



Introduction, Goals and Objectives and Public Outreach

Introduction

1.1

Southeastern Massachusetts is on the brink of an uncertain future with consequential changes in the environment, energy, and an uncertain economy. Global warming and the need for a national and regional effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are no longer simply predictions that trouble is on our horizon - trouble is already here. The flooding in March 2010 that stranded residents of a Freetown neighborhood and caused unprecedented shutdowns of Routes 24, 140 and 44 in the SRPEDD region may be a consequence of global warming and a more common occurrence in the future. (See Figure 1-1, right.)

The impacts of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Gulf of Mexico oil spill of 2010 and civil unrest in the Middle East foreshadow a future of fossil fuels with volatile pricing, unreliable supply coupled with continuing high demand. Our region's future is likely to include limited and increasingly expensive supplies of fossil fuel to power our transportation system. The continuous use of these fuels contributes to an ever growing problem of climate change and impacts how we maintain our infrastructure and economy.

Transportation planning must address more than the movement of goods and people; it is a means to adapt to a changing world. Transportation investments have a profound impact on our economy, environment, and patterns of development. Investment and maintenance of our transportation system is crucial to the creation of jobs and providing access to new economic development while protecting the environment. At its best, transportation brings people together, delivers our daily needs and provides needed escapes. At its worst, transportation is aggravating and often dangerous with a mixture of congestion, pollution, and frustration.

The present transportation system has made society highly dependent upon a single mode of transport - the automobile. This system has also isolated people with physical, social or economic restrictions that limit their mobility and transportation options. We need to embrace a vision of livability that emphasizes "walkable" communities, increases efforts to reduce the reliance of fossil fuels, and offers safe transportation systems that support smart growth principles.

Figure 1-1:
Route 140 Flooding in Freetown



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Throughout history, transportation has played a crucial role in the development of this nation beginning with the settlers of Plymouth, dramatically expanding with the automobile during the 20th century, and developing into a system that we have today - a vast highway network carrying vehicles over longer distances to a variety of destinations. The development of the interstate highway system, while crucial for mobility, increased sprawl into suburbia and created unintended negative consequences.

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This Regional Transportation Plan is a “needs assessment” of our transportation infrastructure, including the associated costs to maintain this system into the future. This plan will outline how change is necessary to adapt to a sustainable future that addresses the needs of today without jeopardizing the capability to maintain the system tomorrow. The plan contributes to a comprehensive vision for the future of this region.

This Plan supports the integration of transportation with land use planning, investment and development. It supports development that is pedestrian and transit friendly, with increased densities of housing and employment in Priority Development Areas (PDA) and around transit stations. It supports Priority Protection Areas (PPA) to safeguard farms and open space.

Elements from this plan will guide us to a future transportation system that includes:

- More transportation choices;
- Improvements to the system to promote safe and uncongested traffic flow;
- Enhancements promoting an interconnected flow of goods and services by road, air, water, and rail;
- A re-invented system that embraces the concepts of sustainability and livability to address issues on climate change and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels;
- Promotes investments in economic development and environmental quality to enhance livability options in the region;
- Revises and facilitates an integrated, convenient and reliable system connecting multiple modes of transport and providing choice through alternatives;
- Promotes a non-motorized system that supports and expands regional bicycle and pedestrian networks;
- Modifies the current system to address global connections as well as neighborhood needs; and
- Develops a system that adapts to new technologies.

Change will not be easy or achieved overnight, but the process for change needs to begin immediately. Attempting to change what has developed over many years will be difficult, but not impossible. An indication of change is already evident including:

- Shopping through the internet during winter holidays rather than driving to a suburban shopping mall;
- Employees allowed to “telecommute” and work at home rather than driving to the office;
- Financial incentives by employers to encourage carpooling by

- workers; and
- Communities changing zoning and adopting plans for Transportation Oriented Development (TOD) and to follow the principles of PDAs and PPAs in anticipation of the expansion of commuter rail.

The transportation planning process is a continuous one that is influenced by new technologies, policies, constraints and participation. This vision is not static, but must be continuously revisited and revised based upon analysis of the system and public input. The ultimate goal is to establish the means to affordably maintain our transportation system, promote and increase the use of alternative forms of transportation, reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, and reduce a dependence on the automobile all while preserving our surrounding environment. This nation's greatest investment is the transportation infrastructure and it remains the largest system managed by federal, state and local government. As a society, we cannot continue to maintain this present system without change.

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Goals and Objectives for the Regional Transportation Plan

1.2

The Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) is a Regional Planning Agency serving 27 cities and towns in southeastern Massachusetts. In the area of transportation planning, SRPEDD receives funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to maintain a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3C) planning process for the region. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is part of this 3C effort.

SRPEDD serves as the primary technical and support staff to the **Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO)**. The SMMPO is responsible for transportation policy and federal resource allocation decisions in the region. Only projects included in the SMMPO's Regional Transportation Plan are officially recognized projects. The Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG) is the public participation forum for citizen involvement. The JTPG advises the SMMPO on policy matters concerning transportation plans and programs.

Our goals and objectives for transportation planning begin with planning factors or guidelines from the Federal Highway Administration through existing legislation, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, otherwise known as SAFETEA-LU. Our goals and objectives also incorporate local and regional planning efforts (such as SRPEDD's Vision 2020), statewide efforts (including the state's Smart Growth Plan) and public participation. Vision 2020 intended to preserve what is best about southeastern Massachusetts, while promoting alternative modes of transportation, economic development, mobility, and road safety to make this region an attractive place to work and live. These planning efforts evolved into the regional policies and the designations by communities of PDAs and PPAs to encourage growth in appropriate areas while protecting and preserving open space.

