

**Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, September 16, 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**  
Shaun Handy-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator  
Christopher McDermott-----Representing Cathleen DeSimone, Mayor of Attleboro  
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  
Josh Reinke-----Representing Diana Bren, Town of Mansfield  
Sarah Hewins-----Town of Carver  
Andrew Romano-----Town of Fairhaven  
Jennifer Vincent-----Town of Berkley  
Marie Clarner-----SRPEDD Commission Chair

**No Ex-Officio, non-voting members were in attendance**

**The following were also in attendance:**

Chris Klem----- Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Barbara Lachance----- Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Dana Hanson-----Office of Congressman Auchincloss  
Alan Slavin-----JTPG At-Large Commissioner/Wareham  
Pam Haznar-----McClure  
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD  
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD  
Andrea Duarte-----SRPEDD  
Dan Brogan-----SRPEDD  
Noah Soutier-----SRPEDD  
Amber Davis-----SRPEDD  
Jon Gray-----SRPEDD  
Jen Chaves-----SRPEDD

**Handouts:**

SMMPO Agenda September 16, 2025  
SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes 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 Mansfield-----Yes  
Town of Fairhaven-----Yes  
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes

Chair Shooster inquired about announcements and Ms. Duarte-Campos announced that there are two new SMMPO members present who weren't at the last meeting, Andrew Romano from Fairhaven and Josh Reinke from Mansfield just began their terms on the SMMPO. Josh Reinke is replacing Kevin Dumas, alternate for Diana Bren, who resigned from his Mansfield Town Manager position.

### **2. Approval of Minutes – August 19, 2025 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)**

Chairman Shooster requested a motion to approve the minutes from the August 19, 2025, SMMPO meeting. The motion was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Jamie Ponte. Ms. Duarte-Campos then called the roll:

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 Mansfield-----Abstain  
Town of Fairhaven-----Abstain  
Town of Berkley-----Yes  
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----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**

In the absence of GATRA and SRTA officials, Dan Brogan and Lisa-Estrela Pedro provided announcements from both RTAs. Mr. Brogan announced that GATRA will be fare free starting October 1<sup>st</sup>, and that GATRA is actively working to reinstate Sunday service. Ms. Estrela-Pedro announced that SRTA is expanding service on the micro connector; both service zones and service spans have changed, and the service is now available from 4:00 AM to 9:30 AM for morning trains and 5:30 PM to 11:00 PM for the evening trains Monday through Friday. The service zones are also expanding, and the service is filling the gap of the times when SRTA routes are out of service. SRTA is also continuing its efforts to develop its comprehensive regional transit plan with Mass DOT.

### **5. FFY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Close Out Presentation**

Lisa Estrela-Pedro highlighted SMMPO staff's 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.
- **TIP:** Coordination and assistance with project development for all communities. 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.
- **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 a draft of 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 new Gateway Link service was previously identified as a need and is now in operation.

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.

Sarah Hewins noted that the South Shore Community Action Council (SSCAC) in Plymouth does significant food access work in some SRPEDD communities including Carver and Middlesbrough and asked if staff had contacted SSCAC during outreach for the Food Access and Security in Transportation Plan. Noah Soutier answered that they hadn't been contacted yet but noted that he would add this to his outreach list.

The Chair asked where the PSAs created by Dan were shared, to which Mr. Brogan responded that the videos are currently posted on SRPEDD's YouTube page, with plans to expand distribution to Instagram and Facebook reels, as well as TikTok, to reach a wider and more diverse audience. The Chair expressed support for the PSAs and mentioned that MassDOT is also exploring ways to improve their own outreach efforts. He encouraged tagging or hash-tagging MassDOT in related videos so the agency can help amplify public safety messages.

**6. Draft Regional Evacuation Route Plan Presentation (Link, Roll Call Vote Needed to Release to 21-day Public Comment Period)**

Jackie Jones reported that the draft Regional Evacuation Route Study, developed in collaboration with communities and partners, has been completed, was presented in detail at the last SMMPO meeting, and is now ready for public release. The plan contains a large amount of information and is currently posted on SRPEDD's website, though it has not yet been promoted publicly due to its file size. A link to the study was shared, and it was noted that a major component of the plan involves establishing or re-establishing regional evacuation routes. Ms. Jones noted that by voting to release the plan to a public comment period, members would also be endorsing these routes. She noted that an interactive draft map is available online, allowing viewers to explore the routes alongside layers such as civic buildings, transportation facilities, hazard models, and census data. She encouraged members to review the materials thoroughly and noted that a formal vote to endorse the plan will take place at the next meeting, following the public comment period.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on the Draft Regional Evacuation Route Plan and seeing none asked for a motion to release it to a 21-day public comment period as presented. The motion was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Jamie Ponte. 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  
Town of Carver-----Yes  
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes  
GATRA-----Yes  
SRTA-----Yes

## **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **7. 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.

The Chair noted the statistic showing that 69% of food-insecure residents must choose between paying for food and transportation, and asked how many rely on public transit, to which Mr. Soutier explained that data on transportation modes is not yet available but will be explored further through surveys aimed at understanding how community members balance expenses like food, housing, and healthcare. Ms. Hewins asked about mapping community gardens, victory gardens, and other non-retail food sources, to which Mr. Soutier emphasized the study's focus not only on food access but also on food sovereignty that encourages local food production and stewardship. Ms. Hewins suggested incorporating land-use data to identify local restrictions on growing food and noted that "right-to-farm" communities in the region allow residents to grow produce and raise animals, often resulting in roadside farm stands. She mentioned additional local food resources, including Carver's weekly farmers market, the Shane Gives Thanks food pantry, and a community garden in the Crystal Lake neighborhood. She again recommended adding South Road Community Action Council and the Greater Boston Food Bank as key stakeholders, given their food distribution and delivery programs. Mr. Soutier thanked members for their insights, noting that this feedback will help staff fill data gaps in the regional food access study.

