

DRAFT Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting Held on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 1:00 PM - Held Remotely via Zoom due to the Covid-19 State of Emergency in Massachusetts

The following members were in attendance:

David Mohler-----Representing Jamey Tesler, Acting MassDOT Secretary and CEO, Chair
Pamela Haznar-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
William Kenney-----Representing Paul Coogan, Mayor of Fall River
Manuel Silva-----Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford
Bill Roth-----Representing Shaunna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton
Julie Boyce-----Town of North Attleborough
Leilani Dalpe-----Town of Middleborough
Alan Slavin-----SRPEDD Commission Chair
Stacy Forte-----GATRA

The following were also present:

Cassie Ostrander-----FHWA
Ben Muller-----MassDOT
Bryan Pounds-----MassDOT
Michelle Ho-----MassDOT
Lee Azinheira-----JTPG Chair
MaryEllen DeFrias-----MassDevelopment
Paul Mission-----SRPEDD
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Lilia Cabral-Bernard-----SRPEDD
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD
Julianne Griffiths-----SRPEDD
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda April 20, 2021
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes March 16, 2021
FFY2021-2025 Proposed TIP Amendment #4
FFY2021-2025 Proposed TIP Amendments #5

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chairman Mohler opened the SMMPO meeting at 1:03 pm. Ms. Lilia Cabral-Bernard announced she would read through the entire roll for attendance and asked all MPO members and designees to please unmute themselves. She then called the complete roll of MPO members, with the following being present at the time of the roll call.

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- Town of North Attleborough-----Yes
- Town of Middleborough-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes

2. Approval of Minutes –March 16, 2021 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote needed)

Chairman Mohler requested a motion to approve the minutes from the SMMPO meeting from March 16, 2021. The motion was made by Bill Roth of Taunton and seconded by Leilani Dalpe of Middleborough. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Abstain
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- Town of North Attleborough-----Abstain
- Town of Middleborough-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS.

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

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

4. Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) Report - RTA Updates-

There was no one present from SRTA and GATRA had nothing to report.

5. **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - FFY2022 Development Discussion-**

Mr. Paul Mission began the discussion by explaining that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is an outline of tasks over the course of the federal fiscal year, which runs from October 1, 2021 to September of next year. It's a continued effort to develop the work program, as well as develop the TIP and also have a mechanism to support regional transportation planning activities and discussions. This also includes activities such as public engagement support, EJ and Title VI efforts, as well as the 3C planning process. It also includes the data collection efforts for the traffic count program, pavement management program as well as community technical assistance.

Major studies that staff is considering includes part two of a Route 6 study in Dartmouth and Westport. This is an effort that was brought to our attention due to safety concerns from the town of Westport, and in conjunction with the Mass DOT District 5 office, staff will work on an effort to study long-term improvements for that corridor. Another study has been proposed by the city of Taunton for an evaluation of safety and congestion issues on the Route 140 corridor from the Route 24 at Route 140 Interchange north to the center of the city.

Staff will continue the update of the trails mapping effort and there will be an update to our Regional Bicycle Plan. This will help for planning efforts with the development of alternative modes of transportation, and with the development of the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan. Staff is also considering an update of the bus stop inventory.

Another effort will be a SRPEDD office-wide effort for the entire region, which is the Regional Resiliency Plan. Multiple departments will work to form a multi-year plan to assess the impacts from climate change and begin efforts to develop projects, as well as policies, to help communities become more resilient with severe weather events or natural disaster events and climate change.

The UPWP will be formally presented next month to the SMMPO, with a request to vote to release it for a 21-day comment period, and a follow up endorsement in the month of June.

6. **FFY2021-2025 TIP Proposed Amendments -**

- a. Discussion on proposed FFY 2021 Highway Amendment #4 (**Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote needed to approve**)
- b. Discussion on proposed FFY 2021 Highway Amendment #5 (**Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote needed to release to 21-day comment period**)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro presented proposed amendment #4 concerning a decrease in funding to project 608597 Attleboro stormwater improvements along Interstate 95, from approximately

\$3.4 million to approximately \$1.2 million. This amendment was presented at the last SMMPO meeting on March 16 and released to a 21-day comment period. There was a public meeting held on April 8, no comments were received at that meeting or otherwise, and she asked that this body approve the amendment.

Chairman Mohler requested a motion to approve the amendment as presented. The motion was made by Alan Slavin, the SRPEDD Commission Chair, and seconded by Leilani Dalpe of Middleborough. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- Town of North Attleborough-----Yes
- Town of Middleborough-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Ms. Estrela-Pedro presented the proposed amendment # 5 in FFY 2021 of the 2021-25 TIP concerning a cost increase for project 608267 in Raynham, resurfacing and related work on Route 138. The increase is from approximately \$18 million to \$22.3 million. The cost difference will be split between target funds at approximately \$3.9 million and statewide funds at \$343,489 thousand. We are asking this body to release this amendment to a minimum 21-day comment period.

