



Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

DRAFT

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SRPEDD
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& **Economic Development** District

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SMMPO Title VI Coordinator

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88 Broadway, Taunton, MA 02780
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MassDOT/MBTA Title VI Specialists

MassDOT Office of Diversity and Civil Rights – Title VI Unit
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3800, Boston, MA 02116
Phone: 857-368-8580 or dial 7-1-1 for Relay Service.
Email: MassDOT.CivilRights@state.ma.us or MBTAcivilrights@mbta.com

Complaints may also be filed directly with the United States Department of Transportation at:

U.S. Department of Transportation

Office of Civil Rights
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Website: civilrights.justice.gov/

For additional information, language service requests, or reasonable accommodations visit mass.gov/nondiscrimination-in-transportation-program, mbta.com/titlevi, or srpedd.org/title-vi-compliance.

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1 Introduction

In accordance with state and federal requirements and to ensure early, inclusive, accessible and continuous public participation and input to the planning process for transportation decision making, the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO), in its role as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) region, has developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP). The SRPEDD region consists of 27 communities; the cities of Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton and the towns of Acushnet, Berkley, Carver, Dartmouth, Dighton, Fairhaven, Freetown, Lakeville, Mansfield, Marion, Mattapoisett, Middleborough, North Attleborough, Norton, Plainville, Raynham, Rehoboth, Rochester, Seekonk, Somerset, Swansea, Wareham and Westport.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is developed with the ultimate goal of allowing every person in the region ample opportunities to become active participants in the Continuous, Cooperative and Comprehensive (3C) metropolitan planning and decision-making process guiding every issue, project, program or service.

Regardless of mode being used, transportation has a large impact on our everyday lives, determining level of access to food, medical care, education, jobs, social networks, and other essential resources. The SMMPO is responsible for planning a transportation system that serves the unique needs of various populations and stakeholders in Southeastern Massachusetts. Informing, gathering input from, and collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders—including residents, business owners, civic and community-based organizations, and social service agencies—is a central part of this planning process. Different groups experience the transportation system in unique ways and must be engaged in the process of deciding how public dollars are spent on transportation infrastructure to inform, develop, and implement solutions that improve mobility for all.

The PPP is an essential element for the distribution of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Metropolitan Planning funding, and with Federal Transit Administration Section 5303 and Section 5307 grants to the regional transit agencies, Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) and Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA). In these public participation efforts, the SMMPO adheres to the principles of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act as part of the 3C metropolitan planning process as relating to transportation systems and facilities.

These efforts will, in no way, exclude persons who are low-income, minority, Limited English Proficient (LEP) or have a disability. The goal of the PPP is to ensure that all persons, regardless of

race, color, national origin, age, gender, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, ancestry or ethnicity, sexual orientation or veteran's status have an equal opportunity to participate in the SMMPO's decision-making process.

This plan is designed, in part, to develop partnerships with, and enhance the participation in the transportation planning process, by groups and individuals of traditionally underrepresented populations. Staff activities include, but are not limited to, targeted communications with local media outlets; conducting meetings at times and locations that are convenient, accessible and on transit routes; the routine translations of public outreach materials, including meeting materials and surveys; and the availability of SMMPO documents in non-technical, web-based or other easily accessible formats as necessary and appropriate for purposes of obtaining input and comment. To this end, the SMMPO also solicits, to the maximum extent possible, the input of all interested parties in the development of this Public Participation Plan.

To inform the 2025 PPP update, the SMMPO engaged residents and community groups throughout the region and gathered input on the most popular and effective communication sources and whether and how residents are reporting transportation issues to local decision-makers. Themes that emerged from this outreach and were incorporated into this Plan include:



- Older adults relying heavily on print newspaper in certain communities
- Some older adults avoiding social media due to misinformation
- Social media as the most popular channel in many communities
- Senior center newsletters as a helpful channel for sharing various resources
- Paper surveys distributed at bus stations as an effective way to engage low-income and limited English Proficient residents

The PPP is designed to be fluid and adaptable, allowing for revisions and improvements as needed, due to ongoing changes in issues, programs, services, public behaviors and preferences, proven evaluation and effectiveness of methods, changes in technology, public feedback and ideas, staff feedback, and unforeseen events such as the COVID 19 pandemic. Public engagement activities should be unique, both to the audience affected and to the issues, studies, projects, programs, and services involved. There may be circumstances and occasions that may not allow for absolute adherence with the protocols and policies contained here. In



these instances, there may be departures and/or differences from this plan that are legitimate and reasonable, although every effort will be made to uphold the standards set here.

The effectiveness of this Plan will be regularly evaluated to ensure it meets the dynamic needs of the public over time, in successfully engaging all SMMPO communities, especially traditionally underrepresented populations. Federal legislation requires any modification (including an amendment) to this Public Participation Plan hold a comment period of no less than 45 days.

Document Roadmap:

Chapter 2 of the Plan summarizes the federal laws and policies that shape public participation in transportation planning. Chapter 3 describes how decisions are made within the MPO framework and identifies key participants, work products, their timelines, and public participation opportunities. Chapter 4 explains the SMMPO's public participation goals, guiding principles, and evaluation metrics. Chapter 5 discusses the practical tools and approaches SMMPO staff use to reach and involve the public. Chapter 6 details strategies for reaching historically under-resourced populations protected under Title VI. Plan appendices include a glossary, document and meeting accessibility checklist, maps of the region's Title VI populations, and best practices for public engagement in TIP project development.

2 Federal Transportation Legislation

ISTEA - 1991

The 1991 federal legislation known as the **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)** required States and MPOs to significantly expand opportunities for the public to become involved in the metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes. The Final Rule on Statewide Planning and Metropolitan Planning for ISTEA states: "The metropolitan transportation planning process shall include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs."

In addition, the Rule states that any modification to this public participation plan requires a comment period of not less than 45 days. A 21-day public comment period must be provided prior to the approval or revision of any plan. In addition, MPOs must seek out and consider the needs of those individuals and groups that have been traditionally under-resourced by transportation systems.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations must establish and periodically review and update public involvement processes. The process should assure early and continued public awareness of, and access to, the transportation decision-making process.

TEA-21 - 1998

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) enacted in 1998 reaffirms the requirement for public involvement opportunities and additionally requires that:

"before approving a long-range transportation plan [or the annual TIP], each metropolitan planning organization shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the long-range transportation plan [or the TIP]."

SAFETEA-LU – August 10, 2005

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. President Obama extended the funding for SAFETEA-LU through September 30, 2010 by signing the HIRE (Hiring Incentives to Restore Employment) Act on March 18, 2010. In March 2010 Congress extended the Safe, Accountable,

Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) through the end of fiscal-year 2011, freezing funding at 2010 levels for transit and other programs through Sept. 30, 2011 and extended again to March 2012.

MAP-21 - July 6, 2012

MAP-21, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141), was signed into law by President Obama on July 6, 2012. Notable changes included a performance-based planning process.

FAST Act – December 4, 2015

FAST Act, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (P.L. No. 114-94) was signed into law by President Obama on December 4, 2015. The SAFETEA-LU Act required the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to provide for consideration of projects and strategies that will serve to advance transportation planning factors. These factors were unchanged with the passage of MAP-21 but two factors were added with the FAST Act legislation, bringing the planning factors from eight to ten and are as follows:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.



9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate storm water impacts of surface transportation; and
10. Improve the transportation system to enhance travel and tourism.

BIL - November 15, 2021

BIL, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law P.L. No. 117-58 (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) was signed into law by President Biden on November 15, 2021. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is the largest long-term investment in infrastructure and economy in our Nation's history .

3 The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process

3.1 Decision-Making Bodies

3.1.1 What is SRPEDD?

The Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) is a public regional planning agency established by state legislature, Chapter 40B, sections 9-19, serving four cities and twenty-three towns in southeastern Massachusetts. SRPEDD is governed by a Commission made up of the chief elected official or designee, and a Planning Board official or designee from each of the 27 municipalities in the region, plus six at-large members representing the interests of low-income and minority groups in the region.

SRPEDD has no legislative or regulatory authority, but has advisory powers and is authorized to prepare plans, conduct studies, and provide assistance to cities, towns and agencies and to make recommendations. SRPEDD also serves as technical and support staff to the Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG) and the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) for Southeastern Massachusetts.

3.1.2 What is the SMMPO?

The Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) is responsible for transportation policy and federal resource allocation decisions in the region. The SRPEDD Commission is one of thirteen voting members on the SMMPO. Other voting members include the mayors of each of the region's 4 cities (Attleboro, Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton), selectmen from four of the region's 23 towns, the Administrator of the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA), the Administrator of the Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA), the Highway Administrator of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Transportation Secretary and CEO of MassDOT.

The SMMPO meets when there are sufficient business items to warrant a meeting, but must meet a minimum of once a year. The SMMPO typically meets, on average, nine times per year at 1:00 PM on the third Tuesday of the month. As a public body, the SMMPO may replace any in-person meeting with a virtual/online meeting (all participants attending remotely) or a hybrid meeting (allowing both in-person or remote participation) provided that it is in accordance with current Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. During the declared state of emergency in Massachusetts due to COVID-19, meetings were held remotely or as hybrid meetings as necessary.

The principal responsibilities of the SMMPO include overseeing staff's development of a 25-year long range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the southeastern Massachusetts region, that is financially constrained and within the projected federal funds available. They also oversee the planning process that includes the scope of planning activities and work tasks such as the five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), tasks included in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and related planning studies and projects deemed necessary to address transportation issues in the area.

Local transportation needs are re-evaluated annually. Based on this evaluation and considering production schedules and funding constraints, project priorities are established and made part of the SMMPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In addition, the TIP is forwarded to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for inclusion into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). By Federal and State law, all regionally significant multi-modal transportation improvement projects (regardless of funding source) must be included in and be consistent (to the maximum extent feasible) with the SMMPO's TIP and long-range Regional Transportation Plan to be eligible for Federal-aid and State funding. Therefore, the SMMPO's Transportation Improvement Program is the primary plan that guides all state and federally funded transportation improvements in southeastern Massachusetts. MassDOT may periodically select projects programmed in the region's TIP to program with its own statewide funds, freeing up regional funds for additional projects.

The SMMPO is the body that is responsible for the regional or metropolitan transportation planning program development. This includes the following:

- Endorses the **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**—a fiscally constrained 5-year program of federal highway, state and transit funding that is prepared annually, and may include adjustments and amendments;
- Endorses the **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**— the scope and cost of work tasks of the SRPEDD transportation staff for the coming fiscal year than runs from October 1 through September 30, and may include amendments;
- Endorses the **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**—a 20-year financially constrained plan for the transportation system with a comprehensive inventory and assessment of the region's highway and transit resources and needs, including air quality conformity;
- Endorses the **Public Participation Plan (PPP)**;
- Approves the **Language Assistance Plan (LAP)**;
- Certifies the planning process; and

- Endorses special studies conducted by SRPEDD when necessary.

3.1.3 What is the Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG)?

The Joint Transportation Planning Group is the advisory committee to the SMMPO for all transportation related issues. Voting members of the JTPG include the chief elected officials from each SMMPO community in the region or their designees; and all at-large SMMPO Commissioners that represent low-income and minority persons and groups. Non-voting members include FHWA; FTA; MassDOT; SRTA; GATRA; transportation interest groups; neighborhood groups; any interested member of the public; and SMMPO staff. **The JTPG is also the forum for public involvement in transportation planning for the region, including the TIP, the RTP and all transportation plans and studies**, and all JTPG meetings are open to the public. SRPEDD personnel act as technical and support staff to the JTPG and SMMPO.

The JTPG responsibilities include:

- Prioritizing the list of projects within each TIP funding category;
- Advising the SMMPO regarding endorsements of the TIP, UPWP and RTP; and
- Voting to make adjustments to the TIP.

The JTPG generally meets on the second Wednesday of each month in a hybrid format. As a public body, the JTPG may replace any in-person meeting with a virtual/online (all participants attending remotely) or a hybrid meeting (allowing both in-person or remote participation) provided that it is in accordance with current Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. A meeting notice with an agenda and other meeting related attachments shall be mailed out to the mailing list of members and other interested parties a week prior to the meeting. Meetings are posted on the SRPEDD website and may be posted on SRPEDD's social media platforms. Individuals may be placed on the contact list by request.

The position of **At-Large Commissioner** on the SRPEDD Commission and JTPG is a unique opportunity for individuals from nonprofits, community associations, and public agencies, who understand the needs of historically underrepresented minority and/or low-income populations to speak for these needs in transportation, environmental, housing, and economic development planning processes and project development in the region.

3.1.4 What Are the Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)?

The two regional transit authorities, SRTA and GATRA, each have an Advisory Board. The Boards are composed of the chief elected official from member communities or their designee. The



Advisory Boards meet monthly, and all meetings are open to the public. GATRA holds quarterly Regional Public Meetings that serve as an open forum for consumer issues related to transit. SMMPO staff hold monthly meetings of the [South East Regional Coordinating Council on Transportation](#) (SERCCOT), where representatives of human service agencies, state agencies, transit authorities, regional planning agencies, consumers, advocates, and other stakeholders meet to discuss the transportation needs of area older adults, people with disabilities, low-income commuters, and transit users and to brainstorm ways to collaborate on solutions. In addition to attending meetings, feedback about GATRA or SRTA services can be given in the following ways:

GATRA:

Call 800-483-2500

Email info@gatra.org

Message GATRA on Facebook or Instagram @gatratransit

Website: www.gatra.org

SRTA:

Call 508-999-5211 Ext. 3310

Email info@srtabus.com

Message SRTA on Facebook or Instagram @srtabus

Website: www.srtabus.com

3.2 Products of the Process & Opportunities for Public Participation

In order for the region to receive federal and state transportation funds, SRPEDD must complete and receive SMMPO endorsement of the following federal certification documents, as well as necessary adjustments and amendments:

Document Name/Action	Purpose	Frequency of Updates	Public Comment Period Length (Minimum)	How Public Can Participate
Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)	20-year needs assessment of the region's entire transportation system and its components, a roadmap for creating new activities/programs in SMMPO workplan	Every 4-5 years	21 days	Provide input on unmet transportation needs, priorities for local transportation improvements
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	5-year rolling capital plan listing all transportation projects receiving federal funding in the region, including regional target funds which the SMMPO controls	Annually	21 days	Provide questions or input about the status of TIP projects in their community via written comment or public meeting
TIP Amendments	Major cost/other changes to originally programmed TIP project lists that must be approved by MPO before funds can be spent	As needed	21 days	Provide input on TIP project(s) via written comment or public meeting
Unified Planning Work	Work plan of activities that SMMPO staff will	Annually	21 days	Speak with local officials about

Program (UPWP)	undertake in the coming federal fiscal year, includes costs & timeframes			requesting studies and project development for areas of concern
Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)	Inventory of transportation providers and unmet service needs for older adults, disability, and low-income populations in the region that helps inform Community Transit Grant applications and funding allocation decisions	Every 4 years	21 days	Provide input on unmet transportation needs & helpful services
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Guidelines for public engagement activities during development of SMMPO's plans, projects, and services	As needed	45 days	Provide input on desired improvements to SMMPO's public participation activities
Planning Studies	Examine conditions and develop recommendations for addressing transportation and land use challenges on specific roadways	At study completion and as needed	Varies by plan (typically 21 days and throughout duration of study)	Provide input on the location / corridor via various in-person and written channels as applicable to specific study

The public has multiple opportunities to comment on all the documents and products of the Southeast Massachusetts' region's metropolitan transportation planning process including:

- **By submitting email messages to transportation@srpedd.org or specific SRPEDD/SMMPO Transportation staff members.**
- **Sharing a comment during public meetings held during comment periods for the documents, mentioned below.**
- **Mailing physical letters to SMMPO staff at:**
Attn: Transportation Department
SRPEDD
88 Broadway
Taunton, MA 02780
- **Staff are available to provide general and project specific information during normal business hours and after hours at the request of interested community groups with reasonable notice.**
- **Other additional methods available, specific to each plan**

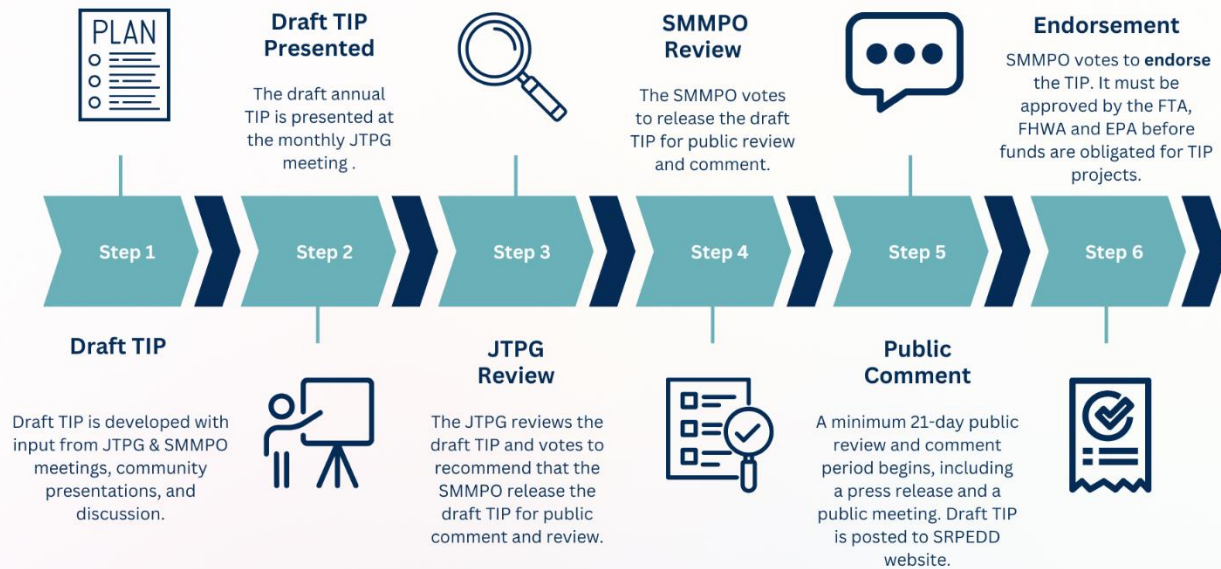
3.2.1 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP is the official five-year rolling capital plan or programming document that lists all transportation projects in the region receiving federal funding for projects that improve roads, bridges, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities. It is prepared annually and includes projects for a five-year period. All federally funded projects must be in the Annual Element of the TIP, with an assigned regional priority, before federal funds are authorized to be spent. The TIP documents projects funded with the stream of federal funds the SMMPO has direct discretion over, or Regional Target funds, and also documents projects pursued in the region with federal transportation dollars by the MassDOT, GATRA, and SRTA.

Public Process:

The TIP regional project prioritization process determines generally which community-initiated projects receive funds and when and is informed by the SMMPO's evaluation criteria and an exchange of information at meetings of the JTPG and SMMPO. JTPG and SMMPO meetings are public and anyone can attend and offer feedback and comments on any of the TIP projects or on any part of the TIP process. Evaluation criteria for projects include: Community Impact & Support, Maintenance & Infrastructure, Safety & Security, Mobility / Congestion, Livability / Sustainable Development and Environmental & Climate Change.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)



TIP development, public, and approval process:

1. SMMPO staff works to develop a draft TIP by coordinating project presentations with communities and presenting and discussing various project programming scenarios to both the JTPG and SMMPO for input and discussion.
2. The draft annual TIP is presented to the JTPG at a monthly public JTPG meeting.*
3. The JTPG reviews the draft TIP and votes to recommend that the SMMPO release the draft TIP to a minimum 21-day public review and comment period.*
4. The SMMPO votes to release the draft TIP to a minimum 21-day public review and comment period at a monthly public SMMPO meeting.*
5. A minimum 21-day public review and comment period is held, which includes a press release posted on the SRPEDD website and a public meeting. Draft TIP is posted to SRPEDD website in April annually.*
6. Staff make necessary edits based on feedback received from various stakeholders.
7. The SMMPO votes to endorse the TIP. Upon SMMPO endorsement, the TIP becomes part of the Statewide TIP (STIP), which must be approved by the FTA, FHWA and EPA before funds are obligated for TIP projects.*

*Community members may provide questions and/or comments about TIP projects (e.g. their status, scope, design elements, etc.) at any of the meetings mentioned in steps 1-5. MassDOT and municipal officials are present at JTPG and SMMPO meetings. Written public

letters may be submitted to be read at any of the meetings if attendance is not possible, or may sent directly to SMMPO, town, and/or MassDOT staff for review.

3.2.2 TIP Amendments

The TIP is amended as necessary by the SMMPO, with **TIP amendments** requiring a public meeting, a 21-day public comment period and a process of public notification. The process of public notification can include various locations such as posts on SRPEDD's website, public postings via city and town clerks, e-mail notifications, press releases, and social media posts. The public input meeting may be held virtually (all participants attending remotely) or in hybrid format (allowing both in-person or remote participation) provided that it is in accordance with current Massachusetts Open Meeting Law. The 21-day public comment period may be abbreviated by a vote of the SMMPO under what may be considered extraordinary circumstances such as an officially proclaimed State of Emergency in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, funding or construction restraints, or a natural disaster.

The TIP may also require **adjustments and administrative modifications**. Adjustments are revisions to the TIP that do not require a public process but are required to be included in a JTPG or SMMPO TIP action with a demonstration of financial constraint for MassDOT and FHWA/FTA approval. An adjustment requires a notice to be included in the appropriate agenda and a notice be sent to the JTPG if the adjustment is not being presented at a JTPG meeting. Administrative Modifications are revisions to the TIP that are minor enough in nature to require neither a public process nor FHWA/FTA approval but do involve a notification to federal partners.

To comply with federal requirements, the process adopted by the SMMPO in the PPP for the development of the TIP satisfies the public hearing requirements pertaining to the development of the Program of Projects (POP) for Section 5307, Urbanized Area Formula Program for SRTA and GATRA.

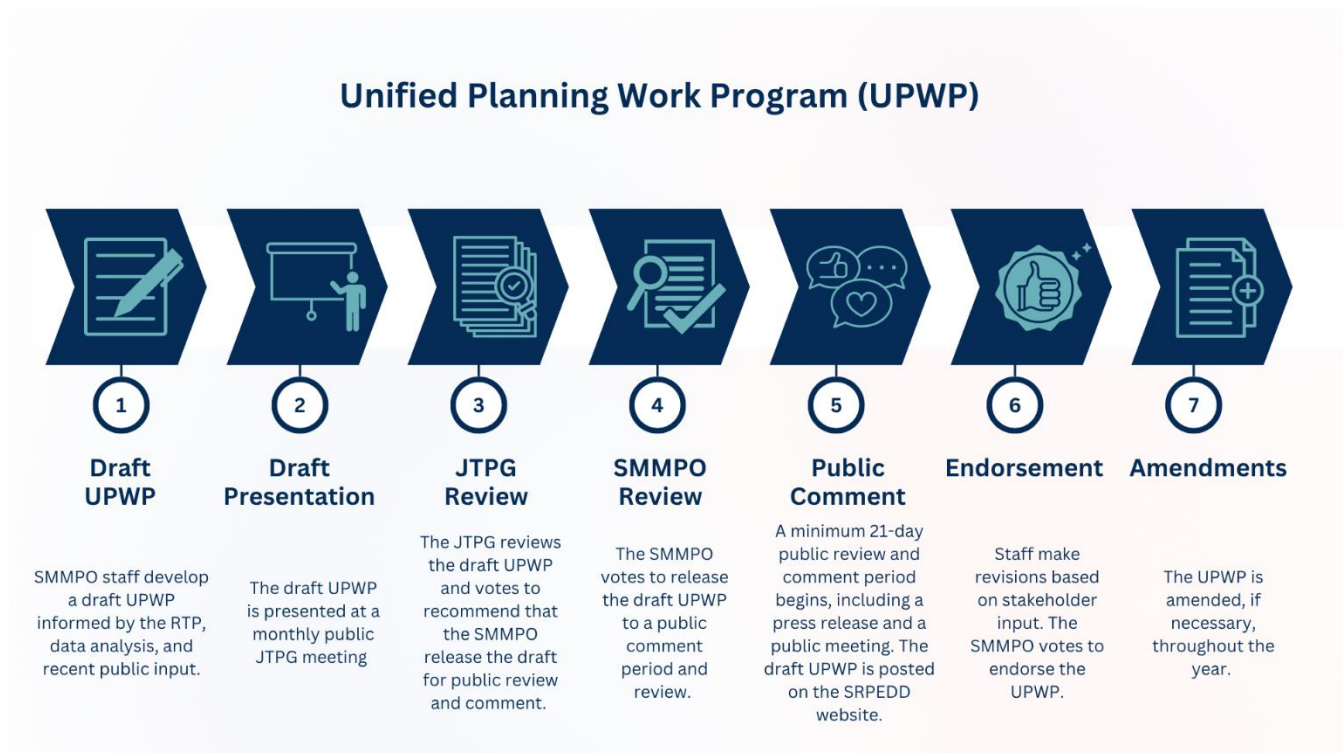
3.2.3 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The UPWP describes the work tasks that SMMPO transportation staff will undertake in a given federal fiscal year from October 1 to September 30. It includes costs and timeframes for tasks including transportation studies, data collection, technical assistance to communities, public engagement, and special projects.

Public Process:

All public participation for the UPWP is through regularly scheduled meetings of the JTPG and the SMMPO, including the invitation to municipal staff to suggest and request needed planning

studies in spring to be implemented in the following federal fiscal year's work plan. Community members and groups are encouraged to speak with their municipal officials about requesting studies and project development for specific locations and topics of concern.



UPWP development, public, and approval process:

1. SMMPO staff develops the draft UPWP informed by issues and needs identified in the Regional Transportation Plan, recent data analysis, and public engagement.
2. The draft annual UPWP is presented to the JTPG at a monthly public JTPG meeting.
3. The JTPG reviews the draft UPWP and votes to recommend that the SMMPO release the draft UPWP to a minimum 21-day public review and comment period.
4. The SMMPO votes to release the draft UPWP to a minimum 21-day public review and comment period at a monthly public SMMPO meeting.
5. A minimum 21-day public review and comment period is held, which includes a press release posted on the SRPEDD website and a public meeting and may include social media and other website content. The draft UPWP is posted on the SRPEDD website annually in May.
6. Staff make necessary edits based on feedback received from various stakeholders.
7. The SMMPO votes to endorse the UPWP in June.
8. The UPWP may be amended with new projects and tasks added throughout the year pending staffing capacity.

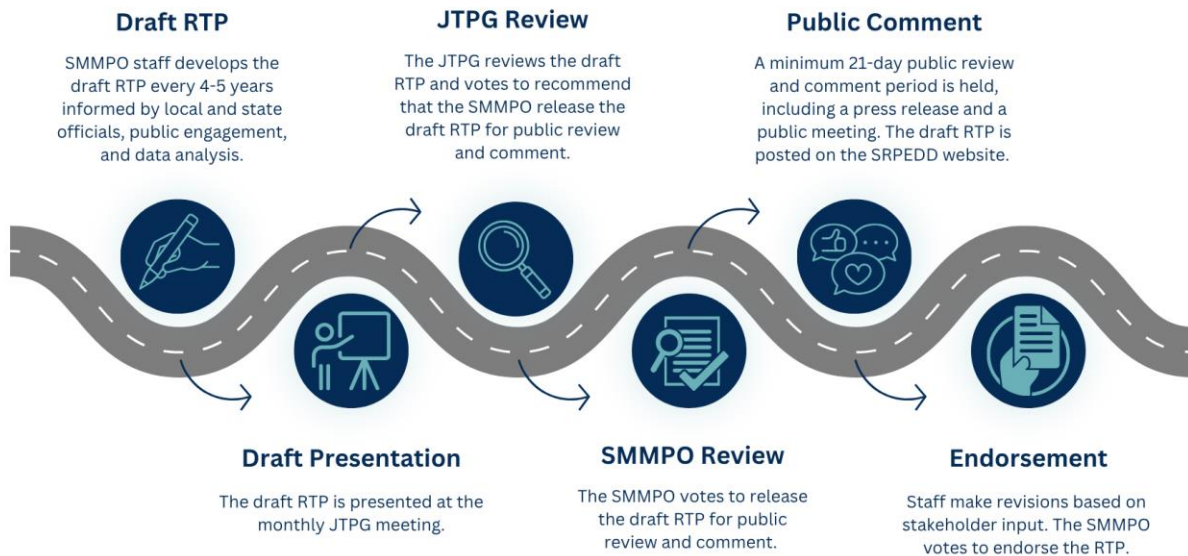
3.2.4 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

The RTP is a 25-year inventory and needs assessment of the region's entire transportation system and all its components, acting as a roadmap for creation of new activities in the SMMPO staff workplan. It is a comprehensive review of all modes of transportation within the SMMPO's region, identifying all roadway and transit transportation facilities and describing locations and needs for improvements for mobility, access for people and goods, efficient system performance, preservation, and good quality of life. The RTP provides short-range and long-range recommendations to local elected officials, the JTPG and state and federal implementing agencies on needs and transportation improvement priorities in the region for the next 25 years. It is updated every 4 to 5 years and contains air quality analyses and financial constraints.

Public Process:

There is extensive public outreach, including but not limited to surveys, community events, and listening sessions, conducted for the development of the RTP and a public notification process for the minimum 21-day public comment period.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP)



RTP development, public, and approval process:

1. SMMPO staff develops the draft RTP informed by meetings with local and state officials, public engagement, and data analysis.
2. The draft annual RTP is presented to the JTPG at a monthly public JTPG meeting.

