

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

**DRAFT Minutes for the JTPG Meeting**

**Held on Wednesday, January 10, 2024 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:**

Victoria Alfaro-Duran, Chair.....Town of Freetown  
Joe Callahan.....Town of Berkley  
Joshua Crabb.....Town of Fairhaven  
Daniel Aguiar.....City of Fall River  
Josh Reinke.....Town of Mansfield  
Norman Hills.....Town of Marion  
Robert Burgmann.....Town of Mattapoisett  
Leeann Bradley.....Town of Middleborough  
David Cabral.....Town of Seekonk  
Fred Cornaglia.....City of Taunton  
Alan Slavin, Vice-Chair.....Town of Wareham  
James Hartnett .....Town of Westport

**The following members/alternates were NOT in attendance:**

City of Attleboro	At-Large, City of Fall River
City of New Bedford	At-Large, City of New Bedford
Town of Acushnet	At-Large, City of Taunton
Town of Carver	
Town of Dartmouth	
Town of Dighton	
Town of Lakeville	
Town of North Attleborough	
Town of Norton	
Town of Plainville	
Town of Raynham	
Town of Rehoboth	
Town of Rochester	
Town of Somerset	
Town of Swansea	
At-Large, City of Attleboro	

**Also in Attendance:**

Mary Ellen DeFrias.....GATRA  
Shayne Trimbell.....SRTA  
Kathy Holton.....City of Taunton  
Ceasar Duarte.....New Bedford Port Authority  
John Regan.....New Bedford Port Authority  
Raissah Kouame.....MassDOT  
Barbara Lachance.....MassDOT  
Kristen Pennucci.....MassDOT  
Amber Vaillancourt.....MassDOT  
Colleen Pekar.....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  
Austin Horowitz.....SRPEDD  
Sean Hilton.....SRPEDD  
Jon Gray.....SRPEDD  
Lisa Sherman.....CDM Smith  
Phil Viveiros.....McMahon & Associates

**Handouts:**

JTPG Meeting Agenda for January 10, 2024  
DRAFT December 13, 2023 JTPG Meeting Minutes

**AGENDA****1. Call to Order and Roll Call:**

Chair Victoria Alfaro Duran called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. Andrea 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:

Victoria Alfaro-Duran, Chair.....Town of Freetown  
Joe Callahan.....Town of Berkley  
Joshua Crabb.....Town of Fairhaven  
Daniel Aguiar.....City of Fall River  
Josh Reinke.....Town of Mansfield  
Norman Hills.....Town of Marion  
Leeann Bradley.....Town of Middleborough

David Cabral.....Town of Seekonk  
Alan Slavin, Vice-Chair.....Town of Wareham  
James Hartnett .....Town of Westport

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

Chair Alfaro Duran called for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting. The motion was made by Daniel Aguiar and seconded by Alan Slavin. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

Town of Freetown.....Yes  
Town of Berkley.....Yes  
Town of Fairhaven.....Yes  
City of Fall River.....Yes  
Town of Mansfield.....Yes  
Town of Marion.....Yes  
Town of Mattapoisett.....No response  
Town of Middleborough.....Abstain  
Town of Seekonk.....Abstain  
City of Taunton.....No response  
Town of Wareham.....Yes  
Town of Westport.....Yes

### **THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS.**

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

There were no comments offered.

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

Shayne Trimbell announced that SRTA is currently fair free since January 1 through the end of June. So far positive feedback has been received, riders like not having to pay to get on the bus. SRTA will begin Sunday service on January 28, which has long been requested in the region, thanks to Fair Share Act funding. SRTA is hopeful that this will become part of regular service, and right now it is in temporary status.

Mary Ellen DeFrias informed the group that GATRA ran free service from Thanksgiving through New Year's Eve and saw an increase of about 4,000 riders over that time. These numbers are similar to those of last year's free service during the same time period. GATRA started operating Sunday service on limited routes in October 2023 and intends for all routes to be operating Sundays on a Saturday service schedule by the first week of February. GATRA is temporarily moving its operations out of Plymouth to the Decas School in Wareham on February 5 until its new facility on Cranberry Highway is complete in July of 2025. GATRA's AVL system is now completely installed and running on all fixed route buses in Attleboro, Taunton, Plymouth, and Wareham. Lastly, GATRA has four electric buses on

order but due to production issues, their delivery date keeps getting delayed. To comply with state of good repair, GATRA will purchase four diesel buses arriving in June.

