

FINAL REPORT

**FISCAL YEAR 2023
TRIENNIAL REVIEW**

of

**Southeastern Regional Transit Authority
(SRTA)
New Bedford, MA
ID: 5002**

Performed for:

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION
REGION I**

Prepared By:

Qi Tech, LLC

**Scoping Meeting Date: February 24 & 27, 2023
Virtual Site Visit Entrance Conference Date: March 28, 2023
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I. Executive Summary

This report documents the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Triennial Review of the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority SRTA of New Bedford, Massachusetts. The FTA wants to ensure that awards are administered in accordance with the requirements of Federal public transportation law 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53. The review was performed by Qi Tech, LLC. During the virtual site visit, the reviewer discussed the administrative and statutory requirements and reviewed recipient documents.

Due to the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) Public Health Emergency, the FTA conducted a virtual site visit for this Triennial Review. In addition, the FTA expanded the review to address SRTA's compliance with the administrative relief and flexibilities that the FTA granted, and the requirements of the COVID-19 Relief funds received through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021. The FTA also requested the SRTA share if and/or how it suspended, deviated from, or significantly updated or altered its transit program due to the public health emergency.

The FY2023 Triennial Review focused on SRTA's compliance in 23 areas. Deficiencies related to the COVID-19 Relief funds have been clearly identified as part of the deficiency description in the respective review area. There were no repeat deficiencies from the FY 2019 Triennial Review.

No deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements in any of these areas.

II. Review Background and Process

1. Background

The Triennial Review includes a review of the recipient's compliance in 23 areas. The basic requirements for each of these areas are summarized in Section IV. The FTA contracts with experienced reviewers to lead and conduct the Triennial Reviews, in partnership with the staff of the regional office.

This report presents the findings from the Triennial Review of the recipient. The review concentrated on procedures and practices employed since the recipient's previous Triennial Review in 2019; however, coverage was extended to earlier periods as needed to assess the policies in place and the management of award funds. The specific documents reviewed and referenced in this report are available at the FTA's Region 1 office or the recipient's office.

2. Process

The Triennial Review includes a pre-review assessment, a desk review and scoping meeting with the FTA regional office, and a site visit to the recipient's location. Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, a virtual site visit was conducted of each recipient. In addition, the review was expanded to address the recipient's compliance with the administrative relief and flexibilities FTA granted and the requirements of the COVID-19 relief funds received through the CARES Act, CRRSAA of 2021, and the ARP Act of 2021. The FTA also requested that the recipient share if and/or how it suspended, deviated from, or significantly updated or altered its transit program due to the public health emergency.

The fiscal year (FY) 2023 process began with the regional office transmitting a notification of the review and a Recipient Information Request (RIR) to the recipient on November 23, 2022, indicating a review would be conducted. While the recipient prepared its response to the RIR, the regional office and review team conducted the scoping meeting on February 24 and 27, 2023. Regional office staff provided electronic files as necessary to the reviewer who also accessed recipient information in the FTA electronic award management (TrAMS) and oversight (OTrak) systems. Following the desk review and scoping meeting, the reviewer and the recipient corresponded and exchanged information and documentation in preparation for the virtual site visit. Prior to the virtual site visit, the reviewer sent to the recipient on May 2, 2023, an agenda package indicating the issues that would be discussed, records to be reviewed, and interviews to be conducted.

The virtual site visit portion of the review began with an entrance conference on March 29, 2023, at which the reviewer and regional staff discussed the purpose of the Triennial Review and the review process. The reviewer conducted additional interviews and reviewed documentation to evidence the recipient's compliance with FTA requirements.

A Section 5307 operations/management contractor, South Coast Transit Inc., was reviewed virtually to provide an overview of activities related to the FTA-funded project.

Upon completion of the virtual site visit, the reviewer and the FTA regional office staff provided a summary of preliminary findings to the recipient at the exit conference on June 29, 2023. Section VI of this report lists the individuals participating in the site visit.

