

DRAFT Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Hybrid Meeting on Tuesday, June 15, 2021 at 1:00 PM - Held at the SRPEDD office and remotely via Zoom due to the Covid-19 State of Emergency in Massachusetts.

The following members were in attendance in-person at the SRPEDD office:

Steve Woelfel-----Representing Jamey Tesler, Acting MassDOT Secretary and CEO, Chair
Pamela Haznar-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Manuel H. Silva-----Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford
Bill Roth-----Representing Shaunna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton
Gary Ayrassian-----Representing Paul Heroux, Mayor of Attleboro
Lorne Lawless-----Town of Somerset
Alan Slavin-----SRPEDD Commission Chair
Stacy Forte-----GATRA
Shayne Trimbell-----SRTA

The following members were present via Zoom:

William Kenney-----Representing Paul Coogan, Mayor of Fall River
Leilani Dalpe-----Town of Middleborough

Also present at the SRPEDD Office:

Lilia Cabral-Bernard-----SRPEDD

The following were also present via Zoom:

Andrew Reovan-----FHWA
Ben Muller-----MassDOT
Michelle Ho-----MassDOT
Michael Lorenzo-----Town of Mattapoisett
MaryEllen DeFrias-----MassDevelopment
Paul Mission-----SRPEDD
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD
Julianne Griffith-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda June 15, 2021
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes May 18, 2021
FFY2021-2025 Proposed TIP Amendments #6

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chairman Woelfel opened the SMMPO meeting at 1:06 pm. The in-person attendees introduced themselves, followed by those attending via Zoom.

2. Approval of Minutes – May 18, 2021 (Materials Attached and Vote needed)

Chairman Woelfel requested a motion to approve the minutes from the SMMPO meeting from May 18, 2021. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Pamela Haznar.

THE MOTION PASSED with One Abstention.

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

Chairman Woelfel invited members of the public to make any comments. Mike Lorenc from the town of Mattapoisett introduced himself and gave an update on the TIP project for the improvements on Main Street, Water Street, Beacon and Marion Road. Progress on this project prior to my arrival has sort of been slow, on the funding side and also the planning side. He wanted to let the group know that they are pushing this forward by getting funding at town meeting this spring to fund the complete 75% design of this project and to let you know we are moving forward.

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

Shayne Trimbell from SRTA informed the group that ridership has recovered to 65-70% of pre-pandemic numbers with expected increases in the fall with student trips from Durfee High School in Fall River. He also announced that the SRTA intercity express service between New Bedford and Fall River had been funded for another year and will continue.

Stacy Forte of GATRA informed the group that they are looking to go forward with scheduled route changes, talking to the public about those this summer. They will also be instituting a new AVL system and are working to get some earmarks, federal funding for a maintenance facility.

Mr. Ayrassian asked which routes would be changed, particularly in Attleborough and Ms. Forte responded that there would be no loss of coverage and there would be a full public hearing before any changes would be made.

5. FFY2021-2025 TIP Proposed Amendments - Discussion on proposed FFY 2021 Transit Amendments (Materials Attached and Vote needed to release to 21-day comment period)

Ms. Lisa Estrela-Pedro presented the group with Proposed Amendment #6 to FFY2021 of the FFY2021-2025 TIP by explaining that there are numerous amendments being proposed in the transit element. Under the 5307 program there are 4 new projects being proposed for GATRA, to acquire miscellaneous support equipment for maintenance facilities. There is also a rehab/renovation to an administration or maintenance facility which will involve work on the electric gate and fencing, as well as electrical upgrades at the Taunton Maintenance Facility. There is also a project to acquire miscellaneous support equipment for IT which is replacement computer equipment as well as software upgrades and licenses.

Under the 5310 program there are 2 new projects being proposed for GATRA including Med Wheels Operating which is a continuation of funding for the long-distance medical program for seniors and persons with disabilities. Also, the Plymouth C.A.R., a continuation of funding for the Plymouth voucher program for Lyft and Uber to provide transportation when GATRA is unavailable.

Under the 5339 program there are 2 new projects being proposed for GATRA including Acquire - Miscellaneous Support Equipment for New Electric Buses, which will be for the purchase of charging stations for electric buses. Also, the purchase of 6 electric bus warranties which is for batteries on the new electric buses.

