

**Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD)
Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG) Meeting.**

DRAFT Minutes for the JTPG Meeting

Held on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 2:00 PM

**Held Hybrid via Zoom and SRPEDD Office in Accordance with Massachusetts Open
Meeting Law.**

The following members and alternates were in attendance:

Alan Slavin, Vice-Chair.....Town of Wareham
Michael Tyler.....City of Attleboro
John Woods.....Town of Carver
Tim Barber.....Town of Dartmouth
Joshua Crabb.....Town of Fairhaven
Daniel Aguiar.....City of Fall River
Franklin Moniz.....Town of Lakeville
Josh Reinke.....Town of Mansfield
Norman Hills.....Town of Marion
Leeann Bradley.....Town of Middleborough
Justin Chicca.....City of New Bedford
Dennis Morton.....Town of Plainville
David Cabral..... Town of Seekonk
James HartnettTown of Westport

The following members/alternates were NOT in attendance:

City of Taunton
City of New Bedford
Town of Acushnet
Town of Berkley
Town of Dighton
Town of Freetown
Town of Mattapoisett
Town of North Attleborough
Town of Norton
Town of Raynham
Town of Rehoboth
Town of Rochester
Town of Somerset
Town of Swansea

At-Large, City of Attleboro
At-Large, City of Fall River
At-Large, City of New Bedford
At-Large, City of Taunton

Also in Attendance:

Mary Ellen DeFrias.....GATRA
Marie Clarner.....SRPEDD Commissioner/Town of North Attleborough
Ken Buckland.....Town of Wareham
Bonnie Polin.....MassDOT
Jaclyn Youngblood.....MassDOT
Raissah Kouame.....MassDOT
Barbara Lachance.....MassDOT
Joshua Barber.....FHWA
Colleen Pekrul.....Safe Routes to School Liaison
Bonnie Roalsen.....Safe Routes to School Liaison
Gail Roderigues.....South Coast Bikeway Alliance
Lisa Estrela-Pedro.....SRPEDD
Jackie Jones.....SRPEDD
Andrea Duarte.....SRPEDD
Sean Hilton.....SRPEDD
Jon Gray.....SRPEDD
Jennifer Chaves.....SRPEDD
Luis de Oliveira.....SRPEDD
Seth Gadbois.....Conservation Law Foundation
Phil Viveiros.....McMahon & Associates
Sid Kashi.....GPI

Handouts:

JTPG Meeting Agenda for November 8, 2023
DRAFT September 13, 2023 JTPG Meeting Minutes

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Vice-Chair Alan Slavin called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. Ms. Duarte asked all JTPG members to unmute themselves so she could call the complete roll call of JTPG members, with the following being present at the time of the roll call:

Alan Slavin, Vice-Chair.....Town of Wareham

Michael Tyler.....City of Attleboro
 John Woods.....Town of Carver
 Daniel Aguiar.....City of Fall River
 Franklin Moniz.....Town of Lakeville
 Josh Reinke.....Town of Mansfield
 Norman Hills.....Town of Marion
 Leeann Bradley.....Town of Middleborough
 Justin Chicca.....City of New Bedford
 Dennis Morton.....Town of Plainville
 David Cabral.....Town of Seekonk
 James HartnettTown of Westport

2. Approval of Minutes – September 13, 2023 (Materials Attached & roll call vote needed)

Vice-Chair Slavin called for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2023 meeting. The motion was made by Daniel Aguiar and seconded by John Woods. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

City of Attleboro.....Yes
 Town of Carver.....Yes
 Town of Dartmouth..... Yes
 Town of Fairhaven..... Yes
 City of Fall River.....Yes
 Town of Lakeville.....Yes
 Town of Marion.....Yes
 Town of Mansfield.....Yes
 Town of Middleborough..... Yes
 City of New Bedford.....Yes
 Town of Plainville..... Abstain
 Town of Seekonk.....Yes
 Town of Wareham.....Yes
 Town of Westport.....Yes

THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTIONS.

3. Public Comments – Opportunity for the Public to address the JTPG

There were no comments offered.

