

CHAPTER 3



Photo: Public Meeting at South Hadley Town Hall

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Draft Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley (RTP) underwent a public review and comment period consistent with the Pioneer Valley Region Public Participation Process. Early in the development of the RTP a series of focus groups were convened to assist in the development of the draft document. Focus groups consisted of a core group of representatives that were invited to participate in a discussion on the development of the vision statement, goals, needs, and strategies included in the RTP. Comments received as part of the focus groups were used to assist in the development of the problem statements included in the RTP. There were a total of four focus groups on the RTP.

- November 14, 2018 – Bicycle and Pedestrian
- November 14, 2018 – Infrastructure
- December 4, 2018 – Transit
- December 6, 2014 – Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change

To begin each focus group, staff developed a short video describing regional transportation from the viewpoint of the average citizen. This video helped to set the tone for discussion by identifying the regional transportation needs and priorities of a select group of residents. Comments received as part of the focus groups were used to develop a draft vision, goals, needs, strategies and problem statements for the

RTP. This draft version was distributed to the JTC, MPO, and through the PVPC website in January 2019 to continue to solicit comments.

A series of RTP informational products were developed beginning in the fall of 2018 to begin outreach efforts and education on the RTP process. These products are summarized below:

- RTP Webpage - <http://www.pvpc.org/projects/2020-regional-transportation-plan-update>
- RTP Article - <http://www.pvpc.org/content/lot-can-happen-four-years>
- RTP FAQs - <http://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/RTP%20Frequently%20Asked%20Questions.pdf>
- RTP Brochure
- RTP Survey

All of the products were made available on the dedicated webpage for the RTP update. The RTP article also appeared in PVPC’s quarterly newsletter. A copy of the RTP brochure and survey have been included as part of the appendix to this document.

A. RTP SURVEY

A brief survey was developed in consultation with the JTC to obtain public input on the content of the RTP. The survey was provided in both English and Spanish. Over 100 responses were received with significant responses summarized below.

Respondents were asked to rank a list of transportation improvement categories from most important to least important. This information is summarized in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1 – What Type of Projects are Important to You?

Transportation Improvement Project Category	Score
Projects that enhance the movement and connectivity of pedestrians and bicycles (ex. on road bike lanes and sidewalks)	6.37
Projects that expand or enhance transit. (ex. express bus service and improved bus stops)	6.22
Projects that improve Safety. (ex. improvements that reduce accidents)	5.64
Projects that improve the roadway surface. (ex. paving streets)	5.17
Projects that protect or enhance Environmental Resources such as Wetlands, Streams, Wildlife, and Air Quality. (ex. upgrades to culverts)	4.63
Projects that promote responsible Economic Growth and Development. (ex. multi-modal transportation centers)	4.4
Bridge Projects (ex. repairing bridges with structural deficiencies and/or weight restrictions)	4.27
Projects that preserve Existing Regional Assets such as Parks, Historic Areas, and Farms. (ex. off road bike paths and trails)	4.23
Projects that reduce Traffic Congestion and Travel Time. (ex. signal timing improvements)	4.08

Most respondents selected “projects that enhance the movement and connectivity of pedestrians and bicycles” as their number 1 choice. This was closely followed by transit improvements, and safety improvements. There was not much widespread variation in the weighted scores for each of the nine categories. In general staff found the projects included as part of the RTP to have a good representation of all of the project categories in the survey.

