

Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO)
Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 1:00 PM
Draft Meeting Minutes

Held Remotely via Zoom due to the Covid-19 State of Emergency in Massachusetts

The following were in attendance:

David Mohler	Representing Stephanie Pollack, Secretary and CEO, MassDOT Chair
Pamela Haznar	Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Alan Slavin	Chairman of the SRPEDD Commission and the Town of Wareham
Shayne Trimbell	Representing Eric Rousseau, Administrator, SRTA
Mark Sousa	Administrator, GATRA
Jamie Ponte	Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford
Shawn McDonald	Town of Dartmouth
Julie Boyce	Town of North Attleboro
Holly McNamara	Town of Somerset

The following were also present:

Jeffrey Walker, SRPEDD
Paul Mission, SRPEDD
Lisa Estrela-Pedro, SRPEDD
Jackie Jones, SRPEDD
Jennifer Chaves, SRPEDD
Lizeth Gonzalez, SRPEDD
Mary Ellen DeFrias, MassDevelopment
Ben Muller, MassDOT
Elizabeth Williams, MassDOT
Barbara Lachance, MassDOT
Bob Campbell, MBTA
Jennifer Tabakin, MBTA
Kim Dobosz, MBTA
Lee Azinheira, Town of Attleboro
Jean Fox, MBTA
Mike Fitzgerald, MBTA
Joe Piemonte, MBTA

Handouts:

FFY2020 UPWP Proposed Amendments
SMMPO Meeting Draft Minutes June 16, 2020

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman Mohler welcomed attendees to the SMMPO meeting. Ms. Lisa Estrela-Pedro called the roll:

MassDOT Chair	Yes
MassDOT Administrator	Yes
City of New Bedford	Yes
Town of North Attleboro	Yes
Town of Dartmouth	Yes
Town of Somerset	Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair	Yes
SRTA	Yes
GATRA	Yes

2. Public Comments - Opportunity for the public to address the SMMPO

Chairman Mohler invited members of the public to make any comments. None were presented.

3. Approval of Minutes – June 16, 2020 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote needed)

Chairman Mohler requested a motion to approve the minutes from the SMMPO meeting from June 16, 2020. The motion was made and seconded. Ms. Lisa Estrela-Pedro called the roll:

MassDOT Chair	Yes
MassDOT Administrator	Yes
City of New Bedford	Yes
Town of North Attleborough	Yes
Town of Dartmouth	Abstain
Town of Somerset	Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair	Yes
SRTA	Yes
GATRA	Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

4. SMMPO Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) Report – Opportunity for RTAs to address the SMMPO

Mark Sousa explained that GATRA continues to offer a part of their normal full service. There has been one positive test, though it was unrelated to GATRA activities. Staff will begin working staggered schedules, reconfiguring the physical office space. Ridership has started to increase and GATRA continues to sanitize buses to maintain safety.

Mr. Shayne Trimbell explained that SRTA has returned to a full schedule since August 24, 2020. School in Fall River will reopen on Thursday, and SRTA provides critical service to Durfee High School. SRTA will be hosting a virtual public meeting on Thursday September 17, 2020 to discuss changes made to the full-service schedule. These changes are meant to be temporary, but will reassess with public input. Ridership is at about 45-50% of annual ridership, which shows signs

of recovery but nowhere near the expected. SRTA has been fortunate that no staff have been affected by the virus and vehicles continue to be sanitized daily.

5. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Paul Mission took the time to introduce two new SRPEDD Commissioners, Julie Boyce from North Attleboro and Shawn McDonald, from Dartmouth. Mr. Mission opened up the floor to the new members.

Ms. Julie Boyce thanked the group for welcoming her.

Mr. Shawn McDonald explained this is his fourth term on the town council. He looks forward to participating in the SMMPO.

a. Discussion of FFY 2020 UPWP

Mr. Mission provided an update to the FY2020 UPWP. The pandemic forced a pause in certain activities, but opened the door to other opportunities. SRPEDD suspended all traffic counting activities, due to the potential for inaccurate data results. The traffic counting crew focused on the return to work volumes in specific areas over the course of the summer. This work will continue in the fall.

SRPEDD also continues pavement management activities. In addition, SRPEDD staff have started a new effort to map existing paths and trails in the region. It will contribute to a statewide database. Staff are also exploring a freight action plan, focusing on what improvements are necessary to support this activity. Pre-timed signal evaluations continue making progress. Staff collected information last fall and we were able to analyze the data over the summer. Looking at three pre-timed signal locations in Fall River and New Bedford that are prone to or contribute to poor air quality due to established signal times. The technical memorandums are in draft form and we will discuss with the respective cities to proceed with recommendations.

SRPEDD is also working on RTP Public Outreach. The RTP is updated every four years, but we have decided to start our outreach efforts well before the update is drafted. This gives us an opportunity to provide more information to communities, the SMMPO, JTPG and other partners.

All this work will continue into the new work program, including the development of the Top 100 Crash List. The list will consider high-crash locations in the region, working in conjunction with the statewide top 100 list. We also continue working on the traffic signal prioritization, which was delayed due to bus service disruptions. With some return to normalcy, we will return to these efforts and recommend solutions that improve on-time performance, physical improvements, and other strategies.

