

Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, August 19, 2025 at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.

The following members were in attendance:

Derek Shooster-----Representing Monica Tibbits-Nutt, Acting MassDOT Secretary, ***Chair***
Richard Bilski-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Cathleen DeSimone-----Mayor of Attleboro (Left early)
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
Kevin Dumas-----Representing Diana Bren, Town of Mansfield
Jennifer Vincent-----Town of Berkley
Marie Clarner-----SRPEDD Commission Chair (Arrived late)
Christina Mendoza-----Representing Erik Rousseau, SRTA Administrator (Arrived late)
Mary Ellen DeFrias-----GATRA Administrator

The following Ex-Officio, non-voting members were in attendance:

Anthony Jones-----Federal Highway Administration
Victoria Alfaro-----Joint Transportation Planning Group Chair

The following were also in attendance:

Chris Klem----- Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Derek Krevat----- Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Barbara Lachance----- Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Diane Hayes----- Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Catarina Perreira-----Office of Congressman Auchincloss
Alan Slavin-----JTPG At-Large Commissioner/Wareham
Will Gardner-----Fairhaven Resident
Miles Grant-----Fairhaven Resident
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD
Dan Brogan-----SRPEDD
Noah Soutier-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda August 19, 2025

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chairman Derek Shooster called the SMMPO meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Ms. Andrea Duarte-Campos 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 Attleboro-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Berkley-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

Chair Shooster acknowledged that there were two new SMMPO members present, Jennifer Vincent from the Town of Berkley and Andrew Romano from the town of Fairhaven.

2. Approval of Minutes – June 17, 2025 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)

Chairman Shooster requested a motion to approve the minutes from the June 17, 2025, SMMPO meeting. The motion was made by Mary Ellen DeFrias and seconded by Jay Pateakos. Ms. Duarte-Campos then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes
MassDOT Administrator-----Abstain
City of Attleboro-----Yes
City of Fall River-----Yes
City of New Bedford-----Yes
City of Taunton-----Yes
Town of Berkley-----Abstain
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS.

3. Public Comments

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

4. Regional Transit Authorities Report – RTA Updates

Mary Ellen DeFrias announced that the Gateway Link service has started, which now connects Brockton, Taunton, and Fall River and is a partnership between three regional transit authorities. She stated that GATRA is preparing for minor adjustments to its fall schedule to better align with ridership numbers and feedback it has received. These schedule changes will be posted online and GATRA is also hoping to add additional service.

5. MassDOT Local Early-Stage and Actionable Planning (LEAP) Program Presentation (Link)

Derek Krevat provided a presentation of MassDOT's new Local Early and Actionable Planning (LEAP) Program, designed to support Massachusetts municipalities in advancing priority transportation projects. The program is run by the recently formed Municipal Planning and Support team, created about six months ago to respond to new federal funding opportunities and to provide general assistance for local project development. LEAP will operate through pre-qualified architectural and engineering consultants who can provide early-stage planning and project development services, such as conceptual design, alternatives analysis, safety studies, traffic counts, cost estimating, and grant application support. The program is currently budgeted at \$1 million per year, with individual project funding ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000, intended for early design phases rather than full-scale engineering. Municipalities can submit project requests through a simple online form, which are then reviewed by MassDOT regional committees in partnership with regional planning agencies like SRPEDD. Projects will be prioritized for communities with limited in-house planning resources, particularly rural towns and gateway cities. Eligible activities include support for Complete Streets design, roadway safety improvements, crash analysis, site investigations, mapping, and technical assistance for state and federal grant programs. While the program is funded with non-federal dollars and is flexible in terms of ultimate funding sources, it is meant to help localities prepare projects for future state or federal funding opportunities. Mr. Krevat emphasized that the program's goal is to expand the pool of viable projects statewide by providing early-stage planning resources where they are most needed. Mr. Krevat provided an opportunity for questions to which none were received at the time.

