

Commute Trends for Major Employment Centers in the Pioneer Valley Region

Introduction

The Pioneer Valley region's 305,451 workers account for 8.7% of the state's labor force. Over half of these employees work in the health care and service industries throughout the 43 communities comprising Hampshire and Hampden Counties. There are several hospitals, commercial centers and social service agencies spread throughout the region which supply these jobs, and this geographic spread contributes to an average commute in the region that is six minutes shorter than the state average, and three minutes shorter than the national average. In fact, 75% (or 230,185 workers) live within a 15-minute commute of a major employment center. A number of factors affect ease of travel throughout the area. Less traffic congestion than other parts of the state is a key factor. High rates of vehicle access and a dense road network facilitate travel throughout the region. These facts may also explain employee mobility, where 25% of workers are employed outside their county of residence, and 9% of the region's workers commute out of state for work. The fact that jobs are dispersed throughout the region rather than concentrated in one area results in people traveling a variety of directions and routes during rush hour which may also reduce traffic congestion, and subsequently, commute times.

Regional commute modes also differ from state trends in many ways. In general, working at home is more common in the Pioneer Valley region than is true across the state. Commuting by car is much more widespread with 88% of workers commuting by car; whereas state-wide, only 72% of workers commute by car. Carpooling, however, is also more common in the region, with a rate of 8.4%, slightly higher than the state rate of 8%. Workers in the Pioneer Valley region take public transit at a regional rate of 2.5%. Cross-county commuting is also more common in the Pioneer Valley region as compared to the state (by 10%), but interstate commutes are more common, where only 4% of Massachusetts workers travel out of state. This makes sense given that the Pioneer Valley region is part of the larger cross-border Knowledge Corridor which shares economy, entertainment and education resources up and down the I-91 corridor linking Connecticut and Massachusetts.

To better understand these trends, including the distribution of jobs in relation to where the labor force lives, and how residents travel between work and home, this report identifies twelve major employment centers distributed throughout the Pioneer Valley region and analyzes the factors affecting the commute patterns of workers living within 10 to 45 minutes of these centers. A number of factors are explored, including the size and locations of the largest employers in the region; the size of the labor force within the 'commute-shed' of each employment center; the modes of transportation used by commuters; and the work locations of commuters. A description of the methodology used to identify these Pioneer Valley employment centers follows.

Average Commute Times



Methodology

Employment Center Identification

In order to develop a picture of the workforce and commute trends in the Pioneer Valley region, twelve distinct employment centers were identified. An employment center was labeled as such if it includes at least one company or organization employing over 1,000 people, or, had at least two employers with over 500 employees each. Two communities identified in this digest - East Longmeadow and Palmer- do not fit either of these criteria. However, East Longmeadow includes a business park where several companies employing over 100 people are located, and Palmer has several existing and potential business development sites where future employment growth is expected.

Data for major employers were retrieved from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's list of major employers in the Springfield Metropolitan New England Cities and Towns Area. In some cases, multiple major employers were within a single municipality or only a few miles from each other in bordering municipalities, such as in the cases of Springfield and Chicopee. Since these areas all have similar commute times, a single point location was chosen to represent this broader employment center. Only one employment center per city or town was used to generate commute times.

GIS Maps – Commute Times

Maps were created using GIS (Geographic Information Systems) to identify areas within 10, 15 and 30-minute drive times of the twelve employment centers. These intervals encompass the commute times of over 90% of workers. The most common time for workers in Hampden County to leave their home for work is between 7am and 8am, with 25% of commuters doing so. Given this, 7:30am was the point in time that was chosen for the commute time model. A composite map which overlays commute times for each employment center was then created to identify locations in the Pioneer Valley region which serve multiple employment centers.

Commuter Data

U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey provided tract and block group-level data for commute times and characteristics of workers. Data presented in this report include five-year estimates of the most recent available data (2009-2013), unless stated otherwise.

