

**Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.**

**The following members were in attendance:**

Stephen Woelfel-----Representing Phillip Eng, Interim MassDOT Secretary and CEO, **Chair**  
Shaun Handy-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator  
Christopher McDermott—Representing Cathleen DeSimone, Mayor of Attleboro  
Dan Aguiar-----Representing Paul Coogan, Mayor of Fall River  
Jay Pateakos-----Representing Shauna O’Connell, Mayor of Taunton  
Jamie Ponte-----Representing Jon Mitchell, Mayor of New Bedford  
Josh Reinke-----Representing Michael Feck, Town of Mansfield  
Jennifer Vincent-----Town of Berkley  
Marie Clarner-----SRPEDD Commission Chair  
John Lebert-----Representing Erik Rousseau, Southeastern Regional Transit Authority  
Mary Ellen DeFrias-----Greater Attleboro and Taunton Regional Transit Authority

**The following Ex-Officio, non-voting members were in attendance**

Anthony Jones-----Federal Highway Administration

**The following were also in attendance:**

Katherine Nunes-----City of Taunton  
Timothy Barber-----Town of Dartmouth  
Alan Slavin-----Damien’s Food Pantry/JTPG At-Large Commissioner/Wareham  
Derek Shooster-----Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Christina Mendoza-----Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Barbara Lachance-----Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Benjamin Muller-----Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
Stephanie Gray-----Office of Congressman Auchincloss  
Emma Yeh-----Pare Corp  
Albert Araujo-----Member of the Public  
Hazel Goodman-----Member of the Public  
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD  
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD  
Andrea Duarte-Campos-SRPEDD  
Dan Brogan-----SRPEDD  
Noah Soutier-----SRPEDD  
Jen Chaves-----SRPEDD

**Handouts:**

- SMMPO Agenda March 17, 2026
- SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes February 17, 2026
- FFY2026-2030 Amendment 4
- SRTA FFY2027-2031 Project Lists
- GATRA FFY2027-2031 Project Lists
- Statewide Draft FFY2027-2031 Project List
- FFY2027-2031 TIP Scenario 1a
- FFY2027-2031 TIP Scenario 1b
- FFY2027-2031 TIP Scenario 2
- FFY2027-2031 TIP Scenario 3

**AGENDA:**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call-**

Chairman Woelfel called the SMMPO meeting to order at 1:01 pm. Ms. Andrea Duarte-Campos asked all MPO members and designees to please unmute themselves so she could call the roll for attendance. She then called the complete roll of MPO members, with the following being present at the time of the roll call:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- City of Attleboro-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Berkley-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes

**2. Approval of Minutes – February 17, 2026 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)**

Chairman Woelfel requested a motion to approve the minutes from the February 17, 2026, SMMPO meeting. The motion was made by Jamie Ponte and seconded by Josh Reinke. Ms. Duarte-Campos then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes  
 MassDOT Administrator-----Yes  
 City of Attleboro-----Yes  
 City of Fall River-----Abstain  
 City of New Bedford-----Yes  
 City of Taunton-----Yes  
 Town of Mansfield-----Yes  
 Town of Berkley-----Yes  
 SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes  
 SRTA-----Yes  
 GATRA-----Yes

**THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION.**

**3. Public Comments**

Chairman Woelfel invited members of the public to make comments, and none were provided.

**4. Regional Transit Authorities Report – RTA Updates**

Mary Ellen DeFrias announced that GATRA is coordinating transportation for the Foxborough region’s World Cup events this summer. She expressed GATRA’s gratitude to regional transit authority partners who have all committed resources to help with this initiative, emphasizing that it will be a big lift which will showcase the importance of regional transportation and coordination among regional transit authorities. The first game will be at 9 PM. Ms. DeFrias stated that the Gateway Link service, which connects Brockton, Taunton, and Fall River, continues to be very popular, with over 3,000 riders a month. She stated that this affirms it is an important service as expected and something GATRA hopes to continue once the pilot ends.

John Lebert from SRTA thanked Ms. DeFrias for taking the lead on World Cup activities and stated that SRTA is very happy to be able to support the effort. Mr. Lebert stated that ridership continues to increase more on demand response than fixed route service, but fixed route service ridership continues to increase each month. SRTA has a number of capital projects coming to a close, and some new ones, such as rehabilitation and renovation projects at its aging facilities, coming online. He expressed enthusiasm with new technologies being implemented to modernize the system.