4. Vulnerable Road Users Law Presentation by MassDOT

Bonnie Polin, State Safety Engineer at MassDOT, introduced herself and discussed the Vulnerable Road User Safety (VRU) Assessment. In addition to preparing a statewide Strategic Highway Safety Plan, state DOTs are also required to prepare a Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment, as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The VRU Assessment looks at fatalities and serious injuries of bicyclists, pedestrians, and people on other mobility devices using different approaches such as analyzing crash data and risk. Ms. Polin presented several initiatives of the statewide MassDOT report that will be submitted on November 15, which is tied to the Strategic Highway Safety Plan. One initiative is to address top risk locations and populations of vulnerable road users. 22% of traffic fatalities in the Commonwealth are vulnerable road users. The VRU Assessment found that 44% of all fatal and serious injuries in pedestrian crashes occur within 2000 feet of a school. To respond to this MassDOT has built upon Safe Routes to School program activities and provided 130 communities with school zone assemblies upon request to lower speeds in school zone areas. 41% of fatal and serious injury pedestrian crashes and more than a third of bicycle fatal and serious injury crashes occur within 300 feet of a bus stop. To respond to this, MassDOT is running a multiyear program to address the top risk crossings near bus stops in the state, starting with state highway locations that are not near a signal. Environmental Justice, underserved minority, low-income, and Limited English Proficient communities are overrepresented in vulnerable road user crashes.

MassDOT will initially be working with communities in the top 5% of vulnerable road user risk and crash locations over the next couple years. Fall River is one of these 17 communities. The SMMPO received a Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) federal grant; while the regional action plan that is developed using this grant may not provide details of types of countermeasures that can be implemented at each top crash location in the region, the goal is that it will identify where systemic types of projects, such as low-cost fixes that can be installed in various locations, are needed. The SS4A Action Plan will help identify community needs for vulnerable road users through the MPO and help MassDOT begin funding some of these improvements. Some examples of projects MassDOT is thinking of implementing in the top 17 communities include improvements to pedestrian crossings and crossing signals, making signs easier to understand for all populations, installing rectangular rapid flashing beacons at mid-block crossings, and installing traffic calming treatments. MassDOT is also helping municipalities procure equipment. 119 communities have signed up for the four-foot passing for VRU signs, and MassDOT will be opening another round for municipalities to request these signs for those who missed previous rounds. Communities can also request other materials like speed feedback boards and other types of signage.

Ms. Polin provided an opportunity for members to ask questions. Alan Slavin asked how the VRU Assessment is responding to VRU crashes in communities with higher foreign born and Limited English Proficient populations, to which Ms. Polin responded that these populations are most “vulnerable” and overrepresented in VRU crashes, and because pedestrian accommodations are very different in their origin countries, significant education and awareness will be necessary to help reduce risk and fatalities in these communities. Marie Clarner similarly asked what the state is doing to address vulnerable road user safety among recently arrived migrants. Many migrants have been walking on the shoulder of Route 1 alongside high-speed vehicles and without crosswalks, and they are used to crossing

everywhere. Ms. Clarner asked if the state was working on initiatives to facilitate migrants using buses. Ms. Polin responded that she would follow up with MassDOT leadership about this. Mike Tyler asked whether the state had conducted a study about the cost effectiveness of solar crosswalk lights and solar speed feedback boards to which Ms. Polin responded that they found that the average speed has come down 4-5 MPH and the highest speed reduction has been with the highest end speeders after installation of speed feedback boards. MassDOT will now be assessing the effectiveness of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, particularly those connected to streetlights.

5. Direct Vision Study Presentation by MassDOT

Jaclyn Youngblood, Chief of Possibility at MassDOT, introduced herself and presented findings from the Direct Vision Study to increase awareness on the importance of direct vision. She defined direct vision using images from the perspective of a truck operator. Research has shown that drivers can have up to a 50% faster reaction time when they're seeing something through direct vision as opposed to indirect vision. Having better direct vision places drivers closer to other road users. While trucks represent a relatively small percentage of vehicles on the road, they have a disproportionate impact on some vulnerable road users and cause more severe injuries in crashes. Ms. Youngblood discussed the components of vehicle design as defined in the state's new Vulnerable Road Users law, including side guards required on state owned trucks. Under the law, MassDOT is now required to measure a sample of its own fleet and that of its contractors for direct division performance. MassDOT will invite municipalities who have had a large number of truck-involved crashes or serious injuries with a vulnerable road user in the last five years to measure their fleets and participate in a one-day measurement session, so that they can understand the performance of their fleet and as the fleet starts to turn over brainstorm strategies to purchase trucks with better vision. MassDOT may produce a prototype scorecard for vehicles and determine the minimum direct vision it will require for its own fleet. Ms. Youngblood asked if there were questions and responded to Mr. Slavin's question about improvements to grill heights.

