

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

**DRAFT Minutes for the JTPG Meeting**

**Held on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 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, Chair.....Town of Acushnet  
Michael Tyler.....City of Attleboro  
Joe Callahan.....Town of Berkley  
John Woods.....Town of Carver  
Tim Barber.....Town of Dartmouth  
Thomas Ferry.....Town of Dighton  
Joshua Crabb.....Town of Fairhaven  
Dan Aguiar.....City of Fall River  
Franklin Moniz.....Town of Lakeville  
Norm Hills.....Town of Marion  
Janice Robbins.....Town of Mattapoisett  
Justin Chicca.....City of New Bedford  
Adam Hart.....City of New Bedford  
William O'Rourke.....Town of Plainville  
Norm Sturtevant.....Town of Raynham  
Katherine Nunes.....City of Taunton  
James Hartnett.....Town of Westport  
Michael Burris.....Town of Westport  
Chris McDermott.....At-Large, City of Attleboro  
Ashley Eaton.....At-Large, City of New Bedford  
Alan Slavin.....At-Large, Town of Wareham/ New Bedford Subregion

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

Town of Freetown  
Town of Mansfield  
Town of Middleborough  
Town of North Attleborough  
Town of Norton  
Town of Rehoboth  
Town of Rochester

Town of Seekonk  
Town of Somerset  
Town of Swansea

**Also in Attendance:**

Jefferey Oaks.....South Coast Bikeway Alliance Member, Marion  
Gail Rodrigues.....Southcoast Bikeway Alliance Member  
Barbara Lachance.....Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Chris Klem.....Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Derek Shooster.....Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Shaun Handy.....Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Shayne Trimbell.....SRTA  
Mary Ellen DeFrias.....GATRA  
Emma Yeh.....Pare Corp.  
Steve Findlen.....Howard Stein Hudson  
Nick Schonberger.....Mass Development  
Pamela Haznar.....McClure  
Phil Viveiros.....Bowman  
Lisa Estrela-Pedro.....SRPEDD (Attended at SRPEDD office)  
Andrea Duarte.....SRPEDD (Attended at SRPEDD office)  
Noah Soutier.....SRPEDD (Attended at SRPEDD office)  
Luis deOliveira.....SRPEDD (Attended at SRPEDD office)  
Jennifer Chaves.....SRPEDD  
Rebekah Rose.....SRPEDD  
Dan Brogan.....SRPEDD  
Jon Gray.....SRPEDD

**Handouts:**

JTPG Meeting Agenda for March 12, 2025  
DRAFT February 12, 2025, JTPG Meeting Minutes

**AGENDA**

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

Chair Victoria Alfaro called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM. Chair Alfaro made an announcement on how the meeting will be run using the Zoom webinar mode. 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, Chair.....Town of Acushnet  
Michael Tyler.....City of Attleboro

John Woods.....Town of Carver  
Tim Barber.....Town of Dartmouth  
Thomas Ferry.....Town of Dighton  
James Purcell.....Town of Dighton  
Joshua Crabb.....Town of Fairhaven  
Dan Aguiar.....City of Fall River  
Franklin Moniz.....Town of Lakeville  
Norm Hills.....Town of Marion  
Janice Robbins.....Town of Mattapoisett  
Justin Chicca.....City of New Bedford  
Adam Hart.....City of New Bedford  
William O'Rourke.....Town of Plainville  
Norm Sturtevant.....Town of Raynham  
Katherine Nunes.....City of Taunton  
James Hartnett.....Town of Westport  
Michael Burris.....Town of Westport  
Chris McDermott.....At-Large, City of Attleboro  
Ashley Eaton.....At-Large, City of New Bedford  
Alan Slavin.....At-Large, Town of Wareham

## **2. Approval of Minutes – February 12, 2025 (Materials Attached & roll call vote needed)**

Chair Alfaro informed the group of an edit made to February's meeting minutes, Robert Araujo's name was removed from the meeting as he was not present. Chair Alfaro called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2025, meeting. The motion was made by Janice Robbins and seconded by Mike Tyler. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

Town of Acushnet.....Yes  
City of Attleboro.....Yes  
Town of Berkley.....Abstain  
Town of Carver.....Yes  
Town of Dartmouth .....Yes  
Town of Dighton.....Yes  
Town of Fairhaven.....Yes  
City of Fall River.....Yes  
Town of Lakeville.....Yes  
Town of Marion .....Yes  
Town of Mattapoisett.....Yes  
City of New Bedford.....Yes  
Town of Plainville.....Yes  
Town of Raynham.....Yes

City of Taunton.....Yes  
Town of Westport.....Yes  
At-Large, City of Attleboro.....Yes  
At-Large, City of New Bedford....Yes  
At-Large, Town of Wareham.....Yes

**THE MOTION PASSED WITH 1 ABSTENTION.**

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

Jeffrey Oaks, resident of Marion and the town’s Southcoast Bikeway representative, presented to this group that for over 30 years, the Town of Marion and the Commonwealth have invested time and money into Marion’s shared use path that is nearing completion. Final design plans are due this month and construction is set to begin within a year. The project will boost local businesses, improve air quality, and provide a safe commuting route, including a Safe Routes to School connection. Potential federal funding cuts threaten the future of the shared use path and Mr. Oaks requested continued support and prompt notification if funding cuts become a risk, to ensure this long-awaited project becomes a reality.

