

DRAFT Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting Held on Tuesday, May 19, 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:

Steve Woelfel-----Representing Jamey Tesler, Acting MassDOT Secretary and CEO, Chair
Pamela Haznar-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Jamie Ponte-----Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford
Bill Roth-----Representing Shaunna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton
Shawn McDonald-----Town of Dartmouth
Alan Slavin-----SRPEDD Commission Chair
Stacy Forte-----GATRA

The following were also present:

Chris Timmel-----FHWA
Ben Muller-----MassDOT
Bryan Pounds-----MassDOT
Michelle Ho-----MassDOT
Barbara Lachance-----MassDOT
Lorne Lawless-----Town of Somerset
Michael Lorenc-----Town of Mattapoisett
MaryEllen DeFrias-----MassDevelopment
Paul Mission-----SRPEDD
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Lilia Cabral-Bernard-----SRPEDD
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda May 18, 2021
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes April 20, 2021
FFY2021-2025 Proposed TIP Amendments #5

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chairman Woelfel 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 New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of Dartmouth-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

2. Approval of Minutes – April 20, 2021 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote needed)

Chairman Woelfel requested a motion to approve the minutes from the SMMPO meeting from April 20, 2021. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Pamela Haznar. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of Dartmouth-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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

Chairman Woelfel invited members of the public to make any comments. There were no comments presented, but Mr. Mission took the opportunity to introduce Lorne Lawless, the Selectman from Somerset who has been appointed by the Somerset Board of Selectmen to fill the vacancy that was left by the resignation of Holly McNamara, and the remainder of her term as soon as it is voted upon by the SRPEDD commission, which will take place next week at their monthly meeting.

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

There was no one from SRTA present but Stacy Forte of GATRA informed the group that they are looking to bring all of their routes back to full service on June 1 with a few small tweaks in Wareham, and a public meeting on May 27 on Zoom. They are also working on a project to update all of their routes and schedules over the summer and institute a new AVL system.

Mr. Alan Slavin asked what the tweaks were and Ms. Forte responded that they are ending Link 2 permanently at the end of Academy Drive.

5. FFY2021-2025 TIP Proposed Amendments -

a. Discussion on proposed FFY 2021 Highway Amendment #5 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote needed to approve)

Ms. Lisa Estrela-Pedro presented the group with Proposed Amendment #5 to FFY2021 of the FFY2021-2025 TIP for a cost increase for Project 608267 in Raynham-Resurfacing and related work on Route 138, that was released to a minimum 21-day comment period at the last SMMPO meeting on April 20th, 2021. Target Funds rose from \$11.6 million to \$15.6 million, an increase of \$3.9 million. Statewide funds from nearly \$2.3 million to \$2.6 million, an increase of \$343,489, with a total cost increase from \$18 million to \$22.3 million, a total increase of \$4,279,549. A public meeting was held on May 4th, no comments were received at the meeting or otherwise. Ms. Estrela-Pedro then asked the body to approve the amendment.

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve. Alan Slavin made the motion and Bill Roth seconded it.

The Chairman asked if there were any questions and Shawn McDonald of Dartmouth asked why the cost increase. Ms. Estrela-Pedro deferred to Pamela Haznar, representing the MassDOT Administrator. Ms. Haznar responded that they are seeing prices escalate quite significantly, as well as full depth construction and drainage improvements.

The Chairman then asked for a roll call and Ms. Cabral-Bernard called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of Dartmouth-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

6. DRAFT FFY2022-2026 TIP (Link - TIP 2022-2026)

a. Self-Certification of MPO 3C Process (Discussion and Roll Call Vote needed to approve)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro asked the body to certify that the SMMPO’s Comprehensive, Continuing, Cooperative (3C) Transportation Planning Process for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 will address major issues facing the region and will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of US Code as identified in the document and as shown onscreen. She explained that by voting yes, each member authorizes Acting Secretary and CEO of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Jamey Tesler to sign on their behalf. She then asked for a vote to approve. The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the self-certification of the MPO 3C process. Shawn McDonald of Dartmouth made the motion and Alan Slavin, the SRPEDD Commission Chair, seconded it. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of Dartmouth-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

b. Self-Certification of Compliance for the Global Warming Solutions Act (Discussion and Roll Call Vote needed to approve)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro asked the body to certify that the FFY2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program for the SMMPO is in compliance with all applicable requirements in the State Regulation 310 CMR 60.05: Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for the Transportation Sector and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation as identified in the document and as shown on the screen. By voting yes, each member authorizes Acting Secretary and CEO of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Jamey Tesler, to sign on their behalf.