Southeastern Massachusetts is growing rapidly. As a region, we are developing nearly 8 acres each and every day, or about 4½ square miles a year. This is equivalent to fully developing an area approximately the size of the Town of

Somerset every 21 months.

Development is inevitable. Our region is a desirable place to live and work, and a certain amount of new growth is healthy. But in the past we have not always planned well for development and the result has not always been an asset for our communities and region.

We must steer development toward the appropriate (priority development) areas and away from the critical (priority protection) areas in order to achieve the vision that we have for our communities.

In conjunction with the South Coast Rail project and the Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force, SRPEDD has been, and will continue to work with municipal officials and citizens in southeastern Massachusetts to identify **Priority Development Areas (PDAs)** and **Priority Protection Areas (PPAs)** in each of the region's twenty-seven cities and towns.

Figure 1-2:
Priority Development Area -
New Bedford Business Park



Priority Development Areas are areas within a city or town that are capable of handling more development due to several factors, including good access, available infrastructure (primarily water and sewer), an absence of environmental constraints, and local support. PDAs can range in size from a single lot to many acres. Areas designated under state programs such as Chapter 43D (expedited permitting), Chapter 40R (smart growth zones) or Economic Opportunity Areas are examples of PDAs. Included in these designations will be the local recommendations for how these sites should be developed. (One example is shown in Figure 1-2, left.)

Figure 1-3:
Priority Protection Area -
Nasketucket Bay State
Reservation



Priority Protection Areas are areas within a city or town that deserve special protection due to the presence of significant environmental factors and natural features, such as endangered species habitats, areas critical to water supply, scenic vistas, or areas of historic significance. Like PDAs, the protection areas can vary greatly in size. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), aquifer recharge areas, or designated priority habitats can be examples of PPAs. (See Figure 1-3, left).

The PDA/PPA designation is useful to all communities in making land use and zoning decisions. It is also helpful in considering potential mitigation for the commuter rail project and may be utilized if a regional system of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is created. The PDA/PPA information that is being developed will also be integrated into the Smart Growth Corridor Plan for the proposed South Coast Rail project.

To develop PDA/PPA designations, SRPEDD assembled known data, local zoning bylaws, master plans and open space plans and worked with local planners, conservation agents, economic development officials, elected officials, interest groups, local organizations and citizens to review this information and refine it with local knowledge. State officials are being consulted for their input and final recommendations brought before local officials and the Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force. Similar efforts undertaken by SRPEDD in 1997 and The Coalition for Buzzards Bay have completed pieces of this process, and that work is also incorporated into this effort.

The plan is also consistent with the phase 1 of MassDOT's report You Move

Massachusetts, published in 2009 which identifies 10 themes for the future of transportation. These themes are:

1. A more reliable transportation system where delays are minimized and travel times are consistent.
2. Transportation assets need to be managed to extend their useful life and thereby maximize the benefits of our past investments.
3. Transportation facilities and operations should be better informed by real-world conditions faced by system users.
4. With so many different users competing for space, better ways must be found to share our roadways through engineering, education, and enforcement.
5. Expansion of transportation capacity, both through the more efficient management of existing corridors and through new capital investments, is necessary to meet future transportation needs.
6. Consumers want a more user-friendly transportation system, where information is easier to access and the travel experience is more comfortable and welcoming.
7. The transportation network and transportation services should be broadened to serve more and different users in more locations.
8. In an era when our transportation funding falls far below our needs, it is imperative that both new funds and new efficiencies are identified, and that the burden placed on system users be fair and appropriate.
9. There is a need to make our transportation system environmentally sustainable.
10. People need more and better access to our transportation system.

The themes from the state plan and the transportation planning factors from the Federal Highway Administration are not specific transportation projects; rather, they represent concepts that should guide us through the development of this plan. The eight planning factors or guidelines are defined by the existing federal transportation legislation, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) are as follows:

Guideline 1: Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

Improve the integration of land use and transportation planning.

- Continue to include local and regional land use planning, including the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Southcoast Rail Corridor Plan into the transportation planning process.
- Promote consistency with local and regional planning goals.
- Preserve the character and quality of life of each community.

Encourage job growth within our region.

- Promote improved and expanded transit service to important destinations (e.g. retail and employment areas, industrial parks, downtowns, etc.) and Priority Development Areas.
- Increase access to alternative transportation modes within

Guideline 1: Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

neighborhoods.

- Increase connectivity between transportation modes for people and for freight.
- Discourage sprawl and encourage compact development and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) where appropriate.
- Improve freight connections to regional, national and international markets.

Improve the time and cost efficiency of the transportation system.

- Continue to maintain and update the timing and coordination of traffic signals.
- Design, develop, improve or expand additional means of travel, including better pedestrian and bike routes, improved public transportation between urban, suburban and rural communities.

Guideline 2: Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

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Reduce the number and severity of vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle crashes.