6. Regional Evacuation Route Plan – Presentation and Discussion

Jackie Jones provided an initial overview of SRPEDD's draft Regional Evacuation Route Plan. She stated that as part of the recent regional transportation planning process, SRPEDD identified a

lack of coordinated regional evacuation route planning, as most communities only have local plans that stop at their borders. Over the past two years, staff met with municipal staff from all 27 communities, conducted a needs analysis, and synthesized local plans into a regional framework with new routing and mapping. The draft Regional Evacuation Route report includes hazard considerations, Title VI and environmental reviews, public health factors, community-specific issues, and best practices. Key findings highlight the need for improved alert systems with higher sign-up rates, clearer chains of command for evacuation authority, re-entry permitting strategies, stronger volunteer teams, and better-defined regional sheltering agreements. Gaps also exist in memorandums of understanding (MOUs) to clarify responsibilities for approving costs and logistics during emergencies. Recommendations focus on identifying problem areas along evacuation routes, improving hospital preparedness, and prioritizing projects that increase resilience. The plan will help tie identified needs to potential funding sources and proposes next steps. SRPEDD staff will be doing tabletop exercises with community stakeholders to test evacuation scenarios and will distribute best practice information to local stakeholders and the public which will include updated routing and TIP project evaluation criteria that prioritizes TIP funding towards projects that help strengthen evacuation routing in case of an emergency. The draft Plan is expected to be released for a public comment period at the September SMMPO meeting.

**7. FFY2025-2029 TIP Proposed Adjustment #3 for GATRA & SRTA FFY2025 and 2026
Project Cost Modifications (Materials Attached, Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)**

Ms. Jones clarified the difference between a TIP adjustment and amendment, noting that both involve changes to originally programmed projects in the TIP but differ in scale. Adjustments reflect minor changes, such as cost shifts under \$500,000 (for projects under \$5 million) or under 10% of the total cost (for projects over \$5 million), while amendments are larger cost changes, or adding or removing projects. Dan Brogan, SRPEDD Transit Planner, stated that FFY2025-2029 TIP Proposed Adjustment #3 for GATRA & SRTA FFY2025 and 2026 includes for SRTA, lower-than-expected maintenance costs and a scheduling shift for a 35-foot hybrid bus reduced expenses, with some costs deferred to FY2026. It also reflects additional savings or cost decreases which arose from ITS fare collection and facility cost decreases, particularly as many systems moved toward fare-free service outside the MBTA. For GATRA, similar adjustments reflected reduced maintenance costs, along with updates tied to the East Wareham maintenance facility, a 35-foot battery electric bus, and a minibus. Overall, most changes involved cost savings rather than overruns, reflecting end-of-fiscal-year adjustments. He provided the opportunity for questions and none were received at the time.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on FFY2025-2029 TIP Proposed Adjustment #3 for and seeing none asked for a motion to endorse it as presented. The motion was made by Kevin

Dumas and seconded by Mary Ellen DeFrias. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte-Campos 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 Berkley-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. FFY2025-2029 TIP Proposed Amendment #5 for SRTA FFY2025 Project Cost Modifications (Materials Attached, Special Consideration Requested to Waive Public Comment Period and Allow for Immediate Endorsement, Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

Mr. Brogan explained that FFY2025-2029 TIP Proposed Amendment #5 is for SRTA maintenance related costs with a variance of about \$100,000 that wasn't allocated for fiscal year 2025, with some maintenance costs again being lower than anticipated. The Chair stated that this item could have also been treated as an adjustment as the project is not being fully removed.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on FFY2025-2029 TIP Proposed Amendment #5 and seeing none asked for a motion to waive its comment period and automatically endorse it. The motion was made by Kevin Dumas and seconded by Mary Ellen DeFrias. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte-Campos 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 Berkley-----Yes
Town of Mansfield-----Yes
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

GATRA-----Yes

SRTA-----Yes

9. Other Business

Ms. Jones stated that SRPEDD's annual meeting will be held on September 24th to showcase SRPEDD's work and celebrate its Commission. She encouraged those who were interested in attending to visit the SRPEDD website for more information.

10. Date and Time for Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on September 16, 2025 at 1:00 pm, held virtually.

11. Adjourn

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Kevin Dumas made the motion and Jay Pateakos seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:33 PM.