6. JTPG Chair Election

Vice-Chair Slavin announced that the JTPG will need to vote for a new Chair as Stephanie Crampton is no longer with the City of New Bedford. He announced that Victoria Alfaro-Duran of Freetown submitted her name but was not present at today's meeting, and asked if anyone else would like to nominate themselves. Hearing no further comments, the Vice-Chair asked for a motion and second to nominate Ms. Alfaro-Duran as new Chair. The motion was made by Dennis Morton and seconded by Norman Hills. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to call the roll as follows:

City of Attleboro.....Yes

Town of Carver.....Yes

Town of Dartmouth..... Yes

Town of Fairhaven..... Yes

City of Fall River.....Yes

Town of Lakeville.....Yes

Town of Marion.....Yes

Town of Mansfield.....Yes
Town of Middleborough..... Yes
City of New Bedford.....Yes
Town of Plainville..... Abstain
Town of Seekonk.....Yes
Town of Wareham.....Yes
Town of Westport.....Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. FFY2025-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Development Timeline

Jackie Jones announced that TIP development season is underway. This time of year, SRPEDD staff begins to collect project information and design schedules. Staff will also be meeting with MassDOT to determine the status of each project. In December through February, SRPEDD staff will evaluate the projects using the SMMPO's evaluation criteria process. There will be presentations later on for any new projects under consideration and funding scenarios will be discussed. In March, the JTPG will select a final project list for programming and recommend it to the SMMPO who will endorse it. The TIP will be released to a public comment period in April and endorsed in May. SRPEDD and MassDOT staff will hold an informational workshop in December to help guide local officials in what goes into projects and the requirements for getting projects funded through the TIP process.

8. Urbanized Area Boundary Update

Lisa Estrela-Pedro announced that since the latest Census was released, there has been discussion about expanding urbanized areas that are used to determine function class of roads. MassDOT has been working on proposed changes for 2020 data and will send them to the FHWA. Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that the only changes in the SMMPO region are in Dartmouth and Marion and pointed to these sections on a regional map. Local rural minor collectors in these areas will become urbanized and it will make these roadways eligible for federal funding. She informed Marion and Dartmouth representatives that SRPEDD staff would follow up with them and send them the map.

9. Other Business

Andrea Duarte provided updates on grant funding and technical assistance opportunities. Ms. Duarte informed the group that the Healy-Driscoll administration recently created the Office of Federal Funds and Infrastructure which has formed a state matching funds pool that will make \$800 million in additional state funding available over the next three years to help the state pursue federal grants. There will be \$50 million dedicated to municipal matching grants and a local infrastructure bank and \$12 million for local government technical assistance in applying for federal grants. This Office also created the MA Federal Funds Partnership which is a working group that is going to be meeting monthly to provide targeted updates on relevant federal funding opportunities and connect municipal officials across the state with resources for technical assistance and state matching funds. Ms. Duarte encouraged JTPG members to stay connected to updates from the Massachusetts Municipal

Association as it also is a channel for technical assistance announcements. Ms. Duarte informed the group about the Accelerating Clean Transportation grant through the MA Clean Energy Center, including its Advisory Services Program and School Bus Fleet Deployment program (which has a January 11 deadline) that will support electrification of school buses. She stated that slides and grant information will be sent to the group following the meeting.

10. Date and Time for Next Meeting

Date and Time for next meeting is December 13, 2023, at 2:00 PM as a hybrid meeting, in which attendees can join at the SRPEDD office in Taunton or via Zoom.

11. Adjourn

The Vice-Chair asked for a motion to adjourn which was made by Marie Clarner and seconded by Mike Tyler. Hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 2:56 PM.