

Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force

Minutes of March 11, 2009 at Mass Highway Department District 5 Office at 4:00 PM

Present:

John Bullard, Vision 2020
Dr. Susan Peterson, SRPEDD
Robert Overholtzer, OCPC
Mary Wasyluk, for Sen. Marc Pacheco
Senator Joan Menard
Rep. Patricia A. Haddad
Rep. Michael Rodrigues
Lisa Lowney, for Congressman Barney Frank
Kristina Egan, EOT
George Spatcher, Esq., Attleboro Chamber
Roy Nascimento, New Bedford Area Chamber
Christopher Cooney, Metrosouth Chamber
Arthur Motta, Southeastern Mass. CVB
Paul Vigiant, SouthCoast Devt. Partnership
Jennifer Menard, SouthCoast Devt. Partnership
Melinda Ailes, Mass. Small Business Devt. Ctr.
Edward Lambert, UMD Urban Issues Initiative
Jim Walsh, Mass Development
Carolyn Lamarre, TRWA
Priscilla Chapman, Mass Audobon
Kyla Bennett, New England PEER
Robb Johnson, TNC
James Maragnano, Bloom's Bus Lines, Inc
Mike Sharff, Peter Pan Bus Lines
Tim Faulkner, TAUNTON GAZETTE

William Roth, Fairhaven
Jim Oliver, Foxboro
Linda Grubb, Lakeville
Ruth Geoffroy, Middleborough
Mayor Scott Lang, New Bedford
Jill Maclean, New Bedford
Rick King, Norwood
Bob Moitozo, Rehoboth
Lou Gitto, Stoughton
Kevin Shea, Taunton
Bill Kenney, Fall River
Debi Kenney, Fall River
Robert Turner, Turner Brothers
David Spillane, Goody Clancy
Pat Ciaramella, OCPC
Charles Kilmer, OCPC
Karen Winger, OCPC
Jed Cornock, OCPC
Stephen Smith, SRPEDD
Greg Guimond, SRPEDD
Louise Hardiman, SRPEDD
Robert Gregory, MHD Dist. 5
Roland Hebert, for SRTA
Reinald Ledoux, BAT Bus

1. Call to Order

Chairman John Bullard called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.

2. Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of February 11, 2009 were accepted as revised.

3. Special Guest: Secretary James Aloisi, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works

Secretary Aloisi told the Task Force that one of his priorities is regional equity across the Commonwealth in transportation funding. The State wants to target investments to spur economic development and help communities rebuild or improve. Secretary Aloisi explained that the bus alternative in the project is not a typical Bus Rapid Transit project that would support walkable communities with intermittent station stops. The Secretary doesn't believe the Rapid Bus alternative is a good permanent solution. He respects alternative opinions about the bus option and he said he will "not put my thumb on the scale". From a transportation and long-term perspective, the State wants to invest in what will draw people to live in a location and root economic development in the South Coast region. He used the Intermodal Center in Haverhill as an example of what rail investment can do--where a commuter rail stop triggered growth, creating a vibrant spot out of a vacant lot.

Secretary Aloisi said the federal stimulus package is good, but it is not a long-term solution; it is a one-time infusion of money. There is \$8B available nationally for high-speed rail, which requires a competitive grant application. Massachusetts will put in an application, trying for the South Coast, the Downeaster or an old corridor in Pioneer Valley between Connecticut and Vermont. In the regular stimulus package, there is \$437M that will be used for road resurfacing and shovel ready road related projects. There is \$320M for rail and transit projects, and there are so many transit needs.

In response to a question from Priscilla Chapman, Secretary Aloisi explained that EOT is working with the Corps of Engineers to ensure coordination between the MEPA and NEPA processes. Roland Hebert, representing SRTA, suggested that the greenhouse gas emission fee that is part of the transportation reform proposal not be revenue-neutral, but be a key revenue source for commuter rail in Massachusetts, as was proposed two years ago. Secretary Aloisi said the final bill will be a reflection of the legislature. Bill Kenney asked what the 3.5 cents of the gas tax dedicated to commuter rail makes possible. Secretary Aloisi said it provides approximately \$75M per year dedicated to rail projects around the state. Robb Johnson said it is important for the Administration to follow through in implementing the Smart Growth Corridor Plan. Money is a motivator to direct growth into PDAs and to protect PPAs. The Secretary agreed. He stressed a commitment to working with the Task Force, providing regional equity, and the importance of small successes in the short-term to keep making progress.