3. Metrics

The metrics used to evaluate whether a recipient is meeting the requirements for each of the areas reviewed are:

- *Not Deficient*: An area is considered not deficient if, during the review, nothing came to light that would indicate the requirements within the area reviewed were not met.
- *Deficient*: An area is considered deficient if any of the requirements within the area reviewed were not met.
- *Not Applicable*: An area can be deemed not applicable if, after an initial assessment, the recipient does not conduct activities for which the requirements of the respective area would be applicable.

III. Recipient Description

1. Organization

The Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA), created in 1974, is a component unit of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. SRTA was established in accordance with Chapter 161b of the Massachusetts General Laws to provide a public transit system for the 10 communities in Southeastern Massachusetts: Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Fall River, Freetown, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Somerset, Swansea, and Westport. SRTA contracts with South Coast Transit Management Inc., a local operating division of First Transit Inc. SRTA owns all rolling stock and facilities. The service area population of the 10 communities where SRTA operates is 322,845. SRTA's advisory board consists of 12 voting members: one representative from each of the 10 cities and towns served, one member who represents persons with disabilities, and one rider representative.

SRTA operates a network of 25 fixed routes. There are 11 routes serving Fall River, 14 routes serving New Bedford, and one route operates between the two cities. Service is provided on weekdays from 5:20 a.m. to 10:10 p.m. Saturday service operates from 6:10 a.m. to 8:05 p.m. On Sunday, SRTA provides demand-response service only, from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Demand-response service for persons with disabilities is provided throughout SRTA's entire service area during the same days and hours of service as the fixed routes. SRTA also offers weekly service on Tuesdays and Thursdays, based on demand, to Boston-area hospitals for seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans.

The fixed-route fare for adults is \$1.50. A half fare of \$0.75 is offered at all times to seniors, persons with disabilities, Medicare card holders, and children aged 6–11 years old. Children under age six ride free when accompanied by a fare-paying adult. The fare for demand-response service is \$3.00 and \$1.00 additional for trips outside of a two-mile radius of a fixed route. The round-trip fare for the Boston hospital shuttle is \$12.50 one way or \$25.00 round trip. SRTA offers a variety of multi-ride ticket and pass options.

A fleet of 69 buses provides fixed-route service. The bus fleet consists of standard and hybrid 30-, 35-, and 40-foot transit coaches. A fleet of 31 cutaway vans is used to operate SRTA's demand-response service. All of SRTA's fleet is federally funded.

SRTA maintains two operations and maintenance facilities: one in New Bedford and one in Fall River. The New Bedford facility also houses the main administrative offices for SRTA's contractor. In addition, SRTA operates two transit centers - one in New Bedford and one in Fall River. All facilities have FTA interest. SRTA's administrative headquarters are located in leased office space in downtown New Bedford.

2. Award and Project Activity

Below is a list of SRTA's open awards at the time of the review.

Award Number	Award Amount	Year Executed	Description
MA-2019-018-00	\$11,132,267	2019	FY2020 Operating and Capital Award
MA-2020-014-00	\$21,043,483	2020	Southeastern Regional Transit Authority 5307 CARES Act Operating, Preventative Maintenance, and Capital
MA-2021-001-00	\$246,000	2021	FY2021 Capital Award - 5307
MA-2021-004-00	\$639,566	2021	FY21 Capital Award - Small Urban 5339
MA-2022-008-00	\$1,539,994	2022	FY2022 - SRTA Capital Award (5307 / 5339 SW)
MA-2022-028-00	\$11,000,000	2022	FY2023 - Operating Award (Southeastern Regional Transit Authority)
MA-2022-035-00	\$147,109	2022	FY2023 - SRTA Capital Award (5339)
MA-2023-018-00	\$3,980,000	2023	FY2023 SRTA Capital Award (Flex)

SRTA received Supplemental Funds for operating assistance in award number MA-2020-014-00. This is not SRTA's first time receiving operating assistance from the FTA.

