



REGIONAL REPORTER

A Newsletter of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

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ORGANIC WASTE SERVICES

PVPC, in collaboration with a working group including the Hilltown Resources Management Cooperative, is evaluating strategies and the costs and benefits of increasing organic waste composting capacity in the central Pioneer Valley, an area that includes Amherst, Belchertown, Deerfield, Easthampton, Granby, Hadley, Hatfield, Northampton, South Hadley, Southampton, Sunderland, Williamsburg, and other nearby Hilltowns. Compostable materials constitute a large portion of municipal solid waste. A regional organic waste management program could include ensuring proper food waste separation and storage, hauling organic wastes to a processing site, sorting and processing the wastes, and distributing the end product.

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BIKE COMMUTE WEEK

Pioneer Valley citizens can leave the car keys at home and bike to work, school, or the grocery store during the Pioneer Valley's eleventh annual Bike Commute Week, May 15–23. This collaborative effort of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, MassBike, MassDOT, community volunteers, and business and civic organizations encourages Pioneer Valley residents to commute by bicycle to work, to school, and for short trips in their communities. Communities from Springfield to Greenfield will host events this year with many sponsoring free breakfasts for bicycle commuters. Other activities and events during the week include bike tours, races, community bike rides, music, lectures, bike-themed film screenings, and prizes. For details about scheduled activities and events, visit www.BayStateBikeWeek.com.

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CONGESTION MANAGEMENT

PVPC will release the draft Congestion Management Process report in April as part of the ongoing regional planning activities of the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. The CMP identifies major traffic congestion locations in our region's 43 cities and towns with the aim of advancing future transportation improvements to reduce traffic congestion and improve the overall safety and efficiency of our transportation network. This CMP report builds on previous versions completed for the Pioneer Valley MPO. Consistent with Federal Highway Administration guidance published in May 2008, the CMP process for the Pioneer Valley has been broadened to better incorporate assessment of the congestion impacts and benefits experienced by transit, cyclists, and pedestrians.

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GREEN COMMUNITIES

PVPC is providing Green Communities planning assistance to nine member communities: Springfield, Holyoke, Northampton, Easthampton, Belchertown, Hadley, South Hadley, Palmer, and Ludlow. Green Communities designation requires accomplishing five criteria to reduce municipal energy use and facilitate clean energy generation. Green Community designation applications are due May 14. Only communities that achieve the Green Community designation will be eligible to apply for a portion of \$7 million set aside to help Massachusetts municipalities reduce energy use. For more information, visit www.mass.gov/energy/greencommunities.

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REGIONAL GIS SERVICES

PVPC has been working with the communities of Chester, Huntington, Ludlow, and South Hadley to develop community-based GIS websites, which provide community GIS data, mapping, and analysis services served over the Internet. Data includes parcels, zoning, and wetlands. PVPC created parcel search applications for each of these communities, allowing the general public and town, state, and other officials to search properties by address, parcel ID, or owner. Users can turn off and on various layers of data, including aerial photography and zoning; search for abutters; read and print assessor information; and even generate reports and mailing labels. PVPC provides the host machine and system administration. Communities interested in this service are invited to contact PVPC.

PVPC Contacts: Jim Scace

Todd Zukowski

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VIDEO PRODUCTION SERVICES

Over the last several years, PVPC has been developing in-house video production capabilities, recently investing in the latest high-definition digital recording equipment. We now have the ability to capture HD video and still images for use in video, multi-media presentations, websites, and publications. We have a solid understanding of what our communities do and what is important to capture. Contact PVPC for more information on documenting emergency response trainings/exercises, production of instructional/public service videos, or other multimedia ideas.

PVPC Contact: Todd Zukowski

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CENSUS FORMS ARE HERE

PVPC staff have continued preparing the region for the 2010 Census by leading the Pioneer Valley region Complete Count Committee, which aims to engage local officials, community organizations, and businesses to reach out to those community members who are least likely to complete and return census surveys. Events will be held April 1 and 10 across the region to get the word out to as many people as possible and remind them to fill out their questionnaires. Make sure the Pioneer Valley is counted! Fill out your Census form!

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HOUSING TRUST WORKSHOP

Communities can learn about maintaining and increasing their supply of affordable housing at a free workshop Tuesday, April 13, 9:00 a.m. at PVPC's office, co-sponsored by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Massachusetts Housing Partnership. The workshop will discuss creating municipal affordable housing trusts, the powers of a trust, and examples of trust activities. Participants will receive a guidebook that explains strategies for setting up a trust and gaining approval from the local legislative body.

To register, call Connie Kruger, MHP Senior Program Manager, at (617) 330-9944 ext. 281 or (413) 253-7379 ext. 11.

HOUSING OUTREACH HELP

PVPC has selected Amherst, Belchertown, Easthampton, Holland, and Montgomery to receive affordable housing outreach technical assistance for supporting adoption of an accessory apartments bylaw and a Chapter 40R smart growth zoning district bylaw, creation of an overnight homeless shelter, and increasing general awareness for affordable housing. Funding was made available by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association.

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SHHH...MYSTERY RIDERS!

Next time you ride a PVTA bus, take a look around. That mild-mannered passenger next to you could be a Mystery Rider. As part of the customer survey services provided to the transit authority, PVPC is expanding the number of Mystery Riders on buses in the region. PVTA, finding these unannounced onboard observations useful during the past year, asked PVPC to double the number of inspections in 2010. Uncover Mystery Riders may board any bus at any time on any of the PVTA's 44 routes to record on-time performance, compliance with ADA requirements, bus driver professionalism, and vehicle condition. PVTA uses the Mystery Rider findings to improve performance and increase customer satisfaction.

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BELCHERTOWN HOUSING PLAN

PVPC has completed Belchertown's Housing Needs Assessment and Action Plan with Community Preservation Act funding. The plan, available at <http://www.belchertown.org/committees/cpc/index.html>, identifies unmet housing needs of town residents and offers action steps. In response to a key recommendation, the Belchertown selectmen are in the process of forming an affordable housing committee.

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PVPC PLANNERS HONORED

Bonnie Parsons, Principal Planner and Manager of Historic Preservation Programs, has been nominated for a new award by Boston-based Preservation Massachusetts, which is commemorating its 25th anniversary by inaugurating the Paul E. Tsongas Profiles in Preservation award. Parsons and other nominees will be honored at the organization's annual dinner and awards ceremony May 5 at the Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston.

Gary Roux, Principal Planner and Co-Manager of the transportation planning section, has been honored by the University of Massachusetts Student Chapter of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) with its 2010 Distinguished Alumni Award. Roux received this award in recognition of his outstanding contributions and service to the transportation profession and his support of the UMass Amherst ITE Student Chapter.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

PVPC Commission

*Full Commission:
April 15, 5:30 p.m.*

*Clarion Hotel and Conference Center,
Northampton*

Annual Meeting: June 10, 6:00 p.m.

Location TBA

Executive Committee:

*April 29, May 27, June 24, 4 p.m.
PVPC Office*

Plan for Progress

*Coordinating Council:
April 12, May 19, June 16
8:15 a.m. at PVPC office*

Joint Transportation Committee

*April 14, May 12, June 9
10:15 a.m. at PVPC office*