

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

DRAFT Minutes for the JTPG Meeting

Held on Wednesday, September 10, 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:

Byron Holmes.....Town of Berkley
Tim Barber.....Town of Dartmouth
Joshua Crabb.....Town of Fairhaven
Dan Aguiar.....City of Fall River
Franklin Moniz.....Town of Lakeville
Josh Reinke.....Town of Mansfield
Norm Hills.....Town of Marion
Janice Robbins.....Town of Mattapoisett
Justin Chicca.....City of New Bedford
Michael Borg.....Town of North Attleborough
George Solas.....Town of Rehoboth
William O'Rourke.....Town of Plainville
TJ Torres.....Town of Plainville
Michael Burris.....Town of Westport
James Hartnett.....Town of Westport
Chris McDermott.....At-Large, City of Attleboro
Gloria Saddler.....At-Large, City of Fall River
Ashley Eaton.....At-Large, City of New Bedford
Alan Slavin.....At-Large, Wareham/New Bedford Subregion

The following members/alternates were NOT in attendance:

Town of Acushnet
Town of Carver
Town of Dighton
Town of Freetown
Town of Middleborough
Town of Norton
Town of Raynham
Town of Rochester
Town of Seekonk

Town of Somerset
Town of Swansea
City of Taunton

Also in Attendance:

Barbara Lachance.....Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Chris Klem.....Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Mary Ellen DeFrias.....GATRA
Christina Mendoza.....SRTA
Marie Clarner.....Town of North Attleborough/SRPEDD Commission Chair
Emma Yeh.....Pare Corp.
Will Gardner.....SouthCoast Places for People
Miles Grant.....SouthCoast Places for People
Lisa Estrela-Pedro.....SRPEDD (Attended at SRPEDD office)
Jackie Jones.....SRPEDD (Attended at SRPEDD office)
Andrea Duarte-Campos.....SRPEDD
Noah Soutier.....SRPEDD
Rebekah Rose.....SRPEDD
Jon Gray.....SRPEDD
Jen Chaves.....SRPEDD

Handouts:

JTPG Meeting Agenda for September 10, 2025
DRAFT August 13, 2025, JTPG Meeting Minutes

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Roll Call:

Vice Chair Gloria Saddler called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM. Andrea Duarte-Campos 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:

Byron Holmes.....Town of Berkley
Tim Barber.....Town of Dartmouth
Joshua Crabb.....Town of Fairhaven
Dan Aguiar.....City of Fall River
Franklin Moniz.....Town of Lakeville
Josh Reinke.....Town of Mansfield
Norm Hills.....Town of Marion
Janice Robbins.....Town of Mattapoissett
Justin Chicca.....City of New Bedford

Michael Borg.....Town of North Attleborough
 James Hartnett.....Town of Westport
 Chris McDermott.....At-Large, City of Attleboro
 Gloria Saddler.....At-Large, City of Fall River
 Ashley Eaton.....At-Large, City of New Bedford
 Alan Slavin.....At-Large, Wareham/New Bedford Subregion

2. Approval of Minutes – June 11, 2025 (Materials Attached & roll call vote needed)

Vice Chair Alan Slavin called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2025, meeting. The motion was made by Norman Hills and seconded by Janice Robbins. Ms. Duarte-Campos then called the roll:

Town of Berkley.....Yes
 Town of DartmouthYes
 Town of Fairhaven.....Abstain
 City of Fall River.....Yes
 Town of Lakeville.....Yes
 Town of Mansfield.....Yes
 Town of MarionYes
 Town of Mattapoisett.....Yes
 City of New Bedford.....Yes
 Town of North Attleborough.....Yes
 Town of Westport.....Yes
 At-Large, City of New Bedford....Yes
 At-Large, Town of Wareham.....Yes

THE MOTION PASSED WITH 1 ABSTENTIONS.

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

There were no comments offered.