Projects Completed

In the past few years, SRTA completed the following noteworthy projects:

- Real Time Passenger Information. SRTA installed an AVL system that reports vehicle location and schedule adherence to a publicly available smartphone application. The application allows users to create service alerts, plan trips, and report issues with service. The application is also used to push service alerts to customers regarding detours, cancelled service, and public service announcements as needed.
- Driver Protective and Safety Barriers. SRTA installed driver protection and safety barriers on the entirety of the rolling stock fleet. For protecting the operator, the barriers provide a reduced capability for direct confrontation as well as a physical barrier in the case of aggressive or unruly passengers. For the passengers and the public at large, the barriers provide a consistent or improved quality of service. The improved operator safety is intended to result in less service reductions or adjustments as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses and beyond. Further, the addition of these barriers reduces the potential of germ spread onboard the vehicle and provides for an improvement in perception regarding safety measurements employed by SRTA.
- Fall River Terminal Deck Rehabilitation. The project removed the spalling and cracking concrete deck surface on the boarding platform, properly water sealed the sub-surface, replaced the concrete platform with proper pitch to shed water, improved gutters and drainage, and installed rain garden landscaping.

- Bus Stop Design Guidelines. The project evaluated the use and location of every bus stop to determine eligibility for consolidation. The project developed a set of guidelines for bus stop improvements based on the stop use and type. The guidelines identified appropriate amenities for bus stops and provided diagrams and examples of similar stop design based on industry best practices.
- Technology Strategic Plan. The plan evaluated the existing technology systems used by SRTA and identified improvements or upgrades. The plan outlined a five-year implementation plan and identified the staff and financial resources needed to deploy technology upgrades.

Ongoing Projects

SRTA is currently implementing the following noteworthy projects:

- Paratransit Scheduling and Dispatching System. The project is modernizing the paratransit scheduling and dispatching system for operators and customers. The customers can receive telephone and text updates on their trip status. Operators will receive passenger manifests digitally on a mobile data display in the vehicle. Dispatchers will be able to update operator manifests in real-time as the demands of the service change throughout the day.

Future Projects

SRTA plans to pursue the following noteworthy projects in the next three to five years:

- Hybrid Vehicle Replacement Program. The hybrid vehicle replacement program will replace 24 diesel vehicles that are reaching or have exceeded their useful life benchmark with diesel/electric hybrid vehicles. The replacement vehicles will reduce emissions and lower fuel consumption for fixed-route operations. The hybrid vehicle replacement program does not require additional support infrastructure at either SRTA bus garage, and can replace existing vehicles in operation one-for-one.

IV. Results of the Review

1. Legal

Basic Requirement: The recipient must promptly notify the FTA of legal matters and additionally notify the USDOT Office of Inspector General (OIG) of any instances relating to false claims under the False Claims Act or fraud. Recipients must comply with restrictions on lobbying requirements.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Legal.

2. Financial Management and Capacity

Basic Requirement: The recipient must have financial policies and procedures; an organizational structure that defines, assigns, and delegates fiduciary authority; and financial management systems in place to manage, match, and charge only allowable costs to the award. The recipient must conduct required Single Audits, as required by 2 CFR Part 200, and provide financial oversight of subrecipients.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Financial Management and Capacity.

3. Technical Capacity – Award Management

Basic Requirement: The recipient must report progress of projects in awards to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and close awards timely.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Technical Capacity – Award Management.

4. Technical Capacity - Program Management & Subrecipient Oversight

Basic Requirement: States must document and follow a public involvement process for the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Designated recipients of Sections 5310, 5311, and 5339 funds must develop and submit a State Management/Program Management Plan to the FTA for approval. Recipients must enter into an agreement with each subrecipient, obtain required certifications from subrecipients, report in the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) on subawards, and ensure subrecipients comply with the terms of the award.