Regional Overview

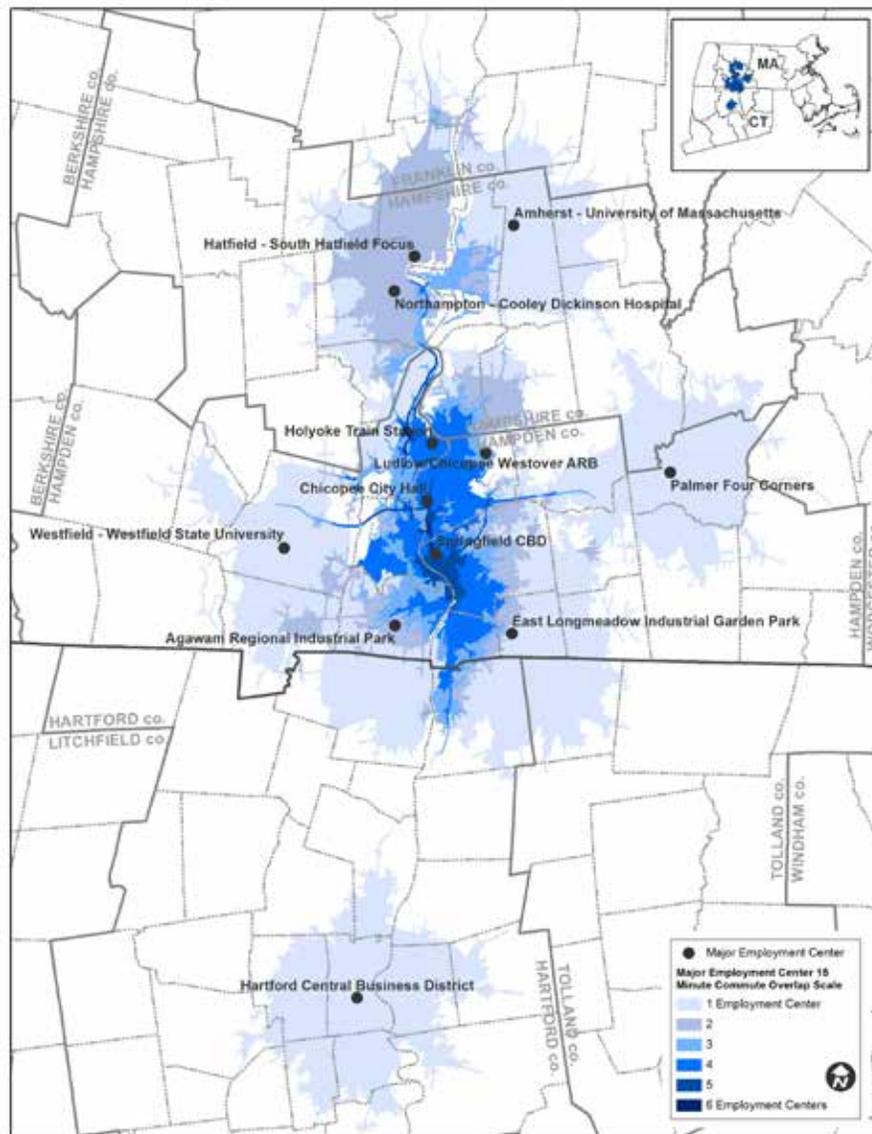
While communities within the Pioneer Valley region are diverse in size, culture, and economic characteristics, there is also a strongly interconnected regional economy and residents frequently travel up and down the I-91 corridor to access work, entertainment, services, and purchasing of goods. Many of the Pioneer Valley's largest employers are hospitals, colleges and universities, located in the cities of Springfield, Holyoke, and Northampton and Hartford, Connecticut. However, few of the region's major employers are located in less dense areas such as the towns of Amherst and Hatfield. The fact that most major employers are situated in more densely-populated areas suggests that workers can live in close proximity to their jobs. However, despite the fact that most workers live within 15 minutes of an employment center, about 25% of the labor force commutes outside their county of residence for work. Some of the region's larger employment centers such as Springfield and Holyoke have labor force populations proportionate to the number of jobs located in that city, but in some suburban communities surrounding Springfield, such as Agawam and East Longmeadow, the size of the labor force exceeds the number of jobs in the area, requiring workers to travel further distances to access jobs.

The Pioneer Valley's average commute time of about 23 minutes also suggests that many people travel outside their place of residence to reach their place of work. Indeed, workers who live in close proximity to employment centers located in Hampshire County as well as northern Hampden County are more likely to commute outside their county than those living in close proximity to employment centers surrounding Springfield. Commuters in the southern part of the Pioneer Valley region, however, are far more likely to work

out of state, with over 10% of the labor force living near employment centers in Agawam, East Longmeadow, Springfield and Westfield commuting out of state to access jobs.

In addition to the geographical distribution of jobs and the labor force, the mode of commuting affects both travel time and where the labor force actually works. Commute mode varies widely among the Pioneer Valley's employment centers. Although 94% of workers studied have access to a car, those living close to smaller employment centers in Amherst, Northampton and Hatfield are less likely to use a vehicle to get to work than those who are living near employment centers in the Springfield area. Interestingly, the former is also more likely to either work at home or walk to work. Commuters living near less dense employment centers such as Palmer, East Longmeadow and Westfield are most likely to commute by car. This could reflect the lack of public transit, or it may be due to higher propensity to commute outside of the employee's resident community if there are few employment options nearby.

Employment Center 15 Minute Commute Overlap Areas



Mode of Access to Jobs	Highest	Lowest
Workers with vehicle access	Palmer – 94%	Springfield – 91.5%
Workers commuting by transit	Amherst – 9%	Palmer – 0%
Workers who walk	Amherst – 14%	Palmer – 1%
Workers who carpool	Springfield – 12%	Westfield – 8%

(Within 15 Minute Commute Distance)