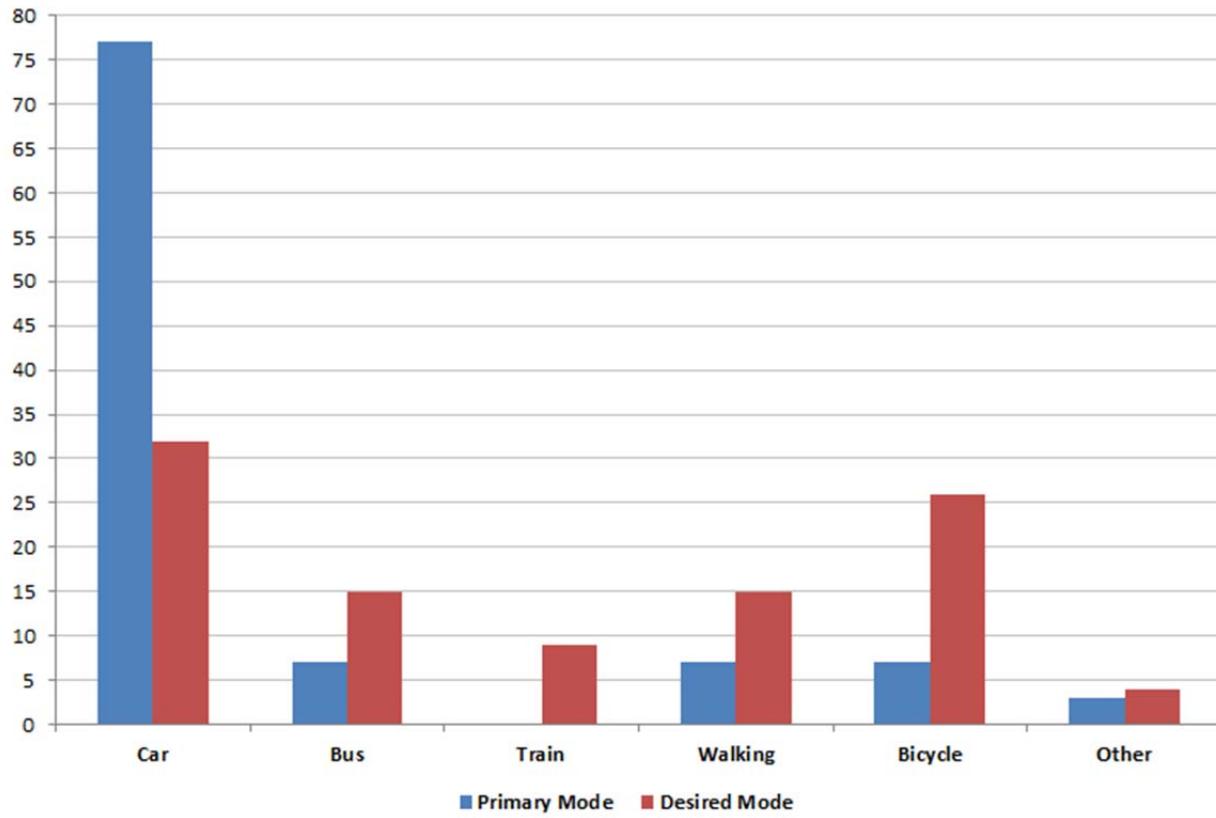
Figure 3-1 – Transportation Improvements Word Cloud



A follow up question was included asking why each respondent chose one of the transportation project categories as their number one choice. A Word Cloud was developed using the most common words included in their responses and is shown on Figure 3-1. Common themes in the responses indicated a need for more safety on roadways, improvements to better accommodate bicycles, and a need to reduce the number of cars on the road. Others commented on the necessity of driving a car to get to your destination in the Pioneer Valley and the need for improvements to public transit. The responses were found to have strong ties to the goals of the 2020 RTP.

Two questions asked about ones primary mode of transportation versus their desired mode of transportation. In other words, what mode of transportation would you prefer to use if possible. Over 75% of respondents reported that a car was their primary mode of transportation, however just over 30% of respondents indicated that a car was their desired mode of transportation. Respondents also indicated a high desire to travel by bicycle, transit, and rail. Additional language on the desire for more opportunities to utilize alternative modes of transportation in the region was included as part of the RTP Problem Statements at the end of Chapter 14. A complete comparison of these two questions is shown in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2 – Primary Vs. Desired Transportation Modes



Each survey respondent was asked to define what the term “regional transportation” means. This question was included to gain insight on how the average person perceives the regional transportation system. This information was compiled into a Word Cloud that is shown on Figure 3-3. The word “connected” appeared on a large percentage of the definitions. Many responses talked about a transportation system that connects all residents and communities to different transportation modes, areas of employment, schools, and shopping areas. Another common response was that transportation be both safe and accessible.

The responses to this question align well with the Vision of the 2020 RTP and the Multimodal Goal to provide a complete choice of adequate travel options that are accessible to all residents, students, visitors and businesses. Many common responses are also addressed as part of the regional Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC). The TEC is used as a management tool to identify projects of regional priority. All projects included in the TIP and RTP have been evaluated and assigned a priority rating using this TEC scoring. The TEC awards bonus points to transportation improvement projects that improve safety, mobility, livability and quality of life. Table 14-11 provides a summary of the TEC scoring.

C. DRAFT RTP

The PVPC utilized existing committees such as the Joint Transportation Committee, Pioneer Valley Executive Committee, and Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization to provide routine status updates in the development of the Draft RTP. A brief presentation on the RTP was given, and comments received as part of the meeting were incorporated into the Draft RTP. The monthly JTC meetings were particularly useful to receive feedback from local communities on the content of the RTP.