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

Shayne Trimbell reminded the group that the South Coast Rail service will begin in less than two weeks, a long-awaited milestone. To support early morning departures and late evening arrivals, SRTA is partnering with VIA to provide micro-transit connections to the New Bedford and Fall River stations. An expanded fixed-route bus service will connect passengers to the New Bedford Downtown Station and Fall River Depot, ensuring seamless transit options. Ms. DeFrias noted that preparations are also underway for GATRA’s Middleborough Station realignment and the opening of the East Taunton Station, with schedule adjustments planned for Mansfield and Attleboro. Federal funding uncertainties remain a concern, as the DOT’s operating budget for this year has not been confirmed, making capital planning and budgeting challenging.

Lisa Estrela-Pedro asked Mr. Trimbell if micro-transit service would extend into the weekend or just weekday. Mr. Trimbell responded that service will operate Monday through Friday from 4 AM to 8 AM and 5 PM to 9 PM, funded by a MassDOT grant through one of the Fair Share Act programs. This schedule was set before the MBTA expanded its commuter rail trip schedule, so SRTA will monitor ridership and adjust as needed. While there is potential for future expansions to weekends or midday service, the current plan aligns with the original vision of providing transit connections outside fixed-route service hours. SRTA will proceed with the established schedule and evaluate its effectiveness over time.

**5. Community of Practice Discussion - Opportunity for Members to Share Questions, Project Updates, Challenges, Success Stories, Lessons Learned**

Mike Tyler raised concerns about the coordination between MassDOT and SRPEDD regarding the South Avenue Corridor Improvement Project. Attleboro has been actively working with MassDOT, it appears that updates are not being adequately communicated to SRPEDD, leading to discrepancies in project

status understanding, particularly in relation to the TIP list and transportation planning. The project is at 25% design, awaiting MassDOT comments before scheduling a public hearing. Given the project's importance to the city and its connection to future I-95 Exit 3 improvements, Mr. Tyler emphasized the need for better alignment and communication among all parties involved to ensure smooth progress. Ms. Estrela-Pedro responded that while MassDOT considers a project at the 25% design stage once plans are submitted, SRPEDD does not classify it as such until after a design public hearing has been held. Given that 25% design plans often go through multiple revisions, this process can take up to a year. Due to regional funding constraints, many projects are at a similar stage of readiness, and only a limited number can be programmed at a time. She noted that the key takeaway is that by keeping the South Avenue Corridor Improvement Project moving through design, there remains a possibility for it to advance sooner than its current placement in 2029 or 2030, depending on future TIP development and project readiness. Discussion ensued about additional communication between Attleboro and SRPEDD.

Joshua Crabb shared an update on his efforts to advance a future TIP project. While still awaiting official confirmation from the Project Review Committee, the town of Fairhaven is proactively moving forward by securing agreements with a consultant and surveyor. Fairhaven is committed to the project and has initiated right-of-way research and other preliminary steps, signaling to MassDOT that the town is prepared to move forward. Barbara Lachance responded that Mr. Crabb's project was approved and that official letters will be sent out soon. Due to recent revisions and technical difficulties, there has been a delay in processing, but the letters should be issued within the next two weeks.

Nick Schoenberger highlighted efforts to improve traffic safety along Fall River's North Main Street, particularly between Bedford Street and past the YMCA. The lack of stop signs and traffic-calming measures has led to excessive speeding in this commercial district. Appreciation was expressed for guidance received from Andrea Duarte and to Jon Gray on advancing discussions with the administration but noted a challenge in securing approval for a curb cut necessary to install a rapid rectangular flashing beacon. Mr. Schoenberger is committed to developing a plan and welcomes further input from SRPEDD, including a potential site visit to explore solutions and funding opportunities.