Springfield, MA - Central Business District

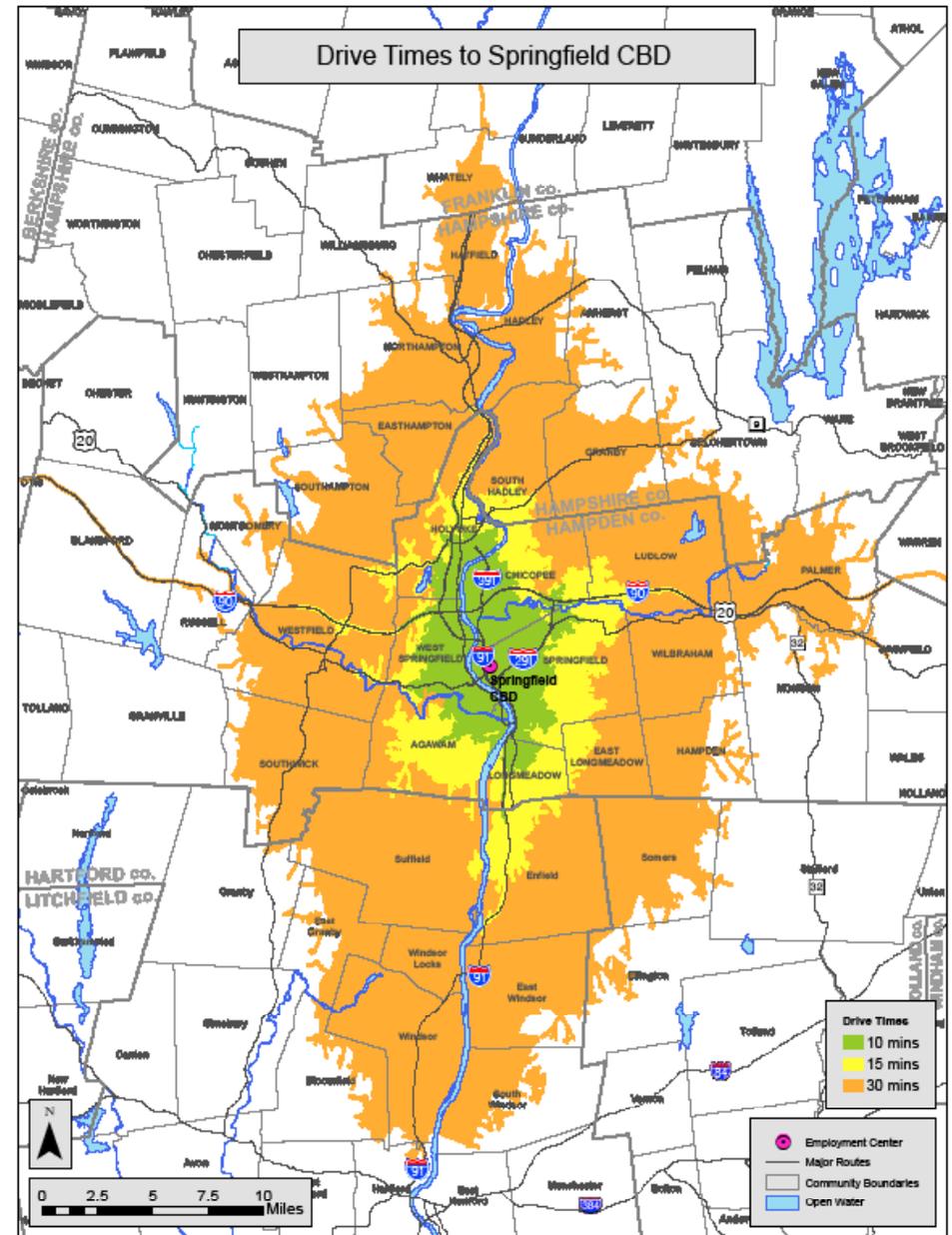
As the largest Massachusetts employment center for the Pioneer Valley region, Springfield is home to several major employers including three hospitals (around 10,000 employees in total), an insurance company (MassMutual Life Insurance - over 1000 employees), a firearms manufacturer (Smith & Wesson - over 1000 employees) and a regional U.S. Postal Service Bulk Mail center (over 1000 employees). The labor force living within 15 minutes of these employers is sizeable and estimated at about 147,000. Ninety percent of the workers living in the Springfield commute-shed, commute by personal vehicle, while only 3% walk and 3% take public transit. The mean travel time to work for this population is 20.8 minutes, which includes most of the area encompassing Springfield, West Springfield, Longmeadow, Agawam, and adjacent parts of Holyoke, South Hadley, Chicopee and East Longmeadow.

This average 20.8 minute commute time however, suggests that many of these workers are employed outside the city of Springfield. Nine percent of those within a 15-minute commute of downtown Springfield work outside of Hampden county, while eleven percent of this cohort works out of state. Suffield and Enfield, Connecticut are within a 15-minute drive of Springfield, but most other parts of Connecticut and New York are a longer drive. The city of Hartford, another large employment center, is 30 minutes away.

Interestingly, only 2% of those living within 15 minutes and 3% of those living within 30 minutes of Hartford commute to jobs located out of state. This implies that Springfield is not a significant draw for workers living in Connecticut, while the Hampden County area is a key source of employees to the Hartford employment center.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	146,920	333,616
Commuters	129,453	294,533
Work at home	3%	4%
Work Out of County	9%	12%
Work Out of State	11%	10%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	20.8	22.0
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	90%	90%
Carpool*	11%	9%
Walk	3%	3%
Public transit	3%	2%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