Environmental consultation was held on Tuesday May 28, 2019 from 1 PM – 4 PM at the office of the PVPC to allow the opportunity for discussion and comment on the potential environmental impacts of transportation projects included in the regional transportation plan. Large scale maps of transportation improvement projects included in the RTP were provided. Invitations were sent to the JTC, MPO and Environmental Justice mailing lists. Environmental agencies and groups as identified by the Sustainability Focus Group were also invited to participate and comment on the Draft RTP.

Three public meetings were scheduled to solicit public comments on the Draft Regional Transportation Plan during the formal public participation process:

- June 25, 2019 – Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Springfield, MA
- June 26, 2019 – Northampton City Hall, Northampton, MA
- June 27, 2019 – Westfield, City Hall, Westfield, MA

Paper and electronic copies of the Draft RTP were made available during the formal public participation process on request. The Draft RTP was also available for download from PVPC's web page at www.pvpc.org.

Table 3-3 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP

Comment	From	MPO Response
Updated text to correct typos, formatting and grammatical errors	PVPC/MassDOT	Changes made as requested
Updated Chapter 3 to reflect comments received and RTP outreach efforts	PVPC	Changes made as necessary
In your goals, you include climate change, but your text is just about climate mitigation/GHG reduction. I suggest adding language on climate adaptation, especially since we know that we have undersized culverts and localized flooding in various places that will be worse with climate change.	Wayne Feiden, Director Planning & Sustainability City of Northampton	Additional language will be added to Goal #13 to reflect climate adaptation.
I suggest switching from chairman to chair throughout the report.	Wayne Feiden	Change made as requested
Your VMT analysis is great. Since there is goal of climate change mitigation, is it possible to A) add a GHG emission translation for VMT, B) provide that information by municipality, and C) I assume that there is not resources, but it would be great for the information by municipality to reflect the vehicle registration there (i.e., some communities have higher shares of SUV and others have higher shares of high mileage, electric, and hybrid vehicles.	Wayne Feiden	This information was not added to the Final RTP. PVPC will work with the JTC to address this request as part of a future UPWP task.
I wasn't exactly sure whether the table on dial a rides was only about PVTA rolling stock or not. You list the Northampton Senior Center as not having a van, but we do own our own non-PVTA van.	Wayne Feiden	The dial-a-ride information only reflects PVTA trips. Additional language will be added to the RTP to clarify.
The Leeds VA Medical Center park and ride lot does not include the PVTA route that stops there. Can that be added?	Wayne Feiden	This has be added as requested.
ValleyBike will have 55 (not 54) stations by middle of the summer.	Wayne Feiden	Change made as requested
Complete Streets- please add Northampton to your list of communities with Complete Streets policies and pedestrian and bicycle plans (Walk/Bike Northampton)	Wayne Feiden	Change made as requested

Table 3-3 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP (cont.)

Comment	From	MPO Response
For the list of shared use paths, can you make the following updates to the names within Northampton: A) Manhan Rail Trail is now New Haven and Northampton Canal Rail Trail, B) the Northampton Bicycle Path/Francis P. Ryan path is now the MassCentral Rail Trail, C) the Manhan Ice Pond spur is now the Rocky Hill Trail, and 4) the Nagle Walkway is now the New Haven and Northampton Canal trail and the MassCentral Rail Trail (Union Station is mile 0).	Wayne Feiden	Changes made as requested
For your list of planned share use paths, please add the Connecticut River Trail from Damon Road in Northampton to Elm Court in Hatfield.	Wayne Feiden	Change made as requested
For your list of Safe Routes to School projects, can you add the most recent class of 2019 projects	Wayne Feiden	Change made as requested
Where you mention the Tennessee Gas Pipeline, that is now owned by Kinder Morgan, which should be added to your inventory.	Wayne Feiden	Change made as requested
For your list of projects that can help CMP, can you add ValleyBike and raising awareness of ValleyBike. Nationwide I think the figure is about 1/3 of bike share trips come from single occupancy vehicle trips.	Wayne Feiden	Change made as requested
I took a look at the project map and compared it with the priority connectivity areas and priority road segments that TNC and partners identified using UMass’ Critical Linkages model. None of the proposed projects appear to overlap with these priority areas for wildlife connectivity.	Laura Marx, Forest Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy	Thank you for your comments.
On the link above it says that the 21-day comment period (for the RTP update) began on June 25, 2019. This means that the last day that comments can be submitted is Monday, July 15th - correct? I would suggest that you note the date when comments are due so that no one has to figure out the due date (for comment) by manually counting out 21 days from the start of the comment period.	Ben Heckscher, Trains in the Valley	The PVPC website was modified to add that comments must be received by 5 PM on July 22, 2019.

Table 3-3 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP (cont.)