- Continue to identify and publish the Most Dangerous Crash Locations to inform and alert the public and to encourage measures to address problems that contribute to unsafe travel.
- Continue to conduct Road Safety Audits to identify solutions for high crash locations.
- Continue to educate the public about safe vehicle operation.
- Continue to promote improved and appropriate signage and pavement markings.
- Continue to promote the improved visibility of roadside obstructions.
- Continue to promote the passage of legislation to allow red-light running cameras and remote ticketing.
- Continue to promote the implementation of traffic calming measures, such as roundabouts.
- Continue to educate the public about traffic regulations concerning bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Continue to identify the gaps in the pedestrian network and identify areas where sidewalks and pedestrian refuge islands, as well as clearly marked crosswalks and signage is needed, especially near schools and elderly housing.
- Continue to identify locations of inter-modal conflict.
- Continue to promote the expansion of sidewalk systems, especially in areas that provide connections between residential neighborhoods, schools, retail and employment.
- Continue to evaluate traffic signal system pedestrian phases to assure they are sufficient and accurate.
- Continue to support the recommendations of the Massachusetts Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan.
- Continue to promote the implementation of a regional bicycle network.
- Continue our efforts to identify high crash locations involving teen drivers and to coordinate preventative efforts and awareness programs with area high schools.

- Continue to identify specific locations along corridors with high crash rates due to drainage and/or flooding issues.

Guideline 3: increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

Continue coordination with state transportation officials to enhance Intelligent Transportation Systems in our region. Ensure that all projects comply with the Southeastern Massachusetts Regional ITS Architecture.

- Explore and promote applications of ITS for traffic signals, warning signs and disaster mitigation.
- Identify possible locations for ITS message signs.
- Consider security (e.g. lighting, surveillance, emergency response) and ITS requirements when planning transportation projects.
- Continue to promote and assist in the utilization of Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) technology in all transit vehicles.

Develop a Disaster Mitigation Plan.

- Map hazardous material routes and determine changes that need to be made.
- Consider emergency vehicle access in all roadway projects, including new construction.
- Continue efforts to evaluate current evacuation routes and procedures and identify inconsistencies.
- Continue to promote detailed regional evacuation routes for the entire region to ensure connectivity.
- Continue to coordinate with state and federal agencies with the development of a disaster mitigation plan.
- Promote public education about regional emergency/disaster routes and/or procedures.
- Identify, create and maintain an inventory of transportation services and infrastructure that could be impacted by rising sea levels.
- Identify, create and maintain an inventory of transportation infrastructure subject to flooding.
- Identify and recommend improvements to any infrastructure subject to any flooding to be included with transportation improvements.

Guideline 4: Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.

Improve traffic flows, especially during peak traffic hours.

- Continue to identify and study congestion issues, including bottlenecks and identify appropriate solutions.
- Promote the tenets of Mobility Management which coordinate and optimize a variety of transportation options and /or providers for the region.
- Promote the continued maintenance and updating of traffic signal timing and coordination in response to and in anticipation of changes in traffic patterns.

Guideline 3: increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

Guideline 4: Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.

- Identify possible locations for ITS message signs.
- Identify, promote and expand transportation options that increase alternative transportation options to reduce congestion, conserve fuel and improve air quality.

Improve the accessibility of the transportation infrastructure for all persons.

- Identify existing access ramps and crosswalk entrances that do not comply with ADA standards and encourage corrective measures.
- Identify and support the installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals where appropriate.
- Recommend provisions for, and improvements to, sidewalks at transit stops and other appropriate areas.
- Identify and encourage roadway and transit improvements designed for an aging population.
- Continue to maintain and update a regional Transportation Providers Directory for public use.

Study all forms of freight movement, including rail, truck, air and seaport.

- Identify truck use in urban or business areas.
- Continue to identify all modes of freight movement in our region.
- Support and promote short sea shipping alternatives to major seaports in our region.
- Recommend improvements to transportation infrastructure in areas of heavy truck traffic.
- Promote development and expansion of truck parking facilities along limited access highways.
- Determine and recommend any use of limited delivery times in high traffic areas or during peak travel times.
- Determine truck use over structurally deficient bridges.
- Support the cluster of freight facilities near ports and rail terminals.

Improve access and safety through sound Access Management practices.

- Promote adoption of curb cut and drive-thru by-laws and shared access principles by each community.
- Promote cross / shared access between businesses and retail plazas, especially along heavily developed commercial corridors.

Guideline 5: Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.

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Promote alternative modes of transportation to decrease the number of vehicles on our roadways while developing a more sustainable transportation system.

- Continue to support, promote and plan for extension of commuter rail service to Taunton, Fall River and New Bedford.
- Continue to include local and regional land use planning, including the regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

(CEDs) and the Southcoast Rail Corridor Plan into the transportation planning process.

- Continue to support the expansion of the local and regional transit system.
- Promote and support the involvement of private bus companies for Boston and non-Boston commuting.
- Educate the public about the benefits of alternative transportation modes and ride-sharing.
- Continue to update the inventory of existing sidewalks.
- Promote the inclusion of sidewalks in any new development or projects.
- Promote requirements for bicycle and pedestrian access to adjacent land uses and public streets in new developments.
- Promote and support the continued expansion of the South Coast Bikeway.
- Promote energy conservation and sustainability in the region.
- Encourage localities to create incentives for developers to incorporate transit-oriented designs and amenities (e.g. bus shelters, bicycle racks) in their projects.
- Promote incentives for alternatives to SOV (single occupancy vehicle) travel.
- Promote the implementation of Park and Ride and shared use lots.
- Continue to incorporate sustainability measures in our transportation planning process and continue SRPEDD's involvement with the region's Council on Sustainability.
- Support the development of local, regional and state plans that have broad public support and are consistent with the state's sustainability principles.

Ensure environmental justice in all transportation planning.

- Continue to seek and consider input from all residents, especially from low income and minority populations, in the transportation planning process.
- Continue to promote and practice public outreach through events such as open houses and appearances at community and neighborhood meetings, various print and broadcast news media, social media and the internet.

Consider environmental impacts in all transportation projects.