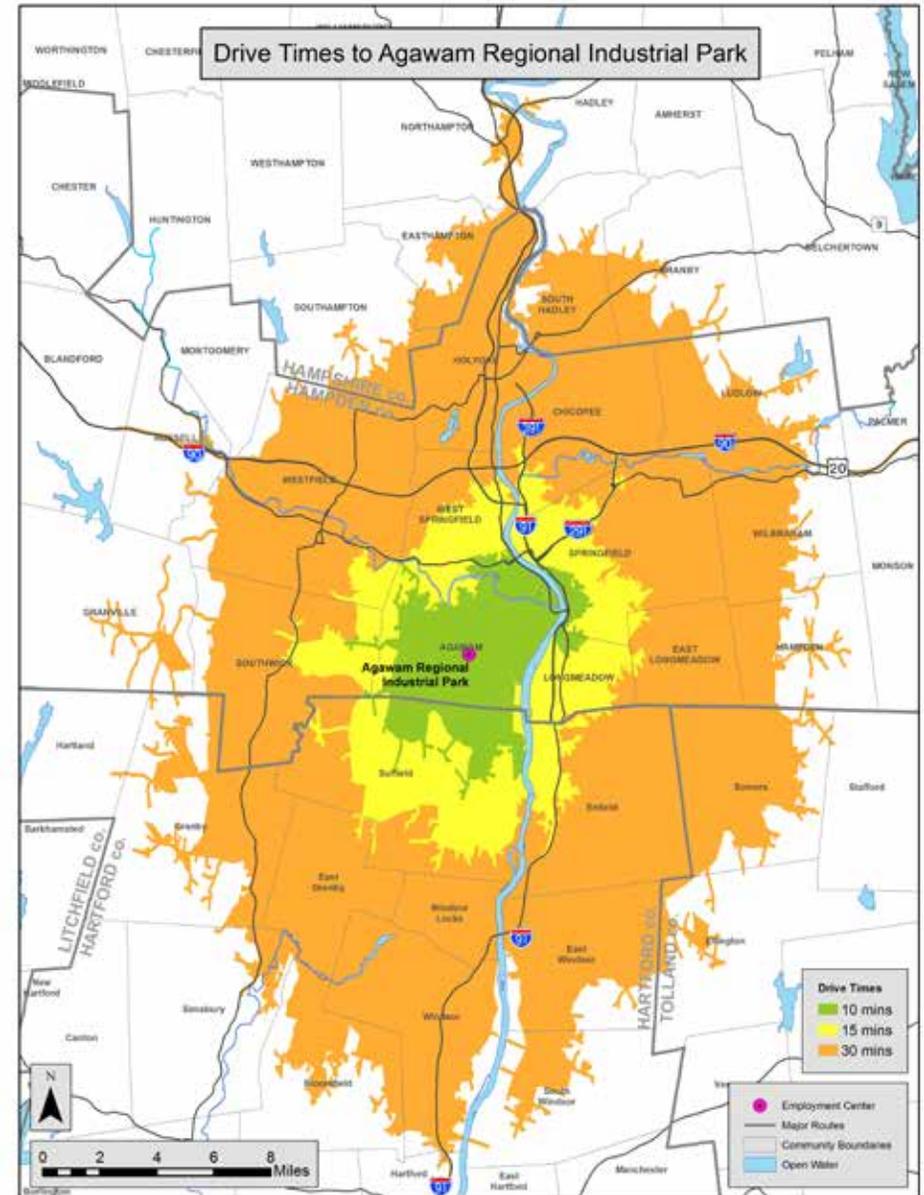
Agawam, MA - Regional Industrial Park

Agawam, a suburb of Springfield which is located on the Connecticut border, reflects commute patterns similar to other communities in the southern portion of the study region. There are several large employers located in Agawam, including a roofing manufacturer (OMG, Inc. with over 1,000 employees), an amusement park - Six Flags (over 500 employees), and a sizeable public school system (with over 500 employees). The labor force, with over 91,000 workers, lives within 15-minutes of this employment center and their average commute time is 21 minutes, less than the region as a whole.

Similar to other Springfield suburbs, a high percentage of commuters near this employment center travel to work by car (90% of those living within 15 minutes), while 10% of those carpool with at least one other person. Walking and public transit use are relatively low. A high percentage of workers travel out of state (14% within 15 minutes of the employment center), while only 2% work at home. As depicted on the map, several surrounding communities, including much of adjacent Suffield, Connecticut are within a 15-minute drive time of the OMG, Inc facility. It is a 30+ minute commute from portions of Enfield and Holyoke. This proximity to Connecticut likely explains why almost one-fifth of Agawam's workers commute out of state for work.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	91,132	296,681
Commuters	79,561	265,802
Work at home	3%	3%
Work Out of County	6%	10%
Work Out of State	14%	10%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	21	22
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	90%	91%
Carpool*	10%	9%
Walk	3%	2%
Public transit	3%	2%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



Amherst, MA - University of Massachusetts

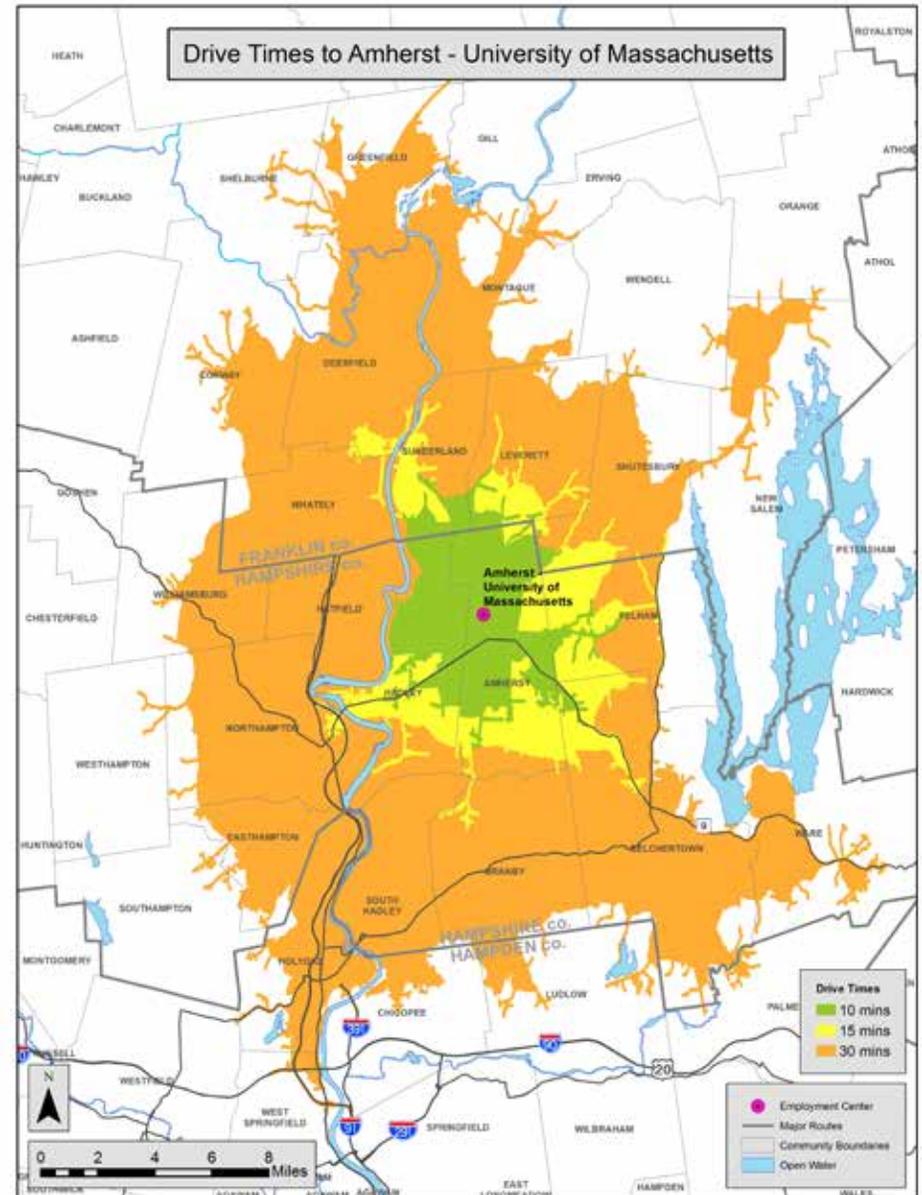
The town of Amherst is one of the Pioneer Valley region's few employment centers not located on an interstate highway. As such, commute patterns are somewhat different from many other employment centers in the region. Amherst is home to the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts, a major regional employer with over 2,000 faculty and staff. Amherst College and Delivery Express also employ over 500 people each and are located near the center of the town. The labor force in the immediate vicinity of Amherst, however, is relatively modest at 23,900 workers, and a high percentage of people (12%) work at home.

