

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO)
Wednesday January 26, 2011**

Held at Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)
88 Broadway, Taunton, MA

Acting Chairman Clinton Bench called the meeting to order at 3:07 pm.

The following SMMPO Members were in attendance:

Francis Gay, GATRA Administrator

Jonathan Henry, Town of Marion

Jean Fox, Town of Freetown

Clinton Bench, MassDOT

Pamela Haznar, MassDOT

Byron Holmes

Kristin Decas

Representing Jeffrey Mullan, Secretary of MassDOT, SMMPO Chair

Representing Administrator Paiewonsky, MassDOT Highway Division

Representing Mayor Flanagan, Fall River

Representing Mayor Lang, New Bedford

The following Ex-Officio Members were in attendance:

Lee Azinheira, JTPG Chair

The following were also present:

Michael Chong, FHWA-MA

Ed Anthes-Washburn, NBHDC

Rod Emery, Jacobs

Jim Hadfield, SRPEDD

Linda Lally, SRPEDD

Lisa Estrela-Pedro, SRPEDD

Trey Wadsworth, MassDOT

Tim Kochan, MassDOT Highway Division District 5

Stephen C. Smith, SRPEDD

Paul Mission, SRPEDD

Louise Hardiman, SRPEDD

Jacqueline Schmidt, SRPEDD

Introductions were made.

1. **Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 3:07 am by Acting Chairman Clinton Bench.
2. **Approval of Minutes** – Mr. Bench asked if there had been any changes to the minutes by staff since the minutes were sent out. Staff replied that there had been no changes. A motion was made to approve the minutes for the December 15, 2010 meeting of the SMMPO held at the SRPEDD Offices in Taunton. The motion was seconded and approved UNANIMOUSLY.
3. **Discussion and of the Fall River Route 79 Western Expressway project and possible need for an amendment to the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan** – Mr. Hadfield discussed a request from FHWA to amend the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to include the Fall River Western Expressway Project, and a meeting that was held earlier that day to discuss this amendment. Mr. Chong explained that any project seeking federal funding needs to be included in the RTP before the environmental review process. The amendment will also include the incorporation of projects identified by the Accelerated Bridge Program which was established in 2008. The following amendments were proposed for the 2007 RTP:
 - Updating Chapter 7 Table 7-1 to remove 3 items listed as bridge number F-02-59.
 - Updating Chapter 7 Table 7-2 to remove Items 6, 7 and 12 totaling \$16 million which are items related to the Route 79/I-195 interchange. These items will be included as part of a larger project.
 - Chapter 19 Table 19-3 will be updated to incorporate Accelerated Bridge Program funding into the financial element of the RTP.

Mr. Bench explained that the changes would need to be released for a 30 day comment period. Mr. Chong inquired as to whether the universe of project costs was updated. Mr. Wadsworth replied that the universe of project was not listed in the original RTP, but the funding amounts would be addressed in Table 19-3. It was determined that in the 2011 RTP the entire universe of projects should be listed.

Mr. Kochan asked if Table 19-3 was fiscally constrained. Mr. Wadsworth replied that it was.

A motion was made to release the amendments for a 30-day comment period. The motion was seconded and approved UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Discussion and vote to endorse amendments to the FFY2011 Transportation Improvement Program –

Mr. Hadfield discussed a vote by the SMMPO at the December meeting to approve the programming of New Bedford Shore Side Electrification project in FY11 of the TIP using CMAQ funding, with the proposed adjustments in funding categories for the Middleborough Interstate 495 and Route 105 in CMAQ and STP; and to approve the change in funding categories for the Fall River Rte 79 Western Expressway project with the addition of a non-federal match of \$70 million also to be included in text in the comment box defining the \$70M from Non Federal Aid; and to release the FY2011 TIP with these changes for a 30 day public comment period. The following amendments were discussed:

- A) **Amendment to the FY2011 Transportation Improvement Program to add the New Bedford Shore Side Electrification Project** – Mr. Hadfield discussed comments from FHWA on the projects applicability for CMAQ funding. He further explained that FHWA would like to see a surface transportation benefit included in the project. At a meeting held prior to the SMMPO, it was determined that the project could be expanded to accommodate trucks. It was also determined that the project description should be changed to the New Bedford Multimodal Shore Side Electrification project. Mr. Kochan inquired if the changes would involve a simple design tweaking or a more expensive redesign. Ms. Decas replied that the electrification features would just need to be relocated. Mr. Chong asked if the electrification features were standard type. Ms. Decas replied that the electrification features were originally designed for land base and that as part of the EPA grant, adaptors for boats would be acquired.
- B) **FY2011 Transportation Improvement Program amendment to change funding for the Fall River Route 79/I-195 Bridge/Ramps Rehabilitation Project** – Mr. Wadsworth explained that the project description should be changed from a the Fall River Route 79/I-195 Bridge/Ramps Rehabilitation project to the Fall River Interchange Improvements at Route I-195/Route 79/Route 138.