**5. FFY2026-2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Proposed Amendment #4 – Addition of two projects in FY2026 (Materials Attached & Roll Call Vote Needed to Release to 21-day Public Comment Period):**

- a. **613106 Rehoboth Deck Replacement, R-04-018 (3U4, 3U5), I-105 (EB/WB) over Palmer River**

- b. **S13419 Fairhaven: Steamship Authority – Construction of two (2) New Vehicle Transfer Bridgers, Gallows, Counterweights and Related Equipment for the Steamship Authority’s Fairhaven Vessel Maintenance Facility**
- c. **609193 Norton – Intersection Improvements at West Main Street (Route 123), North Worcester Street and South Worcester Street – move project from FFY2027 to FFY2026**

Jackie Jones stated that FFY202026-2030 Proposed TIP Amendment #4 includes moving the Norton intersection improvement project at West Main Street, North Worcester Street, and South Worcester Street from the 2027 to 2026 program year because the project’s design plans are ready to proceed and funding is available in 2026. The proposed Amendment also adds two new 2026 projects that were not previously included: a deck replacement over the Palmer River Bridge in Rehoboth, and a Fairhaven Steamship Authority project to construct two new vehicle transfer bridges, gallows, counterweights, and related equipment for the vessel maintenance facility, both taking advantage of available funding and project readiness. Ms. Jones provided an opportunity for questions. Marie Clarner asked for more details about the Norton project, and Ms. Jones explained that it will add signals and other intersection improvements to make the area easier and safer to navigate. She also noted that SRPEDD’s TIP webpage includes videos for each project. With no further questions, the board was asked to make a motion and second to release the amendment for public comment.

The Chair asked if there were any further questions on the Proposed FFY26-30 TIP Amendment #4 and seeing none asked for a motion and second to release it to a 21-day public comment period. The motion was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Christopher McDermott. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte-Campos to read the roll as follows:

- MassDOT Chair-----Yes
- MassDOT Administrator-----Yes
- City of Attleboro-----Yes
- City of Fall River-----Yes
- City of New Bedford-----Yes
- City of Taunton-----Yes
- Town of Mansfield-----Yes
- Town of Berkley-----Yes
- SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes
- SRTA-----Yes
- GATRA-----Yes

**THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **6. Draft 2027-2031 TIP MassDOT Statewide Highway Projects List (Materials Attached)**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro reminded the group that the Draft 2027-2031 MassDOT Statewide Highway Projects list had been included in their packet and was being shared for informational purposes. She explained that the projects would be funded with statewide funds based on availability, prioritization, and readiness, and that the second column shows the federal fiscal year from 2027 to 2031 in which each project would be programmed, while the first column noted where projects are currently programmed in the existing TIP. She highlighted several notable changes, including some projects being delayed by one year, a new Fall River project in 2027 for highway lighting upgrades near City Hall, a statewide systemic safety improvement project with rapid flashing beacons to be installed at multiple locations in 2028, and a new Middleborough Safe Routes to School project along Wood Street. She also noted that the Taunton River Rail Trail would be pushed out and programmed over two years, and that pavement preservation work on Interstate 495 in Mansfield and Norton would be delayed by several years. She concluded by noting that this information would become part of the 2027–2031 TIP unless further changes were made by MassDOT, in which case those updates would be presented to the group. She provided opportunity for questions to which none were made.

## **7. Draft 2027-2031 TIP Transit Project Lists (Materials Attached)**

Dan Brogan summarized the major transit projects currently programmed in the region’s Draft FFY2027-2031 TIP for both GATRA and SRTA. For GATRA, he noted approximately \$13 million for ten 35-foot battery electric buses and two 35-foot diesel buses, about \$500,000 for IT, computer, and software upgrades, roughly \$3.3 million for the Parcel 6A solar panel project to support bus electrification and power distribution for battery electric buses, and about \$9 million for van replacements. For SRTA, he highlighted about \$82 million for planning and future construction of a new Fall River maintenance facility, which aims to reduce wear and tear on vehicles and provide critical maintenance capacity in both Fall River and New Bedford. For clarification, SRTA has not yet secured funding or land to complete the Fall River maintenance facility project; this project and the estimated costs associated are included on the Draft TIP with the intention of adding visibility with future requests. There is a need of an estimated \$82 million to plan and construct a new Fall River maintenance facility. Additional SRTA projects include about \$1.4 million for renovation of the downtown New Bedford terminal parking garage, roughly \$140,000 for website accessibility improvements, about \$900,000 for a bus washing system at the New Bedford maintenance facility, and \$1.5 million for intelligent transportation systems upgrades to support features such as advanced collision detection, real-time traffic management, safety systems, and improved dispatch communication. Mr. Brogan also noted about \$11 million for twelve 35-foot hybrid buses. He stated that these were the major transit projects being programmed in the TIP and invited questions, with Ms. De Frias and Mr. LeBert noting that they had nothing to add to the explanation.