## **5. Complete Streets Prioritization Plans Presentation**

Kristen Pennucci, MassDOT Community Grants Administrator, introduced herself and provided a presentation about MassDOT's Complete Streets funding program and Complete Streets Prioritization Plans. Prioritization Plans include 15 priority Complete Streets projects, supported by technical analysis and public input. Ms. Pennucci stated that municipalities do not need to update these plans unless they want to. However, Prioritization Plans must be submitted to MassDOT at least one month before an upcoming Tier 3 grant application round. A critical element of Prioritization Plan development is cost estimating, which helps in prioritizing projects and understanding order of magnitude and feasibility. Municipalities should update cost estimates between Tier 2 and Tier 3 submission, using the State Aid Reimbursable Programs Estimating Tool (SARPET). Ms. Pennucci then provided an overview of five other MassDOT Community Grants Programs. MassDOT Highway Division is implementing a new Community Grants Portal, Grant Central, that will bring all 6 Community Grants Programs under one portal. Several attendees asked questions about the Complete Streets programs, including asking for clarity on when prioritization plans need to be updated to which Ms. Pennucci answered that it is the community's choice, and some communities update their plans frequently while others do not feel the need to. Josh Crabb asked what other sources of funding are available to redo Complete Streets Prioritization plans if a community already received funding to do their plan once and is no longer eligible; Ms. Pennucci responded that the community may be able to use Chapter 90 funding and should check with the MassDOT district engineer.

## **6. Safe Streets and Road for All Grant Update**

Austin Horowitz, SRPEDD SS4A Project Coordinator, introduced himself and provided the group a status update on SRPEDD's Safety Action Plan. SRPEDD received a Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant totaling \$1.1 million, of which 80% is being funded by the USDOT and the other 20% by MassDOT. The grant funds the completion of a regional Safety Action Plan, which must be completed by August 2025. Required components of the Safety Action Plan include: leadership commitment or reaffirmation from the MPO to either target zero fatalities and injuries on our region's roadways, or at the very least an ambitious reduction in injuries and fatalities on our roadways. The second component is the planning structure in which a task force will be created to steer development of the plan. While the RSAP task force is open to anyone within the region, SRPEDD will make a targeted effort to recruit representation from vulnerable road user groups, as well as underserved and environmental justice (EJ) communities and individuals with region-wide expertise. The Action Plan will look at specific intersections and roadways but will not provide a town-by-town analysis of projects. It will be framed as a playbook of options and opportunities, looking at different methods for improving roadway safety for all road users with consideration to cost effectiveness to help communities understand types of projects that might be most cost-effective for specific circumstances. Other Action Plan components include a safety and crash data analysis, engagement and collaboration with communities especially environmental justice communities, policy and process changes proposed from data analysis and engagement, strategy and project selections, and progress reports and transparency. Mr. Horowitz

presented highlights of initial crash data analysis for the region and stated that 90% of vulnerable road user incidents are located in environmental justice communities.

SRPEDD aims to begin soliciting applications for task force members in late January once the SMMPO has agreed at the next MPO meeting to be the oversight body for the task force that ultimately appoints task force members. Task force applications will be open for roughly a month with the aim to have the full task force appointed by early March. JTPG members will be notified once applications are open and Mr. Horowitz asked that members help circulate the notice to their networks. SRPEDD currently has an active RFP open to solicit consulting services to support its efforts in the RSAP development, and about 50% of the total work effort will be done by the consultant. Proposals are due tomorrow and staff will be reviewing and scoring them next week. Interviews will be conducted the following week to speak with the top responders. The goal is to have a contractor identified and contracts executed by the end of January, but at the least to be in active discussions with the leading bidder to finalize the contract by no later than early February.