This section only applies to recipients that have subrecipients; therefore, the related requirements are not applicable to the Triennial Review of SRTA.

5. Technical Capacity – Project Management

Basic Requirement: The recipient must be able to implement the FTA-funded projects in accordance with the award application, the FTA Master Agreement, and applicable laws and regulations using sound management practices.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Technical Capacity – Project Management.

6. Transit Asset Management

Basic Requirement: Recipients must comply with 49 CFR Part 625 to ensure public transportation providers develop and implement transit asset management (TAM) plans.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Transit Asset Management.

7. Satisfactory Continuing Control

Basic Requirement: The recipient must ensure that FTA-funded property will remain available to be used for its originally authorized purpose throughout its useful life until disposition.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Satisfactory and Continuing Control.

8. Maintenance

Basic Requirement: Recipients must keep federally-funded vehicles, equipment, and facilities in good operating condition. Recipients must keep Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility features on all vehicles, equipment, and facilities in good operating order.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Maintenance.

9. Procurement

Basic Requirement: The non-Federal entity must use its own documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable State, local, and tribal laws and regulations, and conform to applicable Federal law and the standards identified in 2 CFR Part 200. State recipients can use the state's overall policies and procedures. When applied to Federal procurements, those policies and procedures must still be compliant with all Federal requirements as applied to non-state recipients. The flexibility afforded by 2 CFR Part 200 should not be misconstrued as absolving a state from Federal requirements. For example, the FTA does not require each State DOT to have policies and procedures separate from the state education department.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Procurement.

10. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)

Basic Requirement: Recipients must comply with 49 CFR Part 26 to ensure nondiscrimination in the award and administration of USDOT-assisted contracts. Recipients also must create a level playing field on which DBEs can compete fairly for USDOT-assisted contracts.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the US DOT requirements for DBE.

11. Title VI

Basic Requirement: The recipient must ensure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participating in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance without regard to whether specific projects or services are federally funded. The recipient must ensure that all transit services and related benefits are distributed in an equitable manner.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Title VI.

12. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – General

Basic Requirement: Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 provide that no entity shall discriminate against an individual with a disability in connection with the provision of transportation service. The law sets forth specific requirements for vehicle and facility accessibility and the provision of service, including complementary paratransit service.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the US DOT requirements for ADA – General.

13. ADA – Complementary Paratransit

Basic Requirement: Under 49 CFR 37.121(a), each public entity operating a fixed-route system shall provide paratransit or other special service to individuals with disabilities that is comparable to the level of service provided to individuals without disabilities who use the fixed-route system. “Comparability” is determined by 49 CFR 37.123-37.133. Requirements for complementary paratransit do not apply to commuter bus, commuter rail, or intercity rail systems.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with US DOT requirements for ADA – Complementary Paratransit.

14. Equal Employment Opportunity

Basic Requirement: The recipient must ensure that no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability be excluded from participating in, or denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination in employment under any project, program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance under the Federal transit laws.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Equal Employment Opportunity.

15. School Bus

Basic Requirement: Recipients are prohibited from providing school bus service in competition with private school bus operators unless the service qualifies and is approved by the FTA Administrator under an allowable exemption. Federally-funded equipment or facilities cannot be used to provide exclusive school bus service.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for School Bus.

16. Charter Bus

Basic Requirement: Recipients are prohibited from using the FTA-funded equipment and facilities to provide charter service that unfairly competes with private charter operators. Recipient may operate charter only when the service meets a specified exception defined in rule.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Charter Bus.

17. Drug Free Workplace Act

Basic Requirement: Recipients are required to maintain a drug free workplace for all award-related employees; report any convictions occurring in the workplace timely; and have an ongoing drug free awareness program.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Drug-Free Workplace Act.