The Amherst area has the highest percentage of walk-commuters in any of the regions at 14%. This area also has the lowest percentage of employees driving to work with 63% of those living near the University of Massachusetts campus doing so. Public transit use by commuters is high for the region at 9%, and this reflects an extensive PVT/UMass Transit bus network that is one of the most heavily used in all of Massachusetts. Despite these trends, the average commute time in Amherst is just over 20 minutes.

As seen on the adjacent map, a 15-minute commute-shed around the University's Amherst campus includes most of Amherst and adjacent parts of Pelham, Belchertown, Hadley, Sunderland, Leverett and Shutesbury. However, since Amherst is not located directly on an interstate highway, it is a longer drive from employment centers in other counties, where 21% of this labor force works.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	23,929	108,380
Commuters	22,489	99,528
Work at home	12%	7%
Work Out of County	21%	28%
Work Out of State	3%	4%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	20.4	21.9
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	63%	80%
Carpool*	11%	10%
Walk	14%	8%
Public transit	9%	4%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



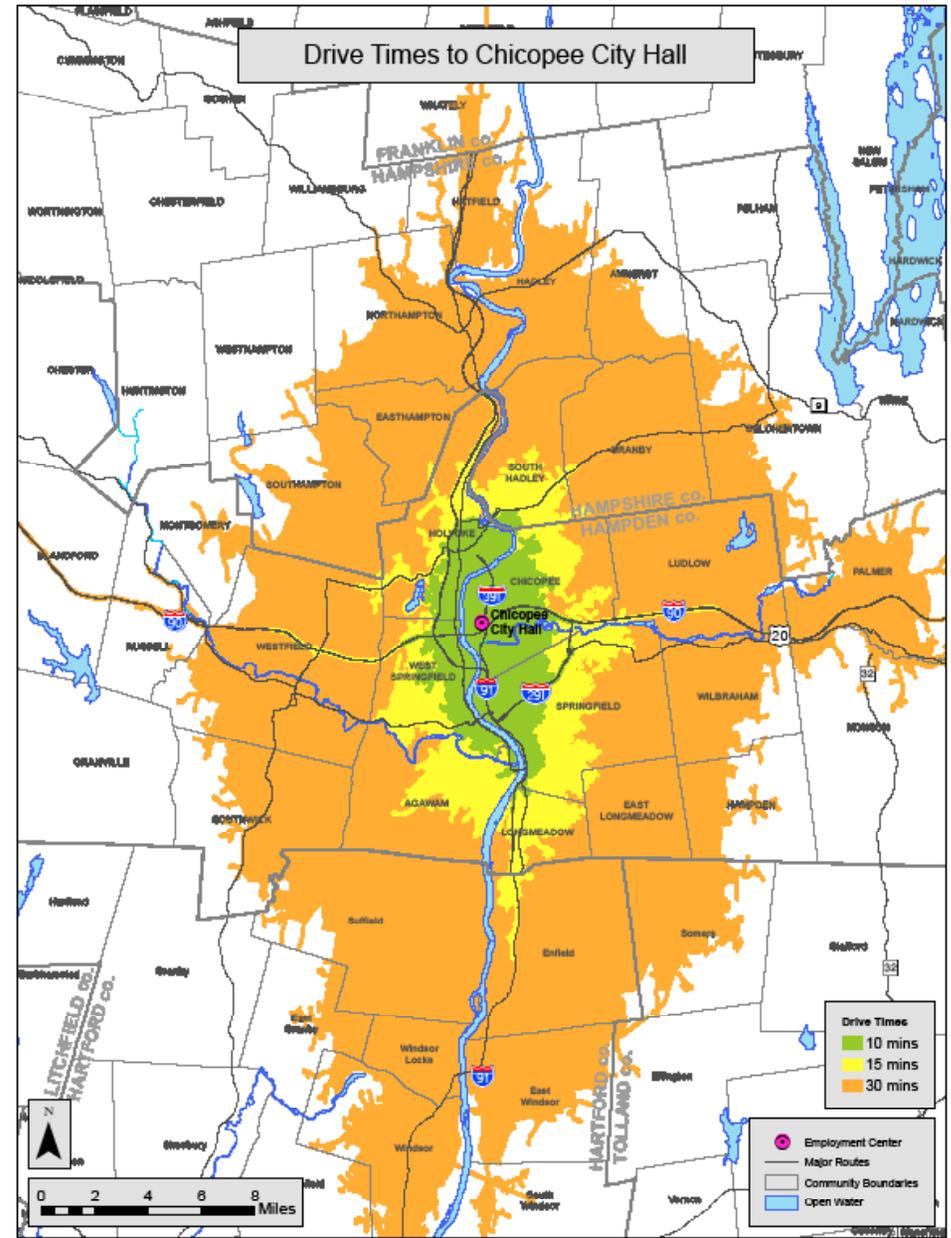
Chicopee, MA - City Hall

Located near the crossroads of two interstate highways, namely I-90 and I-91, downtown Chicopee hosts several large employers, including one manufacturer, one distributor and the city government, each employing over 500 workers. A downtown 15-minute commute-shed includes workers living in Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield and West Springfield and, thus, the labor force is sizeable at almost 118,000 people.

