

Draft Minutes of the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) Meeting on Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 1:00 PM - Held remotely via Zoom.

The following members were in attendance:

Derek Shooster-----Representing Phillip Eng, Interim MassDOT Secretary and CEO, ***Chair***
Shaun Handy-----Representing Jonathan Gulliver, MassDOT Highway Div. Administrator
Cathleen DeSimone-----Mayor of Attleboro (joined late)
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
Richard Trapilo-----Town of Fairhaven
Sarah Hewins-----Town of Carver (joined late)
Jennifer Vincent-----Town of Berkley
Marie Clarner-----SRPEDD Commissioner Chair (joined late)
Mary Ellen DeFrias-----Greater Attleboro and Taunton Regional Transit Authority
Corey Hebert-----Representing Erik Rousseau, Southeastern Regional Transit Authority

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

None

The following were also in attendance:

Bonnie Roalsen----- Massachusetts Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School
Christina Mendoza-----Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Barbara Lachance-----Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Leah Pickett-----Massachusetts Department of Transportation
Stephanie Gray-----Office of Congressman Auchincloss
Albert Araujo-----Member of the Public
Peter Kelly-----Member of the Public
Lisa Estrela-Pedro-----SRPEDD
Jackie Jones-----SRPEDD
Andrea Duarte-Campos—SRPEDD
Daniel Brogan-----SRPEDD
Sean Hilton-----SRPEDD
Noah Soutier-----SRPEDD
Jen Chaves-----SRPEDD
Kevin Ham-----SRPEDD
Jon Gray-----SRPEDD

Handouts:

SMMPO Agenda September 15, 2026

SMMPO Draft Meeting Minutes August 18, 2026

FFY2026-2030 TIP Administrative Modification #3

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order and Roll Call-

Chairman Shooster called the SMMPO meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Ms. Andrea Duarte-Campos 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 Taunton-----Yes

Town of Berkley-----Yes

Town of Fairhaven-----Yes

SRTA-----Yes

GATRA-----Yes

2. Approval of Minutes – August 18, 2026 (Materials Attached and Roll Call Vote Needed)

Chairman Shooster asked if there were any proposed changes and requested a motion to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2026, SMMPO meeting. Ms. Duarte-Campos noted that the minutes had been revised to reflect corrected ridership numbers in SRTA's verbal report, changing ridership in the past year from 1.4 million to 4.4 million. The motion was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Jay Pateakos. Ms. Duarte-Campos then called the roll:

MassDOT Chair-----Yes

MassDOT Administrator-----Yes

City of Attleboro-----Yes

City of Fall River-----Yes

City of Taunton-----Yes

Town of Berkley-----Yes

Town of Fairhaven-----Yes

SRTA-----Yes

GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Public Comments

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

4. Regional Transit Authorities Report – RTA Updates

Mary Ellen Defrias stated that it has been a busy period as GATRA prepares to transition to a new management contract and open its Wareham facility on September 25. She stated that the Gateway Link continues to exceed expectations, maintaining ridership of more than 5,000 passengers per month. Ms. DeFrias stated that while fare-free service has not resulted in a significant increase in overall ridership, demand for ADA transportation services continues to grow, creating additional costs and raising concerns about long-term affordability. Corey Hebert reported a strong start to FY2027 for SRTA, with ridership continuing to increase steadily. He stated that several capital projects are underway, including the replacement of SRTA's workforce management system, for which a contract has been executed.

5. FFY2026-2030 TIP Administrative Modification #3 for GATRA (Materials Attached)

Jackie Jones explained that a minor administrative modification was made to the FFY 2026–2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to reflect a small adjustment to GATRA's state funding match amount. Because the change does not affect federal funding and is minor in nature, it does not require MPO board endorsement or a formal vote. She stated that consistent with the MPO's Public Participation Plan and commitment to transparency, the modification is being presented to the SMMPO for informational purposes and to provide an opportunity for questions and public comment.

6. Draft Southeastern Massachusetts Congestion Management Plan (Link, Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)

Sean Hilton reminded the group that at its August 18 meeting, the SMMPO approved the release of the draft Congestion Management Plan and Process for a 21-day public comment period. He stated that no public comments were received during the comment period, either in writing or at the virtual listening session held on August 31.