## **6. SMMPO Technical Assistance Program Presentation**

Luis de Oliveira presented an overview of the SMMPO's Community Technical Assistance Program and a review of 2024 requests. This program provides support to member communities for local transportation concerns that do not require comprehensive planning studies. Services include traffic counts, road issue evaluations, truck analyses, signal and stop warrant analyses, speed zoning recommendations, and intersection evaluations. In 2024, SRPEDD received 16 technical requests from 11 communities, with some towns submitting multiple requests. The team conducted signal warrant analyses, multi-way stop warrant reviews, historical data comparisons, and traffic counts, among other assessments. Three projects are already scheduled for 2025, including work in Carver, Westport, and Taunton. Communities can submit requests year-round via SRPEDD's website, with data collection typically occurring from April to November. Mr. de Oliveira encouraged early submissions and offered assistance with the application process. Mr. Tyler praised the Community Technical Assistance

Program, highlighting its simplicity, efficiency, and thoroughness. He commended SRPEDD for providing Attleboro with a well-structured and informative report on the North Main Street and Holden Street intersection. The detailed analysis enabled the city to develop an effective plan for improvements. He emphasized the professionalism and user-friendly nature of the program, strongly recommending it to other communities. Nick Schonberger asked how an application can be submitted, and who is responsible for submitting it. Mr. de Olivera replied that an application must be submitted by an official community representative, such as a DPW official or a Select Board member. Applications can be submitted through the SRPEDD Technical Assistance website form or downloaded and sent to Mr. de Olivera. Chair Alfaro asked how communities have utilized this program after receiving the report and what steps have they taken to address issues in the identified intersection or study area? Mr. de Olivera replied that communities typically use the program's report in various ways. Some collaborate with MassDOT to advance necessary improvements, while others use the information for long-term planning or potential TIP project submissions. In some cases, the report serves as a reference without immediate action. A past example includes a signal warrant analysis for Route 123 at the I-495 ramps in Norton, which later led to a signal installation.

## **7. Draft 2026-2030 TIP MassDOT Statewide Highway Projects List**

Lisa Estrela-Pedro presented to the JTPG a Draft of the MassDOT Statewide Highway Projects List, which prioritizes state-funded projects at the state level without impacting regional target funds. Notable updates include funding deficits for two earmarked projects in Dighton and Raynham in 2026, requiring offsets to remain on the TIP. New bridge preservation projects were introduced in Taunton and Freetown. Several projects were deferred, including bridge replacements in Fall River and Freetown which moved to 2027, intersection improvements in Somerset and a Safe Routes to School project in Fall River which both shifted to 2028. A resurfacing project on I-495 in Raynham, Taunton, and Norton was added to 2027. Updates for 2029-2030 include adjustments to projects in New Bedford, Freetown, and Middleboro, along with a new pavement preservation project for I-195 in New Bedford. She entertained questions to which there were none.

## **8. Draft 2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Regional Target Highway Project Programming Considerations Preferred List (Materials Attached & Roll Call Vote Needed to recommend to the SMMPO)**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro presented the preliminary regional target-funded TIP projects lists for 2026-2030, focusing on three funding scenarios. She stated that staff are looking for a preferred scenario list from JTPG and SMMPO and that this is a preliminary list staff are using to begin developing the 2026-2030 TIP, noting changes are still possible if project costs increase. Scenario 1, based on initial TIP readiness day recommendations, resulted in project deferrals, including Westport's Intersection Improvements at Route 177 and Roberts Road/Tickle Road project being pushed from 2026 to 2027 and Attleboro's Corridor Improvements on Route 123, from Lathrop Road to Thatcher Street project being pushed beyond 2030 due to fiscal constraints. Scenario 1 would not program any new projects in 2030. Scenario 2 prioritizes projects based on the SMMPO's evaluation criteria, shifting projects like Norton's Intersection Improvements at West Main Street (Route 123) North Worcester Street and South Worcester Street from 2026 to 2027, New Bedford's Intersection Improvements at Mount Pleasant