Personal vehicles are the main mode of transportation, with 89% driving to work, plus a higher-than-average number of carpoolers (11%). Public transit use is higher, also, with 4% of area workers taking a bus to work. The average commute time of those living within 15 minutes of this employment center is 20.7 minutes. Given the sizeable number of nearby employment centers, and the fact that workers are located close to both I-91 and I-90, there are many travel options to access employment. This is reflected in the fact that 11% of workers living near Chicopee City Hall commute outside Hampden County and 10% commute outside the state.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	117,786	316,496
Commuters	104,234	281,561
Work at home	3%	4%
Work Out of County	11%	13%
Work Out of State	10%	10%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	20.7	21.9
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	89%	90%
Carpool*	11%	9%
Walk	3%	3%
Public transit	4%	2%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



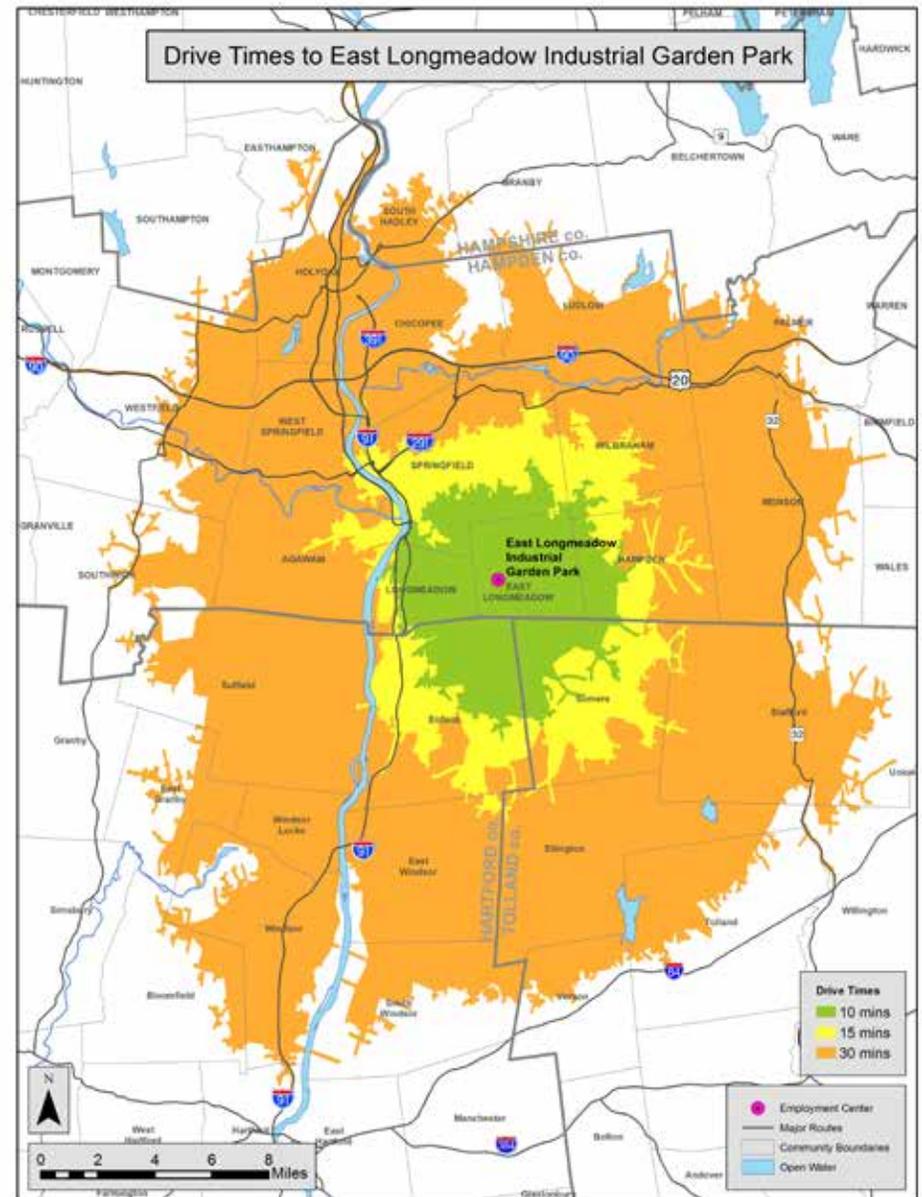
East Longmeadow, MA - Industrial Garden Park

Located on the Connecticut border, East Longmeadow is home to a major toy company, as well as an industrial park that houses several larger businesses. The labor force within a 15-minute commute of this employment center captures residents of Springfield, Hampden, Longmeadow, Agawam and the Connecticut towns of Enfield and Somers. Situated near Springfield, the East Longmeadow work force is sizeable at almost 93,000 workers, with an average commute time of just over 22 minutes.