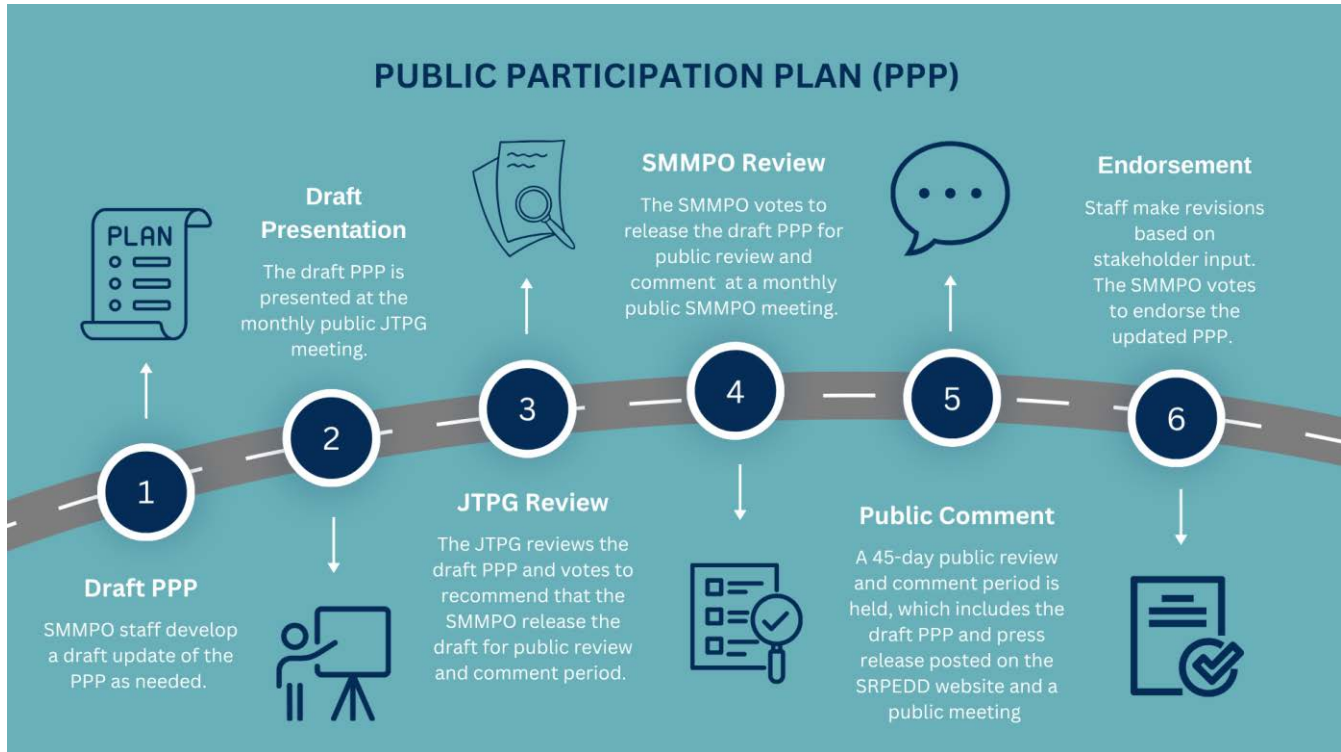
3. The JTPG reviews the draft RTP and votes to recommend that the SMMPO release the draft RTP to a minimum 21-day public review and comment period.
4. The SMMPO votes to release the draft RTP to a minimum 21-day public review and comment period at a monthly public SMMPO meeting.
5. A minimum 21-day public review and comment period is held, which includes a press release posted on the SRPEDD website and a public meeting and may include social media and other website content. The draft RTP is posted on the SRPEDD website.
6. Staff make necessary edits based on feedback received from various stakeholders.
7. The SMMPO votes to endorse the RTP.

3.2.5 Public Participation Plan (PPP)

The PPP is designed to ensure early, inclusive, accessible and continuous public participation and input in the metropolitan transportation planning process for transportation decision making in the region, with the goal of allowing every person ample opportunity to participate in the planning process guiding every issue, project, program or service. Special efforts are made to reach traditionally under-resourced populations, including low-income, minority, Limited English Proficient, disability, and older adult populations.

Public Process:

A process of public notification, including a mandatory 45-day public comment period is required for PPP development and updates. This process includes a wide distribution of the draft document with government and community-based stakeholders across the region and posting on the SRPEDD website with a request for comments and feedback. Community groups, members of the public, and other stakeholders are encouraged to provide input on desired improvements to the SMMPO's public engagement process and public participation methods.



PPP development, public, and approval process:

1. SMMPO staff develops a draft update of the PPP when necessary and posts it on the SRPEDD website.
2. The draft PPP is presented to the JTPG at a monthly public JTPG meeting.
3. The JTPG reviews the draft PPP and votes to recommend that the SMMPO release the draft PPP to a 45-day public review and comment period.
4. The SMMPO votes to release the draft PPP to a 45-day public review and comment period at a monthly public SMMPO meeting.
5. A 45-day public review and comment period is held, which includes a press release posted on the SRPEDD website and a public meeting and may include social media and other website content.
6. Staff make necessary edits based on feedback received from various stakeholders.
7. The SMMPO votes to adopt the updated PPP.

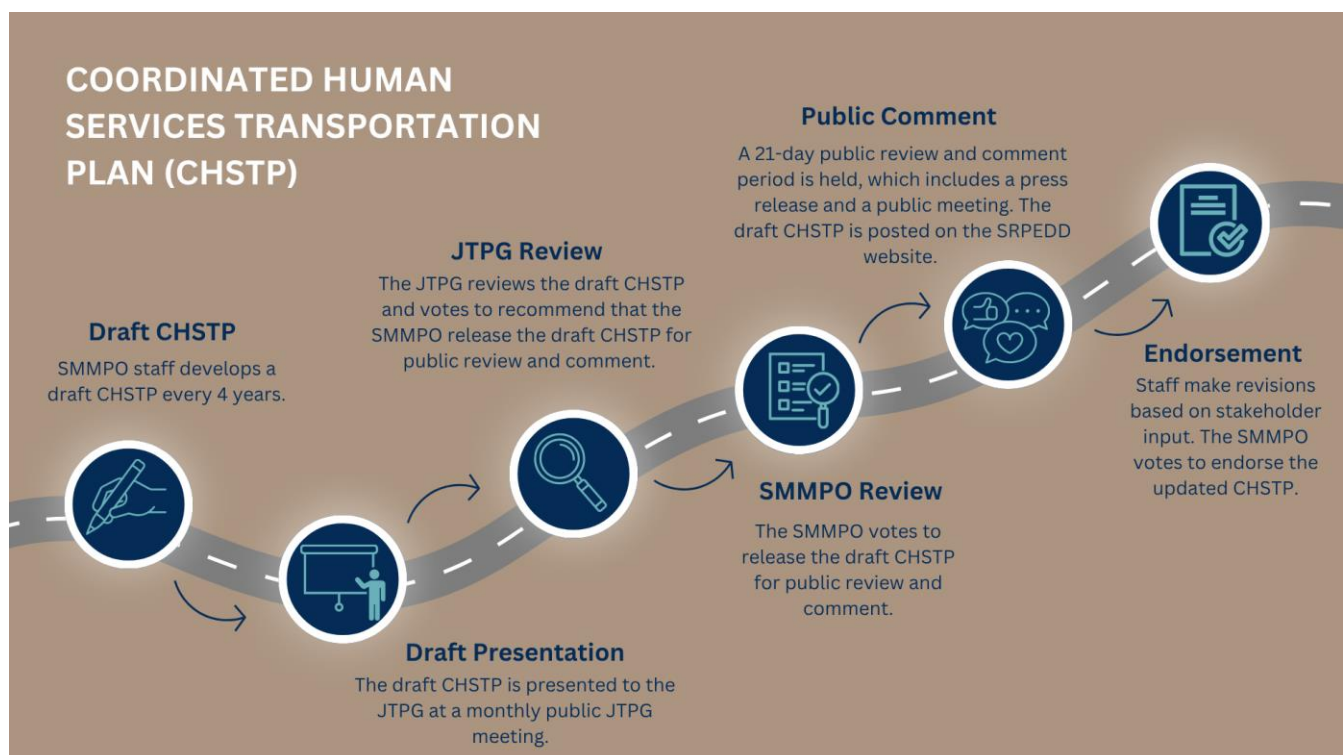
3.2.6 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)

The CHSTP identifies current transportation providers and services in the MPO region; unmet transportation needs and service gaps for seniors, people with disabilities and people with low incomes; potential strategies to address the unmet needs, and priorities for Community Transit Grant proposals in the SMMPO region. It is used to identify eligible projects for the FTA's Section

5310 Program and guides transportation providers in Southeastern MA in applying for 5310 Community Transit Grant funding to address gaps and avoid service duplication. The CHSTP is required to be updated every 4 years.

Public Process:

There is extensive public outreach, including but not limited to surveys, community events, and listening sessions, conducted for the development of the CHSTP and a public notification process for the 21-day public comment period. Older adults, and community members with a disability and/or low incomes, and organizations who work with them are invited to provide input on unmet transportation needs and helpful services to include in the Plan.



CHSTP development, public, and approval process:

1. SMMPO staff develops a draft CHSTP every 4 years.
2. The draft CHSTP is presented to the JTPG at a monthly public JTPG meeting.
3. The JTPG reviews the draft CHSTP and votes to recommend that the SMMPO release the draft CHSTP to a 21-day public review and comment period.
4. The SMMPO votes to release the draft CHSTP to a 21-day public review and comment period at a monthly public SMMPO meeting.

5. A 21-day public review and comment period is held, which includes a press release posted on the SRPEDD website and a public meeting and may include social media and other website content. The draft CHSTP is posted on the SRPEDD website.
6. Staff make necessary edits based on feedback received from various stakeholders.
7. The SMMPO votes to endorse the updated CHSTP.

Federal Transit Administration Section 5303 Grants

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5303 is an FTA-based formula grant program for urbanized areas providing funds to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to carry out the transportation planning process; SRPEDD is the recipient of Section 5303 funds as the regional planning agency providing staff assistance to the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO).

Public Process:

In accordance with USC 49 Section 5303, paragraph i, subsection 6, the SMMPO has prepared a public participation plan that complies with the requirements set forth in that the public is provided an opportunity to comment on the development of transportation plans; public meetings are held at accessible locations at times that are convenient to the public; visualization techniques are used to describe the plan; and all materials are made public through an electronically accessible format.

Federal Transit Administration Section 5307 Grants

FTA 5307 is a formula grant program for urbanized areas providing capital, operating, and planning assistance for mass transportation. Both SRTA and GATRA receive Section 5307 funds. Prior to the Regional Transit Authorities preparing and forwarding grant applications to the FTA and to the state, details of the anticipated grant are published in the TIP. The public process for Section 5307 grants is included with the process completed for the TIP, including adjustments, amendments and public comment.

Public Process:

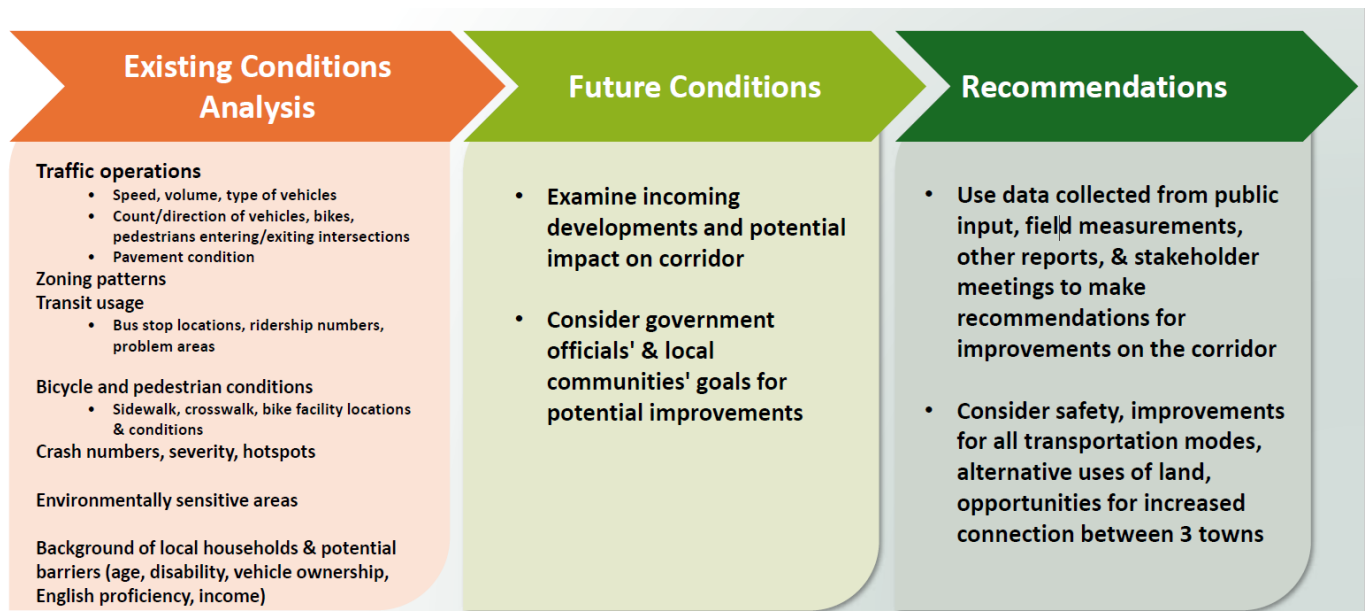
In accordance with the Planning Rule and Circular C 9030 1E, dated January 16, 2014, which streamlined the Public Hearing Requirements for FTA Section 5307 grants, the public involvement process for the development of the TIP satisfies the public hearing requirements for SRTA and GATRA's routine 5307 grants. For FTA projects that are not routine, i.e. Section 5307 applications that require an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), additional public involvement as presented in the joint FHWA/FTA environmental regulations, 23 C.F.R. part 771, will be required by FTA for grant approval.

3.2.7 Major Transportation Studies

Studies and topic-specific plans are conducted to address an issue or need, at the request of a community or as a result of prior planning completed by SRPEDD staff, such as the 100 Most Dangerous Crash Locations. Transportation studies address safety, congestion or other issues. Transit studies address ridership, fares and related issues.

Public Process:

Major transportation studies usually involve comprehensive outreach efforts, including public meetings, surveys, community event tabling, Constant Contact e-mail blasts and social media, as well as door-to-door contact where applicable. All of these efforts disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion and comment, and garner support or consider objections from the neighborhood and community. A second public meeting is held to present the draft study. (Transit data analysis studies do not require initial public meetings.)



The SMMPO's typical corridor and location-specific studies include the following components:

1. Goals/Timeline for the study
2. Phase 1: Analysis of existing conditions of the roadway
 - o Physical layout
 - o Land uses
 - o Traffic data

- Traffic operations
 - Crash analysis
 - Bicycle, pedestrian, transit network
 - Public meetings
3. Phase 2: Analysis of future conditions
- Future projected traffic volumes
 - Future scenarios
 - Operations analysis results
 - Potential improvements
 - Conceptual layout alternatives
 - Public meetings
4. Recommendations

The public process for the SMMPO's typical corridor and location-specific studies includes the following steps:

1. Schedule meeting with town officials to kick off the study
2. Develop project webpage on SRPEDD website
3. Identify the population of the study area and Title VI populations who may require targeted outreach early in study process
4. Develop a study public survey if deemed necessary
5. Develop a flyer and share on social media and popular community locations
6. Organize a kickoff public meeting for the study at an accessible nearby location
7. Attend local community organizations/groups' meetings to discuss the study
8. Organize a second public meeting to present the draft study.
9. Present the draft study at a public JTPG and SMMPO meeting.
10. Make necessary edits based on feedback received from various stakeholders.
11. Report back to the public on public input received and study findings and how they will be used using public outreach and engagement channels deemed most effective for the project and location

Public comments are incorporated into the above documents and presented to the JTPG and SMMPO for acceptance. Substantive changes to the RTP or TIP, as a result of comments received, will cause a revised document and additional comment period that follows the same procedure as the initial comment period. The SMMPO, at their discretion, may vote to abbreviate the standard 21-day comment period for the RTP, TIP and major amendments under what they consider to be extraordinary circumstances. This includes an officially proclaimed State of Emergency in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a natural disaster or a funding opportunity with a grant application deadline of fewer than 21 days. Comment periods may also be extended above 21 days if deemed necessary.

4 Southeast Mass MPO's Approach to Public Participation

4.1 Southeast Mass MPO's Public Participation Goals

The SMMPO has 4 overarching public participation goals and 9 objectives that SRPEDD and stakeholders collaborating with SRPEDD on transportation projects and activities should strive to achieve. These goals are consistent with the laws and regulations that mandate public engagement. SMMPO staff will regularly measure effectiveness in achieving these goals through the self-evaluation metrics described below.

Effective Engagement => Education, Embolden, Evaluate, Encourage

1. EDUCATE

Effectively inform the public and all relevant stakeholders about transportation-related conditions, issues, projects, programs or services relating to the region's metropolitan transportation planning process, using simple and clear language to convey often complex and highly technical information.

