well as the SRPEDD website and social media accounts.

If an issue, project, program or service is confined to a neighborhood, going door-to-door to inform residents and businesses is a personal and effective tool to inform and engage. It is also encouraged to ask partners and other related and / or concerned groups to post information on their websites, as well, to reach a wider audience. It is beneficial to attend local and community events, including neighborhood fairs, civic group meetings, faith based events, job fairs and business expos, to speak to participants and to distribute public outreach materials.

Additional techniques utilized include interviews and articles in local newspapers and magazines, and press releases, including news outlets serving minority, low-income and LEP populations, such as free

and foreign language publications. Informational and outreach brochures and flyers are regularly translated for distribution among LEP populations and regularly printed in larger font for distribution to Councils on Aging for older adults and persons requesting it. These techniques are used concurrently or individually as the situation dictates.

Traditional techniques are not always effective with low-income, minority, LEP and other traditionally underserved persons. As stated in our Language Access Plan (LAP), informational and educational materials, as well as surveys, are a valid means in which to make contact with, and engage with traditionally underserved populations, especially persons with Limited English Proficiency. This practice also informs, as well as invites participation with populations that are often intimidated by any type of bureaucracy and would not otherwise seek out this information.

Staff members should actively cultivate regular contacts with reporters and be available for newspaper and radio interviews on public projects. SRPEDD staff is available to speak at group meetings about any transportation issues upon request with reasonable notice. Staff will adapt public outreach toward specific audiences, such as distributing coloring books concerning bicycle safety designed by the staff at bicycle events for children. Staff has also reached out to the local Councils on Aging, distributing posters and large font brochures on pedestrian safety for older adults. Staff has also conducted presentations concerning pedestrian safety tips specifically adapted toward older adults at housing centers for seniors.

In addition, SRPEDD maintains and strives to continually add to a comprehensive mailing list that includes Environmental Justice contacts, such as social service agencies, community groups and liaisons and transportation providers. The current e-mail list contains over 500 contacts and can be sorted in any number of ways to reach those affected and interested. The e-mail service, Constant Contact, is often utilized as an effective and simple way to send a meeting notice or flyer to both targeted groups or to a wide audience.

PUBLIC MEETING PROTOCOLS

Public meetings and open houses are regularly held and used to disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion and also to solicit feedback, garner support or consider objections from the community. Meetings provide an opportunity for direct contact and direct and open dialogue.

Meeting Notices

Meeting notices and other printed meeting materials should be made as accessible as possible for all users. They should have large, sans serif font (a minimum of 14-point font but 16-point to 18-point font is preferred) and light and dark color contrasts for the best visibility. Off-white non-glossy paper is best for printed reading. Columns and centered text should be avoided.

Meeting notices should include a Notice of Nondiscrimination; availability of language services and an offer of reasonable accommodation with contact information; transit route information; the universal Accessibility Symbol (shown on the bottom left) to indicate that the location is accessible for all users; and a choice of contact information for the opportunity to comment or obtain more information if attendance at the meeting is not possible.



Allow ample time when sending out meeting notices to prepare and to arrange for any requested accommodations, if necessary. Sending a public notice out at least 2 weeks in advance of a meeting is a good rule since ten (10) business days is the accepted minimum time for reasonable notice of accommodation, such as translators, assistive listening devices, American Sign Language interpretation, etc. SRPEDD has Assistive Listening Devices available for the hearing impaired, as well as “I speak” cards and a tablet equipped with Google Translate to assist LEP persons during public meetings.

Every effort will be made to provide reasonable and timely requests for accommodations, including interpreters and materials in alternate formats. These efforts are taken to provide the greatest opportunity for participation by interested parties.

A QR reader for Smart phones can be used on meeting notices, posters and information cards, as well as a URL, for a direct link to websites, surveys and informational web pages.

Public meetings are posted on the SRPEDD website calendar and public meeting notices are mailed to relevant recipients, including our communities’ City and Town Clerks for posting. Meeting notices are sometimes posted in a community’s library, or in the regional bus terminals. Public meetings for TIP amendments and other changes, especially those that require a public comment period, are announced and advertised using a myriad of sources including public distribution and postings,

electronic mailings, posting on the SRPEDD website and social media accounts, as well as other techniques.

Meeting notices should be sent to additional and appropriate contacts, including neighborhood groups, organizations and individuals, ensuring that those representing Title VI populations are included. Consider mailing notices directly to residents and businesses in a project area or going door to door, when warranted and feasible, to distribute meeting notices and speak to those affected.

LEP Efforts

Meeting notices and other meeting materials, such as comment sheets and cards, surveys, display items, posters, maps and especially signage, should be translated into Portuguese, Spanish and Haitian Creole when the issue, program or project is located in or near an LEP area or upon request.

The SMMPO has developed a Language Access Plan (LAP) to help identify reasonable steps to provide language assistance for LEP persons seeking meaningful access to SMMPO programs, benefits, services and information as required by Executive Order 13166. These reasonable steps are based on the analysis of four factors. The first factor is the number or proportion of LEP persons meeting the U.S. DOT definition of LEP “Safe Harbor” thresholds (5% or 1,000 individuals, whichever is less) in the eligible service population or the SRPEDD / SMMPO region.

According to the 2010-2014 ACS data the total number of LEP persons in the SMMPO region is 43,495 which represents 7.40% of the region’s population. The LEP populations meeting this “Safe Harbor” threshold are Portuguese or Portuguese Creole at 25,214 (4.29%), Spanish or Spanish Creole at 10,138 (1.72 %) and French (Haitian) Creole at 1,625 (0.28%).