**8. Draft 2027-2031 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Regional Target Highway Project Programming Scenarios (Materials Attached & Roll Call Vote Needed to Select Draft Scenario for Commencement of TIP Development)**

Ms. Jones explained that TIP Regional Target Highway Project Programming Scenarios are different combinations of projects that could be programmed between 2027 and 2031 using mostly federal funding, typically split 80% federal and 20% state, and emphasized the importance of SMMPO input in selecting among them. She stated that of the four scenarios initially reviewed by the JTPG, scenarios based purely on project readiness or scoring left too much funding unused, so the group selected Scenario 1A because it followed MassDOT readiness recommendations while maximizing available funding.

Ms. Jones then walked through the TIP Scenario handouts, showing how projects move between years, how those changes affect yearly funding targets and allocations, and how project evaluation scores and design status factor into decisions about projects' programming years. Under Scenario 1A, some projects would stay in place while others would shift based on readiness and funding availability, with buffers left in later years to account for cost increases. A newly developed Scenario 2, created after updated information showed a Dartmouth project could advance sooner, largely responded to the wishes of the JTPG's earlier vote but made adjustments, including moving Dartmouth Cross Road corridor improvements into 2029 and allowing both the Mattapoissett shared-use path and Taunton intersection improvements at Winter and School Streets to be added in 2031. Ms. Jones stated that the SMMPO today has the option to either select scenario 1A or Scenario 2 so that staff can move forward in developing and programming the region's 2027-31 TIP. She stated that the group can discuss a different scenario, namely the others that were emailed out, and is happy to answer questions about why certain projects were programmed in different years.

The Chair asked if the group would like to proceed with Scenario 1A, which the JTPG had supported, or propose a different one. Dan Aguiar, who had been present at the JTPG vote last week, asked whether any communities would be significantly harmed by choosing Scenario 2 over 1A; Ms. Jones explained that no projects would be removed from the TIP in any of the scenarios, but the Mansfield project would be pushed back from 2027 to 2030 instead of being pushed to 2029, and the New Bedford Tarkiln Hill and Ashley Boulevard project would be pushed back from 2028 to 2031 with Scenario 2. She stated that New Bedford's older County Street corridor improvements project would remain in place. Representatives from Mansfield and Dartmouth on the call stated that they were comfortable with Scenario 2, noting that project timing can still shift as design readiness improves. Tim Barber of Dartmouth stated that the Dartmouth Cross Road project is moving quickly at the 75 percent design toward 100 percent design plans and is a great project that is viable for 2029 if not even 2028.

The Chair asked if there were any further questions on the proposed 2027-2031 TIP scenarios and seeing none asked for a motion and second in support of either Scenario 1A, 2, or 1B. A motion to support Scenario 2 was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Marie Clarner. The Chair asked Ms. Duarte-Campos to read the roll as follows:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes  
MassDOT Administrator-----Yes  
City of Attleboro-----Yes  
City of Fall River-----Yes  
City of New Bedford-----Yes  
City of Taunton-----Yes  
Town of Mansfield-----Yes  
Town of Berkley-----Yes  
SRPEDD Commission Chair-----Yes  
SRTA-----Yes  
GATRA-----Yes

**THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**9. Other Business**

Ms. Estrela-Pedro stated that SRPEDD staff’s Transportation Tuesday social media post this week highlights Transit Driver Appreciation Day. She encouraged members to check out the social media post, which includes links to local regional transit authorities’ social media pages and is a great location to make comments and thank drivers for their service.

**10. Date and Time for Next Meeting**

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on April 21, 2026, at 1:00 pm, held virtually on Zoom.

**11. Adjourn**

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Josh Reinke made the motion and Jennifer Vincent seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:36 PM.