Provide public, stakeholder and activity participants with contextual information that they need to understand given content, participate effectively, and provide informed input. Provide information in multiple formats (visual, plain language, audio, translations) to accommodate various learning styles and abilities. Offer multiple ways of engaging with project content and providing input (verbal, written, small group).

- **Communicate in Plain Language**

Issues and information should be stated clearly and simply such that the significance and potential effects may be understood by the greatest number of participants.

- **Clearly Define Potential for Influence**

The process should clearly identify and communicate how and when public feedback is solicited, and where and how participants can have influence and direct impact on decision making.

2. EMBOLDEN

Embolden public, officials, and relevant stakeholders to voice concerns about transportation needs and priorities to SMMPO, local, and state decision-makers.

- **Obtain Quality Input and Participation**

Identify populations who will be impacted by plans, projects, or programs (e.g., specific populations that will be affected, socio-demographic characteristics of the populations, barriers to participation for populations). Comments received by the SMMPO are to be encouraged and reviewed to the extent they can be useful, relevant, and constructive, and contribute to better plans, projects, programs, and decisions.

- **Establish Consistent Commitment**

The SMMPO strives to communicate regularly and develop trust with communities, while helping build community capacity to provide public input, as needed.

- **Achieve Broad Representation**

Input should be sought from all populations who may be affected by a plan, project, or program. Public participants ideally represent, as appropriate to a project or those impacted by it, a range of experiences, abilities, and perspectives, including socioeconomic, ethnic, cultural, and demographically unique perspectives from all. Proactively engage with populations who are traditionally under-resourced or underrepresented.

- **Ensure Accessibility**

Every effort should be made to ensure that participation opportunities are physically, geographically, temporally, linguistically and culturally accessible.

3. EVALUATE, LISTEN AND INCORPORATE

Evaluate public and stakeholder comments received during metropolitan transportation planning process and development of plans, projects, and studies. Incorporate public comment received into metropolitan transportation planning documents and projects. Evaluate how public input received impacted final plans, project lists, services, and decisions.

4. ENCOURAGE

Encourage local officials and decision-makers to initiate and develop projects that respond to public concerns and priorities, especially publicly-identified major needs documented in metropolitan transportation planning documents. Involve representatives of traditionally under-resourced communities in decision making related to the transportation planning process (e.g., proposing, selecting, designing projects).

- **Foster Participant Satisfaction**

The SMMPO staff should encourage the public to participate in discussions, recognizing that people who take the time to participate feel it is worth the effort to join the discussion and provide feedback.

- **Provide Opportunities to Build Trust and Compromise**

The SMMPO staff should ensure that discussions, particularly where there are conflicting views, are structured to allow for achieving compromise and consensus. The staff

recognizes that processes which allow for consensus to be achieved are critical to enable public support for recommended actions. The SMMPO staff should document and share how public input received impacts final plans and project lists.

Establish and Maintain Partnerships

The SMMPO staff seeks to develop and maintain partnerships with various stakeholders, including community-based organizations, during the process of educating stakeholders about SMMPO work, emboldening broad public participation, evaluating and incorporating public feedback into recommendations, and encouraging the development of projects that respond to publicly-identified needs. The staff should adopt public engagement strategies recommended by community partners.

4.2 Southeast Mass MPO's Public Participation Guiding Principles

The SMMPO has 8 guiding principles for public participation that help to inform the development of public outreach activities and events. The following guiding principles inform the SMMPO's goals and measures of success for public participation activities.

1. Promote Respect

All feedback received should be given careful and respectful consideration. Members of the public should have opportunities to debate issues, frame alternative solutions, and affect final decisions.

2. Provide Proactive and Timely Opportunities for Involvement

Avenues for involvement should be open, meaningful, and organized to let people participate comfortably, taking into consideration accessibility, language, scheduling, location and the format of informational materials. Meetings and events should be structured to allow informed, constructive dialogue, be promoted broadly and affirmatively; and be clearly defined in the early stages of plan or project development. Participation strategies should lower the barriers to entry in the public process (such as meeting people where they are), allow for early involvement, and be ongoing and proactive, so participants can have a fair opportunity to influence SMMPO decisions.

3. Offer Authentic and Meaningful Participation

The SMMPO staff should support public participation as a dynamic and meaningful activity that requires teamwork and commitment at all levels. Public processes should provide participants

with purposeful involvement and seek feedback that will be utilized in project and planning decisions.

The SMMPO should provide public engagement opportunities that help identify and mitigate harms to under-resourced communities resulting from transportation programs and projects; that inform about how to prevent undue burdens resulting from transportation plans, programs, and projects; that inform about providing benefits to under-resourced communities resulting from transportation plans, programs, and projects; and that work toward correcting or addressing the effects of past discriminatory policies or decisions.

4. Provide a Clear, Focused, and Predictable Process

The participation process should be understandable and known well in advance. This clarity should be structured to allow members of the public and officials to plan their time and use their resources to provide input effectively. Activities should have a clear purpose, the intended use of input received made clear, and all explanations described in language that is easy to understand.

5. Foster Participation from Populations of Various Life Experiences

The SMMPO should proactively reach out to and engage all demographic groups across the region, particularly populations historically under-resourced by existing transportation systems, including people with disabilities, low-income, minority, Limited English Proficient populations, those without access to a vehicle, and older adults.

6. Be Responsive to Participants

Public meetings and events held by SMMPO staff should facilitate discussion that addresses participants' interests and concerns. Scheduling should be designed to meet the greatest number of participants possible and be considerate of their schedules and availability. Informational materials provided should be clear, concise and responsive to known community concerns, while avoiding misleading or biased suggestions or solutions.

7. Record, Share and Respond to Public Comments

Public comments, written and verbal, should be given consideration in SMMPO decision-making processes and reported in relevant documents. Specifically, public comments provide an opportunity for shared knowledge among SMMPO staff and transportation partners but also require clear responses that are documented to demonstrate that community input was in fact addressed. The SMMPO staff should communicate the impact of the public input on decisions at a broad summary level, describing the major themes, the decisions reached, and the rationales for the decisions.

8. Self-Evaluate and Plan Updates

This plan will be periodically reviewed and updated to adapt over time as necessary, to ensure it responds to changing public needs and behaviors and to include new strategies as they evolve.

4.3 Self-Evaluation Metrics – What Does Success Look Like?

At least every two years, the SMMPO will review the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan to ensure it meets the needs of the public. The evaluation will provide findings about potential modifications and improvements to public engagement processes and identify whether these modifications and improvements would require any adjustments to the Plan. The findings of regular evaluations will be documented in bi-annual public participation reports that will be posted on the SRPEDD website and shared with SMMPO decision-making bodies. Public participation evaluations will measure factors including:

Tiers of Engagement: Informing, collecting input, collaborating in decision-making

Visibility

- Number of MPO publications and planning documents produced (plans, studies, reports, etc.)
- Number of MPO publications available online
- Number of social media posts on SMMPO/SRPEDD social media
- Number of press releases distributed to press, posted on SRPEDD website and distributed to community partners
- Number of newspaper mentions of SMMPO work
- Number of announcements and documents distributed to community partners via email
- Number of announcements shared by local community partners on websites and social media
- Number of promotional materials distributed (e.g. reflective wristbands, flashing bike lights)

Participation Opportunities

- Number of public meetings held (virtual and in person JTPG, SMMPO, TIP, project-specific)
- Number of local events attended
- Number of focus groups held
- Number of surveys and crowd-sourced map activities launched
- Number of meetings with community-based organizations
- Number of times canvassed at public venues or door-to-door
- Number of people on the JTPG, SMMPO mailing lists receiving regular agendas

Public Interest and Feedback

- Number of registrations for public meetings

- Number of attendees at public meetings and focus groups
- Number of people engaged with at local events
- Number of people engaged with canvassing at public venues/door-to-door
- Number of comments received (written, verbal)
- Number of survey responses
- Number of social media interactions
- Number of website views
- Level of attendee engagement and participation, topics discussed

Response to Public Input (Impact of comments on project outcomes)

- Recommendations made in response to public input received
- Board actions as a response to public input received
- External actions in response to public input

Accessibility and Inclusion


- Number of meetings held and events attended in under-resourced and Title VI communities
- Number of meetings held along transit routes
- Number of virtual meetings held
- Number of attendees at meetings and events from under-resourced communities
- Number of requests received for language and accessibility accommodations
- Number of materials translated
- Number of LEP individuals engaged with
- Number of events/meetings and their attendees for which refreshments or stipends provided
- Number of complaints received

5 Southeast Mass MPO's Public Engagement Methods

5.1 Guidelines for Designing Public Engagement Activities and Using Public Input

The SMMPO's process for public engagement is driven by the goals and guiding principles described in the previous chapter. We aim to create opportunities for meaningful public participation in a careful and respectful environment in which members of the public can provide feedback, taking into consideration accessibility, language, scheduling, location, and format while lowering the barriers to entry so that participants can influence SMMPO decisions.

The following processes support our federal nondiscrimination obligations, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and additional laws that require nondiscrimination and equal access across the categories of race, color, national origin (including LEP), age, sex, and disability, to ensure that sufficient consideration of outreach to and inclusion of these groups is incorporated into the SMMPO's public engagement procedures.

The SMMPO broadly applies the process identified in Figure  to designing public engagement activities. While the process described below is generally applicable to the SMMPO's public engagement, each instance of public outreach is unique and specific strategies used for each project can vary in order to be most effective while still consistent with applicable compliance requirements.

5.1.1 Key Steps in SMMPO's Public Engagement Process

KEY STEPS IN SMMPO'S PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Identify Your Audience

Identify demographics that will be impacted by a project.



Communication and Information

Create accessible, easy-to-understand project documents and provide information to the community on how they can get involved. Respond to public comments.



Incorporate Feedback

Share input with SMMPO staff and local officials to find solutions. Include and address public concerns in plan, study, or report.



Provide Access to Outreach

Connect with community-based organizations and leaders to identify most effective and accessible meeting times, venues, events, etc.

Community Representation

Identify barriers to participation (lack of transportation, childcare, etc.) and make meetings accessible to increase participation of community members with various experiences and backgrounds.

Backgrounding – Know Your Audience

- Identify and determine the demographics of those who may be impacted by a project, plan, or program
- Build an outreach strategy to reach various demographic populations identified, including language groups and stakeholders across demographics

Providing Meaningful Access

- Consult with community leaders and community-based organizations to identify most effective outreach channels, events, meeting times, and locations to promote meaningful access.
- Identify an accessible venue(s) and/or an accessible virtual platform for meetings or events
- Disseminate meeting or event notice to reach various demographic populations

Communicating and Meeting with Public Stakeholders

- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with the community
- Create summary documents to present complex information in a simple and clear manner
- Ensure that project documents and materials are accessible.

- Identify and arrange reasonable accommodations and produce meeting materials in alternate formats and where necessary alternate languages
- Provide interested community members with opportunities to voice comments, questions, and concerns in different formats (e.g. oral, written) and provide an adequate response at or after events.
- Compile and provide responses to public comments

Planning for Broad Representation

Planning for the involvement of community members of various backgrounds and experiences is essential to an inclusive and successful effort.

- Establish a clear objective and role for public participation, including the nature of community involvement needed for meaningful outcomes.
- Understand the history of relationships between stakeholder representatives and groups.

Identify factors that would encourage participation and involvement and potential barriers to participation.

- Common barriers could include schedule limitations, childcare, lack of transportation, limited English proficiency and/or limited literacy, lack of trust due to past experiences, lack of experience, and cultural barriers.
- Provide information and explain the decision-making process so that expectations are clear.
- Take steps to remove barriers to participation where possible (site meetings/events in accessible community spaces, time meetings/events to avoid conflicts where possible)

Documenting the effort to achieve broad representation by recording efforts to identify individuals and groups and following through to demonstrate that input was considered and/or had an impact on project parameters, study outcomes, and planned activities can demonstrate the value of continued public involvement in these activities.

Incorporating Public Feedback Into Planning Work and Decision-Making

- Document public input received through various engagement channels and share with all project and relevant SMMPO staff
- Include public comments received in a section(s) of the plan, study, or report document
- Address public concerns in the recommendations section of the plan, study or report
- Share the public comment highlights with decision-making bodies, including JTPG, SMMPO, SRPEDD Commission, MassDOT, municipal officials, and regional transit authorities
- Discuss public concerns highlights with relevant municipal officials and explore opportunities for addressing popular concerns through future UPWP work plan studies or

- tasks, TIP project initiation, assistance with implementing quick-build projects or solutions, assistance with grant applications for funding solutions
- Regularly consider public comment themes when making decisions about TIP project prioritization and UPWP task selections.

Public participation is an ongoing activity and an integral part of every planning effort, including one-time activities, such as intersection and corridor studies, and transit studies, and regularly repeated activities, such as the annual Transportation Improvement Program process and long-range Regional Transportation Plan updates. A public outreach effort is initiated before the start of any new project to solicit feedback, garner support or consider objections. Any number of public participation techniques are utilized to disseminate information and to seek feedback from the public and can be adapted depending on the situation.

A first important step in public outreach is identifying the communities, populations or neighborhoods affected by the issue, project, program or service involved, including identifying any Title VI populations such as minority, Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or low-income populations in the study or service area. This will assist in developing a strategy to effectively reach all affected stakeholders. As part of this first step, SRPEDD staff has developed both a [Scoping Process and a Public Engagement Resource](#) to assist with selecting appropriate engagement activities for a given project.

5.2 Public Outreach and Engagement Methods: Ways to be Informed and Involved

The SMMPO's Public Participation Plan and strategy are designed with the ultimate goal of allowing every member of the public ample and varied opportunities to participate in the regional decision-making process in order to plan for a transportation system that meets various public needs. An ongoing collaborative relationship with numerous community and municipal stakeholders throughout the region is essential to understanding and responding to the large array of transportation needs and priorities in the region and planning for facilities and services that improve quality of life for all.

The SMMPO's public participation efforts rely on employing various engagement techniques for a given project. Each plan, issue, program, and service is unique in purpose, scope, and target audience and the same engagement methods cannot necessarily be applied in the same way for all projects. Different populations and users of the region's transportation system have different

preferences for receiving information and engaging with projects and public processes. Effective and representative engagement requires using various methods and communication channels to reach *all* users.

The outreach methods that the SMMPO typically uses to communicate with the public about planning information and engagement opportunities include:

1. Project webpages, meeting notices, announcements on the SRPEDD website (www.srpedd.org), particularly the transportation and events sections
2. Social media posts on SRPEDD's [Facebook](#) pages and local Facebook groups, SRPEDD [Instagram](#), SRPEDD LinkedIn, SRPEDD [YouTube](#), and other platforms
3. Mailings and email lists
4. Postal mail
5. Press releases
6. SRPEDD and community partners' newsletters
7. Presentations, announcements and discussions at JTPG, SMMPO, SRPEDD Commission and other SRPEDD meetings
8. Flyers and announcements shared with municipal and community partners and posted/shared at physical locations: town halls, libraries, councils on aging, bus terminals, YMCAs, local businesses, community organizations
9. Flyers and announcements shared with municipal and community partners and posted on municipal and community partner digital locations: websites, social media pages, newsletters, WhatsApp groups
10. Media / radio interviews
11. Informational posters, fact sheets, brochures, display boards, presentation slides

The engagement methods that the SMMPO typically uses to dialogue with the public and gather public input include:

1. Workshops, public meetings, open houses, listening sessions (in-person & virtual)
2. Set up a resource table at community events
3. Focus groups (in-person & virtual)
4. Surveys shared online and in paper copies at community meetings/events
5. Comment cards posted online and at community events
6. Meetings with community-based organizations and groups
7. Interactive crowdsource maps posted online and shared at community events
8. Interactive posterboards with prompts
9. Canvassing at public venues and door to door, including bus stations, parks, Councils on Aging, shared use paths

Physical locations where SMMPO staff may engage the public:

- SRPEDD hosted public events / meetings (including of the JTPG and SMMPO)
- Attendance at municipalities' and community organizations' meetings
- Recurring or Annual Community Events
- Health Fairs, cultural festivals, job fairs
- Lions Club/ Rotary Club / Elks Events
- School events / Safe Routes to School Events

Comments on issues, studies, projects, programs, services, TIP amendments or any transportation or transit issues may be received anytime by phone, fax, mail, email, as well as verbally or in writing at public meetings and on SRPEDD's social media outlets.

