

PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SRPEDD Announces a 21-day Public Comment Period and Two Virtual Public Meeting Options - Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at 2:00 pm or Monday October 6, 2025, at 4:00 pm to hear comments on the release of the Draft Regional Evacuation Plan for Southeastern Massachusetts.

September 17, 2025 – The [Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization \(SMMPO\)](#)'s draft [Regional Evacuation Plan](#) is being released to a 21-day public comment period. The Southeastern Massachusetts region is at risk from a variety of natural and man-made disasters that can result in the need for evacuation. While individual communities in the region have done significant work to be prepared for disasters, there is a significant planning gap at the regional level. Most community level planning does not provide instruction for evacuation outside community borders, leading to conflicting routing between communities. In order to provide and improve regional coordination, SRPEDD staff from the Homeland Security, Transportation, and Environmental departments completed a regional evacuation plan.

The study was largely informed by meetings with representatives from every municipality in the SRPEDD region, small, targeted focus groups, and meetings with statewide partners. To gain a comprehensive understanding of municipal resources for emergency situations and potential challenges, SRPEDD staff met with representatives from town administrator offices, police and fire departments, councils on aging, school departments, departments of public works, health departments, conservation agents, and other emergency management or human services staff.

This study examines the potential triggers for evacuation, clearly defines regional evacuation routes, and provides a plan to coordinate regional resources. The study also contains recommendations for improving routing and coordination and a resource list of best practices, which include:

- **Re-entry Permitting:** Controlling the flow of residents back into disaster impacted areas through a permitting system administered away from the disaster area in order to make for an orderly re-entry only for those with homes in impacted areas.
- **Regional CERT:** There has been a decrease in the number of active Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) after Covid. Communities may not be able to maintain a CERT if only one or two individuals are interested. However, if several municipalities band together with interested individuals, regional teams may be formed. Regionalization lets municipalities pool their budgets and share assets, and in some cases, can open grant opportunities not available to single municipalities.
- **Regional Public Info and Warning:** It has been said that for a message to get across to the public they need to see it three times, e.g., on the municipal Facebook page, on a variable traffic message board, and a text from their local alert system. Building a robust database of people opted into emergency alerts, and wide-scale, unified messaging from municipal websites, leaders,

and community groups to get individuals opting into this system, will be crucial to spreading the word in an emergency.

- **Regional Sheltering:** For some municipalities, capacity for resourcing, staffing, and operating an emergency shelter for 72 hours before help arrives is now more limited. Regionalizing shelters spreads the burden of resourcing and operating across regional partners and makes it easier to send one-two personnel every other shift than fully staff a shelter with just one municipality's resources. Centralizing clients in one shelter also facilitates provision of wraparound services.

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.

All of this work helps support the region's 27 communities toward building a safer, and more accessible, connected, reliable, and resilient transportation system for all mode users.

Two **virtual** public meetings on the draft Regional Evacuation Plan will be held **remotely**, one on **Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at 2:00 pm** and one on **Monday October 6, 2025, at 4:00 pm**. The same information will be presented at both meetings; there is no need to attend both. Everyone is welcome to attend, ask questions and offer comments, but attendance is not necessary to offer input or comment. More options to offer comments can be found below.

The meetings will be conducted through ZOOM. This link provides the information to allow participants to connect to the meeting through a computer, smart phone, or regular telephone:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>.

Register in advance for the September 30, 2025 (2 pm) webinar at this link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_z3Jomt7rS2OaynGMII0KYw

Register in advance for the October 6, 2025 (4 pm) webinar at this link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZjIZlfT6RDaTVDmpp9WQgg

The Draft Evacuation Plan will have a 21-day public comment period, and a final version will be endorsed at the next SMMPO meeting which is scheduled for October 21st. More detailed information on the document can be found on SRPEDD's website www.srpedd.org at the following link: [Draft Regional Evacuation Plan](#).

Comments are encouraged and may be offered by a variety of methods including: via e-mail at kham@srpedd.org; our website at <https://srpedd.org/contact-us/>; our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SRPEDD/>; or Instagram @SRPEDD <https://www.instagram.com/srpedd/>

The SMMPO, through SRPEDD, provides reasonable accommodations, including language assistance and/or auxiliary aids and services free of charge, upon request and as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact SRPEDD's Title VI Coordinator by phone (508 824-1367), dial 711 to use MassRelay, or by email at aduarte@srpedd.org. Requests should be made as soon as possible prior to the meeting.

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