- As part of our Geographic Roadway Runoff Inventory Program (GRRIP), continue to maintain and update an inventory of roadway drainage facilities on federal aid eligible roads in terms of condition, type, location and function.
- Continue to support environmental mitigation with all transportation improvement projects.
- Provide environmentally friendly recommendations when appropriate and/or necessary.

Enhance and improve SRPEDD's website and Facebook page to provide increased public outreach and education about regional resources.

- Continue to encourage feedback from the public on all tasks conducted through SRPEDD.
- Continue to post public meetings as required by the state open meeting rules and regulations.
- List upcoming road projects and the status of ongoing projects.
- Post regionally significant studies and documents for review and comment.

Guideline 6: Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and for freight.

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Maximize connectivity between origins and destinations and the modes used to travel between them.

- Continue to promote, support and plan for the extension of commuter rail service to the cities of Taunton, Fall River and New Bedford.
- Promote the improvement and expansion of local transit connections to other modes of travel, including commuter rail, commuter bus, bicycles, etc.
- Promote the creation of multi-modal transportation centers.
- Promote improved connectivity between the region’s population and major employment centers within our region, including Boston and Providence, RI and other urban centers in southern New England.
- Study and determine the need for intercity rapid transit between major population and employment centers.
- Continue to update the inventory of existing sidewalks.
- Continue to promote the inclusion of sidewalks and bike lanes in projects and developments.
- Identify, promote and support the need for additional park & ride facilities.

Guideline 7: Promote efficient system management and operation.

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Enhance the capacity and efficiency of the transportation network.

- Continue to conduct studies based on identified areas of congestion.
- Continue to recommend incorporation of access management guidelines and curb cut and drive-thru by-laws to optimize traffic flow.
- Continue to recommend traffic signal timing updates and coordination to improve Level of Service (LOS).
- Continue to conduct studies based on identified areas of congestion.
- Promote expansion of unlimited access in the transit system (such as that currently provided to Wheaton College students, faculty and staff) to more colleges.

Guideline 8: Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Preserve and improve the existing transportation infrastructure.

- Continue to maintain and update the regional Pavement Management database and identify repair strategies for arterials and collectors including cost estimates.
- Continue to emphasize and promote the “Best First” approach concentrating on routine and preventative maintenance to roadways as a long term, cost effective means of pavement management within the region and statewide.
- Recommend repairs based on our pavement management ratings.
- Preserve existing rail right-of-way.
- Support the continued effort of bridge repair and replacement through the Commonwealth’s Accelerated Bridge Program.
- Promote the repair and replacement of functionally obsolete and structurally deficient bridges.

Continue to rate the region’s transportation projects based on evaluation criteria.

- Prioritize projects based on safety, mobility, condition and environmental concerns, as well as economic and community support.
- Continue to assign priority to the maintenance of roadways in our evaluation criteria, as well as encourage communities to seek remedies for other deficiencies (e.g. safety, congestion and environmental issues.)
- Assign priority to projects that resolve multiple deficiencies in a transportation network.

Guideline 8: Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

SAFETEA-LU Requirements

1.3

The federal transportation legislation signed in 2005 and extended in 2010, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), contains a number of policy initiatives and transportation planning requirements for long range regional transportation plans. The initiatives recommended include a plan to establish the cost of maintaining the roadways in our region, an inventory of transportation services and infrastructure that could be impacted by rising sea levels and subject to flooding problems, as well as climate change, and a comprehensive livability program that provides options and links transportation and land use planning. We have also continued following the requirements mandated for the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that include environmental mitigation, new consultations with the public, consistency with planned growth and development plans and visualization techniques. All of these requirements and initiatives were extensively covered by the SMMPO in the process of producing the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan.

The SMMPO staff, through its Pavement Management Program, regularly assesses the pavement conditions of the roadway system in the region and estimates the cost of maintaining that system based on data collected. These cost estimates are projected to 2020.

The SMMPO staff's Geographic Roadway Runoff Inventory Program (GRRIP) provides an analysis and mapping of roadway drainage facilities and runoff into environmentally sensitive areas. A systematic analysis and data on sites that are ecological, as well as infrastructure problem areas are incorporated into GRRIP mapping. Further information regarding both GRRIP and other aspects of environmental coordination can be found in Chapter 16 of the plan. Staff has also utilized the Army Corps of Engineers Sea, Lake, and Overland Surge from Hurricanes (SLOSH), a computerized model to estimate storm surge depths and their impacts to land and infrastructure in the region and mapped these areas.

A comprehensive livability program is being achieved through various methods and initiatives. The Smart Growth Corridor Plan, a collaborative partnership among the Commonwealth, thirty-one corridor communities, and three regional planning agencies, including SRPEDD, working in conjunction with the Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force, is combining transportation and land-use planning. This has led to communities in our region designating areas as Priority Protection and Priority Development Areas for future planning. A Mobility Management Plan is in development, and ongoing bicycle and pedestrian planning, including the ultimate goal of a continuous network of bikeways from Rhode Island to Cape Cod, is being aggressively pursued.

Environmental mitigation and coordination with environmental groups was a serious task undertaken by the SMMPO staff during the development of the RTP. Numerous meetings were held with environmental groups such as Mass Audubon, the Nature Conservancy and the Division of Ecological Restoration. Environmental mitigation is also built into the SMMPO's Evaluation Criteria process for the rating of regional projects to give them a higher priority.