The Chairman asked for a motion to approve the self-certification for the Global Warming Solutions Act. Alan Slavin, the SRPEDD Commission Chair, made the motion and Shawn McDonald of Dartmouth seconded it. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes

MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of Dartmouth-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

c. Endorsement of Draft FFY2022-2026 TIP (Discussion and Roll Call Vote needed to approve)

Ms. Estrela-Pedro informed the group that the draft FFY2022-2026 TIP was released to a minimum 21-day comment period at the last SMMPO meeting on April 20th. Staff hosted a public meeting on May 4th, at that time no comments were received. Staff did receive comments from both MassDOT on May 7th and the Federal Highway Administration on May 10th.

All comments in reference to broken links, alternate text updates, formatting inconsistencies, redundant text and clarification have been addressed and will be available for viewing in the final TIP which will be posted on SRPEDD’s website by the close of business on Thursday, May 20, 2021.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro took the opportunity to highlight and address particular comments –

- MassDOT asked staff to “consider adding an executive summary in relevant languages on the MPO website.”

In response, staff will begin working on an executive summary, as well as translations and once complete it will be available on SRPEDD’s website.

- MassDOT also noted that “There remain concerns about the deliverability of project 606024 (Taunton- Reconstruction of Route 44 (Dean Street), from Arlington Street to Route 104 (South Main Street)) in FFY 2022 and project 608535 (New Bedford- Corridor Improvements and Related Work on County Street from Nelson Street to Union Street) in FFY 2023.”

In response, staff will closely monitor the development of both projects and if necessary and possible consider the programming of more advanced projects from out years.

- Federal Highway questioned “any change in the equity analysis from 2010-2014 American Community Survey (ACS) data originally used with the updated 2015-2019 data?”

Staff responds that unfortunately, 2015-2019 ACS data was not available for analysis during the development of the draft FFY2022-2026 TIP. The data was released December 2020 and is being processed by Caliper Corp. for use in transportation analysis.

All of these comments, as well as others that were received during the development of the TIP can be found in Table 8 within the document.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro told the group that, at this time, the body is asked to endorse the FFY2022-2026 TIP, this includes an Air Quality Conformity Determination for the document which reports the latest determination for the 1997 ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in the SMMPO Region. It covers the applicable conformity requirements according to the latest regulations, regional designation status, legal considerations, and federal guidance. By voting yes, each member authorizes Acting Secretary and CEO of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Jamey Tesler, to sign on their behalf.

The Chairman asked for a motion to endorsement the FFY2022-2026 TIP. Alan Slavin, the SRPEDD Commission Chair, made the motion and Shawn McDonald of Dartmouth seconded it. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of Dartmouth-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

7. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - FFY2022 Development Discussion (Link – [FFY2022 UPWP](#)) and Roll Call Vote needed to release to 21-day comment period)

Mr. Paul Mission began the discussion by explaining that the Unified Planning Work program or the UPWP, as it's called, supports the 2020 long range regional transportation plan and outlines planning activities for the SRPEDD staff, as well as for the SRPEDD region is an outline of tasks over the course of the federal fiscal year, which runs from October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022. It also is tied to the federal and state funding contract that we have through MassDOT, FHWA and FTA. The UPWP follows legislative guidance; the FAST Act is built upon Map-21 of previous legislations, as well as the former SAFETEA-LU legislation. There is guidance that the UPWP adheres to, which includes strengthening America's highways, establishing a performance-based planning evaluation, supporting the economic development and the creation of jobs, supporting the US DOT's aggressive safety agenda, streamlining the transportation programs, accelerating delivery of projects and promoting innovation. A couple of guidance factors that were added with the FAST Act were addressing the issues associated with climate change, and enhancing travel and tourism. There are basically two sources of

funding, from the Federal Highway Administration, as well as the Federal Transit Administration.