18. Drug and Alcohol Program

Basic Requirement: Recipients receiving Section 5307, 5309, 5311, or 5339 funds that have safety-sensitive employees must have a drug and alcohol testing program in place for such employees.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Drug and Alcohol Program.

19. Section 5307 Program Requirements

Basic Requirement: The recipient must participate in the transportation planning process in accordance with FTA requirements and the metropolitan and statewide planning regulations.

Recipients shall develop, publish, afford an opportunity for a public hearing on, and submit for approval, a program of projects (POP).

Recipients are expected to have a written, locally developed process for soliciting and considering public comment before raising a fare or carrying out a major transportation service reduction.

For fixed-route service supported with Section 5307 assistance, fares charged seniors, persons with disabilities or an individual presenting a Medicare card during off peak hours will not be more than one half the peak hour fares.

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for Section 5307 Program Requirements.

20. Section 5310 Program Requirements

Basic Requirement: Recipients must expend Section 5310 funds on eligible projects that meet the specific needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. Projects selected for funding must be included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. Recipients must approve all subrecipient leases of Section 5310-funded vehicles. Leases of Section 5310-funded vehicles must include required terms and conditions. Either the recipient or subrecipient must hold title to the leased vehicles.

This section only applies to recipients that receive Section 5310 funds directly from FTA; therefore, the related requirements are not applicable to the Triennial Review of SRTA.

21. Section 5311 Program Requirements

Basic Requirement: States must expend Section 5311 funds on eligible projects to support rural public transportation services and intercity bus transportation.

This section only applies to recipients that receive Section 5311 funds directly from FTA; therefore, the related requirements are not applicable to the Triennial Review of SRTA.

22. Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP)

Basic Requirement: Recipients must comply with the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation (49 CFR Part 673) to ensure public transportation providers develop and implement an Agency Safety Plan (ASP).

Finding: During this Triennial Review of SRTA, no deficiencies were found with the FTA requirements for PTASP Requirements.

23. Cybersecurity

Basic Requirement: Recipients that operate rail fixed guideway public transportation systems must certify compliance with the requirements for establishing a cybersecurity process under 49 U.S.C. § 5323(v), a new subsection added by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, Pub. L. 116-92, § 7613 (Dec. 20, 2019).

This section only applies to recipients that operate rail fixed guideway public transportation systems; therefore, the related requirements are not applicable to the Triennial Review of SRTA.

V. Summary of Findings

Review Area	Finding	Deficiency Code(s)	Corrective Action(s)	Response Due Date(s)	Date Closed
1. Legal	ND				
2. Financial Management and Capacity	ND				
3. Technical Capacity – Award Management	ND				
4. Technical Capacity – Program Management and Subrecipient Oversight	NA				
5. Technical Capacity – Project Management	ND				
6. Transit Asset Management	ND				
7. Satisfactory Continuing Control	ND				
8. Maintenance	ND				
9. Procurement	ND				
10. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	ND				
11. Title VI	ND				
12. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - General	ND				
13. ADA – Complementary Paratransit	ND				
14. Equal Employment Opportunity	ND				
15. School Bus	ND				
16. Charter Bus	ND				
17. Drug Free Workplace Act	ND				
18. Drug and Alcohol Program	ND				
19. Section 5307 Program Requirements	ND				
20. Section 5310 Program Requirements	NA				
21. Section 5311 Program Requirements	NA				
22. Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan	ND				
23. Cybersecurity	NA				

The metrics used to evaluate whether a recipient is meeting the requirements for each of the areas reviewed are: Deficient (D)/Not Deficient (ND)/Not Applicable (NA)

VI. Attendees

Name	Title	Phone Number	E-mail Address
<i>Southeastern Regional Transit Authority</i>			
Erik Rousseau	Administrator and CEO	508-997-6767 Ext. 3308	erousseau@srtabus.com
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<i>South Coast Transit Management Inc.</i>			
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<i>Qi Tech, LLC</i>			
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VII. Appendices