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

Mary Ellen DeFrias shared an update that GATRA is preparing for a new hiring push to address a current driver shortage, which is constraining service expansion. The Wareham facility is progressing and is anticipated to be operational this fall. Ms. DeFrias highlighted the Gateway Link, connecting Brockton, Taunton, and Fall River, which carried 1,068 passengers in its first month, demonstrating strong demand for direct bus connections to transit hubs, the VA hospital, and Stonehill College. GATRA is exploring extending the service for another year with new funding and evaluating long-term sustainability options.

Christina Mendoza shared an update that SRTA has expanded its Micro Connector service, providing direct transit connections from Fall River and New Bedford to the South Coast rail stations. Service hours now run weekdays 4:00–9:30 a.m. and 5:30–11:00 p.m., with expanded service zones. Ms. Mendoza noted that fare-free service will continue through June 30, 2026, and SRTA is actively developing the 2025 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan with MassDOT, including a public survey to gather input on regional transit needs.

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

Ms. Duarte-Campos informed the group that a walk audit will be conducted on Route 6 (Pope’s Island), from the Bedford/Fairhaven bridge to the intersection with Middle Street, following recent fatalities on the road. She explained that South Coast Places for People group has formed a working group to involve community members in advocating for safety improvements along this corridor.

6. FFY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Close Out Presentation

Lisa Estrela-Pedro highlighted SRPEDD accomplishments from Fiscal Year 2025 and upcoming priorities for Fiscal Year 2026 across planning, data management, and community support. Achievements included:

- **3C Planning & Studies:** Conducted 13 MEPA reviews; coordinated with MassDOT, federal partners, and municipalities on multiple projects; and completed federal certification.
- **Public Participation:** Engaged in safety education tabling in New Bedford and Fall River and tabling and outreach for the Age-Friendly Mobility Plan and Food Access and Security in Transportation Plan (FAST Plan), as well as outreach with food system organizations. An infographic on the South Coast Rail opening was also highlighted, which received over 20,000 views and more than 40 shares on social media.
- **UPWP:** Continued development of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Federal Fiscal Year 2026 UPWP is available on the website. Ongoing coordination and assistance with project development for all communities.
- **TIP:** Ongoing amendments and adjustments to the 2025–2029 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), development of the 2026–2030 TIP includes an analysis of funding distribution. Communities were encouraged to review the analysis so staff can collaborate with those that have not yet fully utilized TIP resources and support the advancement of projects across the region.
- **Data Management, GIS and Modeling:** Continued maintenance of the signalized intersection database and interactive map, conducted counts at park-and-ride and non-MBTA commuter rail lots, and performed crash data collection and analysis. Analysis of land use data, U.S. Census, and ACS data to support traffic studies and requests through the traffic count program.

- **Traffic Counting:** Completed 94 Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) counts to date, along with 55 turning movement counts - 16 supported specific studies and 39 contributed to updates for the signalized intersection database.
- **Pavement Management:** Surveyed 6 communities and conducted analysis for 13 communities.
- **Performance Measurement:** Ongoing monitoring of statewide and agency performance measures and reported continued updates to the performance measures dashboard, available on the agency website.
- **Community Technical Assistance:** Completed 12 Technical Assistance requests, 4 are currently in progress and 1 is waiting to be started.
- **Integrated Management Systems:** Closed out Phase 1 of the FAST Plan and the Parking Lot Utilization Plan. Continued participation in Road Safety Audits and monitored roadway congestion and bottlenecks. Finalized the Regional Evacuation Route study.
- **Active Transportation:** Closed out Phase 1 of the Age-Friendly Mobility Plan and ongoing Regional Network support. The year-end trails mapping report was completed, data collection in 7 communities, and assisted several communities with applications for MassTrails grants.
- **Environmental Planning:** Continued support for coastal communities with identifying, prioritizing, and implementing coastal flood mitigation and adaptation projects, along with stormwater needs assessments and mapping vulnerable flood zone areas related to stormwater and general flooding.
- **Transit Planning and Support:** Created public service announcements and developed an interactive transit-accessible parkland map. Reinstated the Southeast Regional Coordination Council on Transportation (SERCCOT) to help identify gaps in regional transit, the Gateway Link cited as an example of a previously identified need.