5.2.1 Outreach Methods

5.2.1.1 SRPEDD Website

The SRPEDD website contains up-to-date information regarding all aspects of the region's metropolitan transportation planning process, including all draft and final planning documents, minutes summarizing JTPG and SMMPO meetings, TIP project descriptions, community technical assistance examples and request forms, and project webpages for ongoing and special projects. It contains direct links for providing written comment on various projects and a general feature to contact us with comments, found here: <https://srpedd.org/contact-us/>. The SRPEDD website also features an up-to-date event calendar, which lists all SMMPO public meetings and public comment periods along with an invitation for comments and questions. It may also include community events at which SMMPO staff plan to table or set up an informational stand.

The SRPEDD website is ADA compliant, offers a translation feature into eleven (11) languages/dialects and includes a static link at the bottom of each page directly connecting to the page containing all Title VI related information and documents, including translated versions. All vital documents, including the Civil Rights Notice to the Public and the Title VI Complaint Process and Complaint Forms are posted on the website in the region's five Safe Harbor languages, in addition to English.

5.2.1.2 SRPEDD Social Media

SRPEDD uses several social media platforms to share information and communicate directly with the public, including a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/srpedd), a presence on Instagram (www.instagram.com/srpedd), [LinkedIn](#), and a YouTube (www.youtube.com/user/srpedd) page with over 50 videos including public meetings and workshops, an instructional video on how to safely navigate a roundabout, and informative

webinars. Social media is an effective tool for sharing project updates and educational material with large audiences, while allowing for community and municipal partners to quickly re-share SMMPO content on their own pages upon request. Posting in local Facebook groups has proven effective for sharing content about surveys and public meetings across the region's 27 municipalities. It also a channel for the public to provide comment and receive responses on plans and projects by directly commenting on social media posts and sending direct messages; this is a helpful supplement if they are unable to invest greater time in taking a survey or attending a meeting. The SMMPO recommends that the public monitor these feeds to stay current on agency activities. In addition, SMMPO staff can at times respond directly to members of the public through these platforms when issues or concerns are expressed.

5.2.1.3 Mailings and Email Lists

SRPEDD maintains and strives to continually add to a comprehensive mailing list that includes community-based organizations, social service agencies, advocacy groups and liaisons, and transportation providers. The current e-mail list contains nearly 500 contacts and can be sorted in any number of ways to reach those affected and interested. The e-mail service, Constant Contact, is often utilized as an effective and simple way to send a meeting notice or flyer to both targeted groups or to a wider audience. Community partners and members of the public may also sign up to be added to the monthly JTPG and SMMPO email distribution list for monthly meetings and resources.

5.2.1.4 Postal Mail

The SMMPO periodically uses postal mail to reach stakeholders who have reduced access to digital platforms. The SMMPO also receives public comment and input through postal mail to the SRPEDD office as an alternative to digital methods.

5.2.1.5 Press Releases

The SMMPO may issue press releases to announce major updates, public meetings, the release of key documents, or other items. Press releases may be distributed through various media channels to reach a wide audience. Press releases help keep the public informed and encourage public participation in the planning process and through project development. Press releases are posted on the SMMPO webpage and if a public meeting is involved, on the SRPEDD website calendar. Staff should include news outlets serving minority, low-income and LEP populations, such as free and foreign language publications where necessary. Staff members should actively cultivate regular contacts with reporters across the region and be available for newspaper and radio interviews on public projects.

5.2.2 Engagement Methods

5.2.2.1 Open houses, listening sessions (in-person & virtual)

SMMPO and project partners may interact with members of the public through open house sessions for major projects. These sessions afford members of the public an opportunity to view plans for projects. They do not have formal agendas, and formal discussions or presentations may not take place. At open houses, people receive information informally from exhibits including posterboards and staff, and they are encouraged to give opinions, make comments, and state preferences to staff, orally or in writing. SMMPO staff and consultants are on hand to discuss particular details of interest with members of the public. While the interactions during these sessions are informal, critical issues are often raised. SMMPO staff and consultants strive to address these issues accurately and effectively during these sessions. Open houses may be more accessible to community members as they allow individuals to come and go on their own schedules and are not structured to attend for a set period of time.

5.2.2.2 Set up resource table at local events

The SMMPO often sets up a table or booth at high-trafficked local events to engage community members where they already are. At these events staff often connect with a larger quantity of individuals, including the general public and specific target populations. Staff may ask attendees to take a survey by distributing informational flyers with survey links or QR codes. They may also use interactive activities such as posterboards with questions to which participants can physically add their responses, in addition to verbally conducting short surveys. Informational posterboards and flyers are often used to share project updates, goals, findings, and resources at local events. Meeting individuals where they are in this way requires less time commitment from them while offering an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions.

5.2.2.3 Focus groups (in-person & virtual)

The SMMPO uses focus groups to gain insights from a specific stakeholder group. Focus groups may include traditionally hard-to-reach stakeholders. Focus groups enable the SMMPO to have discussions with a smaller group with specific content applicable to that group's needs, preferences, and concerns. The SMMPO may identify focus group participants through a variety of approaches, including through existing relationships or partner community-based organizations. The SMMPO may also screen potential participants through a questionnaire to confirm eligibility.

5.2.2.4 Surveys shared online and at community meetings/events

Surveys provide an opportunity for SMMPO staff to ask specific questions and collect general feedback from the public. Because surveys can be administered in a variety of ways (in person, electronically, via targeted emails, or posted on the project webpage) they offer a straightforward option for large-scale public input, that can be completed at the public's convenience. Surveys are often available online and upon request via hardcopy for individuals with limited computer access.

5.2.2.5 Comment cards posted online and at community events

Comment cards consist of one open-ended question and are an opportunity for members of the public to voice a comment or question about any topic of their choosing. The SMMPO may

use this method in combination with longer surveys in order to provide a faster public input option for those who do not wish to take a longer survey. Comment cards may be available on the SRPEDD website and in hard copy.

5.2.2.6 Meetings with community-based organizations and groups

Planned meetings with staff or volunteers of community-based organizations who serve populations affected by relevant projects or services help inform SMMPO staff about the needs of specific stakeholder groups, especially those historically underrepresented in transportation decision-making. The SMMPO may meet one-on-one with community partners, convene a group of partners, or attend regular monthly meetings of community partners and/or coalitions.

5.2.2.7 Interactive crowdsource maps posted online and shared at community events

Mapping exercises allow participants to comment on existing conditions, identify challenges or opportunities, and propose improvements at specific locations. The SMMPO may engage participants either through in-person mapping exercises or through online platforms.

5.2.2.8 Interactive posterboards with prompts

Interactive posterboards with project-specific or general questions that are either shared and engaged with at community events or that float to various community locations overtime, e.g. libraries, town halls, offer an opportunity for the public to provide quick and specific feedback. They also provide a useful visual of overarching concerns to both SMMPO staff and others engaging in the activity.

5.2.2.9 Canvassing at public venues or door-to-door

SMMPO may conduct verbal interviews and conversations at public venues such as bus stations, shared use paths, and public libraries in order to meet the public where they are and understand their experiences using transportation facilities while they are onsite at these facilities. This method requires less additional time commitment from the public and allows SMMPO staff the opportunity to experience transportation facilities from the perspective of local road or service users.

5.2.2.10 JTPG/SMMPO/SRPEDD Commission Meetings

Monthly JTPG, SMMPO, and SRPEDD Commission meetings are another opportunity for the public to hear updates about transportation planning in the region, and presentations concerning studies, projects, TIP amendments and other transportation and transit issues, in addition to providing comments and deliberating with decision-makers on any of these topics.

5.2.2.11 Public Meetings: Protocols For In-Person, Virtual & Hybrid Meetings

Public meetings, listening sessions, workshops, and webinars, whether they be in-person, virtual or hybrid, are regularly held and used to disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion and also to solicit feedback, garner support or consider objections from the general public and the communities we serve. Meetings provide an opportunity for personal contact and direct and open dialogue. All public meetings must adhere to the Open Meeting Law, including any amendments made for remote participation. These include the following:

- At the start of the meeting, the chair must announce the name of the member or members who are participating remotely; such information must also be recorded in the meeting minutes.
- All votes must be taken by roll call.
- Members of the public body must be clearly audible to each other and to members of the public at all times.

5.2.2.11.1 Meeting Notices

When:

A Meeting Notice with the date, time, location or meeting link (if the meeting is virtual), and a listing of topics that is reasonably anticipated to be discussed at the meeting, as well the agenda and other pertinent documents attached, may be posted on the SRPEDD website at least seven (7) days in advance of the meeting to give ample notice for attendance or a quorum, but shall be sent out and posted at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, in accordance with Massachusetts' Open Meeting Law (OML) 940 CMR 29.01(1)(c). In an emergency, staff shall post notice as soon as reasonably possible prior to the meeting.

Where:

The SMMPO, SRPEDD Commission, and all of their standing committees, subcommittees, and affiliated committees adopted in December 2024, with approval of the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, the SRPEDD website (srpedd.org/about-srpedd/meetings/) as the **official posting location for all meeting notices**. Although no longer required by OML in addition to posting on the SRPEDD website, regional meeting notices for the SMMPO and JTPG will continue to also be sent to each city or town clerk in the region in order to encourage greater dissemination of this information, via any and all mechanisms including physical town hall postings, municipal websites, social media, etc.

With the adoption of this alternative posting location, municipalities are now only required by OML to post the [Notice of Meeting Posting Location](#) that was sent to clerks by SRPEDD's Executive Director in the manner that the municipality ordinarily posts its own meeting notices.

If this is by physically posting notices in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in the municipal building in which the clerk's office is located (i.e., the town has not adopted its website as the official means of posting notices), then this notice need not also be posted on the municipality's website.

SMMPO, SRPEDD, and their subcommittees' public meetings are additionally posted on the SRPEDD website calendar (srpedd.org/events/). Meeting notices are sometimes posted in a community's library or in the regional bus terminals. Public meetings for TIP amendments and other changes, especially those that require a public comment period, are announced and advertised using various channels, including public distribution and postings, electronic mailings, posting on the SRPEDD website and social media accounts, as well as others.

5.2.2.11.2 Meeting Notice Best Practices:

Meeting notices and other meeting materials should be made as accessible as possible for all users. This includes:

- ✓ Large, sans serif font (a minimum of 14-point font but 16-point to 18-point font is preferred)
- ✓ Light and dark color contrasts for the best visibility.
- ✓ Off-white non-glossy paper is best for printing ed reading materials.
- ✓ Columns and centered text should be avoided.
- ✓ Notices for social media postings should adhere to social media platform guidelines for optimal viewing.
- ✓ Meeting notices should include a Notice of Nondiscrimination; availability of language services and an offer of reasonable accommodation with contact information; transit route information if applicable; the universal Accessibility Symbol (shown below on the bottom left) to indicate that the in-person, physical meeting location is accessible for all users; and a choice of contact information for the opportunity to comment or obtain more information if attendance at the meeting is not possible.



- ✓ Allow ample time when sending out meeting notices to prepare and to arrange for any requested accommodation if necessary. Sending a public notice out at least 2 weeks in advance of a meeting is a good rule, since ten (10) business days is the accepted minimum time for reasonable notice of accommodation, for services like translators, assistive listening devices, American Sign Language interpretation, captioning, etc.

Consider bringing “I speak’ cards and a tablet equipped with Google Translate to assist Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons during public in-person meetings.

To provide accessibility for virtual and hybrid meetings, SRPEDD staff can utilize Otter.ai software for live auto captioning for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and Wordly.ai software for translations for persons who are Limited English Proficient, as requested and needed. The SRPEDD office conference room is equipped with a Meeting Owl camera, a 360° camera that captures a panoramic view of the conference room, as well as a microphone and speakers. During a hybrid meeting, this allows the remote participants to see and hear all the participants attending in-person during a meeting.

SRPEDD has assistive listening devices and a Public Address System (P.A. System) with wireless microphones available for in-person public meetings. The intent of this is to provide all participants attending an in-person public meeting an opportunity to speak, hear, and be heard by all participants. Meeting attendees with disabilities who are unable to hold a microphone independently will be accommodated. In these situations, allowing an attendee use of a microphone, with a stand adjusted to their height is preferable, however, staff will be available to accommodate and hold the microphone for any attendee if necessary. Alternatively, and particularly for larger meetings, staff with a floating microphone would be preferable to facilitate communication.

Every effort will be made to fulfill reasonable and timely requests for accommodations, including interpretation and materials in alternate formats. These efforts are taken to provide greater access and opportunity for participation by all interested individuals and groups.

QR codes for smart phones can be used on meeting notices, posters and information cards, for a direct link to websites, surveys and informational web pages.

Who:

Meeting notices should be sent to additional and appropriate contacts, including neighborhood groups, organizations and individuals, ensuring that those representing Title VI populations are included. Consider mailing notices directly to residents and businesses in a project area or going door to door, when warranted and feasible, to distribute meeting notices and speak to those directly affected.

5.2.2.11.3 Meeting Materials

All materials should be composed in a clear and simple manner, avoiding technical and industry jargon and acronyms to be easily understood by a wide number of varying backgrounds and educational levels. Consider creating a summary document of the issue, project, program or service to present highly technical and complex information simply and clearly.

Visualization techniques, such as posters, maps, photos, charts and graphs, as well as use of GIS systems, computer simulation and artist's renderings and physical models can be used. These techniques may be used concurrently or individually as the situation dictates. Ensure that posters and other display materials are placed at a location and height (considering persons who use wheelchairs and others) that are visible and accessible to all. Ensure that electronic documents, such as meeting notices and other relevant materials are accessible.

5.2.2.11.4 Meeting Locations & Protocols

For in-person and hybrid meetings:

- ✓ If possible, choose a meeting site that is within or near the area where the relevant issue, project, program or service is located, if applicable.
- ✓ Choose a site that is on or near public transportation and during hours of transit service, typically 4-6 pm.
- ✓ Ensure that the in-person meeting site is accessible for all users, including LEP persons, and persons with disabilities. A list of ADA accessible meeting locations on transit routes is maintained in-house and continuously updated. Public libraries are always a good place to start when locating an acceptable in-person meeting site. Use a checklist, such as the one found below, to ensure that the in-person meeting site is accessible for all users before the start of the meeting.
 - ✓ Is there an accessible entrance, accessible parking and are there accessible rest rooms?
 - ✓ Is there clear and directional signage for these accommodations, as well as for restrooms, emergency exits, etc.?
 - ✓ Are entrances, travel paths and aisles at least 3-feet wide and clear of obstacles?
 - ✓ Is there seating available for any attendees who have requested an accommodation?
 - ✓ Are there assistive listening devices or wireless microphones available? (SRPEDD has these available for meetings.)
 - ✓ Is there an interpreter available for any attendees who have requested one?
 - ✓ Have your meeting materials been translated to be made accessible for any LEP populations nearby and affected by the project?

