



**SRPEDD**  
Southeastern Regional Planning  
& Economic Development District

## PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SRPEDD Announces a 45-day Public Comment Period and Virtual Public Meeting - Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 4:00 pm to hear comments on the release of the SMMPO's Draft Public Participation Plan and Draft Language Assistance Plan.**

**October 22, 2025** – The [Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization \(SMMPO\)'s Public Participation Plan](#) (PPP) and [Language Assistance Plan](#) (LAP) are being updated and the draft documents are being released to a 45-day public comment period. **The PPP guides SMMPO staff's public outreach and engagement activities** during development of SMMPO plans, projects, and services and explains all components of the metropolitan or regional transportation planning process. It is developed with the ultimate goal of allowing every person in the region ample meaningful opportunities to become active participants in the Continuous, Cooperative and Comprehensive (3C) metropolitan transportation planning and decision-making process guiding the SMMPO's work toward building a transportation system that meets the needs of all residents and stakeholders in the region. The Plan was last updated in 2022, and this year's update has been informed by recent policy changes, federal certification requirements, and insights from recent public engagement efforts. This year's update includes the following changes:

- Addition of public engagement goals and principles
- Addition of public engagement evaluation metrics
- Explanation of the SMMPO and Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District's (SRPEDD) alternate meeting notice process adopted in 2024
- Explanation of changes to SMMPO's virtual public meeting procedures
- Clarified, step-by-step explanation of public participation opportunities in each of the SMMPO's work products
- Addition of menu with explanations of SMMPO staff's various outreach and engagement methods and how they are used
- Addition of glossary, maps of the region's Title VI populations, document and meeting accessibility checklists
- Updated Limited English Proficient demographic data
- Restructuring of the document for easier readability and use

**The LAP guides SMMPO's staff's methods for reaching and engaging the region's Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities**, ensuring LEP individuals have equal access to meaningfully participate in the SMMPO's programs, activities, and services. The LAP outlines how SMMPO staff assess language needs in the region, implement language services that ensure meaningful access to transportation planning, and communicate information about these services. Developed in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and U.S. DOT and FTA guidance, the LAP applies a four-factor analysis to determine

regional language needs: (1) the number and proportion of LEP individuals, (2) frequency of contact with LEP individuals, (3) importance of MPO services to LEP individuals, and (4) resources available and overall cost.

7% of individuals and 5% of households in the SMMPO's Southeast Massachusetts region are currently LEP. Using American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education data, the MPO identified Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole as the region's primary languages currently meeting/exceeding the US DOT's "Safe Harbor" threshold, with Chinese and Vietnamese also noted as significant. LEP populations are concentrated in Fall River, New Bedford, and Taunton, where Portuguese and Spanish are most common.

Previous Language Assistance Plans used American Community Survey (ACS) data to identify the languages spoken by individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in the SMMPO region. Beginning with the 2016 ACS, however, 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 these 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.

The MPO frequently interacts with LEP residents at community events, focus groups, and through partnerships with local organizations. It provides interpretation and translation services—either proactively or upon request—for all public meetings and outreach. MPO staff includes bilingual personnel fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, and French, and SRPEDD maintains a contract with Language Line for phone interpretation in over 170 languages. SRPEDD website features a built-in translation tool. SMMPO staff will review U.S. Census data every two years and Massachusetts DESE data annually to adapt to demographic changes and ensure effective language access in the region.

The public meeting on the draft Public Participation Plan and Language Assistance Plan will be held **virtually**, on **Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 4:00 pm**. Everyone is welcome to attend, ask questions and offer comments, but attendance is not necessary to offer input or comment. More options to offer comments can be found below.

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

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

**Register in advance for the online meeting at this link:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_to-LPB-iTqesPwafG86JWQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_to-LPB-iTqesPwafG86JWQ)

The Draft Public Participation Plan and Language Assistance Plan will have a 45-day public comment period, with final versions to be endorsed at the December 16 SMMPO meeting. More detailed information on the documents can be found on SRPEDD's website [www.srpedd.org](http://www.srpedd.org) at the following links: [Draft Public Participation Plan](#), [Draft Language Assistance Plan](#).

Comments are encouraged and may be offered by a variety of methods including:

- Submitting a comment form on the SRPEDD [website](#) at [arcg.is/mXGeg0](https://arcg.is/mXGeg0),
- Sending an e-mail to [aduarte@srpedd.org](mailto:aduarte@srpedd.org) or [lestrela@srpedd.org](mailto:lestrela@srpedd.org);
- Our general website form at <https://srpedd.org/contact-us/>;
- Our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SRPEDD/>; Instagram @SRPEDD <https://www.instagram.com/srpedd/>;
- By phone call to 508-824-1367;
- Attending the monthly Joint Transportation Planning Group meeting on November 12 or December 10, 2025. For more info visit: [srpedd.org/transportation/jtpg](https://srpedd.org/transportation/jtpg).
- Attending the monthly Southeastern Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting on November 18. For more info visit [srpedd.org/transportation/smmpo/](https://srpedd.org/transportation/smmpo/).

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

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

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