Ms. Estrela-Pedro noted that in Fiscal Year 2026 the Transportation Department will continue Phase 2 of the Age-Friendly Mobility Plan, FAST plan, and the parking utilization assessment, conduct a corridor study along Pleasant Street in Fall River, update the congestion management plan, and support emergency preparedness exercises with the Homeland Security Department. Vice Chair Slavin noted that Wareham was designated an Age-Friendly Community nine years ago but had not completed all follow-up requirements after the initial survey. The town's council and subcommittee are working to complete the remaining steps to fully implement their Age-Friendly Transportation program.

7. Draft Regional Evacuation Route Plan Presentation (Roll Call Vote Needed to recommend to SMMPO for Release to 21-day Public Comment Period)

Jackie Jones reported that the Regional Evacuation Route Study, developed in collaboration with communities and partners, has been completed and is ready for public release. The SMMPO is expected to vote next week to release the study for a public comment period. The study is available on SRPEDD's website and is anticipated to be tested through tabletop exercises. Ms. Jones requested the group vote to recommend that the SMMPO release the report for public comment.

Vice Chair Slavin called for a motion to recommend to the SMMPO that the study be released for public comment. A motion was made by Justin Chicca to recommend the study to the SMMPO and was seconded by Dan Aguiar. Ms. Duarte-Campos then called the roll:

Town of Berkley.....Yes
Town of DartmouthYes
Town of Fairhaven.....Yes
City of Fall River.....Yes
Town of Lakeville.....Yes
Town of MarionYes
Town of Mattapoisett.....Yes
City of New Bedford.....Yes
Town of North Attleborough.....Yes
Town of Westport.....Yes
At-Large, City of New Bedford....Yes
At-Large, Town of Wareham.....Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. Food Access and Security in Transportation Plan (Phase 1) Update

Noah Soutier provided an update on Phase 1 of the Food Access and Security in Transportation Plan (FAST Plan), which aims to assess and improve healthy food access across the SMMPO region through transportation planning and public health principles. The plan combines strong public engagement, GIS data analysis, and regional coalition input to identify current food access disparities, particularly among vulnerable populations. Phase 1 included a report and a public GIS mapping toolkit that visually represents food access locations (e.g., grocery stores, food pantries, farmers markets) alongside transportation networks (bus routes, bike/ped networks) and supplemental community resources (hospitals, schools, housing authorities). Key findings highlighted that over 37% of Massachusetts households experienced food insecurity in 2024, and programs like the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) are underutilized locally, with only 2–3% of eligible households participating. Phase 2 will expand upon this data with additional public engagement, survey feedback, and refined GIS analysis, including incorporating transit stop data and evaluating transportation barriers to healthy food access. The toolkit will remain publicly accessible, supporting transportation staff, local officials, community organizations, and residents in understanding and addressing food access needs across the region.

Ashley Eaton inquired if food pantries were included in the online toolkit. Mr. Soutier confirmed that the public GIS mapping toolkit included food pantries.

Vice Chair Slavin reported that Damien’s Pantry is experiencing increasing demand, with current operations (two days per week) reaching maximum capacity for both visitors and parking. The pantry currently has one bus and one box truck, but a second box truck is needed to support food pickups and

meet the growing demand. Mr. Soutier agreed and emphasized that the plan is expected to include strategies to support community-based organizations in strengthening their resources, enabling them to continue providing access and services to local communities

9. Parking Lot Utilization Plan (Phase 1) Update - [Story Map Link](#)

Jon Gray provided an overview of the regional parking utilization assessment, which analyzed municipal lots in Attleboro, New Bedford, and Taunton during spring 2025. Data was collected over several weekdays between March and May to capture a representative picture of downtown and port-area parking use. Results showed that most lots had low to moderate utilization overall, with Taunton recording the highest demand near City Hall, Attleboro showing mixed results including some commuter rail-adjacent parcels identified as potential redevelopment sites, and New Bedford reflecting the lowest utilization, likely due to data being gathered prior to the peak summer ferry season. Overall, the study concluded that parking supply generally exceeds demand in these areas, indicating that community perceptions of shortage are often greater than actual conditions. Mr. Gray emphasized the importance of the 85% utilization benchmark for evaluating parking management and pricing strategies and noted that the findings align with previous municipal and regional studies. The discussion also highlighted opportunities for municipalities to use transportation demand management, continued data collection, and targeted policy adjustments to more effectively balance parking needs with broader goals for housing, small business vitality, land use efficiency, and multimodal access.