Commuter modes are similar to other suburban employment centers located in the southern part of the Pioneer Valley region. An estimated 89% of workers drove to work and 10% of those workers carpool. Walking and public transit use is low, and approximately 4% of workers work at home. Given its shared border with Connecticut, it is not surprising that 13% of those living within 15 minutes of the East Longmeadow employment center travel out of state for work. Eight percent of workers also travel outside Hampden County for work, which may also increase the average commute times as most employment locations in adjacent Hampshire County to the north, are over 30 minutes away.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	92,827	303,918
Commuters	82,910	268,627
Work at home	4%	3%
Work Out of County	8%	14%
Work Out of State	13%	10%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	22.2	22.4
Commuter Mode:		
Personal vehicle	89%	92%
Carpool*	10%	9%
Walk	2%	2%
Public transit	3%	2%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



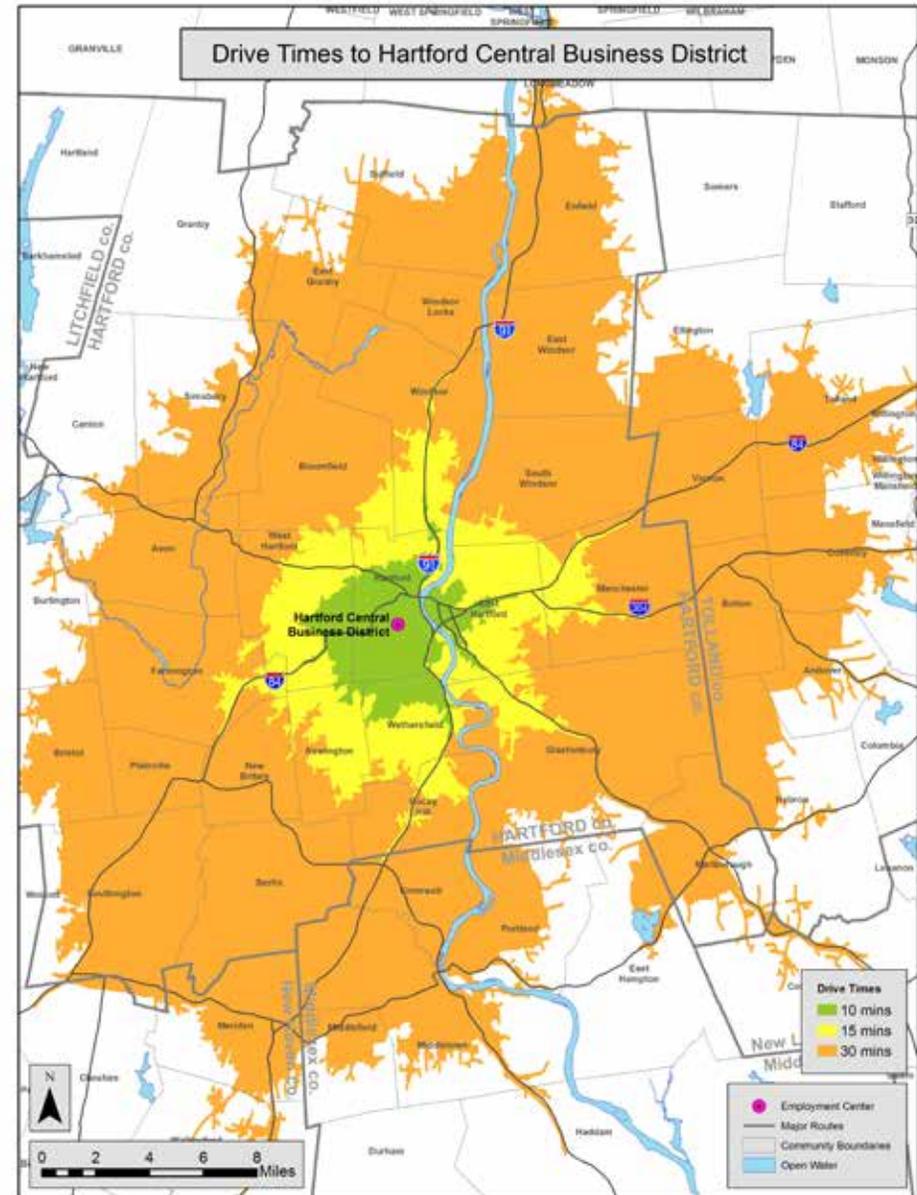
Hartford, CT - Central Business District

All previous employment centers described are located within Massachusetts. However, given the percentage of Pioneer Valley workers who commute to work out of state, the Central Business District (CBD) in Hartford is included as a significant regional employment center. Several large employers are situated in Hartford's CBD including five hospitals (over 1000 workers each), several insurance companies (over 1,000 employees each), and two larger insurance companies (over 5,000 employees each). As a major New England city, Hartford's labor force is sizeable with over 166,000 workers living within 15 minutes of the CBD. This area encompasses all of Hartford along with adjacent portions of Windsor, East Hartford, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Newington, Manchester and Glastonbury, Connecticut. The average commute time for this cluster is 20.8 minutes, which is less than most employment centers in Massachusetts.