The Chair asked if there were any questions on the Congestion Management Plan seeing none asked for a motion and second to endorse it. The motion was made by Jennifer Vincent and seconded by Rick Trapilo. 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 Taunton-----Yes
 Town of Berkley-----Yes
 Town of Fairhaven-----Yes
 Town of Carver-----Yes
 SRPEDD Commissioner Chair-----Yes
 SRTA-----Yes
 GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**7. Draft Southeastern Massachusetts Food Access and Security in Transportation Plan-
 (Link, Roll Call Vote Needed to Endorse)**

Noah Soutier of SRPEDD stated that the draft Southeastern Massachusetts Food Access and Security and Transportation (FAST) Plan was released for a 21-day public comment period following the August SMMPO meeting. A public meeting held on August 31 received positive feedback from a representative of the Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP), while a September 8 meeting with a New Bedford City Planning official focused on document clarifications and improvements to the readability and usability of the plan's interactive map. He explained that in response to this feedback, SRPEDD developed a new Food Access Point Locator Map that allows users to select a location or enter an address to identify nearby food access destinations within an adjustable distance. The tool is still under development and will be made publicly available alongside the plan. Following discussion of the tool's flexibility for urban, suburban, and rural contexts, Mr. Soutier requested that the SMMPO formally endorse the FAST Plan.

The Chair asked if there were any more questions on the Food Access Plan and seeing none asked for a motion and second to endorse it. The motion was made by Dan Aguiar and seconded by Rick Trapilo. 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 Taunton-----Yes
 Town of Berkley-----Yes
 Town of Fairhaven-----Yes

Town of Carver-----Yes
SRPEDD Commissioner Chair-----Yes
SRTA-----Yes
GATRA-----Yes

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. Establishment of Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)

Discussion

Jon Gray explained that SRPEDD is forming a regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) to provide regular opportunities for public input on bicycle and pedestrian planning initiatives in the region. The committee is expected to meet quarterly, depending on interest and available capacity. He explained that membership will be open to individuals who live or work in the SRPEDD region, including residents, municipal staff, elected and appointed officials, public agencies, community organizations, and advocacy groups. Transportation planning experience is not required. He stated that SRPEDD particularly encourages participation from historically underrepresented groups, including individuals with disabilities, older adults, youth and families, low-income communities, racial and ethnic minorities, transit riders, and those with limited vehicle access or English proficiency. Professionals in public health, education, childcare, economic development, tourism, parks, and recreation are also encouraged to apply. He explained that goal is to bring diverse perspectives into regional bicycle and pedestrian planning efforts.

Rick Trapilo raised concerns about the distinction between traditional bicycles and electric bicycles (e-bikes), particularly regarding their use on shared-use paths. He noted growing conflicts among pedestrians, cyclists, and e-bike riders on South Coast bike paths. Mr. Gray acknowledged these concerns and emphasized that the proposed regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) would provide an opportunity to discuss shared-use path etiquette, e-bike regulations, and potential solutions. He explained that the committee could also help municipalities address these challenges by sharing guidance, resources, and best practices from neighboring communities. Mr. Shooster highlighted the proposed state-level Ride Safe Act, noting that the BPAC could help interpret future legislation and incorporate new policies into regional transportation planning goals. SMMPO members expressed support for the committee and interest in future updates.

9. Mansfield Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Phase I Update

Mr. Gray provided an update on Phase 1 of the Mansfield Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Plan, a new planning initiative developed in collaboration with the Town of Mansfield. He explained that unlike traditional Complete Streets plans, this project takes a comprehensive approach to evaluating the Town's network of sidewalks, trails, shared-use paths, and roadways to identify connectivity gaps and safety concerns. Phase 1, conducted from fall 2025 through summer 2026, focused on existing conditions, GIS mapping, safety analysis, and public engagement. Outreach included a virtual public meeting, community events, and collaboration with a Select Board-appointed steering committee. Residents identified concerns related to vehicle speeds, unsafe crossings, sidewalk gaps, access to the World War II Veterans Memorial Trail, and uncomfortable railroad underpasses. He stated that trail counter data recorded over 100,000 trips between April 2025 and March 2026, with usage varying significantly by season and temperature. A traffic stress analysis also identified substantial overlap between high-stress roadways and locations of pedestrian and bicycle crashes. Phase 1 findings have been compiled into a draft report for Town review, while Phase 2 will focus on identifying and prioritizing short- and long-term improvements to strengthen network connectivity and safety.