Figure 1-4:
Corridor Rail Meeting



New consultations with the public were a significant undertaking during the development of the plan. SMMPO staff members attended countless meetings with many new groups, including: local high schools to address corridors that are routes to school with a high percentage of crashes involving young drivers; meetings with both staff and residents of housing communities as part of the new transit outreach program in the SRTA region; and collaboration with Mass in Motion, East Coast Greenways and Fall River Parks Advocates. As part of the South Coast Rail Project and during the development of the Smart Growth Corridor Plan, SRPEDD staff was an active participant in the Interagency Group Meetings. Other agencies sitting at the table included the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Narragansett Tribe, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Division of Ecological Restoration's Riverways Program of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. The SMMPO staff also assisted with the development of the Southeastern Massachusetts Council on Sustainability in collaboration with the UMass Dartmouth Office of Campus and Community Sustainability.

Figure 1-5:
Sustainability Event Meeting



The SMMPO also maintains an environmental justice mailing list to keep all

suitable groups (community, minority, cultural) up to date and has expanded upon a public participation program. Bilingual staff members are available to those who speak languages other than English and we have retained the services of Language Line for live interpretation and translation services. The website also makes available Google Translate which enable translation of website content into over 50 languages. SMMPO staff regularly attends GATRA and SRTA Consumer Advisory Committee public meetings and Joint Transportation Planning Group public meetings. With widespread usage of the Internet, one of the most important avenues to the public that the SMMPO utilizes is the SRPEDD website, where studies, meetings schedules and minutes, issues and policies are regularly posted.

SRPEDD is also utilizing social media by maintaining a Facebook page and Twitter account to expand our public outreach by regularly listing state and local meetings and events and issues of interest. SRPEDD's new electronic newsletter is being sent out regularly to hundreds of contacts to inform recipients of projects and important issues. (See Figures 1-6 and 1-7, right.)

Efforts that began with the 2007 RTP and continue with this plan show consistency with all the major growth and development plans in the region. The Vision 2020 growth plan developed several years ago was formed after discussion and debate in the region on problems and solutions related to the rapid growth being experienced in Southeastern Massachusetts. Vision 2020 also gave birth to the Commuter Rail Task Force, whose recommendations and planning for commuter rail to the South Coast form the basis for those in the Commuter Rail chapter of this plan. Also, the plan shows consistency with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region. The recommendations of several RTP chapters, including Congestion, Commuter Rail, Airport and Freight/Intermodal, all closely follow the CEDS.

Visualization techniques are prevalent throughout the plan and are widely used at public meetings regarding the plan and projects in the region. Traffic simulation programs such as SimTraffic and TransModeler are used regularly and Powerpoint presentations complete with images, intersection diagrams and maps are a staple, as well, at all meetings. SRPEDD staff produced two videos for our public outreach efforts. The first, outlining the transportation issues in our region addressed in the 2012 Transportation Plan, was shown at public meetings. This video was also broadcast by local television stations in the region. The second video is the actual Power Point public presentation made by staff at public meetings concerning the issues and recommendations of the Transportation Plan. Both videos are posted on the internet through SRPEDD's YouTube channel. (See figure 1-8, right). DVD copies of these videos have also been mailed out to interested groups, including the two federally recognized Indian Tribes in the state. It has always been a priority of the SMMPO to present information to the public in the easiest to understand and comprehensive way. Components that allow the public to see exactly what the SMMPO is talking about are therefore crucial.

The Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization certifies that the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan meets the requirements set forth by the SAFETEA-LU legislation. The plan is extensively distributed and discussed with all interested parties and is consistent with all other regional and state growth plans.

Figure 1-6:
Facebook Logo



Figure 1-7:
Twitter Logo



Figure 1-8:
YouTube Logo



To determine the objective importance of every highway project proposed for funding, and to monitor regional equity in the distribution of transportation investments, the region uses criteria to evaluate the selection of highway projects for funding in southeastern Massachusetts.

To determine the objective importance of every highway project proposed for funding, and to monitor regional equity in the distribution of transportation investments, the region uses criteria to evaluate the selection of highway projects for funding in southeastern Massachusetts. Each project is reviewed to estimate the impact on, or sensitivity to each of the criteria categories listed. Although this is a formal process to prioritize projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), it is relevant to all processes and programs in the SMMPO's Regional Transportation Planning program.

The specifics of every project or study include a description of its purpose, such as addressing an existing safety or congestion problem. Project impacts are identified for the build vs. no-build condition to establish the project's positive and negative impacts. These impacts include effect on the transportation system and its users, as well as neighboring land uses.

Safety - Safety has traditionally been considered the foremost element of a project's importance in the SRPEDD region. This Regional Transportation Plan considers safety problems as pre-existing conditions that merit maximum consideration for corrective measures. Projects that specifically address safety problems would rate high under these criteria.

Bridges - Bridges that are rated as structurally deficient and have weight restrictions have a detrimental affect on mobility. Often, these bridges adversely impact truck and bus routes, causing long detours along roadways not equipped for such traffic. They are especially a problem if they provide direct access between neighborhoods and emergency facilities, or as designated emergency evacuation routes.

Mobility - Traffic congestion adversely impacts the movement of people and goods. Motor vehicles excessively delayed in traffic operate less efficiently, wasting fuel and expelling pollutants into the air we breathe. Addressing congestion problems improves mobility by providing an effective highway system that serves the motoring public in addition to reducing fuel consumption and air quality emission levels.

Condition - The pavement management program is part of a statewide effort to rate the surface condition of all federal aid roads. This data, updated jointly by the region and MassDOT, provides the most up to date condition information on these roads.