Vice Chair Slavin noted that both Wareham Village and Onset Village face significant parking shortages for businesses. To address this, a warrant article has been prepared for the upcoming spring town meeting. The proposal, modeled after a Boston approach, would allow businesses to meet zoning parking requirements by counting public parking located within a half mile of their site.

Will Gardner raised a question regarding parking scarcity concerns in New Bedford, particularly related to new housing developments and neighborhood perceptions. He asked whether there are case studies of residential permit systems or priced parking programs that address these challenges. Vice Chair Slavin shared Wareham's experience, noting that Wareham Village has operated a residential permit program for about three years, where residents pay a small fee for permits and violators are ticketed or towed. Additional permits can sometimes be purchased for guests or businesses, and revenue goes into the town's general fund. He acknowledged that the program initially faced strong opposition but became more accepted after modifications over several years. Mr. Garner noted that New Bedford's situation is more complex, tied to balancing the needs of long-term residents and new residents in developments that cannot provide all the required parking on site. Mr. Gray emphasized that parking solutions often need to be location-specific rather than applied uniformly across an entire municipality.

Emma Yeh noted that during Attleboro's comprehensive plan meetings, many residents expressed concerns about a lack of parking. She added that the assessment data is helpful in showing that parking

is not as constrained as often perceived, and that public frustration often arises when convenient spaces directly in front of destinations are unavailable. Mr. Gray recommended Ms. Yeh review the 2022 Downtown Attleboro Parking Plan for additional data and context. He noted that on-street spaces typically show higher utilization because of their convenience, which contributes to the perception of limited parking. Mr. Gray also stated that in many downtowns and village centers, available lots are located behind buildings and are not immediately visible, creating a sense of scarcity compared to big box stores where large, front-facing lots are obvious. He emphasized that this perception challenge is a common tradeoff for having compact, vibrant downtown areas.

10. Age-Friendly Mobility Plan (Phase 1) Update

Ms. Duarte-Campos provided an update on Phase 1 of the Age-Friendly Mobility Plan. The plan seeks to identify transportation needs and priorities that support healthy aging and dementia-friendly infrastructure, noting that older adults (65+) make up 18% of the region's population, with the fastest growth in communities with limited transit. About 9% of households lack access to a vehicle, underscoring the need for alternatives. Phase 1 focused on research, GIS mapping, and adapting AARP Livability Index scores with a mobility adjustment for Councils on Aging (COAs). Results showed higher scores in urban areas with transit access, while suburban and rural areas scored lower. Public engagement highlighted reliance on demand-response services and carpooling, the need for more frequent and reliable transit (especially to healthcare), limited awareness of paratransit options, and volunteer driver shortages. Phase 2 will expand data collection and engagement through surveys and focus groups, evaluate bus stop and senior housing accessibility, and coordinate with municipalities and regional transit authorities. The final plan will be released in fall 2026 following MPO review and a public comment period.

11. Other Business

Ms. Estrela-Pedro announced that MassDOT has opened the application cycle for Community Transit Grants. Eligible applicants include Councils on Aging (COAs), municipalities, nonprofits, and private operators of public transit services. Additional grant information and slides from today's presentations will be distributed following the meeting.

12. Date and Time for Next Meeting

Date and Time for the next meeting is October 8, 2025, at 2:00 PM as a hybrid meeting, in which attendees can join at the SRPEDD office in Taunton or via Zoom.

13. Adjourn

The Vice Chair Slavin asked for a motion to adjourn which was made by Norm Hills and seconded by Ashley Eaton. Hearing no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 3:17 PM.