It might be difficult to find an in-person meeting site in the desired area or neighborhood that is on a transit route and fully accessible, and that may indicate having to forego fulfilling all of the items on the checklist. However, making a physical location as accessible as possible may be accomplished by physically moving tables, chairs and other obstacles or by printing signs to post at the location.

Another alternative may be to hold a virtual or hybrid meeting to encourage and accommodate more participants. Virtual meetings can eliminate the usual barriers in attending an in-person meeting including lack of accessibility and/or transportation, lack of childcare, and participants with non-traditional working hours.

For in-person, virtual and hybrid meetings, choose a date and time that is convenient for the largest number of people, for instance, after common work hours.

Before the start of an in-person, virtual or hybrid meeting, allow ample time to complete any necessary tasks. For virtual or hybrid meetings, this may include ensuring that staff members are assigned responsibilities that could include facilitation, allowing attendees into the meeting, recording the meeting, calling the roll, monitoring chat comments and questions, testing audio and video, etc. For in-person and hybrid meetings, this may include: posting signage; rearranging tables and chairs to clear travel paths; setting up assistive listening devices; having “I Speak” cards available; setting out sign-in sheets, comment sheets and other relevant handouts and meeting materials; posting the Title VI / Nondiscrimination Notice in a prominent location; and placing all posters, maps and other display items at heights and locations that are visible and accessible to all attendees, including persons using wheelchairs.

Any conversations held and comments received during the meeting should be transcribed by staff following the meeting. Virtual or hybrid meetings should be recorded to keep a record of any comments. Comments cards containing contact information should be displayed and/or distributed prior to the meeting and shared during the meeting for the opportunity for later comment, especially for those unable or unwilling to speak at a virtual or hybrid meeting or attend an in-person meeting.

In order to prevent future Zoom meeting disruptions and security incidents, JTPG, SMMPO, and virtual/hybrid public meetings are now set up using **Zoom webinar**. Voting members of the JTPG and SMMPO and other officials and community members on these groups’ mailing lists receive emails with unique links to login to the Zoom meeting. The unique meeting links allow these individuals to join the meeting as “Panelists,” meaning they are participants with full audio and video access - as opposed to being Attendees which are view-only participants who can only be



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unmuted by a host. Individuals who are not JTPG/SMMPO voting members or not on the monthly mailing lists who would like to join these meetings are required to register for the meeting (as Attendees) using the meeting registration link provided on the SRPEDD website and meeting agenda.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) bots are prohibited from joining Zoom meetings of the JTPG and SMMPO.

6 Targeted Outreach Methods

The SMMPO is committed to ensuring that all members of the public have equal access to meaningfully participate in its transportation planning activities. In order to ensure that all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, age, gender, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, ancestry or ethnicity, sexual orientation or veteran's status have an equal opportunity to participate in the SMMPO's programs and decision-making process, the SMMPO proactively takes measures to conduct targeted outreach to populations that have been historically under-resourced and underrepresented in planning activities. **This begins with identifying and implementing strategies that seek to remove barriers to participation.**

6.1 Engaging Title VI Populations

Traditional techniques are not always effective for engaging low-income, minority, LEP and other traditionally under-resourced populations. SRPEDD and SMMPO staff utilize a Scoping Process and a [Public Engagement Resource](#) to assist with selecting appropriate engagement activities for a given project. The Scoping Process guides public outreach by confirming stakeholders, identifying vulnerable and significant populations, as well as populations and neighborhoods where languages other than English are spoken, to inform inclusive public engagement practices at the start of a project. The Public Engagement Resource addresses common barriers to engagement such as transportation access, limited income, work schedules and childcare, language, physical access and accessibility, (dis)comfort with technology, and safe/habitual spaces for minority/BIPOC populations. It utilizes an engagement plan matrix to identify and reach under-resourced populations and languages.

To determine the types of outreach that may be necessary for a project, SMMPO staff also identify areas where Title VI population averages exceed regional averages for the following six demographics of historically vulnerable populations: low-income, race and ethnic minority, limited English proficient, disability, older adult, and households with no access to a vehicle. The SMMPO utilizes an interactive map available online at <https://srpedd.org/transportation/public-participation-and-title-vi/>, informed by 2018-2022 American Community Survey block group data, to identify demographics that are greater than the SMMPO's regional average and locations that should receive targeted outreach methods for a given project.

Block groups with an average above the SMMPO's regional average are considered to have relatively high shares of residents that are especially impacted by changes in or to transportation

networks. This data is updated every two years and is used in programs and documents such as the Transportation Improvement Project (TIP) evaluation criteria, TIP Funding Distribution Analysis, SRPEDD's Title VI program, demographic analyses for various SMMPO/SRPEDD plans and studies, to inform outreach and engagement activities, and for other general planning purposes.

The following list provides examples of effective strategies to engage traditionally under-resourced communities:

Low-Income

- Hold or attend meetings at locations along transit routes
- Provide a remote option or options that do not require computer (such as broadcasts on local cable TV)
- Rotate in-person meeting locations
- Provide food and refreshments at in-person meetings

Racial and Ethnic Minority

- Hold meetings in neighborhood and community spaces populations frequently spend time in
- Set up a table at community organizations' pop-up events that attract these communities
- Send meeting and project information to community leaders who are trusted advocates to share out with their constituents
- Set up a table at local events
- Include participation options that do not require direct contact (for populations with mistrust in government institutions)

Limited English Proficient

- Translate flyers & meeting materials into the region's Safe Harbor languages and/or languages spoken by community members who are affected by a project or service (edit to simple English before translating)
- Provide interpretation at meetings if high rate of LEP residents in the project area
- Bring tablet with Google translate ability to outreach events
- Provide closed captioning at virtual meetings for videos with translations
- Partner with community organizations to hold meetings & gather feedback in community members' native language
- Post meeting notices on SRPEDD website in HTML so they are easily translatable by website
- Include participation options that do not require direct contact (for populations with mistrust in government institutions)

Disability

- Hold and/or attend meetings at ADA-accessible locations
- Provide a virtual meeting option
- Use closed captioning on video for virtual meetings
- Provide sign language interpretation as necessary
- Make website and meeting materials accessible for screen readers

Older Adults (65+ Years Old)

- Hold meetings or set up office hours at Councils on Aging
- Distribute meeting notices and project materials to Councils on Aging
- Use large print on flyers and materials

Households with No Vehicle Access

- Provide a virtual meeting option
- Hold or attend meetings at locations accessible by transit routes

Youth under 18

- Use simple language
- Share meeting and project information with parents and organizations and community leaders who regularly connect with youth, including YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, youth commissions, school administrators, Safes Routes to School Coordinators

6.1.1 Engaging Limited English Proficient Communities

The SMMPO's [Language Assistance Plan](#) (LAP) helps identify reasonable steps to provide language assistance for LEP individuals to meaningfully access SMMPO programs, benefits, services and information. These reasonable steps are based on the analysis of four factors. The first factor is the number or proportion of LEP individuals meeting the U.S. Department of Transportation's LEP "[Safe Harbor](#)" thresholds (5% or 1,000 individuals, whichever is less) in the eligible service population or the SRPEDD/ SMMPO region.

Limited English Proficient Populations in Numbers

According to the 2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS) data, one of the SMMPO's sources for identifying LEP populations, the total number of LEP households in the SMMPO region is **260,908**, which represents **five percent** of the region's population. Beginning with the

2016 ACS, the U.S. Census Bureau revised how non-English languages spoken at home are reported. As a result of changes to data coding and privacy protections, new languages are listed, while others have been grouped into broader language categories. These broader language categories pose a challenge in the SMMPO region, where languages such as Portuguese are now aggregated under the "Other Indo-European Languages" category. This change is especially significant given that Fall River, New Bedford, and Taunton are home to some of the largest Portuguese-speaking communities in the country.

To address data constraints, staff supplemented ACS data by gathering language information from additional sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding of language needs in the SMMPO region. Additional sources include Public Use Microdata which is based on the same ACS data collected from individual people and housing units but offers more detailed information, including a wider range of languages than those listed in the previously mentioned ACS tables, and applies privacy safeguards to ensure individuals or households cannot be identified; PUMS is more granular by language but less granular by geographic area. The SMMPO also uses Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education data which consolidates statewide data on English Language Learner (ELL) students into a single, user-friendly platform. While not a direct match to the USDOT's definition of LEP, it is reasonable to assume that ELL students often come from households where parents or guardians also have limited English proficiency.

Based on these sources, the SMMPO has identified the LEP populations currently meeting the "Safe Harbor" threshold in the region as Spanish at 14,041 (2.3%), Portuguese at 24,481 (4%), and French/Haitian/Cajun at 2,430 (0.4%). However, the SMMPO also recognizes the existence and importance of other languages, including Chinese, Vietnamese, and Khmer in the region. When planning outreach, translating materials, and conducting demographic analyses, staff are committed to taking into consideration the specific geographic area, consulting the aforementioned data sources, and drawing on local knowledge from community partners to make informed decisions about which languages to include.

For detailed maps and tables regarding LEP populations, see Appendix D.

Tailoring Engagement Methods for LEP Communities

Meeting notices and other meeting materials, such as comment sheets and cards, surveys, display items, posters, maps and especially signage, should be translated into Portuguese, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, and Mon Khmer Cambodian, especially when an issue, program or project is located in or near an area with a high LEP population or upon request.

Surveys are translated and distributed throughout a study area via social media, notices that include links and QR codes that link to the survey, and through community partners who work with LEP communities. Survey materials are made available to all stakeholders and other interested parties prior to, during, and after meetings—offering an opportunity to comment without the requirement of attending a meeting. Translated surveys are a useful tool to garner feedback and provide the opportunity to participate if attendance at meetings is not possible or preferable, especially for communities who are often intimidated by bureaucracy and would not otherwise seek out this information.

Press releases and/or meeting notices should be sent to appropriate non-English media outlets when a project, program or service is located in or near an LEP area. In the SMMPO region, this includes O Jornal and the Portuguese Times.

Several SMMPO/SRPEDD staff are bilingual, and interpreters or reasonable accommodations are made available for meetings upon request. Bilingual SRPEDD staff members should be present at any meetings or events in neighborhoods with LEP populations, regardless of a formal or prior request for an interpreter. ‘I Speak’ cards are available at meetings, as well as a tablet equipped with Google Translate as needed.

The SRPEDD website’s translate feature allows translations into eleven languages/dialects including Arabic, Chinese (both Simplified and Traditional) French, German, Haitian Creole, Italian, Mon Khmer Cambodian, Portuguese, and Spanish. The SMMPO should release social media posts for region-wide projects in the region’s top spoken languages and local project social media posts in the top languages spoken in the project area’s communities. The most important information should be included in the text of posts as social media translators do not translate content contained within images.

Staff has been trained in using and has access to Language Line to communicate with callers who are Limited English Proficient and trained in taking calls from MassRelay, the service which makes calls from those with hearing impairments possible through relay operators.

6.2 Community Partnerships

Maintaining strong partnerships with various types of stakeholders across the region is crucial for the success of all SMMPO public engagement and planning initiatives. The SMMPO is committed

to collaborating and deepening relationships with community-based organizations, social service agencies, community advocacy groups, elected and appointed local officials, and other partners who serve local communities. These groups are closest to and most familiar with the needs of local communities and the SMMPO is committed to engaging them in order to gain a full understanding of the region's varied and local transportation needs and ensure meaningful responses to addressing these needs.

Local community partners play a vital role in helping distribute SMMPO planning information and updates to their communities through channels and contacts local residents, especially those under-resourced, are familiar with and trust. With local expertise on their own communities, they can provide guidance on important groups, individuals, outreach methods, and language to include on a project. Direct outreach to community-based organizations who work closely with under-resourced and underrepresented populations is crucial to ensuring information gets to them and increases the likelihood they will participate in project meetings other activities.

Collaboration with community partners can boost engagement and planning effectiveness, leading to greater support for SMMPO plans and projects and improved likelihood of implementation. Examples of collaboration include:

- Sharing content to include in each other's newsletters, websites, and social media accounts
- Attending each other's events and meetings, this is an effective way to meet residents where they are and in a place they are already comfortable
- Inviting community partners to regular and project-specific SMMPO meetings and scheduling one-on-ones to discuss local needs and priorities
- Conducting presentations and gathering public comment at regularly scheduled community coalition meetings
- Inviting community partners to join SMMPO task forces or advisory groups, and other decision-making bodies

SRPEDD staff is available to speak at group meetings about any transportation issue upon request with reasonable notice. Staff has adapted public outreach toward specific audiences, such as distributing coloring books concerning bicycle safety designed by the staff at bicycle events for children. Staff has reached out to the local Councils on Aging, distributing posters and large-font brochures on pedestrian safety for older adults. Staff has also conducted presentations concerning pedestrian safety tips specifically adapted toward older adults at housing centers for older adults.



Comments on this Plan or the SMMPO's public engagement activities may be offered by e-mail (aduarte@srpedd.org), phone (508 824-1367) fax (508 823-1803) or on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SRPEDD), as well as in person at our offices located at 88 Broadway, Taunton, MA 02780.

For further information please visit our website at www.srpedd.org. Here you will find information about SRPEDD, the SMMPO, current projects, the planning services we provide, as well as an extensive resource library.

7 Appendix A: Glossary

Accessibility

An intentional effort to make it easy for all members of a community to contribute to the planning process. This includes, but is not limited to, conveniently located public engagement activities (ex. events on transit routes), readability and/or translation of planning documents and resources, ADA compliant meeting locations, easy access to amenities.

Community

People who engage with or live in a city/town or region.

Community Leaders

Community members or organizations that often act as advocates or representatives of various groups in the community.

Disseminate

To share something, usually information.

Inclusion

Ensuring that all members of a community have an opportunity to meaningfully contribute to planning projects. This includes intentionally reaching out to populations that have been traditionally left out of the planning process.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Used to describe people who have a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

Low-Income

Used to describe individuals and/or households that earn less than a livable wage for a given area, resulting in limited access to time and resources. For example, people who live at or below the poverty line or people who earn less than the average income.

Local Decision-Makers, Local Officials

Community members that hold government or political power often affect decisions made about a transportation project. They often include staff from the Department of Public Works, Planning Department, City Council/Select Board, Police/Fire/Emergency Management.

Outreach

Communicating with the community through various locations, including social media, websites, bulletin boards, events, to share project and agency information and increase participation in planning projects.

Public Engagement

The intentional practice of educating, dialoguing, and collaborating with the community to gather input that informs decision-making on planning projects.

Public Engagement Strategy

A method of increasing participation from the community in a project, especially activities and events that engage community members that are often left out of the planning process.

Stakeholders

People who are impacted by and/or have decision-making power in a planning project. Examples include residents, community-based organizations, local business owners, government staff, etc.

Traditionally Underrepresented, Traditionally Under-resourced, Historically Underrepresented

Populations that have been left out of the planning process in the past and that continue to face barriers that decrease participation in the planning process.

8 Appendix B: Document Accessibility Checklist

- ☐ Large, sans serif fonts (Arial, Calibri, Candara, Gadugi, Tahoma, Verdana) (a minimum of
- ☐ 14-point font bold but 16-point - 18-point font is preferred) [Older adults]
- ☐ Light and dark color contrasts for the best visibility. Use tool to check (<https://coolers.co/contrast-checker>). Accessible contrast is **4.5:1 or greater**.
- ☐ Images and graphics have alt text
- ☐ 4th-6th grade-level of language, use simple words accessible to most people
- ☐ Off-white non-glossy paper is best for printing reading materials
- ☐ Columns and centered text should be avoided
- ☐ Meeting notices should include
- ☐ A Title VI Notice of Nondiscrimination (Title VI Notice to the Public);
- ☐ Availability of language services and an offer of reasonable accommodation with contact information (translated into Safe Harbor languages as necessary);
- ☐ Transit route information if applicable;
- ☐ Universal Accessibility Symbol to indicate that the in-person, physical meeting location is accessible for all users;
- ☐ Contact information for the opportunity to comment or obtain more information if attendance at the meeting is not possible
- ☐ QR code(s) that links to the project webpage, survey, etc.