This current work program also considers flood hazard mitigation, in conjunction with other programs such as municipal vulnerability preparedness program. Altogether, this summarizes the FFY20 work program. Mr. Mission welcomed any questions, of which there were none.

b. Amendment for FFY2021 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote to release for 21-day public comment)

Mr. Mission discussed the FY2021 UPWP, which runs October 2020 to September 30, 2021. Much of what was already discussed will continue, with the ultimate goal of fixing and improving infrastructure. There is one amendment to add a study under the management system tasks to address a request from Somerset. The town requested an access management study along the Route 103 corridor, which is on the southern end of the town. SRPEDD received this request in the summer, which arose from haphazard curb cuts, wide open cuts, parking in close proximity to the edge of the road. The town is also slated for additional development. They would like to improve access management along the corridor to address safety and congestion issues. The study is within the Brayton Point area, which is an up and coming industrial area.

The study design identifies the study area as the 103 corridor from the interchange of 195 to Brayton Point Road. We are currently considering the public participation process. Previous studies in the area may assist in creating a fair assessment of pre-COVID data. We will also be counting on collecting additional data in the community. SRPEDD will conduct a traffic analysis, current and future forecasting for 10 to 20-year timeframe. The study will consider driveway layouts and how these impact current and future conditions. The study will develop improvement alternatives, which will then be shared with area residents and town leadership. Completion of this will enable the completion of the final report, which would be endorsed by this body and put on file with MassDOT. We are estimating a budget of about \$50,000.

Mr. Mission requested that this amendment be released for a 21-day public comment period.

Chairman Muller mentioned that the SMMPO may not be able to approve this because the federal government has not approved the FFY21 UPWP. The SMMPO can take questions at the moment, and table the vote until next month.

Ms. Holly McNamara thanked Mr. Mission for highlighting this project. It is an important corridor for Somerset and they are excited to see it move forward.

6. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Updates

Ms. Pamela Haznar provided updates to regional target projects.

2020

Taunton Interchange

Advertised and BID opening expected in October. This is a major regional project consisting of 3 bridges. This includes 2 rail bridges and the 140 bridge.

2021

New Bedford - Intersection Improvements at Allen and Rockdale

75%

This project is above the current TFPC. The estimated cost is over the TIP estimates. In 2021, we will consider cost saving measures.

Raynham - Resurfacing at Route 138	100% This project is above the current TFPCC. The estimated cost is over the TIP estimates. In 2021, we will consider cost saving measures.
Seekonk – Route 44	This is on the NHS program, statewide funded, resurfacing project.
Rehoboth – Bridge Project, Reed Street and Palmer River	100%
Fall River – Bridge Project, Weaver Street over Mass Coastal Railroad	75%
Acushnet – Hamlin Street over Acushnet River	75% with a virtual design public hearing in July. MassDOT expects the 100% soon.
Marion – Bridge Project, Marion Route 6 over Weweantic River	75% is expected in the Winter.

2022

New Bedford – Acushnet Ave at Peckham Road	MassDOT has been working with City on preferred alignment for turning lanes and bike and pedestrian accommodations. Still pre-25%
Rehoboth – Roundabout at Route 118	75%
Taunton – Route 44 Dean Street to Arlington	25%, MassDOT expects 75% next month
Attleboro – Route 1 and Route 1A	75% with a complete design
Swansea – Route 6 at Garners Neck Road	Recent virtual public hearing, statewide funded.
Norton/Mansfield – Rail trail	MassDOT expects 75% over the winter

2023

Dartmouth – Corridor Improvements Dartmouth and Prospect Street	25% MassDOT looked at intersection by St. Mary Church
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New Bedford- Corridor Improvements at County Street	25%
Dartmouth - Realignment at Tucker and Hathaway Road	MassDOT considering other alternatives with the town. There are some right of way challenges, significant right of way to realign Tucker Road. VHB has been asked to revisit and see other, less impactful alternatives.
Plainville – Route 1 at George Street	Meeting with the Board of Selectmen, MassDOT and Designer. We are in agreement to move forward with a preferred alternative.
2024	
Mansfield – Chauncy Street	Going back and forth with town and designer to fine tune plans.
Wareham – Narrows Road	The entire project will be a shared use path, which is a major improvement. Currently at 25% though some revisions needed.
Wareham – Route 6 at Swift’s Beach Road	Pre-25% the project is being started in house
Taunton – Route 138 Corridor Improvements	Pre-25%

Ms. Julie Boyce asked whether Route 1 in North Attleboro, 1A and Elmwood would be on the list at all? Ms. Haznar responded, saying that this project is not on the list because it is not currently an official project. She mentioned she would be happy to discuss a potential project, given the complexity of the intersection. Ms. Haznar invited Ms. Boyce to reach out to her directly or SRPEDD staff.

