

**Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.**

**The following members were in attendance:**

Derek Krevat-----Representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Acting MassDOT Secretary, *Chair*  
Shaun Handy-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator  
Daniel Aguiar-----Representing Paul Coogan, Mayor of Fall River  
Jamie Ponte-----Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford  
Jay Pateakos-----Representing Shauna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton  
Sarah Hewins-----Town of Carver  
Kevin Dumas-----Representing Diane Bren, Town of Mansfield  
Lloyd Mendes-----Representing Jacob Vaught, Town of Somerset  
Alan Slavin-----Town of Wareham  
MaryEllen DeFrias-----GATRA Administrator  
Marie Clarner-----SRPEDD Commission Chair

**The following were also in attendance:**

Dana Hanson----- Office of Congressman Auchincloss  
Jenna Massoud-----Office of Congressman Auchincloss  
Kathy Holton-----City of Taunton  
Barbara Lachance-----MassDOT  
Colleen Pekrul-----MassDOT/Safe Routes to School  
Bonnie Roalsen----- MassDOT/Safe Routes to School  
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD  
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD  
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD  
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD  
Danica Belknap-----SRPEDD

**Handouts:**

SMMPO Agenda February 20, 2024  
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes January 16, 2024  
FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment 3A Transit  
FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment 3B Hwy  
FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment 3C Hwy  
FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment 4 Highway

**AGENDA:**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call-**

Chairman Derek Krevat called the SMMPO meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Ms. Andrea Duarte asked all MPO members and designees to please unmute themselves so she could call the roll for attendance. She then called the complete roll of MPO members, with the following being present at the time of the roll call:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Somerset-----Yes
- Town of Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

**2. Approval of Minutes – January 16, 2024 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)**

Chairman Krevat requested a motion to approve the minutes from the January 16, 2024, SMMPO meeting. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Daniel Aguiar. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Somerset-----Abstain
- Town of Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

**THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION.**

**3. Public Comments**

Chairman Krevat invited members of the public to make comments. There were no comments presented.

#### **4. Regional Transit Authorities Report – RTA Updates**

Mary Ellen DeFrias informed the group that GATA has now implemented full Sunday service throughout the region but is still having challenges hiring enough drivers. GATRA moved its Plymouth operations to Wareham as of February 5, and will be operating out of the Decas School until its new facility is built in Wareham. Ms. DeFrias stated that GATRA is using a new dispatch software to help with ADA accessibility, and she believes the software will also provide GATRA staff with better data reports.

#### **5. Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grant Presentation**

Danica Belknap, SRPEDD Environmental Planning Manager, provided a presentation of the Climate Pollution Reduction Planning Grant (CPRG) from the Environmental Protection Agency that SRPEDD is currently working on. SRPEDD staff are currently in the public engagement stage of the grant project, collecting feedback from municipal representatives and the general public. The aim of the project is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that are contributing to warming of the planet. It also aims to support the creation of good jobs and lower energy costs for families, accelerate work to address climate injustice, empower community driven solutions and overburdened neighborhoods, and provide the full benefits of cleaner air by reducing emissions and air pollution throughout the region. It is a country-wide initiative where funding was awarded to the most populated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). The SRPEDD region lies within the Providence Warwick MSA, which includes part of Southeastern Massachusetts and the entire state of Rhode Island. SRPEDD is facilitating the planning process on behalf of this area. The deliverables of this grant include a Climate Action Plan, with a shorter planning timeframe, which outlines a list of key priorities we can do now to reduce emissions and the types of projects that are ready to implement. The CPRG program has a second phase of implementation grants. Once SRPEDD completes the Climate Action Plan, it becomes eligible to apply for implementation funding to implement any of the actions identified in the priority Climate Action Plan.

Ms. Belknap reviewed a draft list of measures for JTPG members' input in the sectors of buildings, transportation electricity generation, agriculture and working lands, waste management and materials, and industrial processes. SRPEDD is doing a low-income and disadvantaged communities benefits analysis as part of this to look at how the actions proposed will benefit low-income communities Ms. Belknap identified on a regional map. The Plan will provide an outline of how SRPEDD will work with the proper authorities to implement the plan. The comprehensive climate action plan that comes later will be more detailed and will expand on the actions to prepare greenhouse gas emission projections, targets for how much we want to reduce emissions, and do some further outreach and further benefits analysis. Ms. Belknap informed the group that the draft action list and public comment form can be found on the project webpage, [www.srpedd.org/cprg](http://www.srpedd.org/cprg), and they can contact [enviro@srpedd.org](mailto:enviro@srpedd.org). She stated that 2 forums were held last week to gather public comment, and forum materials will be posted on the project website. She provided time for comment and questions, and

discussion ensued about road diets, multiuse paths, energy-efficient air conditioning improvements in school buildings, and heat pumps.