Chairman Mohler requested a motion to release the amendment to a 21-day comment period. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Leilani Dalpe of Middleborough. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- Town of North Attleborough-----Yes
- Town of Middleborough-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

7. DRAFT FFY2022-2026 TIP Presentation (Link - TIP 2022-2026 and Roll Call Vote needed to release to 21-day comment period)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro presented the draft FFY2022-26 TIP by informing the group that it had been uploaded to SRPEDD's website for their reading pleasure, and that it had also been discussed at the April 14 Joint Transportation Planning Group meeting last week. Besides project updates that were reported from the district, there were no other significant comments. She stated that she would quickly highlight some of the new things that are included in this year's TIP.

The first item is Table 10, which is found in the draft document entitled Regional Target Projects Relationships and this table highlights the connections between each project to the long-range transportation plan, regional or state modal plans, corridor studies, if staff has ever performed any type of technical assistance, as well as documenting a road safety audits.

The table also displays each project's relationship to performance measures and our regional goals. Of the current 14 projects programmed with target funds in FFY 2022-26, four have been identified as a combination congestion and high crash corridor and four have been identified solely as high crash locations. Two projects have been identified as having a high occurrence of bicycle and/or pedestrian crashes and one was solely a congested corridor. In addition, one project was developed as a result of a single warrants analysis, and the outlier is a system preservation project.

Staff was also asked by MassDOT to expand on transit projects, so staff did reach out to both transit authorities and there is a detailed explanation of major transit projects and programs over FFY 2022 -26 in the TIP.

As part of our Title VI and Environmental Justice Equity Analysis, we looked at social equity this year, as well as geographic equity and determined the anticipated benefits and positive impacts, as well as disproportionate burdens and adverse effects. Table 11 displays all that information for projects that are programmed in FFY2022-26 and Table 13 displays that information for the look back years of the TIP.

As for highway project programming, we are moving forward with Scenario #3, which was approved at the last SMMPO meeting. This saw the Lakeville Route 79 project in FFY 2025 and shifted the Dartmouth-Dartmouth at Prospect Street to the supplemental project list. The following slides display projects in the years 2022 to 2026, both regional projects and statewide. Ms. Estrela-Pedro reminded the group that these were reviewed at the last meeting, but she would go over them individually again, or she could display the slides for the group, pausing on each one and if anyone has any questions, they could be addressed at that time. The

Chairman indicated that another review was not necessary so the group was allowed ample time to view each slide.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro then continued presenting the transit portion of the TIP. GATRA is programming approximately \$50.4 million over FFY 2022-26 on all the items that are listed. For SRTA, programming is approximately \$117 million on all of the items listed. These individual items can be found in the attachments within the TIP document.

She then asked the members to release the Draft FFY2022-26 TIP to a minimum 21-day comment period.

Chairman Mohler requested a motion to release the Draft FFY2022-26 TIP to a minimum 21-day comment period. The motion was made by Leilani Dalpe of Middleborough and seconded by Julie Boyce of North Attleborough. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of North Attleborough-----Yes
Town of Middleborough-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

8. Federal Certification Discussion-

Paul Mission explained to the group that in January, staff had a week-long federal certification review, with Federal Highway, Federal Transit, and MassDOT. This review takes place every four years, usually a year after the development of a Regional Transportation Plan, and determines that the MPOs nationwide, as well as this particular MPO, is following the rules and regulations and guidance established within the Transportation Planning Act and use of federal funds. Staff received a draft report which we submitted comments on, and a final report was released this month with some of the recommendations and a corrective action that will be needed to be made in order to maintain certification.

Overall the executive summary states that it found that the SMMPO is conducting its planning requirements and is conditionally certifying the transportation planning process subject to

addressing the corrective actions. There were also some recommendations, as well as areas where the SMMPO is performing very well, and are to be commended.

The corrective action concerns adjusting our memorandum of understanding to ensure compliance and addressing responsibilities for development of financial plans, support of the Regional Transportation Plan, as well as the Transportation Improvement Program and an annual listing of obligated projects. This is required as part of the federal funding and federal legislation. The MPO should also ensure that all signatures required for the execution of the MOU are included in accordance with any relevant provisions within the MOU. With the last updated MOU, staff allowed the quorum that was present for the meeting to sign the document, but that did not include the signatures of every member. That needs to be corrected no later than December 31.

It was also recommended that the MPO review the existing bylaws to ensure that they're all consistent with current practices and include any process necessary for effective management of MPO business. The organizational structure should also include language regarding Select Person eligibility on the MPO, and is not limited to Bristol and Plymouth counties because the MPO has one community that is located in Norfolk County.