Land Use - What are the project's specific effects on existing land use and future impacts on land use? Is the project consistent with the Smart Growth Corridor Plan and Priority Development and Priority Protection Areas? Does the project meet the concept of sustainable development in the region? The evaluation of Sustainable Development is guided by the following principles: Redevelop First; Concentrate Development; Be Fair; Restore and Enhance the Environment; Conserve Natural Resources; Expand Housing Opportunities; Provide Transportation Choice; Increase Job Opportunities; Foster Sustainable Businesses; and, Plan Regionally.

Community Effects and Support - Every project considers principles of

environmental justice as defined by the U.S. Department of Transportation:

- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations;
- Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and,
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.

A chief measure for meeting the Environmental Justice criteria is the SMMPO's public participation process, which is implemented early in the planning of a project as it progresses from the concept stage to actually becoming an accepted project.

Accessibility - All projects and programs must consider provisions for handicapped accessibility.

Economic Development - Consideration is given for all projects and programs impact (positive, negative, or no impact) on economic development. Does the project impact a designated Priority Development Area or Priority Protection Area? Does it impact neighborhoods, etc.? This could include a review of the impacts to the community in the immediate vicinity of the project or the impacts to the entire southeastern Massachusetts region. Does the project positively effect job creation in the region (other than jobs related to the construction project itself)?

Local/Regional Support - Does the project have local and neighboring community support? This is generally established through the SMMPO's formal public participation process.

Intermodal Connections - Does the project enhance or enable the use of alternative modes of transportation; such as transit service, ride sharing or bicycles?

Environmental - Projects and programs are reviewed for impacts (positive, negative, or no-impact) on air quality, water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitat, storm water/drainage, noise, energy consumption, historic/cultural resources, and scenic and recreational resources.

Public Outreach

1.5

One of the major elements of the Regional Transportation Plan is public participation. SRPEDD actively seeks contributions from the public and encourages discussion involving important transportation issues with concerned citizens and greatly values these discussions, suggestions and insights. SRPEDD staff met with town and community leaders, attended community and public meetings, spoke to countless citizens in person or on the phone and sent out hundreds of personal letters to residents of neighborhoods offering assistance, and especially seeking feedback, suggestions and input from all parties. SRPEDD staff has regular and frequent contact with residents and citizens, through phone calls and e-mails and through presence at community events, such as

Raynham Pride Day and the Bioneers by the Bay conference in New Bedford. Staff regularly speaks at local and community groups such as the Rotary Club, Kiwanis and local Chambers of Commerce meetings. Staff regularly places legal and box ads in local newspapers concerning meetings and all amendments, writes editorials for local newspapers, regularly writes articles for local magazines and does interviews for television and radio stations. Staff regularly produces informational pamphlets for distribution at events explaining what an RPA actually does and what the RTP is all about. The staff also created an informational pamphlet geared toward young drivers for a local high school.

From April 2007 thru March 2011, staff conducted, participated in or attended over 800 meetings and related instances involving community assistance and general public outreach. Some examples are requests for traffic counts answered, the distribution of informational posters and pamphlets at local libraries, town halls and businesses concerning the RTP, countless conversations with private citizens concerning an array of issues, ads placed in newspapers and participation in 5 focus group meetings hosted by the Southeastern Massachusetts Transportation Alliance on transportation needs in New Bedford, Fall River, Attleboro and Taunton. (A complete and detailed list can be found in the Appendix.)

Transportation Plan Open Houses & Public Meetings

Staff hosted 11 separate public meetings / open houses to present the draft RTP and to seek public input.

Staff hosted an open house / public meeting to present the commencement of the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan and to seek public input in Taunton on August 4, 2010.

Staff hosted an open house / public meeting to present the commencement of the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan and to seek public input in New Bedford on August 17, 2010.

Staff held two separate (an afternoon and an evening) public meetings to present the draft findings of the Transportation Plan and to seek public input in New Bedford on February 8, 2011. (See Figure 1-9, top left.)

Staff held a public meeting to present the draft findings of the Transportation Plan and to seek public input in Fall River on February 9, 2011. (See Figure 1-10)

Staff held two separate (an afternoon and an evening) public meetings to present the draft findings of the Transportation Plan and to seek public input in Taunton on February 15, 2011.

Staff held a public meeting to present the draft findings of the Transportation Plan and to seek public input in Attleboro on February 16, 2011.

Also, staff was invited to the Taunton Kiwanis Club meeting on August 2, 2010, to the Taunton Rotary Club luncheon on November 18, 2010, and to the Middleborough / Lakeville Rotary Club meeting on February 23, 2011 to present the fundamental purpose of the Transportation Plan and to update participants

*Figure 1-9:
New Bedford RTP Public Meeting*



*Figure 1-10:
Fall River RTP Public Meeting*



on the conclusions and recommendations of various chapters.

Interagency Meetings

Staff met with the staff of bordering RPAs, transit agencies and federal highway staff to discuss common issues and projects.

SRPEDD staff met with staff from Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC) and the Boston MPO (CTPS) in Boston to discuss specific issues and projects that cross regional boundaries on December 14, 2010. This meeting was to ensure that all agencies are in agreement on the status and recommendations for particular transportation improvements.

SRPEDD staff met with staff of the Cape Cod Commission and staff of the Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority (CCRTA) in Barnstable to discuss issues of common interest and concern on January 13, 2011.

SRPEDD staff met with the staff of Rhode Island Statewide Planning in Taunton to discuss cross border issues and projects on February 22, 2011. This meeting was also attended by FHWA staff.

A list of all attendees of all of the above meetings and important issues discussed can be found in the Appendix.

SRPEDD staff has been conducting an ongoing communication and collaboration with OCPC staff to an attempt to discuss and problem solve common issues, share the cost of specialized software, etc.