Discussion ensued about maintenance challenges associated with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Mr. Gray noted that Mansfield's Department of Public Works faces competing demands related to vegetation management, snow and ice removal, trail accessibility, and crosswalk maintenance, often with limited staffing and funding. He explained that winter trail maintenance presents particular challenges because different users have conflicting preferences regarding snow removal and ice treatment. He indicated that Phase 2 could further evaluate existing maintenance practices and identify opportunities for improvement. Mr. Shooster noted an ongoing statewide research study on bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure maintenance and expressed interest in sharing findings. Mr. Gray also referenced maintenance information collected from municipalities during SRPEDD's recent Regional Pedestrian Plan update, including concerns about dedicated sidewalk funding. Mr. Shooster noted that federal transportation funds may be available to support new sidewalk infrastructure.

10. Evacuation Planning Tabletop Exercises Update

Kevin Ham, Director of Homeland Security for SRPEDD, provided an update on the regional evacuation planning table top exercises project, which included five tabletop exercises conducted between July 1 and August 6, 2026. Mr. Ham explained that the exercises built upon a previous two-year evacuation planning initiative and involved 27 participating organizations, including 24 municipalities and three regional or state partners. Participants evaluated emergency response capabilities through winter storm, hazardous materials, and hurricane scenarios, focusing on critical transportation, public information and warnings, and operational coordination. All nine performance targets were rated as successfully performed with some

challenges, demonstrating strong regional coordination while identifying opportunities for improvement.

He stated that key strengths included established mutual aid relationships, effective interagency communication, familiarity with emergency alert systems, prioritization of public safety, and awareness of the broader transportation impacts of emergencies. Areas for improvement included clarifying jurisdictional responsibilities for roadway closures and detours, formalizing emergency response procedures and decision-making criteria, strengthening unified command structures, documenting informal coordination practices, and better addressing the needs of vulnerable populations beyond elderly and medically fragile residents. Ms. Ham noted that proposed next steps include developing a regional matrix of responsibilities and authorities, creating standardized decision-making guides, inventorying emergency communication equipment and signage, formalizing regional coordination procedures, and conducting additional tabletop exercises focused on unified command. He noted that an after-action report and improvement plan are being finalized to guide future preparedness efforts and evaluate progress in addressing identified gaps. He provided an opportunity for questions to which none were presented.

11. Other Business

Ms. Estrela-Pedro announced several upcoming events and funding opportunities, including:

- The MassDOT Moving Together Conference will take place on October 27 in Boston, with limited registration spots remaining.
- A virtual design public hearing for the Plain Street Bridge over the Taunton River is scheduled for September 29.
- SRPEDD's Annual Dinner will be held on September 23 at the Fall River Country Club from 5:30 to 8:30 PM, providing an opportunity to discuss ongoing and future projects.
- Funding opportunities include the Safe Routes to School Signs and Lines Program; the Infrastructure Project Funding Program, with an October 16 deadline; and the Bike Rack Grant Program, opening October 30. Additionally, the Community Transit Grant Program closes October 30 and provides funding to improve transportation and mobility for older adults and people with disabilities; eligible applicants include transit authorities, councils on aging, municipalities, nonprofits, and private transportation operators.

12. Date and Time for Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the next SMMPO meeting will be on October 20, 2026, at 1:00 pm, held virtually on Zoom.

13. Adjourn

The Chair asked for a motion and second to adjourn. Rick Trapilo made the motion and Sarah Hewins seconded. The Chair asked that all in favor say aye. All ayes were heard. The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 PM.