

Southeastern Regional Coordinating Council on Transportation Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2025 - Hybrid

Microsoft Teams/Fall River Library, Fall River, MA

In-Person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dan Brogan, SRPEDD- Andrea Duarte, SRPEDD- Gloria Saddler, Fall River	Virtual: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Mandy Aquino, SRTA- Kerri Victorio, GATRA- Ella Ackerman, RIPTA- Will Gardner, Fairhaven- Amber Davis, SRPEDD- Rebekah Rose, SRPEDD- Noah Soutier, SRPEDD
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Introduction

- Dan Brogan invited SERCCOT members for community presentations on topics of interest related to transportation obstacles and opportunities within SRPEDD's region
- RIPTA plans to participate in the March meeting.

Improved Virtual Accessibility for Future SERCCOT Meetings

- Future SERCCOT meetings will have a wide camera and room mics to ensure that virtual SERCCOT members will be able to engage meaningfully and hear/see things clearly

Transit Updates

- South Coast Rail will be open to ridership on March 24th.
- Free fare and free parking will be available on weekends through the end of April at South Coast Stations
- One-way cost to Boston: Regular fare will be \$12.25 with an option to apply for a reduced fare (\$6).
- One-way cost for local travel: Traveling within the South Coast region, such as from Taunton to Fall River or Freetown to Middleborough, is \$2.75 one way with an option to apply for a reduced fare (\$1.25).
- MBTA will be providing train shuttle services between the Taunton, Fall River, and New Bedford stations.

- The New Bedford train station is serviced by SRTAs routes 202, 204, 211, and 221 (Church Street). Fall River Depot is serviced by SRTAs route 102. East Taunton Station is temporarily serviced by GATRA's dial-a-ride and minibus service. Route 8 will service the station beginning in June.
- Kerri Victorio added that the temporary shuttle service for Route 8 passengers provides transportation to the East Taunton station for those within ¼ mile of Route 8 or originating from the Taunton terminal. Unlike traditional Dial-A-Ride, this service is open to all riders and operates with Dial-A-Ride buses, offering two morning and three afternoon trips. Riders must book by 3:30 PM the day before, with a fare of \$1.50, matching the fixed-route fare. This temporary service is in place to gauge interest ahead of anticipated permanent Route 8 changes by June 1st, which will include scheduled trips to the train station. A new phone number is available with call or text options for scheduling rides.
- South Coast Rail services can also enhance access to Health Care (Brookton VA Medical Center), Higher Education (BCC and BSU), Social Services and employment opportunities.
- Fare Payment Options: MBTA app, Cash or Credit Card on the trains, or in-person at major stations (i.e. South Station, Back Bay, and Providence). SRPEDD is working to create PSAs (public service announcements) to help educate passengers on paying for and accessing tickets.
- Andrea Duarte asked if tickets needed to be purchased during free fare weekends. Dan Brogan replied that conductors will ask where riders are coming from and going to, riders should state that they are traveling to or from the South Coast.
- Mandy Aquino asked for clarification on when the free fare weekends will end. Dan Brogan replied that the MBTA has told SRPEDD the promotion will continue through the last weekend of April. Gloria Saddler further clarified that fares were free all week during the month of March then switched to weekends for the month of April.

Transit World Cafe

- Dan Brogan opened the conversation with the following information: RIPTA is developing the 2050 Transit Master Plan to improve regional transit, including a potential high-frequency Metro Connector from TF Green to Central Falls. The plan also explores expanding connections between Rhode Island, the South Coast, and Connecticut. While still in development, RIPTA is actively engaging communities to create a more integrated and accessible transit system.
- The discussion was prompted by asking about unmet transit needs between Rhode Island and Massachusetts, based on input from community members, their experiences

and conversations. Have gaps in transportation related to healthcare, social services, and other essential needs been identified?

- Mandy Aquino highlights the lack of direct transit to the VA in Rhode Island, despite high demand. While a bus connects Rhode Island to Fall River, it doesn't reach the VA, leaving veterans reliant on limited services from the COAs (councils on aging) or the veteran's office. Dan Brogan acknowledged the transit gaps, including limited midday service to the VA in Providence and a lack of direct South Coast-Providence connections. Congestion and redevelopment along Route 79 present challenges and opportunities for improved transit, but current options mainly serve 9-to-5 commuters, leaving others with limited access.
- Will Gardner highlighted the need for affordable transportation from New Bedford to Providence, as locals currently pay up to \$90 for rides. He recalled an Amtrak bus service that was discontinued due to low ridership and expressed support for a regular bus route connecting New Bedford, Fall River, and Providence for better transit access. Dan Brogan welcomed Will's input, noting the potential for a New Bedford-to-Providence bus service similar to Amtrak's Worcester-Providence connection.
- Ella Ackerman, a long-range transit planner at RIPTA, joined the discussion to express support for better connectivity between Rhode Island and Massachusetts, given their strong economic and social ties. She acknowledged that this need has been raised before and assured attendees that she would take notes and share their input with her team. Ackerman mentioned that these insights would be valuable for RIPTA's ongoing Transit Master Plan update and invited questions about RIPTA projects, including the Metro Connector and other initiatives.
- Dan Brogan linked transit needs to food access, aging populations, and disability mobility. He stressed the importance of transportation for maintaining family and community connections across Massachusetts and Rhode Island, noting that many relatives live in both states. Reliable transit is essential for accessibility and quality of life, even if it isn't reflected in the data.
- Amber Davis asked about bridging intergenerational transit needs in long-term planning. She highlighted the region's aging population alongside younger generations and wondered if there were ways to enhance connectivity for food access and resources. She suggested exploring solutions that address both older adults and younger residents, ensuring mobility for all.
- Dan Brogan discussed potential transit connections between Pawtucket and Attleboro, noting that legal and insurance challenges often arise when buses cross state lines, though routes under five miles typically face fewer restrictions. He highlighted the Pawtucket and Attleboro Transit Centers as key locations for improved connectivity. Kerri Victorio from GATRA added that while there is a fixed-route bus from Seekonk to