- ☐ Allow ample time when sending out meeting notices to prepare and to arrange for any requested accommodation, if necessary
- ☐ Send notices at least 2-3 weeks in advance of a meeting, 10 business days is the accepted minimum time for reasonable notice of accommodation, such as translators, assistive listening devices, American Sign Language interpretation, captioning, etc. Bring “I speak’ cards and a tablet equipped with Google Translate to assist LEP persons during public in-person meetings.
- ☐ To provide accessibility for virtual/hybrid meetings, use Otter.ai software for live auto captioning for persons who are deaf/hard of hearing and Wordly.ai software for translations for persons who are Limited English Proficient, as requested and needed
- ☐ Translate meeting materials to reflect the LEP population or users affected and the most common languages spoken by LEP people in the SRPEDD region. [SRPEDD region’s Safe Harbor Languages: Portuguese, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Khmer]
- ☐ Have materials that need translation available in Word format also, in order to embed as html on the SRPEDD website which makes it translatable into other languages as necessary

9 Appendix C: Meeting Logistics Accessibility Checklist

- ☐ If possible, for an in-person meeting, choose a meeting site that is within or near the area where the relevant issue, project, program or service is located, if applicable.
- ☐ Choose a site on or near public transportation and during hours of transit service (4-6 pm). (ADA accessible meeting locations on transit routes list)
- ☐ For in-person, virtual, hybrid meetings, choose a date/time that is convenient for the largest number of people, for instance, after common work hours.
- ☐ Accessible entrance, accessible parking and are there accessible rest rooms? Is there clear and directional signage for these accommodations, as well as for rest rooms, emergency exits, etc.?
- ☐ Entrances, travel paths and aisles at least 3-feet wide and clear of obstacles?
- ☐ Seating available for any attendees who have requested an accommodation?
- ☐ Assistive listening devices or wireless microphones available? (SRPEDD has these available for meetings.)
- ☐ If an in-person meeting site in desired area /neighborhood that is on a transit route and fully accessible isn't possible, items on the checklist may need to be forgone. However, make the physical location as accessible as possible by: physically moving tables, chairs and other obstacles or by printing signs to post at the location. Another alternative : hold a virtual/hybrid meeting to encourage and accommodate more participants & eliminate usual barriers in attending an in-person meeting like lack of accessibility and/or

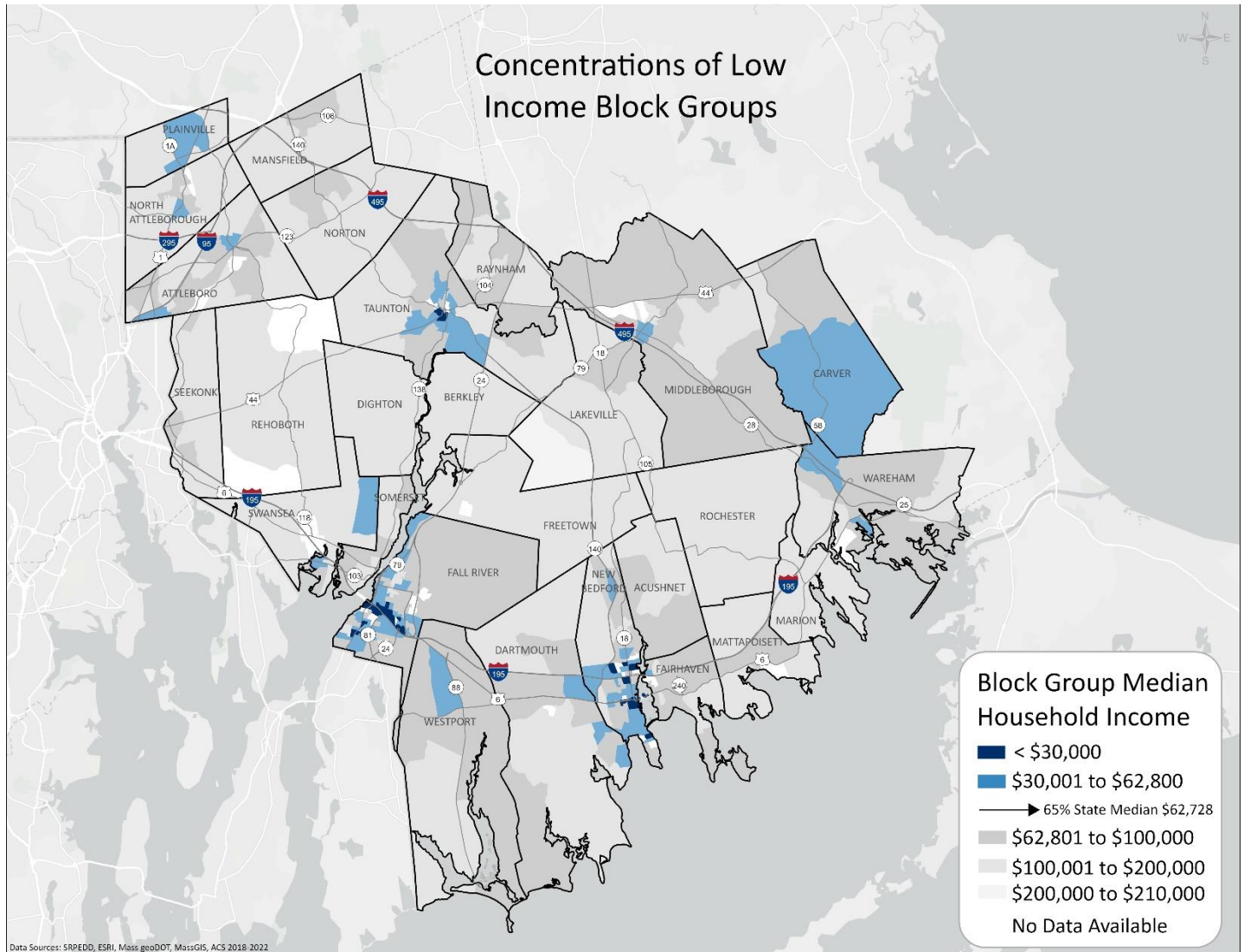
transportation, lack of child care, and participants with non-traditional working hours.

- ☐ For a meeting held in a neighborhood identified as containing an LEP population, a bilingual staff member should be present regardless of a formal/prior request for an interpreter. Bring 'I Speak' cards and a tablet equipped with Google Translate as needed.
- ☐ Is there an interpreter available for any attendees who have requested one?

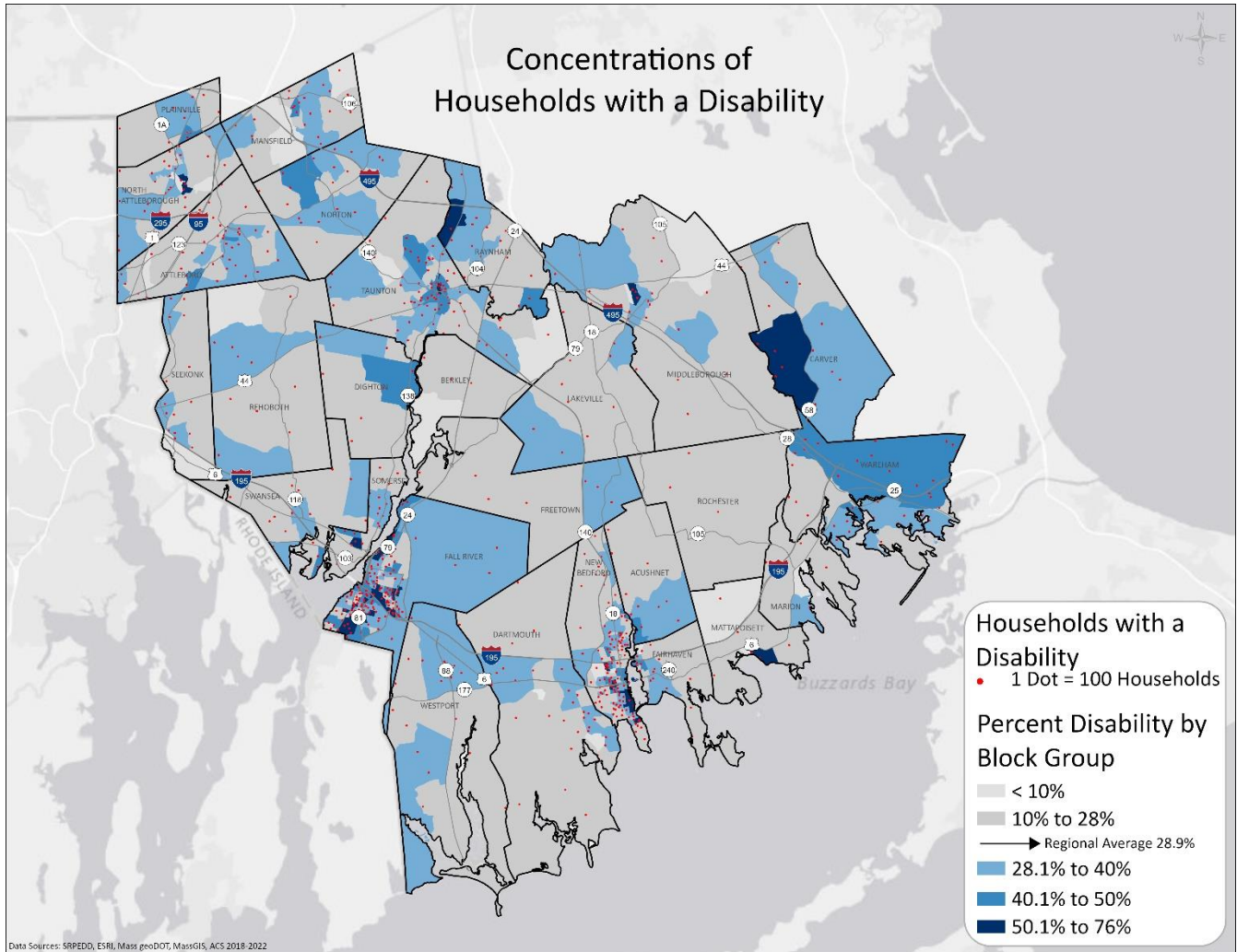
10 Appendix D: Maps of Title VI Populations in SMMPO Region

Title VI or Under-resourced Population	Unit of Analysis	Total Population / Households	Under-resourced Population	SRPEDD Regional Average
Race and Ethnicity	Person	649,761	133,719	20.6%
Income	Block Group	N/A	N/A	\$62,728*
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	Household	260,908	13,370	5.1%
Disability	Household	260,908	75,454	28.9%
No Vehicle	Household	260,908	23,433	9.0%
Age 65+	Person	649,761	116,722	18.0%

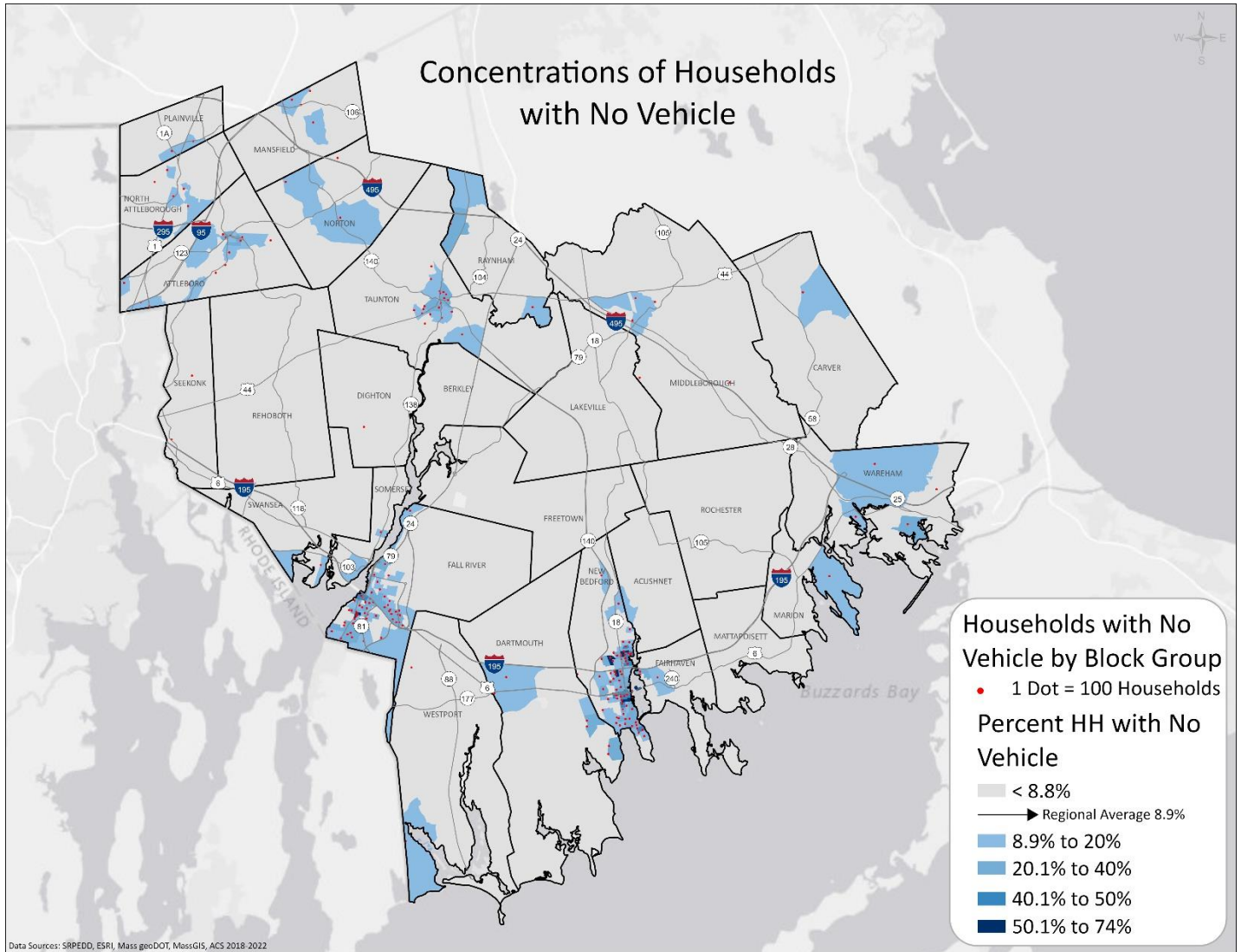
* ACS 5-YR 2022 Block group whose annual median household income is equal to or less than 65% of the 2022 statewide median income of \$96,505. Sixty-five percent of \$96,505 = \$62,728.