As well as other materials that are translated, public surveys are translated. The surveys are distributed throughout the study area via social media and notices that include links and QR readers that link to the survey. These are made available to all stakeholders and other interested parties prior to the meeting, during the meeting and after the meeting. This offers the opportunity to comment without the requirement of attending the meeting. These translated surveys are a useful tool to garner feedback, as well as to provide the opportunity to participate.

The practice of translating printed materials and offering ways to participate without direct contact is important in traditionally underserved populations. This practice informs, as well as invites participation with populations that are often intimidated by any type of bureaucracy and would not otherwise seek out this information.

Press releases and /or meeting notices should be sent to appropriate non-English media outlets when the project, program or service is located in or near an LEP area. In the SRPEDD region this includes O Jornal and the Portuguese Times.

Meeting Materials

All materials should be composed in a clear and simple manner, avoiding technical and industry jargon and acronyms to be easily understood by a wide number of varying backgrounds and educational levels. Consider creating a summary document of the issue, project, program or service to present highly technical and complex information simply and clearly.

Visualization techniques, such as posters, maps, photos, charts and graphs, as well as use of GIS systems, computer simulation and artist's renderings and physical models can be used. These techniques are used concurrently or individually as the situation dictates. Ensure that posters and other display materials are placed at a location and height (considering persons who use wheelchairs and others) that are visible and accessible to all. Ensure that electronic documents, such as meeting notices and other relevant materials are accessible.

Meeting Sites

If possible, choose a meeting site that is within or near the area where the relevant issue, project, program or service is located if applicable. Choose a site that is on or near public transportation and at a date and time that is convenient for the largest number of people. (e.g. after common work hours, during hours of transit service, typically 4 to 6 pm.)

Ensure that the meeting site is accessible for all users, including LEP persons, and persons with disabilities. A list of ADA accessible meeting locations on transit routes is maintained in-house and constantly updated. Use a checklist, such as the one found below to ensure that the meeting site is accessible for all users before the start of the meeting.

- Is there an accessible entrance, accessible parking and accessible rest rooms?
- Is there clear and directional signage for these accommodations, as well as for rest rooms, emergency exits, etc.?
- Are entrances, travel paths and aisles at least 3-feet wide and clear of obstacles?
- Is there seating available for any attendees who have requested an accommodation?
- Are there assistive listening devices available? (SRPEDD has these available for meetings.)
- Is there an interpreter available for any attendees who have requested one?
- Have your meeting materials been translated to reflect the LEP population or users affected?

It might be difficult to find a meeting site in the desired area or neighborhood that is on a transit route and fully accessible and that may indicate having to forego fulfilling all of the items on the checklist. However, making a location as accessible as possible may be accomplished by physically moving tables, chairs and other obstacles or by printing signs to post at the location. Public libraries are always a good place to start when locating an acceptable meeting site.

Before the start of the meeting, allow ample time to complete necessary tasks. These include: posting signage; rearranging tables and chairs to clear travel paths; setting up assistive listening devices; have “I Speak” cards available; set out sign-in sheets, comment sheets and other relevant handouts and meeting materials; post the Title VI / Nondiscrimination Notice in a prominent location; and place all posters, maps and other display items at heights and locations that are visible and accessible to all attendees, including persons using wheelchairs.

Any conversations held and comments received during the meeting should be transcribed by staff following the meeting. Comments cards containing contact information should be distributed prior to the meeting and supplied during the meeting for the opportunity for later comment, especially for those unable or unwilling to attend a formal meeting.

Additional Opportunities for Public Engagement and Comments

Comments on issues, studies, projects, programs, services, TIP amendments or any transportation or transit issues may be received anytime by phone, fax, mail, email, as well as verbally or in writing at public meetings and on SRPEDD’s social media outlets. There are several bilingual staff members on the SRPEDD staff and interpreters or reasonable accommodations are made available for meetings upon request. For a meeting being held in a neighborhood identified as containing an LEP population, a bilingual staff member should be present regardless of a formal or prior request for an interpreter. ‘I Speak’ cards are available at meetings, as well as a tablet equipped with Google Translate as needed. The SRPEDD website offers Google Translate and there are also multi-lingual announcements on the website, as well as full documents available in Portuguese, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, in addition to English, on the website.

The SRPEDD website and Social and Public Media

The SRPEDD website is ADA compliant, offers Google Translate and includes a static link at the bottom of each page directly connecting to the page containing all Title VI related information and documents, including translated versions. Draft documents are posted on the SRPEDD website during the public comment period. The final document is posted there following endorsement. All vital



documents, including the Notice of Nondiscrimination Rights and the Title VI Complaint Process and Complaint Forms are posted on the website in three Safe Harbor languages, in addition to English. The start of all comment periods are posted on the website, along with an invitation for comments and questions with any relevant draft documents. The website’s vast resource library includes all final documents. The website also features an up-to-date meeting calendar. SRPEDD maintains a Facebook page, a presence on Twitter and a YouTube page including videos on the Regional Transportation Plan and on how to safely navigate a roundabout, to name just two.

Comments may be offered by e-mail (lcabral@srpedd.org), phone (508 824-1367) fax (508 823-1803) or on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SRPEDD), as well as in person at our offices located at 88 Broadway, Taunton, MA 02780.

For further information please visit our website at www.srpedd.org. Also on our website are details about SRPEDD, current projects, the planning services we provide, as well as an extensive resource library.