Public Meetings for Community Assistance Projects

Staff conducted, participated or attended over 60 meetings and related instances involving community assistance. Some examples of this are assistance with community requests to meet with Planning Boards, town planners and Boards of Selectmen, and police departments. There are also requests to assist in reviewing data, contributions to community Master Plans and other documents and lending technical expertise on various transportation and planning issues. A detailed list can be found in the Appendix.

Staff conducted, participated or attended over 25 meetings for bicycle and pedestrian projects, as well as enhancement projects. Some examples are numerous meeting with various groups interested in developing and pursuing options for bike paths such as the Wareham, Marion and Mattapoisett Bike Path committees, UMass Dartmouth and the New Bedford Harbor Commission (See Figure 1-11). A detailed list can be found in the Appendix.

Staff also conducted, participated in or attended meetings for Emergency Management and Evacuation Routing issues, regional Casino Task Force meetings, Emergency Management / Evacuation Routing, ITS meetings, Highway Safety Improvement Program committee meetings, numerous Participant Statistical Area Program (PSAP) meetings, South Coast Rail meetings, as well as State Freight and Rail Plan meetings. A detailed list of every meeting attended can be found in the Appendix.

*Figure 1-11:
SRPEDD Display at Public Event*



Individual Studies Meetings

Staff conducted, participated in or attended over 100 meetings concerning the Dartmouth Faunce Corner Road Study, the I-495 Task Force and the subsequent I-495 study, the I-95 Corridor Coalition, the Mansfield Downtown Circulation Study, associated MEPA hearings, the Park and Ride Study, the Fall River Plymouth Avenue Study, the Regional Truck Route Study, the Fall River Route 79 Study, the Route 79 / I-195 Task Force, the Taunton Washington Street Corridor Study, as well as 17 MassDOT public meetings involving projects in the SMMPO area. SRPEDD staff also participated in 10 MassDOT Road Safety Audits (RSA) and conducted 8 RSAs with local communities which resulted in over 30 meetings, various press releases and mass mailings to local residents for feedback on this effort alone.

South Coast Rail

Staff conducted, participated or attended over 200 meetings involving the proposed South Coast Rail project and the Smart Growth Corridor Plan. (See Figure 1-12, left) These included Commuter Rail Task Force meetings, community corridor plan meetings, MEPA/NEPA scoping sessions, all 27 individual cities and towns to identify and designate Priority Protection Areas (PPA) and Priority Development Areas (PDA) and Interagency Coordinating Group meetings. Other agencies sitting at the table included The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Narragansett Tribe, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Division of Ecological Restoration's Riverways Program of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game.

Figure 1-12:
Corridor Plan Meeting



Sustainability and Livability

The SMMPO staff assisted with the development of the Southeastern Massachusetts Council on Sustainability in collaboration with the UMass Office of Campus and Community Sustainability. Staff attended and participated in over 20 meetings, including Regional Sustainability Exchange events, the Regional Conference on Sustainability: Building a Sustainable SouthCoast event and SRPEDD hosted the Southeastern Massachusetts Council on Sustainability: Moving Towards Sustainability event.

Transit Related Studies

Staff conducted, participated in or attended over 130 transit related meetings. Staff attended 17 SRTA Consumer Advisory Committee meetings and 85 GATRA Consumer Advisory Committee meetings to get feedback from transit users on their riding experiences and issues and to hear and address rider's concerns. Staff attended numerous SRTA board meetings, other public hearings and meetings with Councils on Aging, as well as conducting various passenger

surveys. Staff also initiated and attended 9 informational public outreach meetings at various housing, school, employment and homeless centers / agencies as part of a new transit public outreach program.

Joint Transportation Planning Group

The Joint Transportation Planning Group (JTPG) is the advisory group to the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMMPO) for all transportation related issues. As stated in our Public Participation Program, members of the JTPG include the chief elected officials for each SRPEDD community or their designees, all at-large SRPEDD Commissioners, MassDOT, SRTA, GATRA, transportation interest groups, citizen groups, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, SRPEDD transportation staff and the general public. The JTPG meets on a monthly basis and is the forum for citizen involvement in transportation plans and programs, including the TIP, the RTP and all transportation studies.

The list consisting of JTPG meeting dates and topics relevant to the RTP are as follows:

May 16, 2007

- Discussion of the PPP and commencement of the 45-day public comment period.
- Announcement of the release of transit JARC and New Freedom funds.

June 13, 2007

- Discussion of additions to the Public Participation Program.
- Review of Project Criteria Evaluations.
- Discussion of SAFETEA-LU requirements being added to the RTP.

September 12, 2007

- Project Updates –
Faunce Corner Road, Dartmouth
Plymouth Avenue, Fall River
Route 79, Fall River
Road Safety Audits
Commuter Rail Task Force.
- Announcement of an update to the financial chapter of the 07 RTP.

October 10, 2007

- Discussion of the Route 44 Corridor Study.
- Discussion of Route 79 in Fall River.

November 14, 2007

- Discussion of the Human Services Transportation Plan.
- Discussion of Freight Needs in our region.
- Discussion of the I-495 Corridor Study.
- Discussion of the Safe Routes to School Program.

January 9, 2008

- Formation of an I-495 Corridor Advisory Task Force.

March 12, 2008

- Presentation of the South Coast Rail Project.
- Discussion of the Freight and Trucking Study.
- Discussion of the I-495 Corridor Study.
- Discussion of Road Safety Audits.

May 14, 2008

- Amendments to the FFY 2008 TIP.
- Development of the FFY 2009-2012 TIP.

