

**Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.**

**The following members were in attendance:**

Stephen Woelfel-----Representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Acting MassDOT Secretary, *Chair*  
Richard Bilski-----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  
Sarah Hewins-----Town of Carver  
Alan Slavin-----Town of Wareham  
MaryEllen DeFrias-----GATRA Administrator  
Erik Rousseau-----SRTA Administrator

**The following were also in attendance:**

Dana Hanson----- Office of Congressman Auchincloss  
Jenna Massoud----- Office of Congressman Auchincloss  
Joshua Barber-----FHWA  
Derek Krevat-----MassDOT  
Barbara Lachance-----MassDOT  
Raissah Kouame-----MassDOT  
Stephanie Abundo-----MassDOT  
Andrew Wang-----MassDOT  
Kathy Holton-----City of Taunton  
Victoria Alfaro-----Town of Freetown/JTPG Chair  
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD  
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD  
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD  
Rebekah Rose-----SRPEDD  
Dan McCormack-----BETA Group  
John-----Lakecam TV  
Paul Cogley-----Town of Somerset  
Sarah Friedman-----Member of public  
Jennifer Doherty-----Member of public

**Handouts:**

SMMPO Agenda March 19, 2024  
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes February 20, 2024

- Agenda Item 5- FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment 5
- Agenda Item 6a—FFY25-29 TIP Statewide Lists
- Agenda Item 6b – GATRA Draft FFY25-29
- Agenda Item 6b –SRTA Draft FFY25-29
- Agenda Item 6c –TIP Scenario 1
- Agenda Item 6c—TIP Scenario 2
- Agenda Item 6c –TIP Supplemental Projects List

**AGENDA:**

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

Chairman Stephen Woelfel 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 Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes

**2. Approval of Minutes – February 20, 2024 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)**

Chairman Woelfel requested a motion to approve the minutes from the February 20, 2024, SMMPO meeting. The motion was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Alan Slavin. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- Town of Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes

**THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**3. Public Comments**

Chairman Woelfel 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 GATRA is in the process of fully rolling out Sunday service, which will provide seven day a week service, and is assessing opportunity for offering later service until 8 PM on the larger routes starting after July. GATRA is working on plans for its facility in Wareham and hoping to put out bid docs for construction in the late spring. Erik Rousseau informed the group that SRTA is also rolling out Sunday service, with a 14% increase in service and \$3 million worth of service, which started on January 28, 2024 and will be piloted until June 30, 2024. SRTA hopes to extend the pilot into a permanent offering but is still assessing the feasibility of this. SRTA’s Fall River facility is inadequate for supporting zero emission vehicles and it is in the process of identifying potential options for relocation that would support this platform. SRTA is hopeful to be able to roll out its bus stop improvement plan which has made great progress in the last few years.

**5. FFY24-28 TIP Proposed Amendment #5 – Removal of Project 610647 Wareham: WAREHAM- CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS ON ROUTE 6 AT SWIFTS BEACH ROAD & Cost Increase for Project 608563 Swansea: SWANSEA- IMPROVEMENTS ON ROUTE 6 (GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC HIGHWAY) AT GARDNERS NECK ROAD (Materials Attached and Call Vote Needed to Release to 21-Day Comment Period)**

Lisa Estrela-Pedro informed the group that Proposed Amendment #5 on the FFY24-28 TIP includes project changes for FFY2024. There are two items to this change. Project 610647 Wareham Corridor improvements on Route 6 at Swifts Beach Road is being proposed to be removed from FFY2024 because design plans are not ready for construction to be advertised in 2024. It is being proposed for inclusion in the FFY25-29 TIP. Because of this change, there will be an approximately \$18 million surplus in regional target funds in FFY2024. SMMPO staff are working with MassDOT District 5 staff and regional transit authorities to identify projects to fund that will fill the gap this year. The second item of this proposed amendment is Project 608563, Swansea Improvements on Route 6 at Gardners Neck Road, which will have a cost increase due to increased materials and labor costs. Ms. Estrela-Pedro concluded by asking that the body take a vote to release Amendment #5 to a 21-day public comment period.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on FFY2024-28 TIP Amendment #5 and seeing none asked for a motion and second to release the Amendment to comment period. The motion was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Mary Ellen DeFrias. 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-----Abstain  
 GATRA-----Yes  
 SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSENTION.