**6. FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment #3, including Adjustments – A) FFY24 for Community Transit Grants and Project and Cost Adjustments for GATRA & B) FFY24 – FFY26 Cost Modifications for Highway Projects {606527 New Bedford: Superstructure Replacement & Fall River: Corridor Improvements on Route 79/Davol Street} (Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse, Materials Attached)**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro reminded the group that proposed Amendment #3, presented and released to public comment period at the January SMMPO meeting, has several parts, so it was sectioned off into agenda items 6 and 7 and subsections A, B, and C. Section A encompasses the addition of community transit grants and projects as well as cost changes for GATRA. Additionally, there were class changes for the New Bedford superstructure project and Fall River Corridor improvements along Route 79. There were cost changes for both of these projects in FFY2024. The New Bedford superstructure project will span into FFY2025 and FFY2026 to accommodate cost increases that were part of this project. A public meeting was held on February 13 for Amendment #3. There were no comments received at that time or otherwise. Ms. Estrela-Pedro concluded by asking that the body take a vote to endorse Amendment #3 Sections A and B.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on FFY2024-28 TIP Amendment #3 A and B and seeing none asked for a motion and second to endorse the Amendment. The motion was made by Marie Clarner and seconded by Jamie Ponte. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Somerset-----Yes
- Town of Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**7. FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment #3 C) - FFY24 Highway Consideration of Inclusion of Funding for Blue Apple Bus – Service from Mansfield to Logan (Flex to Transit) (Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse, Materials Attached)**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro reminded the group that FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment #3 C, that was also released to public comment period, involves the continuation of service from Mansfield to Logan Airport and is being funded through GATRA. This project is the continuation of service funded last year with FFY23 funds. In FFY24 there is a balance of highway Regional Target Funds that is being converted to transit funding to support continuation of this service. The project is being brought before the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Committee this afternoon to be approved for CMAQ funding. Ms. Estrela-Pedro requested that the body take a vote to endorse this Amendment if there were no further questions.

The Chair asked for a motion and second to endorse Amendment #3 C. The motion was made by Marie Clarner and seconded by Dan Aguiar. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes  
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes  
City of Fall River-----Yes  
City of New Bedford-----Yes  
City of Taunton-----Yes  
Town of Mansfield-----Yes  
Town of Somerset-----Yes  
Town of Carver-----Yes  
Town of Wareham-----Yes  
GATRA-----Yes  
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**8. FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment #4 – FFY24 Highway Cost Increase for Project 609518 FAIRHAVEN- LEROY WOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS (SRTS) (Roll Call Vote Needed to Release to 14 Day Public Comment Period and automatic endorsement on March 5th if no negative comments are received, Materials Attached)**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that FFY24-28 TIP Amendment #4 is for a project in Fairhaven for the Leroy Wood Elementary School improvements. There has been a cost increase of approximately \$1.1 million for this project mainly due to utility relocations and reimbursement. She asked the body to take a vote to release the Amendment to a non-traditional public comment period abbreviated to 14 days during which a public meeting will be held on February 29. She asked that the body, as part of the vote to release this Amendment to a shortened comment period,

also approve an automatic endorsement of the Amendment on March 5<sup>th</sup>, if no negative comments are received.

The Chair asked for a motion and second to release the Amendment for a public comment period that is abbreviated to 14 days and that if no negative comments are received, at that time, it will be considered endorsed. He informed the group that the reason for the abbreviated comment period is because the project has an advertisement date of March 30 and we want to make sure we can get approval from our federal partners before it goes out for bids for construction. He expressed appreciation for the vote given the extenuating circumstances. The motion was made by Alan Slavin and seconded by Jamie Ponte. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes  
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes  
City of Fall River-----Yes  
City of New Bedford-----Yes  
City of Taunton-----Yes  
Town of Mansfield-----Yes  
Town of Somerset-----Yes  
Town of Carver-----Yes  
Town of Wareham-----Yes  
GATRA-----Yes  
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **9. Draft FFY 2025-2029 TIP Development**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that she and Jackie Jones attended two Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) readiness days with the MassDOT district office and Boston office earlier in the month where they discussed all projects in the current TIP as well as additional projects, their statuses and cost increases. Ms. Estrela-Pedro presented a chart of projects considered for programming in the FFY2025-2029 TIP. There will be an overall cost increase of \$11.5 million for 2024-2028 projects. She discussed updates on projects in each year and explained the domino effect that is happening. One project currently programmed for FFY2024 will not be able to be programmed this year and will need to be shifted to the FFY25-29 TIP along with its \$8 million cost increase. SRPEDD staff will have further conversations with specific communities on projects' readiness and desires for funding. Ms. Estrela-Pedro noted that projects in red are those that staff are looking to push out. Yellow indicates a questionable project where there is uncertainty whether or not it would stay in that year. Projects in green are those that have the opportunity to advance to an earlier year, of which there is only one. She presented a list of

supplemental projects, including bridge projects, that were initiated by communities, received an earmark, are looking for construction funding, and will not be scored with SRPEDD's evaluation criteria. She noted that at this time staff are not looking to bring in any additional projects to the development of the FFY25-29 TIP as there is only a reminder of \$1.1 million in FFY2029. Staff will send out several scenarios for the development of the FFY2025-2029 TIP and will ask the JTPG and SMMPO to select one at their next meetings. Ms. Estrela-Pedro provided opportunity for questions. Mr. Slavin expressed concern with further project delay due to a large new housing development and additional traffic coming into Wareham soon. Further discussion ensued about whether any projects are moving beyond 2029 and whether there is opportunity for additional projects to come in and apply for funding in years where there is currently a surplus. Ms. Estrela-Pedro responded that if a town can get project design ready and move it through the review process this is a possibility. Ms. Jackie Jones stated that smaller projects are easier to move forward than larger ones and encouraged staff to consider proposing small-scale demonstration projects and reach out to SRPEDD staff with ideas.

#### **10. Other Business**

Lisa Estrela-Pedro announced that MassDOT will be holding the annual Innovation Conference on April 30 and May 1 at DCU Center in Worcester. She stated that on February 28 there will be a virtual design public hearing for the Marion and Wareham bridge replacement on Marion Road in Wareham Road along Route 6 over the Weweantic River. On March 20, there will be a virtual design public hearing for the Westport intersection improvements at Route 177 and Roberts Road/Tickle Road.

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

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on March 19, 2024, at 1:00 pm, held virtually as of right now.

#### **12. Adjourn**

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Marie Clarner made the motion and Alan Slavin seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:53 PM.