Street and Nash Road from 2027 to 2028, and Mattapoissett's Corridor Improvements and Related Work on Main Street, Water Street, Beacon Street And Marion Road from 2028 to 2029 to maintain fiscal balance. Scenario 2 programs one new project in 2030, Taunton's Intersection Improvements at Winthrop Street (Route 44) and Highland Street. Scenario 3 aims to maximize regional target funding, keeping more projects in earlier years while allowing for cost increases. Scenario 3 programs a different new project in 2030, Raynham's Intersection Improvements at North Main Street (Route 104), Pleasant Street, South Main Street (Route 104) and Orchard Street. Each scenario involved strategic adjustments to remain fiscally constrained while accommodating project priorities. The committee reviewed project placements and funding balances, with discussions on advancing projects if they progress more quickly than anticipated.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro asked members to vote on a preferred scenario to recommend to the SMMPO. Mr. Tyler expressed support for Scenario 2, emphasizing that it best aligns with SRPEDD's evaluation criteria scores. He highlighted the importance of prioritizing projects based on need, referencing a high-scoring project in Attleboro that serves a low-income, elderly neighborhood and three schools. The project addresses safety concerns on a hazardous stretch of Route 123. Mr. Tyler stated that while acknowledging that 2029 is later than ideal, Attleboro officials are willing to wait their turn but advocate for using evaluation scores as the guiding principle for project prioritization. Jim Hartnett asked if there was a scenario that would keep Westport's project in Fiscal Year 2026 instead of moving it to 2027; he acknowledged that while they would prefer their project to be scheduled sooner, 2027 could still be feasible. He cautioned against relying on evaluation scores, as their project, with a score of 29, may never rank higher than others despite significant investments made in its design. Mr. Hartnett also raised concerns about the cost and impact of requiring shared-use paths and bike lanes in every project. While supportive of bike infrastructure, Mr. Hartnett pointed out that in this case, the shared-use path would not connect to an existing network, yet it adds significant costs, requires land takings, and may involve wetland filling and Army Corps approvals. Mr. Hartnett suggested that the group reconsider a blanket requirement for shared-use paths and bike lanes in future projects, advocating instead for a more case-by-case approach. Ms. Estrela-Pedro acknowledged the concern and stated that the design schedule will be reassessed. She expressed a preference for keeping the project in 2027 to ensure it secures funding and is completed on time. Upon reviewing the timeline, if it is determined that the project could be ready in 2026 with confidence, she would consider advancing it. Discussion ensued with Justin Chicca, Alan Slavin, and Mr. Aguiar contributing concerns about adding mandatory bicycle lanes to new projects. Chair Alfaro requested that the topic be revisited at a later meeting. Mr. Aguiar asked for clarification on whether the group is recommending that all three scenarios be sent to the SMMPO for consideration or if they need to prioritize one scenario over the others. Ms. Estrela-Pedro replied that the group is being asked to recommend one scenario to the SMMPO. While all three scenarios will be presented, the goal is to provide the SMMPO with a clear recommendation from the JTPG for consideration.

Chair Alfaro called for a motion to recommend a scenario to the SMMPO. A motion was made by Dan Aguiar to recommend Scenario 2 to the SMMPO and was seconded by Mike Tyler. Ms. Duarte then called the roll:

Town of Acushnet.....Yes  
 City of Attleboro.....Yes  
 Town of Berkley.....Yes  
 Town of Carver.....Yes  
 Town of Dartmouth .....Yes  
 Town of Dighton.....Yes  
 Town of Fairhaven.....Yes  
 City of Fall River.....Yes  
 Town of Lakeville.....Yes  
 Town of Marion .....Yes  
 Town of Mattapoisett.....Yes  
 City of New Bedford.....Yes  
 Town of Plainville.....Yes  
 Town of Raynham.....Yes  
 City of Taunton.....Yes  
 Town of Westport.....Yes  
 At-Large, City of Attleboro.....Yes  
 At-Large, City of New Bedford....Yes  
 At-Large, Town of Wareham.....Yes

**THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**9. Other Business**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro provided a brief update regarding remote meetings under the Open Meeting Law. She stated that clarification is being sought regarding Open Meeting Law requirements for this advisory group. If the current extension is not renewed, in-person attendance may be required for voting, with at least 16 members present to take action. For now, hybrid meetings will continue, but updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

Ms. Duarte announced some opportunities to the group. The South Coast Bikeway Alliance (SCBA) is seeking additional members, particularly from Swansea, Somerset, and Fall River, as these communities currently lack representation in the advocacy group. She encouraged members to share SCBA contact information with anyone who may be interested. Additionally, several upcoming trainings are available through Bay State Roads, including a Complete Streets Safety Countermeasures training in Westhampton, a virtual ADA Municipal Transition Plan development and tracking training, a pavement maintenance training in Chestnut Hill, and Creating Accessible Communities workshop in Marion on April 15.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that the development of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is underway, and community technical requests are a key part of it. If communities have additional needs



or require larger studies, they are encouraged to reach out to see if those can be accommodated by the program.

Mr. Slavin commented that there is growing concern over the impact of federal funding uncertainties, particularly regarding school transportation, alternative energy, and other federally funded programs. With large-scale layoffs and shifting priorities in Washington, the stability of these initiatives remains uncertain. Given the unpredictability of future budgets, there is a strong recommendation for collective lobbying efforts rather than individual advocacy to ensure continued support for critical programs.

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

Date and Time for the next meeting is April 09, 2025, at 2:00 PM with the goal of holding a hybrid session. Attendees were encouraged to plan for in-person attendance to ensure a quorum, pending further updates on Open Meeting Law requirements.

#### **11. Adjourn**

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn which was made by Justin Chicca and seconded by Dan Aguiar. Hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 PM.