There are a lot of tasks that are involved with the UPWP, but essentially, they follow the guidelines of four elements including Management & Support of the Planning Process. Another being Regional Data Collection, Modeling and Analysis Activities. A third is the Transportation Plan Activities and Studies, and the fourth is our Additional Technical Planning Activities.

Element 1 is management and support. It includes the 3C process and the three-step process including the Public Participation, Environmental Justice and Title VI. All are interrelated and are key to our management of transportation, evaluations and studies, but also key to our participation with various groups such as the JTPG, the MPO, the SRPEDD commission, and also with our Regional Transit Authorities and other groups that are involved with transportation. The public participation aspect allows us to do our public outreach to keep people informed of the process. Through Environmental Justice we do an evaluation to make sure there's social equity with the transportation process as well as ensuring that there is no discrimination and everybody has an opportunity to participate with the transportation planning process. The development of the UPWP and the TIP are key to our work and are required as part of the federal funds for planning purposes here in our region.

Element 2 is Regional Data and Modeling. This is where we gather the information that is useful with our studies, but also with helping the communities in their efforts. We have the ability to work with different data sets and mapping tools that we utilize for communities as well as with our studies. Our regional model emulates what's going on in reality on our road networks and it locates points of congestion currently and into the future. Our regional traffic count program is what we use to monitor traffic volumes throughout our region in conjunction with MassDOT, and we also have a pavement management program that evaluates federal aid eligible roads, as well as local roads that is available to our communities through a side contract. Performance Measures evaluate our performance targets, that we must adhere to for the region, but also in conjunction with state measures. And finally, our Community Technical Assistance, which is a set of funds that are set aside so we can help out communities with short-term projects that need a quick and easy recommendation for implementation that doesn't have to go through a formal study process. This includes signal warrants analyses, concerns over pedestrian crossings and/or bicycle traffic along roadways.

Element three, regional transportation plan and studies and we are working on several initiatives right now. Our Continuous Transportation Public Engagement Process is for public outreach and public engagement, so we can determine what the problems are with our transportation system to be addressed with our next Regional Transportation Plan due in 2024. It's also used for educating the public on various transportation issues. Management systems is

looking at our congestion and safety management planning identifying areas that need to be studied and having them being resolved with either a small improvement project or through the Transportation Improvement Program. We have a section that is dedicated strictly to bicycle and pedestrian planning. This has been growing ever since its conception back in the early 2000s. This is an effort that has gained a lot of popularity, especially with the development of multi-use paths throughout our whole region. We are continuing our goal of trying to connect Cape Cod and Providence through our region with a separate path that goes along the coastline.

We have an Intermodal Project Coordination, Freight Movement, and Intelligent Transportation systems task, which we use for studying the evaluation of freight movement throughout our region as well as with other amenities with transportation. We are continuing with our Flood Hazard Mitigation program, which also includes a new section called Regional Resiliency, to look at the effects of climate change on the infrastructure in our region. And finally, we have our Support for Regional Transit and Mobility Management tasks where we look at the issues that are public transportation related. Finally, Element 4 is our special projects, a technical assistance planning contract that we have with GATRA. They will be using us for some technical assistance and also for some studies of the fixed route bus system.

Mr. Mission told the group that the document is available on the SRPEDD website for review and to pose questions or comments within the 21-day review period. He then asked the MPO to consider the draft FFY2022 UPWP to be released for a 21-day public comment period.

There were no question and the Chair asked for a motion to release the FFY 2022 draft to a 21-day comment period. Alan Slavin, the SRPEDD Commission Chair, made the motion and Shawn McDonald of Dartmouth seconded it. Ms. Cabral-Bernard then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
Town of Dartmouth-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair -----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

8. Other Business

Mr. Mission reminded the group about MassDOT's Innovation conference being held virtually on May 25, 26 and 27. He announced that Jackie Jones will be presenting at the conference about safety analysis using MassDOT's Impact tool portal. The Chair then reminded the group that registration would be closing at midnight.

9. Date and Time for Next Meeting

Mr. Mission announced the next meeting for Tuesday, June 15, 2021 at 1:00 PM via Zoom.

10. Adjourn

The Chairman asked for a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Alan Slavin, the SRPEDD Commission Chair, made the motion and Bill Roth of Taunton seconded it. Without objection, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 1:39 PM.