The public outreach and involvement and the Public Participation Plan should consider developing measures of effectiveness to formally evaluate outreach efforts and informed decisions. With civil rights, including Title VI, Environmental Justice, Limited English Proficiency and Americans with Disabilities Act, the MPO should consider tracking the data associated with curb ramps within their jurisdiction. This is something that staff is considering for inclusion with our bus stop inventory, as well as our bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts.

The Regional Transportation Plan should coordinate with regional partners and seek input to identify priority goals and focus areas for the region. These regional values and priorities should guide the strategies and investments that ultimately results from the RTP. Financial planning needs is another recommendation where the MPO should enhance its analysis of long-term funding needs, and identify how available funding will affect the regional goals of the transportation system.

There's also recommendation for a list of obligated projects, and that the MPO should work with the transit partners to ensure that they have the necessary information to accurately report on the obligations that have occurred during the appropriate reporting year. This is actually required as part of the legislation. The Unified Planning Work Program should develop clear criteria to present to the town and city governments in the region and prioritize future UPWP activities and studies.

There's also a recommendation on performance-based planning and programming that should include the Transit Asset Management Plans for baseline data in the RTP system performance report, so future updates can be tracked for progress over time.

It is also recommended to pursue an as-built evaluation, especially under the congestion management to determine if the measures did improve air quality for that particular project, and also consult with other regional and statewide partners to explore options for developing evaluation, which includes strategies and regional prioritization projects within the TIP. The congestion management process also needs to include a list of congested areas that are prioritized based on the severity, and rank them within the study for the UPWP.

Staff did receive two commendations, in particular, our public outreach and involvement. Staff was commended for embracing different web-based platforms and visualization tools to present information to the public and gather input in creative and interactive ways, This has particularly served us well in the past year given the gathering restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were also commended in our civil rights efforts and how the SMMPO demonstrated a great understanding and willingness to connect with communities, particularly in low-income and/or households that do not own a vehicle, and how they connect to the vital areas such as hospitals and supermarkets.

The next step with this certification process is to pursue the corrective action on or before December 31 and also pursue recommendations moving forward towards the future updates of the MOU and the UPWP and the TIP. We will be pursuing these recommendations as we develop our Regional Transportation Plan scheduled for year 2024.

9. Other Business

Mr. Mission informed the group that Julie Boyce, our SMMPO member from North Attleborough did not get reelected to her position on Town Council, and therefore will not be eligible to serve on the MPO board after June 30. He told Ms. Boyce that her time and effort was truly appreciated especially attending meetings and helping with the transportation planning process in the region. The Chairman called for a round of applause and the group expressed their thanks and applauded Ms. Boyce.

He then informed the group that Somerset MPO member Holly McNamara resigned from her position on the Somerset Board of selectmen last week, and therefore is not eligible to serve on the MPO effective immediately. The MPO election for the board of selectmen members will begin on May 1, where staff will be sending out the self-nomination forms to all the boards of selectmen for consideration to be an eligible member on the MPO board. The SRPEDD commission will hear from nominated and then we'll proceed to elect three members. The current terms for MPO members expires on August 1 of this year.

He then reminded the group that when staff sends out calendar invitations to the MPO meeting, they respectfully request that all members please RSVP on those calendar invites. That way, staff can ensure that we have a quorum prior to the meeting.

MassDOT is hosting their innovation virtual conference on May 25th through the 27th and anyone can register through Baystate Roads program or the MassDOT website. Typically, this has been a two-day conference that took place up in Worcester at the DCU center, but because of COVID restrictions, it will be held virtually over the course of three days.

Chairman Mohler updated members that Congress is beginning the markup of the next authorization of the transportation bill, and as part of that markup, the House, although not the Senate yet, has agreed to again allow earmarks for specific transportation projects in the bill. Each Congressperson has been given some level of money to earmark, somewhere between 15 and \$20 million. As part of that process, if the project is not on the TIP, they need to get a letter that specifies that the project can be placed on the TIP within a reasonable period of time and that letter will come from the MassDOT as the chair. MassDOT will determine whether it can be on the TIP by assessing whether it's ready to be on the TIP. In other words, can it be delivered in the next four years, and also whether the earmark plus whatever the non-matching funds, is sufficient to fund the project. MassDOT is not making any commitment of MPO funds, and they're not making any commitment that the MPO would place a project on the TIP, they're just saying it could make it onto the TIP if, number one, it could it be ready, and number two, can it be fully funded with the earmark and the non-federal match. The Chairman informed the group that for details they should ask their Congressperson and the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee has a booklet available on their website that explains the details.

10. Date and Time for Next Meeting

Mr. Mission announced the next meeting on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 1:00PM via Zoom.

11. Adjourn

The Chairman asked for the meeting to be adjourned. Alan Slavin, the SRPEDD Commission Chair, made the motion and Pamela Haznar, representing the Mass Highway Division Administrator, seconded it. Without objection, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 1:43 PM.