4. Regional Priority Development Areas/Priority Protection Areas

Nancy Durfee continued the discussion on composite regional maps. The process started in June 2007 and continued throughout 2008 with several local meetings. In January 2009, a regional hand-drawn map was created from the local priority maps and vetted at a SRPEDD meeting. In February, SRPEDD drafted a composite map and asked, "did we get it right?" SRPEDD and OCPC held a few more meetings through March with regional organizations included. Some new areas were identified for development and protection. The information is going to Goody Clancy to be used in the Smart Growth Corridor Plan. There was debate over specific areas not included as a PPA by members

at the meeting. There were also some discrepancies pointed out. The maps are online and Kristina Egan asked that any potential errors or further comments be emailed to SRPEDD and copied to Eric and Amy at Goody Clancy.

Jill McLean asked how the Task Force is going to adopt the map as part of the Plan if not every community adopts it. Steve Smith said every local community had signed off.

In discussing the map further, Mr. Johnson argued that including the Three Mile and Canoe River ACEC as a PPA results in a townwide river corridor as a PPA while other rivers seemingly have nothing. Mr. Smith said that the map should not specify widths, and perhaps it is better to focus on the definition of river corridors rather than the map. Kristina Egan asked that any additional comments be made within one week. The final map is going to the state agencies. At future meetings she would like the Task Force to think about how to capitalize on all this work and how the map will be used. Comments on the MAPC towns will be received at a later date.

Karen Winger presented maps of Easton, Bridgewater and Stoughton, highlighting redevelopment opportunities in town centers and in underused industrial parks. Ms. Egan said that, along with the map, there will be a narrative that explains how development and historic preservation can go together. Every priority development area needs to explain what kind of development is appropriate. Lou Gitto said there are other protection areas in Stoughton that should be included. Ms. Winger said she would contact the Town Planner one more time. OCPC will be mapping West Bridgewater, East Bridgewater and Brockton, and working with MAPC to include Holbrook. They are expected to be complete by June. Pat Ciaramella said OCPC is using DLTA funding to locate stations in East and West Bridgewater. Ms. Egan said it makes sense that a station is a priority development area. Mr. Guimond said the maps for Foxboro and Sharon should be done by MAPC in one to two weeks.

5. State policy reforms that would support regional smart growth

Eric Hove reported that EOT is looking for ideas to change existing programs, create new programs and create new sources of funding to shape into a package to accomplish economic development and open space goals from the corridor plan. He asked members to think boldly, but said that even changing small ways in which a grant program works can affect land use patterns. There was discussion about priorities for where mitigation occurs and how the regional maps would be used for this purpose. Ms. Egan explained that there are legal requirements for mitigation. Beyond that, mitigation funds are discretionary and could be used for open space acquisition or a way to mitigate cumulative impacts, although that is not required. Smart growth is a criterion for actions that enhance quality of life in the region and it is separate from environmental impacts.

6. Status reports

Ms. Egan reported that public comments about ridership or anything else are due to MEPA by March 17. She asked people to also send a copy of their comments to the Corps of Engineers. Although the Corps is not putting out an official scope, it is hoped

they will coordinate with MEPA on their March 27 decision of what EOT needs to further study.

There will be a summary of technical assistance projects on the web shortly and SRPEDD will also send it to task force members. As part of the project's technical assistance to communities, there are some workshops being developed on affordable housing and sewer infrastructure technologies. These workshops will be available to interested communities.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Future Meetings

The next meeting is on April 15, 2009 at the ATMC in Fall River from 4:00PM to 6:00PM. Preceding the meeting is a regional sustainability exchange on South Coast Rail...The Day After from 1:00PM to 3:30PM at the ATMC. The following task force meeting is on May 13, 2009.

9. Adjournment

Chair John Bullard adjourned the meeting at 6:20PM.