South Attleboro, cross-border transit options remain limited. She mentioned a Dial-A-Ride service for medical trips to select facilities in Rhode Island but acknowledged its constraints. Brogan also pointed out the Market Basket in South Attleboro as an emerging intermodal hub due to its commuter rail access. He invited further discussion on transit needs and possible improvements.

- Will Gardner commented on the need for more convenient and frequent transportation options between smaller areas and major cities like Providence and Boston. He suggests a service where passengers can simply show up at a depot, take a direct bus to the city center, and return without needing to plan around a rigid schedule. He notes that the previous Amtrak service failed because its infrequent and random schedule made it unreliable. Dan Brogan compares this to the Peter Pan bus service, which only offers a few departures each day, making it difficult for people to travel to Boston. He highlights that before the South Coast rail was available, these limited options created a significant challenge for commuters.
- Ella Ackerman highlights that post-COVID travel patterns have shifted, with more people needing to travel throughout the day rather than during traditional peak commuting hours. Dan Brogan agrees, noting that many people now have irregular work schedules due to multiple jobs or shift work. Both stress the need for flexible, affordable transportation services that can accommodate these diverse and unpredictable travel needs.
- Will Gardner proposing the idea of using space on the Washington Bridge for a priority bus lane. Dan Brogan supports this, drawing on successful bus rapid transit systems in Minnesota and highlighting the benefits of buses for reducing congestion and improving air quality. Ella Ackerman shares that similar requests have been made for the Washington Bridge, though without success. Brogan also suggests working with MassDOT to address congestion on I-195, emphasizing the long-term benefits of such infrastructure improvements.
- Gloria Saddler questions the demand for transit connections between the South Coast and Providence, expressing confusion about where the idea came from. She notes that she has never heard anyone specifically request such a connection, and wonders who inquired about it. Dan Brogan discusses how to assess the demand for transit between the South Coast and Providence. While he hasn't heard direct requests, he suggests using a combination of historical data, traffic counts, community surveys, and focus groups to better understand commuting patterns and community needs. He highlights the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative data to create a more comprehensive understanding of travel demands.
- Gloria Saddler feels that it's too soon to discuss expanding transit to Providence, as people are still evaluating the new commuter rail's impact. She mentions that many are

focused on whether the rail improves their lives and concerns like rising rents and suggests waiting until summer to better understand its value before considering further transit options. Dan Brogan agrees with taking time for people to adjust to the new commuter rail before introducing more changes. He highlights the historical connections between Providence and the South Coast and points out that commuting to Boston is more challenging due to the longer distance.

- Gloria Saddler highlights the concerns in Fall River about potential displacement due to new transit developments, like the commuter rail. Residents fear outsiders, especially from Boston, might take local jobs and drive-up rents. She states that people are still adjusting to the commuter rail and suggests focusing on its current impact before considering further expansions. Dan Brogan acknowledged the importance of considering the impact of displacement and gentrification, particularly in marginalized neighborhoods. He highlights that there are diverse perspectives on the need for connections to Providence and that these varying needs should be carefully considered to avoid negative effects on existing communities.
- Gloria Saddler proposes focusing on medical transportation for individuals with disabilities or those needing services in Rhode Island, based on personal experiences with her brother. She feels this issue could engage more people in transportation conversations. Kerri Victorio from GATRA mentions their Med Wheels program, which offers limited medical transportation to places like Boston and East Greenwich, with a grant-funded eligibility process. She also highlights the recent approval of funding for a service similar to the "Boston Bus" that connects Plymouth to Boston, coordinated with local Council on Aging organizations. Dan Brogan adds that SRTA offers a medical shuttle on certain days from New Bedford and Fall River. Both discuss the need for more accessible, reliable medical transportation, especially to locations like Providence and Boston. Dan also suggests expanding travel options for different groups, such as seniors and college students, potentially through express buses or HOV lanes for more frequent, on-time services.
- Dan Brogan wraps up the conversation by acknowledging the diverse perspectives shared, including concerns about displacement, the current focus on the commuter rail, and varying interest in connections to Providence. He highlights the importance of meeting the community's needs and being adaptable to their concerns. He reassures participants that they can continue the dialogue through email or phone calls.

Next Meeting: April 24th in Attleboro

[Microsoft Teams Link](#)