June 18, 2008

- Review of project criteria evaluation scores.
- Request for projects for the upcoming Unified Planning Work Program.

September 17, 2008

- Review of the status of FFY 2008 TIP.
- Review of the status of FFY 2009 Draft TIP.
- Discussion of JTPG Enhancements and formation of sub-committee for same.

November 19, 2008

- Discussion of the FFY 2009-2012 Draft TIP.
- Discussion of SRTA proposed fare increase.
- Announcement of the availability of the latest editions of the SRPEDD Traffic Count Book and the fifth edition GRRIP.

February 11, 2009

- Discussion of TIP Amendments due to ARRA funding.

April 8, 2009

- Discussion of the development of the 2010-2013 TIP.
- Discussion of seaport projects.

June 17, 2009

- Discussion of Draft 2010 -2013 TIP.
- Discussion of possible TIP amendments for SRTA and GATRA.
- Discussion of Marine Transportation Issues.

July 22, 2009

- Discussion and approval of the United Planning Work Program.
- Discussion of Draft 2010 -2013 TIP.

September 23, 2009

- Discussion of possible changes to the TIP to accommodate ARRA funding.
- Update on Park and Ride Study.
- Update on Washington Street Study.

November 4, 2009

- Discussion of the commencement of the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan.

March 10, 2010

- Request for comments of the draft copy of the Goals and Objectives section of the 2012 Regional RTP.
- Request for each community's use of road funding to update the Pavement Management Chapter of the 2011 RTP.

April 14, 2010

- Amendments to the FFY 2010-2011 TIP concerning 5307 funds for GATRA and section 5307 funds for SRTA.
- Revisions to SRPEDD's Public Participation Plan.
- Update on RTP chapters were presented.

May 19, 2010

- Discussion of FFY 2011-2014 TIP.
- Discussion of the development of the UPWP.

June 16, 2010

- RTP update included discussion of land use and transportation, connectivity, sustainability, as well as the eight present SAFETEA-LU directives plus three new additional directives.

July 14, 2010

- Approval of the draft FFY 2011-2014 TIP.
- Approval of the draft FY2011 UPWP.
- Discussion of the Southeastern Massachusetts Transportation Alliance (SMTA).
- RTP update of the Safety chapter, including "Most Dangerous Crash Locations."
- Approval of the SMMPO Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan.

September 22, 2010

- Presentation of the "Most Dangerous Crash Locations" publication stemming from Safety chapter of the RTP.
- Update of the RTP Congestion chapter.
- Update of the RTP Pavement Management chapter.

December 8, 2010

- Update of the FFY 2011 Project Status Report.
- Discussion of TIP amendment to change funding for the Route 79 Bridge/Ramps. Rehabilitation Project.
- Presentation of the draft Regional RTP.

January 19, 2011

- Discussion of Roadway Projects listed in the Draft Regional Transportation Plan.
- Discussion of pending TIP Amendments.
- Discussion and Vote on a TIP Administrative Adjustment requested by GATRA.
- Discussion of a potential use for \$1.2 million balance in TIP Target for FY2011.

March 16, 2011

- Discussion of amended 2007 Regional Transportation Plan regarding the Fall River Interchange Improvements at Route I-195/Route 79/Route 138.
- FY2011-2014 TIP Amendments.
- Discussion of the development of the FY2012-2015 TIP.

South Coast Insider Magazine

SRPEDD staff regularly writes articles for the South Coast Insider magazine. (See Figure 1-13, left.) The following are a list of articles written concerning a variety of transportation, planning and regional issues:

Figure 1-13:
Cover of The South Coast Insider



March 07 - Commuter Rail for the Southcoast

April 07 – Streamlined Permitting

May 07 – No Money for Transportation Projects

July 07 – Southcoast Rail Project

August 07 - Future of Wind Power in the Region

September 07 - Middleborough Casino Deal

November 07 – Paying for Transportation

December 07 – A Regional Outlook

January 08 – Safety and Congestion Problems at Plymouth Ave. in Fall River

February 08 – SRPEDD Futures Task Force

April 08 – Transportation Funding

June 08 – Roundabouts

August 08 – Reforming the Financing of Local Government

October 08 – Improving Transportation Options

October 08 – Sustainability

October 08 - Environmental Planning

November 08 – SRTA Routes & Services

December 08 – The State of Our Infrastructure

January 09 – Fighting Sprawl

April 09 – New Route. 24 Interchange in Freetown

May 09 – The Southcoast Bikeway

July 09 – The Wild and Scenic River

November 09 –South Coast Transportation Projects

December 09 – Major Transportation Projects in the Region

April 10 – The Casino Debate

May 10 – The Transportation Alliance

August 10 – Red Light Running

Jan 2011 – Looking Forward

Feb 2011 – Lessons From the Portuguese

Mar 2011 – Re-thinking Transportation - The RTP

All of these efforts at public participation, public outreach, evaluation criteria and goals and objectives for planning contribute to ensuring non-discrimination in our planning processes. It is the SMMPO's policy to actively ensure non-discrimination under Title VI and to follow the tenets of Environmental Justice. The SMMPO staff is always striving to improve our methods of outreach and add to the groups we include in our efforts. Most recently we have added social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and a new electronic newsletter to reach a wider audience in addition to the methods we already utilize, such as our website, mailings, articles and ads in local magazines and both English and foreign language publications, neighborhood, community, regional and state meetings and personal conversations on the phone or by e-mail.

The largest major transportation investment recommended in this plan for the region is the extension of commuter rail service to the cities of Taunton, Fall River and New Bedford. The lack of commuter rail service to these cities is an Environmental Justice issue.