A motion was made to approve the programming of New Bedford Shore Side Electrification project in FY11 of the TIP using CMAQ funding, with the proposed adjustments in funding categories for the Middleborough Interstate 495 and Route 105 in CMAQ and STP, to change the project description to the New Bedford Multimodal Shore Side Electrification project; to approve the change in funding categories for the Fall River Rte 79 Western Expressway project with the addition of a non-federal match of \$70 million also to be included in text in the comment box defining the \$70M from Non Federal Aid; and to change the project description to the Fall River Interchange Improvements at Route I-195/Route 79/Route 138.. The motion was seconded and approved UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Emory gave a brief presentation on the status of the Fall River Interchange Improvements at Route I-195/Route 138 design. A new alternative has been developed and will need to be approved by FHWA as part of the environmental review process. This alternative is a hybrid of earlier alternatives and removes the viaduct, keeps basic connections and has more of an urban boulevard feel. A model of this alternative shows the majority of traffic staying within the same corridor, with a 3 or 4% shift in traffic.

He further explained that this alternative provides better connectivity, incorporates a future south coast rail station and has no major environmental or historic structure impacts.

Mr. Mission commented that this alternative has a greater than 50-60% reduction in bridge decks, which would require less costly maintenance while still maintaining elevation for South Coast Rail. Ms. Haznar commented that the bridge currently has a 6 figure maintenance budget that is difficult to keep up with and that one of the bridges is closed right now due to the need for maintenance.

Mr. Chong noted that it was important to remember that the environmental review process considers a wide range of alternatives. Mr. Bench commented that MassDOT would be doing due diligence on the project and that the project was consistent with the character of the city.

5. Discussion of the potential use(s) for \$1.2M balance in FY2011 TIP Target – Mr. Hadfield discussed potential uses for \$1.2 million of unallocated Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds for FY2011 of the TIP. Mr. Hadfield emphasized that the projects must be ready for advertising by September 2011 to utilize this funding. The following projects were discussed:

- **Dartmouth Tucker Road Relocation/Improvements to the Faunce Corner Road/Route 6 Intersection** – Mr. Hadfield explained that the total cost for this project was \$7 million and that there was potential for the project to be phased and questioned the possibility that it could be partially funded in FY2011. The town is considering phasing the project in which the first phase would involve the Faunce Corner Road, Route 6 and Old Westport Road improvements including the addition of the northbound lane on Faunce Corner Road from the intersection, signal modifications to the intersection and to cold plane and resurface Faunce Corner Road between Route 6 and the Interstate 195 ramps. The second phase of the project would be the relocation of Tucker Road. In order to qualify for this funding, Phase 1 of the project would need to be ready for advertising by September 2011. The town has created an aggressive schedule for this project that would require a large amount of support from MassDOT. Mr. Hadfield discussed a meeting planned for the following week to discuss the phasing and potential readiness for the project.
- **Maintenance on sections of Taunton-Raynham Resurfacing & related work on Rte 44 and Rte 138** – Mr. Hadfield discussed a maintenance project that has been advanced through the design process and is within the available dollar amount. The project limits are approximately 0.6 miles of Route 44 from Arlington Street to Route 104 in Taunton and approximately 0.6 miles of Route 138 from Jackson Street in Taunton to the proposed Walmart Location in Raynham. The section of Route 44 flooded in the spring of 2010 and is really bad shape. The project is at the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) stage and would involve cold planing, sidewalk reconstruction, wheelchair ramps, minor drainage improvements, and replacement of traffic loop signals. Ms. Haznar asked for a copy of a study that SRPEDD had performed on the Route 44 corridor so that pavement markings and signal timing

Mr. Hadfield announced that potential projects will be discussed at the next JTPG meeting, with recommendations to be forwarded to the SMMPO.