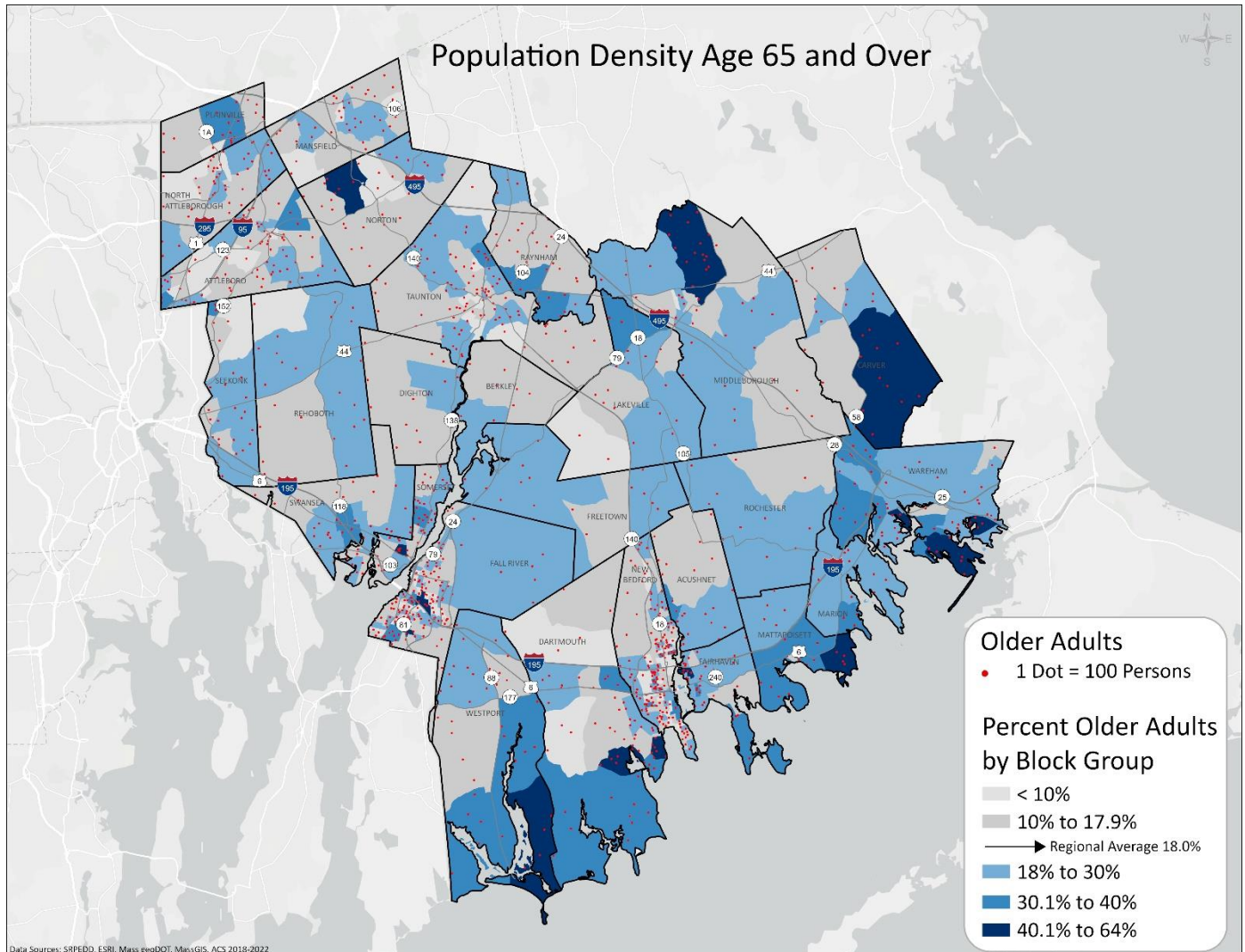
Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022



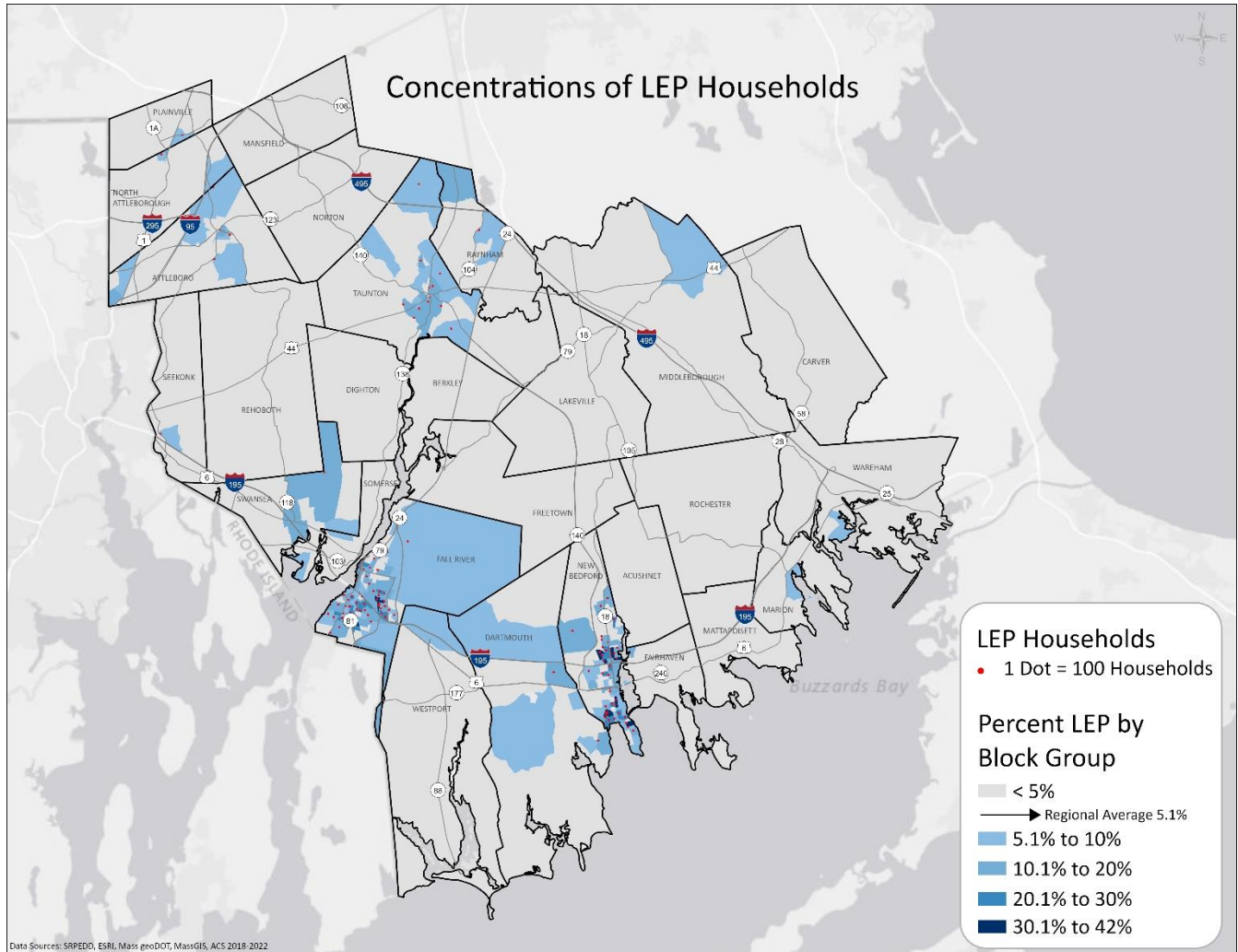
Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022



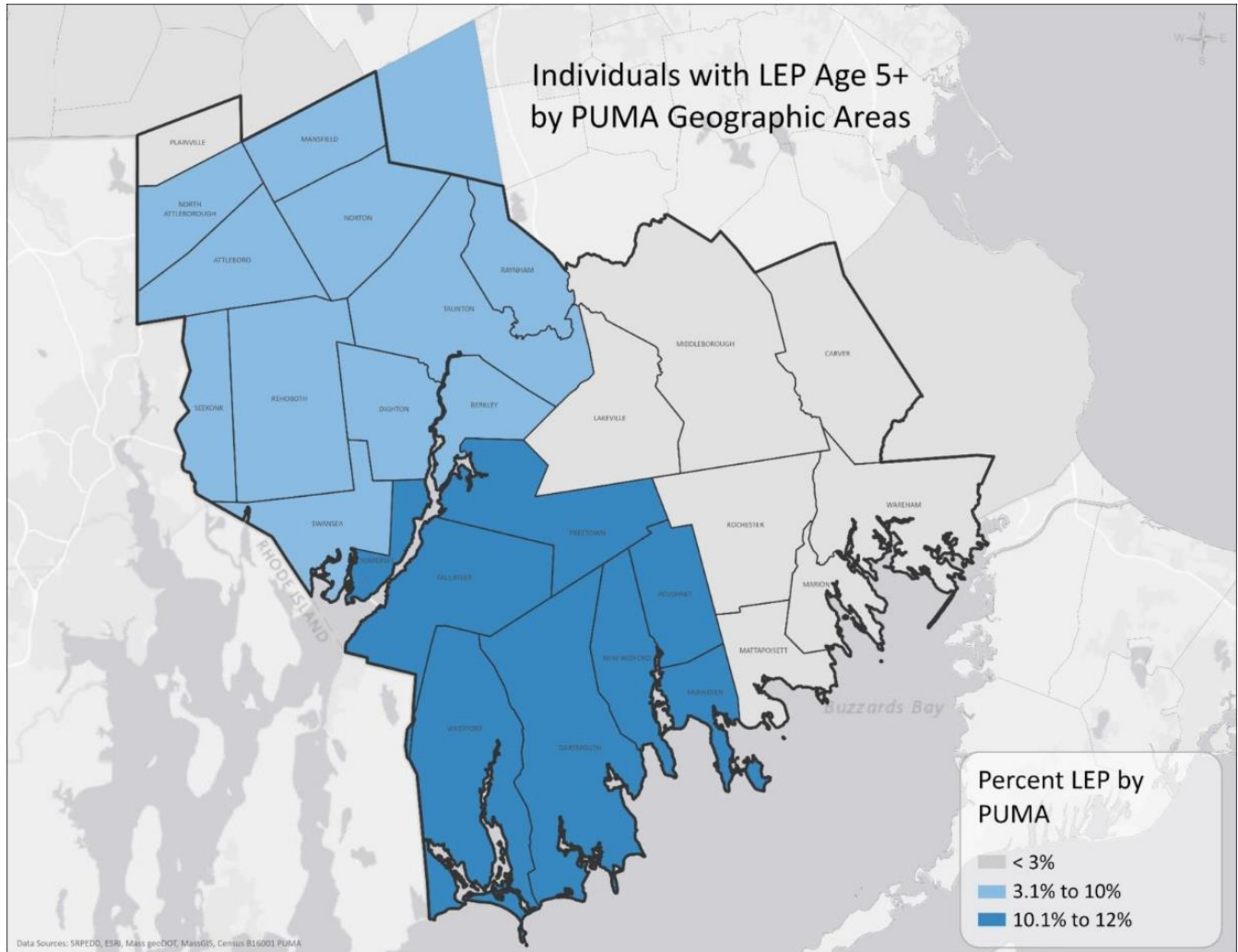
Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022



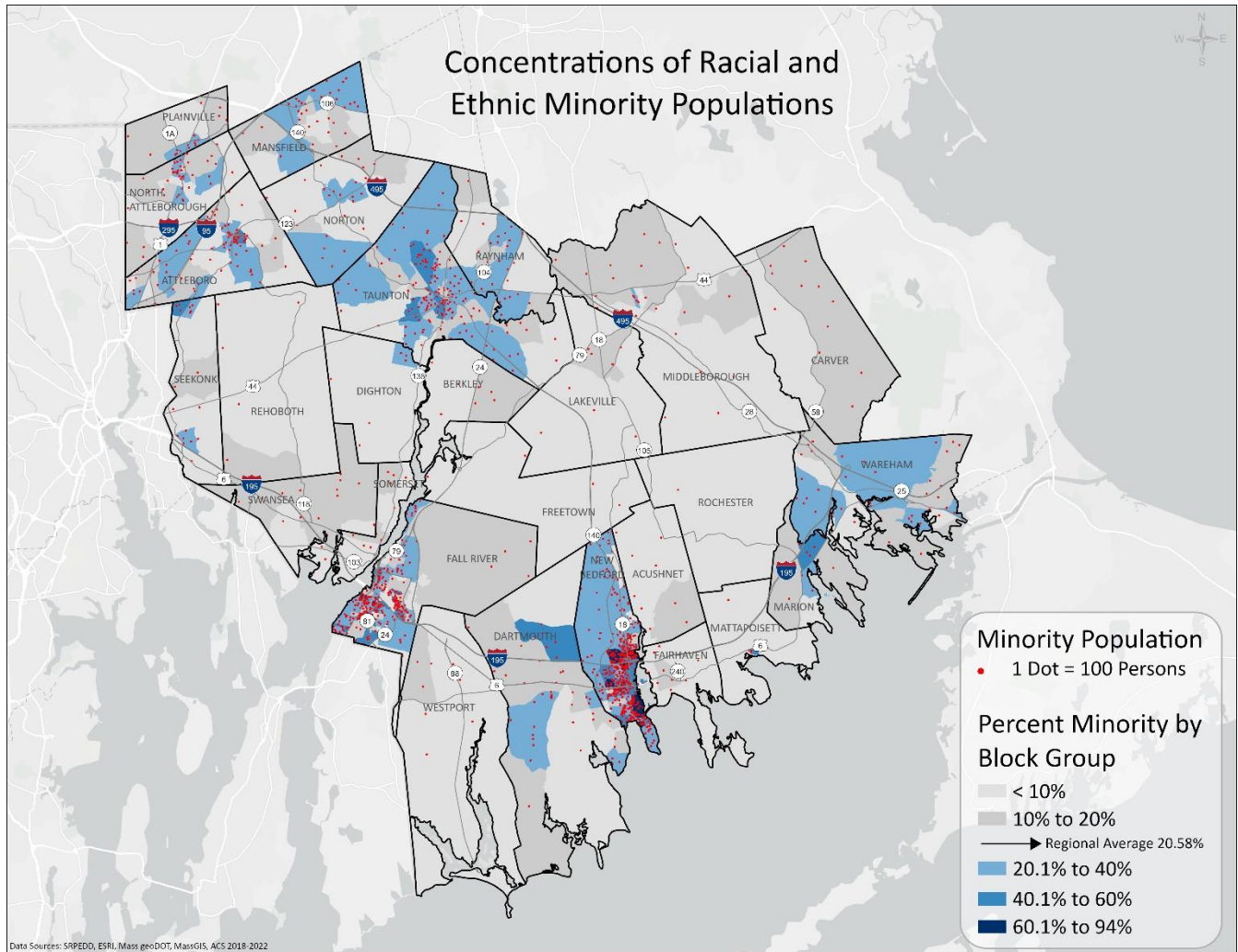
Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022



LEP Households by Census Block Group and Dot Density (Table C16002)



LEP Individuals Age 5+ by PUMA Geographic Areas (Table B16001)



Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022

11 Appendix E: Community Engagement Best Practices for Effective TIP Projects

Advertising

- ✓ Social media posts: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- ✓ Announcements on City/Town website, websites of community partners and community organizations
- ✓ Flyer drops in public libraries, town halls, civic buildings, bus terminals, local businesses, YMCAs, churches, etc
- ✓ Press releases, ads in local newspapers
- ✓ Mailings/informational letters sent to project abutters
- ✓ Digital roadway signs

Logistics

- ✓ Choose a date/time convenient for target populations
- ✓ Chose site on/near public transit and during transit service hours (ends at 6 PM)
- ✓ If possible, chose site that is near proposed project and is ADA accessible
- ✓ Include in-person and virtual participation options to accommodate various schedules / digital comfort
- ✓ Record meetings, publish recordings on City/Town website & cable
- ✓ Invite SRPEDD Transportation staff

Public Meetings

Content

- ✓ Present project context
- ✓ Initial findings of previous studies
- ✓ Is it included as a priority in the Regional Transportation Plan

Alternative & Supplemental Activities

- ✓ Drop-In listening sessions
- ✓ Neighborhood meetings
- ✓ Online & paper comment cards available at Town Hall/website