



Bike Sharing is Advancing in the Pioneer Valley

The communities of Northampton, Amherst, Holyoke, and Springfield, along with the University of Massachusetts, are working with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to advance a pilot scale bike sharing program in the Pioneer Valley. A regional Bike Share Advisory Committee has been formed and meets monthly to work on details for this project.

The participants have crafted an intergovernmental compact to collaborate on bike sharing in the region, have completed work on a feasibility analysis, have applied for federal grant funds for bike share equipment, and have hired a consultant to complete an advanced feasibility analysis. There are still many steps still ahead before a program can be launched, including refining the recommended business, operating, and governance models; selecting a bike share equipment model (dock-based or “smart” bike); confirming station locations; securing corporate sponsorship and advertising commitments; securing funding for operations; and identifying necessary agreements and permits. Alta Planning & Design has been secured as a consultant to assist in these tasks.

Bike sharing is an alternative mode of urban transportation that stands readily available at central locations and can be used for a fee, free from the worries of ownership of the bicycles. Bike sharing is ideal for short distance point-to-point trips providing users the ability to pick up a bicycle at any self-serve bike-station and return it to any other bike station located within the system’s service area. Successful bike share programs have been launched in many cities around the U.S. and the world, notably Hubway in Boston and Citi Bike in New York City. The focus area for this project in particular is primarily in and around the region’s urban transit and commuter rail stations with links to the region’s college network.

Since the beginning of 2014, with the assistance of the Commonwealth’s District Local Technical Assistance funds, PVPC has been working collaboratively with four communities (Holyoke, Springfield, Amherst, and Northampton) and several area colleges (UMass Amherst, Springfield College, Springfield Technical Community College, Mt. Holyoke College, Hampshire College, Amherst College, and Smith College). The end result was a completed feasibility study for establishing a pilot-scale regional bike share program. This year, PVPC has expanded the project into Phase II and continues to collaborate with stakeholders to work on possible implementation.

PVPC submitted a grant request to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration for funds through its Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) program to cover the start-up capital costs for the program. If approved, funding for bike share infrastructure could be available in 2018.

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