## **7. SMMPO Title VI Report Presentation**

Andrea Duarte, SRPEDD Transportation Outreach Coordinator, provided a presentation on SRPEDD's Title VI Report and recent updates made in Fall 2023. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Because SRPEDD/SMMPO is a subrecipient of MassDOT and receives federal money from FHWA and FTA it must comply with these agencies' Title VI reporting requirements. Ms. Duarte provided an overview of the 2022 Title VI Annual Report components including a demographic profile of the region's Title VI populations and languages spoken. She discussed items that were updated in 2023, which include Title VI Civil Rights Notice to the Public, Title VI Complaint Procedures, Title VI Complaint Form and 6 translations were updated and posted to the SRPEDD website and distributed to staff; language about the SMMPO's new process for monitoring subrecipients for compliance with Title VI was drafted and added to the report; the 2022 update to the Language Assistance Plan is now included in the report and on the SRPEDD website; and the SMMPO will vote on approving the 2022 Title VI report at its next meeting and these 2023 updates and minutes will be uploaded to the report as formal documentation of Title VI program approval. Like many other MPOs/RPAs, SRPEDD did not have a process for monitoring subrecipient Title VI compliance before because it had never had its own subrecipients of federal funds. The new process is especially relevant now that SRPEDD will have a subrecipient of federal funds working on the SS4A Safety Action Plan.

Lastly, Ms. Duarte reminded the group that as part of the process for developing an application for a TIP project, municipal officials are required to explain the impacts of projects on Environmental Justice (EJ) and Title VI communities and engage them in the project planning process. If the project is located in/near an EJ and/or Title VI area, officials must identify project elements that are designed to improve safety, sustainability, and mobility for that EJ community and identify improvements that distribute benefits and burdens fairly among local populations; they must involve the EJ/Title VI communities in project planning to help identify problems, needs, and opportunities for improvements that may affect them. Ms. Duarte demonstrated a mapping tool created by SRPEDD staff using Census and ACS data to

locate a TIP project and identify which if any EJ or Title VI populations reside near it. She provided an overview of best practices for meaningfully involving underrepresented populations in public engagement activities.

## **8. TIP Development Discussion**

Jackie Jones, SRPEDD Assistant Director of Transportation, reminded the group that TIP development is underway. SRPEDD staff is collecting data on project statuses and changes in preparation for readiness days in February. Readiness days are when SRPEDD staff discuss every project with MassDOT and determines whether projects are staying in their current programming year or moving to a different year. TIP projects have many moving parts that can delay programming or cause them to advance quickly. SRPEDD staff had a very productive meeting with MassDOT District 5 today about project statuses and will be reaching out to communities for project updates as well. Ms. Jones urged JTPG members to reach out to her or Ms. Estrela-Pedro if their TIP project has a significant status change, if they are concerned with how it's moving, or if they would like to discuss anything about the TIP. The more information SRPEDD staff has about the project, the more they can help the city or town work through issues and ensure sure the project is programmed in the correct year.

## **9. Rhode Island Traffic Discussion**

SRPEDD Transportation Planner Sean Hilton provided updates on traffic flow between Rhode Island and the surrounding region due to the closure of the Washington Street Bridge and how SRPEDD is monitoring these changes, following concerns expressed at the last JTPG meeting. Mr. Hilton provided a demonstration of travel times using dashboards he created to keep tabs on the situation in Southeastern Massachusetts as it relates to the bridge closure, primarily looking at major roadways that lead to and from Rhode Island. Travel delays are no longer near the level that they were on the initial day of the bridge closure. The state of Rhode Island has started ferry service between Bristol and Providence, as well as opened the bypass lane on I-195 so traffic can move both ways. Mr. Hilton informed the group that the Rhode Island DOT created a webpage ([www.dot.ri.gov/projects/WashingtonBridgeClosure/index.php](http://www.dot.ri.gov/projects/WashingtonBridgeClosure/index.php)) to inform the public of ongoing updates, which includes a dashboard on live and previous travel times for any roadways to, from, and out of Rhode Island since the closure.

## **10. Other Business**

There was no other business discussed.

## **11. Date and Time for Next Meeting**

Date and Time for next meeting is February 14, 2024, at 2:00 PM as a hybrid meeting, in which attendees can join at the SRPEDD office in Taunton or via Zoom.

## **12. Adjourn**

The Vice-Chair asked for a motion to adjourn which was made by Norm Hills and seconded by David Cabral. Hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 3:12 PM.