## **8. Parking Lot Utilization Plan (Phase 1) Update -**

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d9dd4561b4534f378f096e5c8e8ff79f>

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. He 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.

The Chair expressed appreciation for the regional parking study, noting his support for the similar “Better Fit Parking” study previously conducted by MAPC. He asked whether any communities within the SRPEDD region currently have transportation demand management (TDM) ordinances in place. Mr. Gray responded that he was not aware of any formal TDM ordinances but noted that related concepts sometimes appear within zoning bylaws, particularly in tables of use or within downtown parking studies, where TDM measures are often listed as recommendations. He stated that some transit-oriented development (TOD) zoning districts may also contain relevant language. The Chair shared that his own community, the City of Everett, adopted a TDM ordinance in 2021 and encouraged other municipalities not to wait for state mandates to implement similar measures. He explained that such ordinances can be structured to require certain TDM strategies for larger developments—such as bike share programs, MBTA pass subsidies, or other multimodal incentives—and recommended that SRPEDD communities take advantage of the agency’s technical assistance to pursue these opportunities.

Shaun Handy asked for clarification about California’s initiative that compensates people for biking to work, wondering if it involved prorating salaries and whether it was mandatory or voluntary. Mr. Gray explained that the program he was referring to is the California Parking Cash-Out Law, a statewide mandate that applies to employers of a certain size and requires eligible employers to offer financial compensation or equivalent benefits to employees who choose not to use a company-provided parking space, effectively rewarding those who bike,

walk, or use alternative transportation to commute. He noted that the law is likely connected to broader state efforts led by the California Air Resources Board to reduce vehicle emissions and promote sustainable commuting.

### **9. Age-Friendly Mobility Plan (Phase 1) Update**

Ms. Duarte-Campos provided an update on Phase 1 of the Age-Friendly Mobility Plan. The plan aims to identify transportation needs, priorities, and recommendations that will guide SRPEDD's future technical assistance and investments in infrastructure supportive of healthy aging. She noted that older adults (65+) make up 18% of the region's population, with the fastest growth in communities that have limited transit service including Middleborough, Berkley, Norton, and Rochester. About 9% of households lack access to a vehicle, underscoring the need for alternatives.

Phase 1 (April–August 2025) involved collecting background research, quantitative data, and GIS spatial analysis to assess transportation accessibility for older adults. Using modified AARP Livability Index metrics, SRPEDD developed customized Age-Friendly Mobility Livability Scores for neighborhoods of COAs in the region, placing greater weight on transportation and transit access. COAs located closer to bus or train stops scored higher. Preliminary findings show that while some COA neighborhoods score well, most see a decline in livability scores when transportation access is factored in. GIS mapping illustrated spatial relationships among COAs, older adult residential clusters, and regional transit networks (GATRA, SRTA, and MBTA), revealing significant service gaps and weak connections between where seniors live and where they can access COA resources. Walkshed analyses showed that even where transit exists, it often remains disconnected from some older adults' neighborhoods. SRPEDD will also map paratransit, dial-a-ride, and van services—critical mobility options for seniors without access to fixed-route transit—and will integrate information on popular destinations to evaluate multimodal accessibility and infrastructure gaps such as missing ADA ramps or sidewalks.

Feedback received during public engagement so far 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 transit, walk and bike-shed data collection and public engagement through surveys and focus groups, evaluate bus stop and senior housing accessibility, and coordinate discussions with municipalities and regional transit authorities. The final plan will be released in fall 2026 following MPO review and a public comment period.

Marie Clarner shared her personal experience as an older adult who uses a cane, highlighting accessibility challenges that affect her and others with limited mobility. Although she can use GATRA's dial-a-ride service, she explained that many curbs are too high and that sloped



sidewalk corners can be dangerously slippery, particularly in wet or icy conditions—even where textured metal plates have been installed. Because of these barriers, she sometimes avoids certain destinations altogether when traveling alone. She urged planners to consider these real-world obstacles in their accessibility and mobility planning efforts. Ms. Duarte-Campos thanked Ms. Clarner for her valuable perspective and confirmed that her concerns align closely with the goals of the age-friendly mobility study. She noted that future phases of the project could include walk audits and ADA accessibility assessments, ideally involving residents with mobility challenges to inform actual usability rather than just technical compliance. Amber Davis emphasized that accessibility is not only about physical infrastructure like ramps but also about understanding how people with varying abilities actually experience the environment. She discussed incorporating these lived experiences into dynamic transit access audits, focusing on practical barriers such as carrying groceries, navigating slippery surfaces, or walking in poor weather conditions.

The Chair added that other regional planning agencies have successfully conducted “wiggle audits”—activities that simulate mobility challenges by having planners and officials use mobility aids themselves to gain first-hand understanding of accessibility issues. He recommended SRPEDD consider adopting a similar approach in collaboration with local Councils on Aging.

#### **10. Other Business**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that SRPEDD’s annual dinner will be held on September 24th at the Hillside Country Club in Rehoboth and is an opportunity to talk with SMMPO staff and all SRPEDD staff and learn about the work that is happening across the agency.

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

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on October 21, 2025 at 1:00 pm, held virtually.

#### **12. Adjourn**

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Dan Aguiar 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 2:12 PM.