7. Update on the Southcoast Rail Project

Ms. Jennifer Tabakin thanked everyone for their patience and pulled up the presentation for all to see. She went on to discuss that Southcoast Rail is being built in phases, currently focused on Phase 1 construction. The current line goes as far as Middleboro, where phase 1 will bring the line to East Taunton, and have one line to New Bedford and Fall River. The team was focused on bringing Phase 1 to construction in the past year.

This past August, FMCB the second package was approved for funding, including Middleboro and New Bedford main line. Prior to that, the first major construction package, including Fall River secondary, was issued notice to proceed. Southcoast Rail is underway with three contract packages on schedule for Summer and Fall completion. This includes 46 Culvert contract, 4 bridges, and 9 structures demolition, track material procurement. In the design phase, Southcoast Rail is focusing on traffic mitigation work. We are at 30% Design for the New Bedford pedestrian bridge. Ms. Tabakin discussed the new consultants, and the team which is based in

Bridgewater, including Bob Campbell, Kim Debois, and Mike Fitzgerald as well as Jean Fox. We have a program manager, CM firm AECOM and the Design Team led by VHB and NTB. Start of service is expected in 2023, there is some overlap in the timeline with interfaced milestones. Further, she discussed the awarded contracts for each station and showed the four station renderings.

The station in Taunton is not part of the fully funded portion. Southcoast Rail is getting to the point where design is almost complete, which is funded, and then funding for construction will be pursued. Southcoast Rail service is expected to provide 3 peak morning and evening trains, at 90 minutes each way. For the Middleboro, Taunton routes, 6 morning and evening trains, at 90 minutes each way.

Mr. Mission requested that a copy of the slides be provided to the SMMPO and SRPEDD staff. Ms. Tabakin offered to provide these and continue to share and coordinate with the SMMPO and its partners.

Mr. Alan Slavin asked about the Cape Cod Flyer and whether this would be integrated into Phase 1. Ms. Tabakin mentioned that the Cape Cod Flyer is not included in the scope of the project, but there is an opportunity there. The design does not preclude a future connection. A study is expected to explore the Cape Cod service and Buzzard's Bay option. Ms. Jean Fox mentioned that they did do preliminary research of Cape Cod ridership. Mr. Benjamin Muller updated the SMMPO on the scope of work of the study, which focuses on Buzzard's Bay. The Cape Cod Commission is leading the public outreach. They will reach out to Wareham and Middleboro to sit on the stakeholder committee sometime this fall.

8. MassDOT Performance Measures 2022

Mr. Ben Muller began the presentation by stating that a few years ago MassDOT set 2- and 4-year performance measures for the Boston urbanized area. These targets are required due to the existence of several non-attainment areas. Today, MassDOT is able to revisit their targets and determine whether we are on track to meet them. MassDOT identified two that require assessment: single occupancy vehicles (SOV) and emissions reduction.

The graphic shows the targets and real, new data. Non-SOV data has increased more than MassDOT had expected. In light of this, MassDOT has set a new target of 35.8% non-SOV for the Boston urbanized area. The data show an increase in public transit ridership and other behaviors contribute to the target.

Emissions reductions target considers the emissions caused by CMAQ funded projects in the non-attainment areas of the commonwealth. There are no non-attainment areas in the southeast region. MassDOT is taking feedback and input to provide final data and targets to our federal partners.

Mr. Mission asked for clarification regarding whether the SMMPO would need to vote on this measure. Mr. Muller stated that this was not required because it is Boston-UZA-wide.

9. Mobility Dashboard

Ms. Elizabeth Williams from MassDOT joined the SMMPO to discuss the Mobility Dashboard. Prior to and during COVID, MassDOT received requests for common data. With that in mind, MassDOT decided to create this dashboard to centralize our data and lift the curtain on this process.

There are currently 14 indicators that show how people are traveling, what mode they are using, and where they are going. Generally, the site is updated just about weekly. The dashboard shows some COVID data so users can contextualize data. The data show the different trends going on across the state and overtime. The dashboard pulls in data from a variety of databases that together provide valuable insights regarding vehicle travel, ridership and mode. Currently, the dashboard only shows subway data, but the team will receive bus data very shortly.

Ms. Williams highlighted other dashboards that users might be interested. The data is largely available for download, but Ms. Williams invited users to reach out directly for any questions. They hope the dashboard will be hosted for the long term.

Mr. Mission asked about data-sharing given SRPEDD's recent acquisition of bicycle counters. Ms. Williams shared that they have 4 counters on trails, and they would love to have an opportunity to share data. Mr. Trimbell shared that RTA ridership data is updated quarterly, but it is broken down monthly.

10. Other Business

Mr. Mission reminded attendees of the MBTA and City of New Bedford listening session to discuss the Southcoast Rail Project. The meeting will take place Tuesday September 22, 2020 from 6pm-7:30PM. Additionally, SRTA will host a public hearing this Thursday at 5PM.

11. Adjourn

The next SMMPO meeting will take place Tuesday, October 20, 2020 at 1PM. The meeting is expected to take place virtually unless otherwise noted.

Chairman Mohler adjourned the meeting at 2:20PM.