Under the Other Non-Federal program there are 2 new projects being proposed, one for GATRA & one for SRTA and both are for operating assistance. Ms. Estrela-Pedro asked the body to release these amendments to a 21-day comment period.

The Chairman asked for a motion, which was made by Alan Slavin, and a second, which was made by Gary Ayrassian. The Chairman asked if there were any questions or comments. Shayne Trimbell asked why the operating assistance funds were being added to the TIP when state funding has never been added to the TIP in the past. Ms. Estrela-Pedro informed the group that following the same question from John LeBert of SRTA, she researched guidance from Federal Transit and it was stated that even if it's just using state funds, that it should be shown on the TIP, which might be the answer to that question.

Some discussion ensued on this issue, including getting the answer on why non-capital projects are being added to a capital program, as well as if the SMMPO members attending via Zoom are able to make or second a motion since they are not at the in-person quorum, the best way to make a new motion and/or rescind the initial motion made, and/or if it would make sense to approve only the federal portion of the transit amendments for release. Additional discussion ensued and it was decided that Mr. Slavin should rescind his original motion and Mr. Ayrassian should rescind his second on the original motion, which they proceeded to do.

The Chairman then asked for a motion and a second to release the amendments for a 21-day public comment period as presented by Ms. Estrela-Pedro. That motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Pamela Haznar.

The Chairman then informed Mr. Trimbell that his comments and concerns are noted and will be reflected in the minutes and we will find an answer. Mr. Mission then stated that we are just releasing these amendments for public comment, and that it is not an endorsement or approval and we still have to wait until July before we take that action. He continued by stating that if, in fact, between now and that time, we find information that says the state portion does not need to be included within the amendment, then we can make those adjustments prior to approval of the amendment. The Chair agreed and asked for vote.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Discussion and Endorsement of the DRAFT FFY2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) ([Link - FFY2022 UPWP](#) Vote needed to approve)

Mr. Mission informed the group that the draft UPWP was released in May. This document is essentially our work program that guides us in how we spend federal and state monies toward transportation planning efforts within southeastern Massachusetts. It's divided up into several different tasks, and upon release for public comment, it gave our federal and state partners an opportunity to review and comment, as well as the general public an opportunity to review and comment. Andrew Reovan from FHWA offered numerous comments aside from typos and other minor corrections including changing the word "poverty" to "low-income". He also complimented the explanation of 10 guidance factors and the map of the SRPEDD UPWP projects. He also had some comments on region-wide projects, that are difficult to map but can be displayed in a table. He also suggested that we add specific dates to timeframes so that language will be changed. He had a question on the dates of completion for our public participation plan and our freight plan. Under flood hazard mitigation and resilience planning. He commented that it sounds like a great report and will be good to share with other MPOs and maybe nationally. He also complimented the timetable for tasks timeline as being very helpful.

The Chairman then asked for a motion and a second to approve the FFY 2022 UPWP. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Bill Roth.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Other Business

Mr. Mission offered congratulations to Ms. Leilani Dalpe who is the representative from the town of Middleborough, as she is taking a new job in the Mayor's office in Weymouth and will be leaving the MPO board. He told Ms. Dalpe that she would be missed and that her help was appreciated, especially her participation on the board.

Ms. Dalpe thanked the board and told them how she had enjoyed her time here immensely and learned so much.

Mr. Mission asked the Chair to pass around the signatory pages for the UPWP. As in-person members were signing, Mr. Mission brought up the subject of hybrid meetings, considering the lifting of the state of emergency and pending legislation to extend the ability for remote meetings. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Roth then offered, on behalf of the City of Taunton, to meet in full at the brand new 21st Century City Hall with both a huge conference room, that is much larger than SRPEDD's for social distancing, as well as the council chambers, and it is fully wired.

8. Date and Time for Next Meeting

Mr. Mission announced the next meeting for Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at 1:00 PM, but as far as in-person or remote is to be determined, but it may be an in-person / hybrid situation until further notice. He then requested if we could at least have seven members available in person to vote on the amendments that will be due at that time, it would be greatly appreciated.

9. Adjournment

The Chairman announced if there was nothing else, he would entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alan Slavin made the motion and Shayne Trimbell seconded it. Hearing all ayes and no objections or abstentions, the meeting was adjourned at 1:43 PM.