**6. Presentation of Projects for Draft FFY2025-2029 TIP**

**a. MassDOT Statewide Highway Project List (Materials Attached)**

**b. Regional Transit Authority Lists - GATRA & SRTA (Materials Attached)**

**c. Regional Target Funding Project Lists (Materials Attached & Roll Call Vote Needed to Recommend to SMMPO)**

Lisa Estrela-Pedro explained all the listings of projects being considered for programming on the draft FFY2025-2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). She began with the MassDOT Statewide Highway Project List and explained the difference, if any, in project programming for projects currently on the FFY2024-2028 TIP and new projects. Ms. Estrela-Pedro encouraged the group to reference the handouts provided for specific details. She brought special attention to the Taunton River Rail Trail which was previously programmed with regional target funds and is now being programmed with MassDOT’s statewide funds for FFY2028; this has freed up some MPO regional funds in that year. She then provided an overview of GATRA and SRTA projects being considered for programming over the next five years. GATRA is programming \$96 million of investments over the next five years for projects such as non-fixed route and fixed route operating mobility management, planning efforts, miscellaneous support equipment, maintenance facility, support vehicles, replacement vans, 35-foot buses, and charging stations. SRTA is programming \$251 million of investments over the next five years which include projects such as operating assistance, ADA paratransit, support equipment, engineering and design for a bus equipment facility, hybrid and electric buses, and tire leases. Ms. Estrela-Pedro paused to answer questions.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro then explained the lists of two scenarios for regional target funds for the draft FFY25-29 TIP, which were presented for a vote at the March Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG) meeting. She discussed updates on projects programmed for each year and explained that some need to be shifted to a later year due to delays in design readiness and cost increases. The difference between scenario 1 and 2 is the projects programmed for

FFY2029. Scenario 1 would program two additional larger projects in FFY2029: Swansea Corridor Improvements on Route 118, from Milford Road to Wood Street and Dartmouth- Cross Road Corridor Improvements. Scenario 2 would program three additional smaller projects in FFY2029: Dartmouth- Cross Road Corridor Improvements, New Bedford- Corridor Improvements on County Street, from Union Street to Kempton Street, and Raynham- Intersection Improvements at North Main Street (Route 104), Pleasant Street, South Main Street (Route 104) and Orchard Street. She informed the group that the JTPG voted to recommend Scenario 2 to the SMMPO. She noted, however, that in the meantime there was a cost increase for the Mattapoissett project that happened at the end of last week. Because of this SMMPO staff created a modified Scenario 2. This pushes out the Dartmouth corridor improvements project to 2029. In this case, only two additional projects could be programmed in 2029. Based on the costs and priority, it would be Dartmouth Cross Road and the New Bedford improvements at County Street. The Raynham project would no longer be programmed as it would put us over the available regional target funding. Ms. Estrela-Pedro concluded by asking the body to vote on selecting a scenario to allow SMMPO staff to begin developing the FFY25-29 TIP, with staff’s recommendation being the modified Scenario 2.

The Chair asked if there were any questions to which there were none and asked the body for a motion and second to choose a scenario and opened it up for discussion. A motion to accept modified Scenario 2 was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Sarah Hewins. 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
- Town of Carver-----Yes
- Town of Wareham-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**7. Draft FFY2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Development Discussion**

Jackie Jones informed the group that SMMPO staff are in the process of developing the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for FFY2025, which runs from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025. The work program covers the activities of the SRPEDD Transportation Department and includes items like bicycle and pedestrian planning, safety analysis, congestion analysis, low-cost quick implementation projects, assistance with a variety of data needs, intersection

analysis, corridor studies, and transit studies. She asked the group if there are any locations they would like SMMPO staff to study and include in its work program next year. She referenced the Regional Transportation Plan and the SRPEDD Top 100 Most Dangerous Locations for examples and informed the group that already included in the FFY2025 UPWP are phase two of the current evacuation route study and updates to the freight plan as well as continuation of existing programs. There was no feedback provided at this time by SMMPO members or attendees.

#### **8. Other Business**

Lisa Estrela-Pedro informed the group that the recording for SRPEDD's TIP Workshop hosted in December is on YouTube. She stated that MassDOT is still accepting registrations for the annual Innovation Conference on April 30 and May 1 at DCU Center in Worcester, to which Mr. Woelfel corrected that in person registration has already exceeded capacity and is now closed. Virtual registration for certain conference sessions is still open.

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

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on April 16, 2024, at 1:00 pm, held virtually as of right now.

#### **10. Adjourn**

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Alan Slavin made the motion and Dan Aguiar seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:27 PM.