6. Discussion of the replacement of the Faunce Corner Road Bridge over I-195 in Dartmouth – Mr. Hadfield discussed a previous commitment from the JTPG found in the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan in which the group deemed the project significant enough to potentially devote one year's target allocation to the project if the State agreed to fully fund the project. Currently the Wareham Route 6/28 project is programmed in FY2013 and FY2014 as an advance construction project. This project requires a tremendous amount of land takings that may not be completed in time for funding in FY2013. Mr. Hadfield suggested that the JTPG could consider inserting the Faunce Corner Road Bridge Project in FY2013 in the amount of \$7.6 million, and move the Wareham Route 6/28 project to FY2014. No input has been received from Wareham on this change.

Mr. Bench inquired about the latest cost estimate. Ms. Haznar explained that the latest cost estimate for the bridge was \$17.4 million and that the project was at 25% design. She further explained that the project was not currently on the TIP and that the additional non-TIP funding has not been identified on the near term bridge list.

Mr. Wadsworth noted that the TIP funding to be allocated to the project would be from the Surface Transportation Program funding (STP) and asked if the project could qualify for CMAQ or Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funding. Mr. Hadfield replied that the project would qualify for both but that projects have already been targeted for those funds. Mr. Bench commented that MassDOT appreciates the creativity in trying to find funding for this project and that the possibility will be discussed with headquarters and the bridge division. Mr. Bench inquired about the confidence of the support of the JTPG. Mr. Hadfield replied that it is difficult to allocate any whole year of support, and that the JTPG finds it favorable but it needs to be discussed further.

Ms. Haznar explained that both the Dartmouth and Wareham projects are a priority for MassDOT and that they are unsure if Wareham is aware of the potential change at this point. She further explained that the major factor with this project is the land takings, and that the Right of Way department thinks the project is doable for the time frame.

- 7. Discussion of Update to the MPO Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** – Mr. Bench explained that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is the bylaws that the SMMPO operates by and that all the MPO's in the Commonwealth have one. The document outlines the composition and purpose of the body. Mr. Hadfield explained that changes were made to the MOU to account for the change of title from the Massachusetts Highway Department to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), to increase the number of members needing to be present for a vote from 4 to 7 and to remove text related to the Central Artery Project.

Mr. Chong inquired if 4 members was a normal amount of members needing to be present for a vote. Mr. Wadsworth explained that usually more than half of the voting body needs to be present for a vote.

The following changes to the MOU were proposed:

- Steve commented that a change should be made regarding the number of people from Plymouth county represented on the board, but I can't find the reference.
- Change the number of cities and towns that are part of GATRA from 17 to 26 and delete "(Kingston, Plymouth, are not covered by the SMMPO)" on Page 2
- Change the number of cities and towns that are part of SRTA from 9 to 10 on page 2
- Change "SAFETY-LU" to "SAFETEA-LU" on page 2
- Change the number of voting members from twelve to thirteen on page 2
- Delete "At the first election, two Selectmen/women shall be elected for a one year term, and two for a full year term" from page 3
- Delete "Advisory Board" from the end of the titles of the Administrators of the Regional Transit Authorities on page 6
- Change "(Bristol County)" to "(Plymouth County)" after Stephen McKinnon, Selectman, Middleborough on page 6

Ms. Decas asked if the changes would require the MOU to be released for another 30-day public comment period. Mr. Bench replied that that would not be necessary.

A motion was made to endorse the Memorandum of Understanding with the changes as described above. The motion was seconded and approved UNANIMOUSLY.

The MOU will be sent out to all mayors, boards of Selectmen, and town managers for signatures.

8. Discussion of major projects in the Draft Regional Transportation Plan – Mr. Mission gave a presentation on projects currently listed in SRPEDD’s 2011 Draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). He announced that the draft version of the TPlan is very close to being released for public review and comment. This presentation covered the following potential projects:

- Route 44 Widening from Route 24 to Route 58, including replacement of the Middleborough Rotary – This project may be too large to be completed as one project; therefore SRPEDD is looking at recommending the project be split into phases. The first phase would address the Middleborough Rotary, and then if necessary revisit widening Route 44. Interim improvements for the Rotary are being looked at as well such as better pavement markings and signage. **Mr. Bench commented that the inclusion of the Ring Road alternative to the rotary in the RTP may not be appropriate due to potential environmental conflicts.**
- Fall River Route 79 Boulevard Project – This project involves changing the current divided highway into an at-grade boulevard providing better access to the water front and provide for economic development. This project is considered regionally significant project and is being re-examined in conjunction with an adjacent project, the Rehabilitation of the Route 79 Western Expressway in Fall River.
- New Bedford King’s Highway – This project is the result of a study by SRPEDD on this corridor and a recommendation for the T-Plan would be to pursue the recommendations from the study. Mr. Arruda suggested that SRPEDD meet with the city of New Bedford to discuss the recommendations and possible implementation.
- Route 24 Widening from Interstate 495 south to Route 140 – This recommendation has been on the books for a while but no action has been taken.
- Route 24 Change the Status from State Route to Interstate Route – This was a recommendations from previous years, but after discussion between SRPEDD, the Boston MPO and OCPC, it was determined that the status change may not be necessary; however the ramps along Route 24 need to be brought up to design standards.
- Park and Ride Lots – SRPEDD recently finished a study of park and ride lots throughout the region and as a recommendation from this study and through discussion with MassDOT, lease agreements for existing parking lots to be used as park and ride lots will be recommended as part of the RTP.
- Future Congestion Problems Identified with Model – A list of projects completed or underway, planned, locations studied and needing study was distributed. SRPEDD is looking for input on locations needing study, please contact Paul Mission for more information by emailing pmission@srpedd.org, or by calling (508) 824-1367. The section of Route 44 from Arlington Street to Route 104 in Taunton was highlighted.
- Structurally Deficient Bridges – A list of currently structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges with statuses for the bridges was distributed. Highlighted bridges included:
 - Dartmouth – Faunce Corner Road Bridge over Interstate 195
 - Fall River – Western Expressway/Route 79 Rehabilitation Project. A Task Force meeting for this project will be held on January 26, 2011 at 8am at the Fall River Maritime Museum on Water Street and will be open to the public.

It was emphasized that a maintenance program is needed after the completion of the Accelerated Bridge Program to ensure the bridges are properly maintained and do not fall back into disrepair.

- **GRRIP Projects** – Mr. Mission introduced 6 locations with issues that should be turned into projects to address drainage problems highlighted by the Geographic Roadway Runoff Improvement Program. These projects include:
 - North Attleborough – The Ten Mile River from the Attleboro Town Line to the Plainville Town Line experiences extensive flooding problems due to silt and other debris buildup that prevents water from properly draining. This project is not currently under design but will be included in RTP.
 - Mansfield – The Wading River experiences extensive flooding due to undersized culverts in the Otis Street/Gilbert Street area which act like dams and prevent water from draining off road.
 - Norton – the Wading River also experiences extensive flooding due to undersized culverts in the Walker Street area which act like dams and prevent water from draining off road. These flooding problems impact not only the culvert, but road infrastructure as well.
 - Swansea – MassDOT working with the town to mitigate pollution in the Route 6 area from a developer. The developer will have to clean up the pollution before being allowed further access to the site.
 - Somerset – The area surrounding the Labor in Vain Brook has been studied in the past and some improvements have been made to the surrounding salt marshes; however there is one remaining component, a culvert under Route 138 that backs up and causes flooding during extreme storms.
 - Taunton Morey Street Dam/Bridge at Lake Sabbatia – The dam and bridge have functional and structural issues which are being repaired as part of Accelerated Bridge Program (ABP) in addition to adding fish and eel ladders.
 - A project that was developed as part of the GRRIP program is the Middleborough Nemasket River Stormwater Project which is programmed on the FY 2011 year of the TIP. The project should be advertised by fall 2011 and the construction is expected to be done by spring/early summer 2012.

Mr. Chong asked if SRPEDD had looked at which of the projects would fit in the budget. Mr. Hadfield replied that SRPEDD will look into that when the financial chapter is received from the state.

Mr. Bench asked how South Coast Rail will be addressed the in the RTP. Mr. Hadfield replied that that hasn't been determined yet, but that the RTP will show that the project is a priority to the region. Mr. Bench expressed mutual frustration at the progress of the project and difficulty in finding a funding source. Mr. Smith said that the RTP will not be an impediment to South Coast Rail.

Mr. Gay discussed the following GATRA projects:

- Plymouth Intermodal Center – Kick off meeting for the planning study has been scheduled.
- Attleboro Intermodal Center – moving ahead with the bus waiting area this spring, proposed sidewalk improvements at 25% design.

9. Other Business – No other business was discussed.

10. Date, Time, and Location of Next Meeting – March 2, 2011 at 2pm.

11. Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 4:26 pm by Acting Chairman Clinton Bench.