Comment	From	MPO Response
<p>Does the PVPC just take the comments and add them to the report or do you (the PVPC) review the comments and consider whether or not the draft report should be modified based on the comments received?</p>	<p>Ben Heckscher, Trains in the Valley</p>	<p>PVPC responded to this question directly via email: When the comments are spelling, grammar corrections or correcting an error we just make the change in the document. When it is more substantial involving a policy or project change the comments must be addressed and approved by our MPO. All comments we receive are summarized for the MPO and appear in Chapter 3 of the RTP. This is a federal requirement. While some comments cannot be addressed immediately, they do impact future decisions the MPO makes, particularly in programming the TIP.</p>
<p>Please more thoroughly explain how the survey and other public participation results impacted and/or validated the final recommendations contained within the RTP.</p>	<p>MassDOT</p>	<p>Additional information will be added to Chapter 3 as requested</p>
<p>In addition to describing the elements of the Pioneer Valley Public Participation Plan, please specifically describe how they were implemented to solicit feedback as part of the outreach for the RTP.</p>	<p>MassDOT</p>	<p>Additional information will be added to Chapter 4 as requested</p>
<p>The last sentence within the “Western Region Homeland Security Plan” states that “PVPC has conducted analysis on the following four evacuation scenarios.” However, these scenarios are not discussed or elaborated on. Please revise accordingly.</p>	<p>MassDOT</p>	<p>Additional information will be added to Chapter 7 as requested</p>
<p>Please define the threshold at which congestion is “verified” for the purposes of being included in the Congestion Management Process.</p>	<p>MassDOT</p>	<p>Additional information will be added to Chapter 8 as requested</p>

Table 3-3 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP (cont.)

Comment	From	MPO Response
Please clarify the language regarding the “Transit Congestion Severity” calculation. The recommendation within Table 8-2 references data “discussed ... in this chapter” but this data does not appear in this chapter.	MassDOT	Additional language will be added to clarify this statement.
Within Table 14-13, “Major Regional Projects,” please clarify which projects are programmed within the current TIP and which ones are programmed as part of this RTP.	MassDOT	Additional information will be added to Chapter 14 as requested
For accessibility purposes, please revise Table 14-14, “Visionary Projects,” from an image to being text-based. Additionally, please specify which near-term improvement recommendations of the I-91 Viaduct Study are included as part of the financially constrained section of the RTP.	MassDOT	Table 14-14 has been revised as requested. Additional information on recommendations from the I-91 Viaduct Study that appear as part of the financially constrained RTP will be added as requested.
Please revise the last bullet point on this page to make clear that the additional revenue gained from the completion of the GANS repayment after 2028 will be distributed using the formula developed by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA).	MassDOT	This change will be made as requested.
Within Table 15-9, “Highway Fiscal Constraint Summary,” please revise the row currently titled “NFA Bridge” to “NFA Bridge and Pavement Preservation,” per MassDOT’s financial guidance.	MassDOT	This change will be made as requested.
“Scenario Funding Summary,” please clarify within the title that the amounts included in this table refer to the funding levels needed to achieve to bring the roadway system into a state of good repair.	MassDOT	This change will be made as requested.
Please ensure that the final document contains the results of the greenhouse gas modeling currently underway.	MassDOT	This information has been added to the final report as provided by MassDOT.
Please spell out the acronym for “FBO.”	MassDOT	This information has been added to the Appendix as requested.

Table 3-3 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP (cont.)

Comment	From	MPO Response
<p>Within Figure 5-17, please double check the value for the I-91 Northbound Rest Area in Northampton, which is currently zero. If this is correct, please provide a brief explanation of this finding.</p>	<p>MassDOT</p>	<p>This total is correct as this rest area has limited parking spaces. Additional language has been added to the Appendix to reflect this.</p>
<p>Despite the fact that efforts are underway or planned to increase the vehicular capacity of Route 9 (the critical travel link between Amherst and Northampton), I believe that other transportation modes along an alternate path need to be explored. It has been consistently demonstrated that increasing the capacity of congested roadways is merely a short-term solution to mitigating congestion problems. A more effective long-term solution is parallel public mass transit. In the case of Route 9, I suggest that a rail line, using diesel multiple units (DMUs) adjacent to the existing bike path, should be studied.</p>	<p>Zane Lumelsky</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>
<p>I noticed a lack of rapid transit ideas in the RTP. Has light rail or trackless trolley ever been considered. I am aware there are multiple abandoned Railroad rights of way in the pioneer valley and thought some could be reused or made into a rail with trail if already turned into a bike path. Attached are some concepts that I have worked on.</p>	<p>Eli Blumen</p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>