Commute modes are varied for this employment center, with fewer workers commuting to work by car (84%) than any of the other employment centers in the Pioneer Valley. Of these, a relatively high percentage of workers carpool (13%). 13% of workers do not have access to vehicles, and this helps to explain the Hartford region's higher public transit use (8%). It also appears that most workers are employed locally, since only 2% travel out of state and less than 10% travel outside Hartford County. These figures suggest that Hartford is the employment center to which out-of-state commuters living in Springfield and its surrounding suburban communities are traveling.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	166,854	538,505
Commuters	143,992	476,350
Work at home	3%	3%
Work Out of County	9%	19%
Work Out of State	2%	3%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	20.8	22.1
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	84%	89%
Carpool*	13%	10%
Walk	3%	2%
Public transit	8%	4%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.

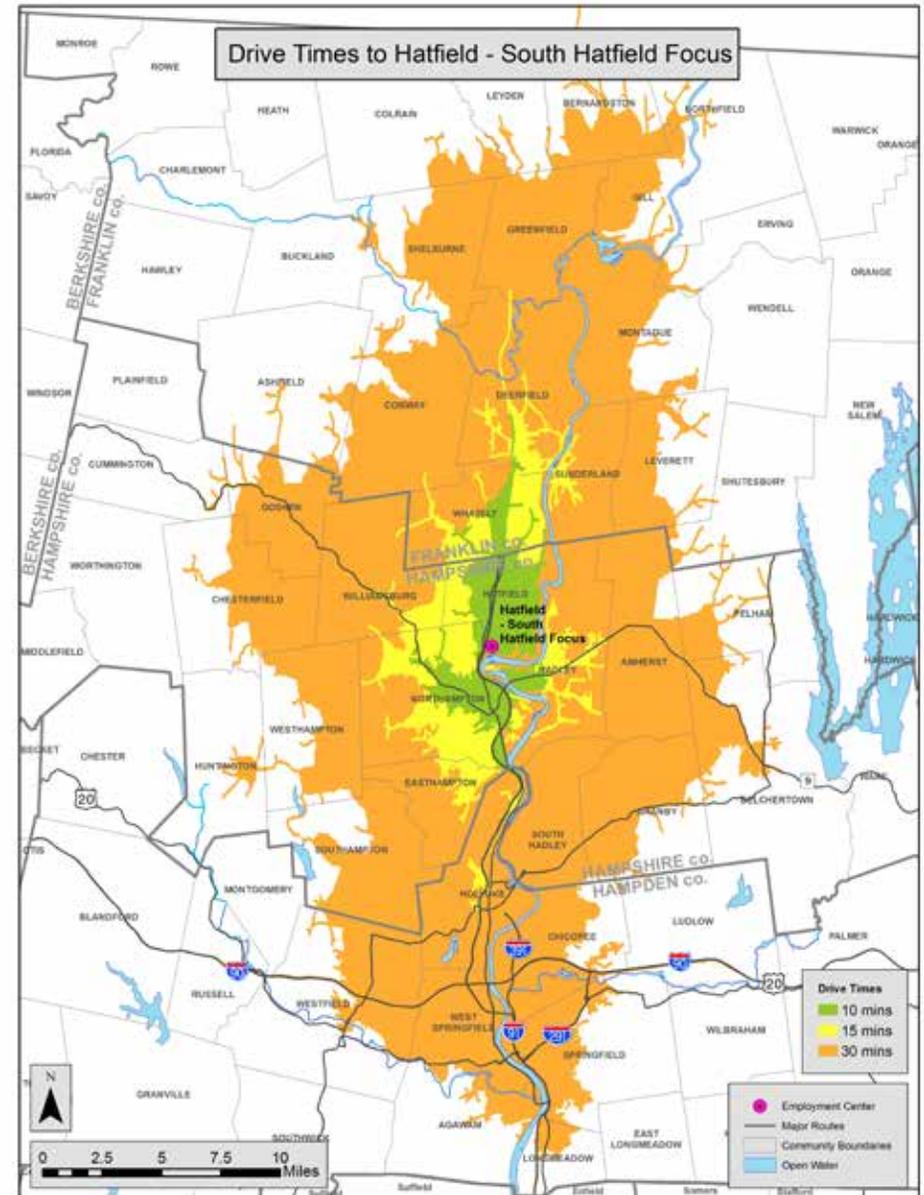


Hatfield, MA - South Hatfield Focus

At the northern end of the Pioneer Valley region, and located along Route I-91, the town of Hatfield includes one of the area's largest employers, C&S Wholesale Grocers, a major supplier to grocery stores throughout New England. C&S Wholesale Grocers employs over 1,000 people, and generates significant truck traffic. As a more rural area, the labor force within 15 minutes of this Hatfield employer is 22,000 and includes residents of Whately, Deerfield, Hatfield, Sunderland, Northampton, Hadley and Easthampton. The mean commute time for workers in this area is 21.1 minutes.

Commuting trends belie the rural character of this employment center, and may reflect its close proximity to Northampton, given that only 75% of those workers within a 15-minute distance commute to work by car, 11% of who carpool. Another 9% percent work at home, 3% bike, 10% walk, and 3% take a bus to get to work. As with other nearby employment centers, a high percentage (24%) work outside Hampshire County, suggesting workers commute to employment centers located in either Franklin County to the north, or Hampden County to the south.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	22,003	195,761
Commuters	20,277	176,167
Work at home	9%	5%
Work Out of County	24%	19%
Work Out of State	3%	7%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	21.1	22.2
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	75%	84%
Carpool*	11%	10%
Walk	10%	6%
Public transit	3%	4%

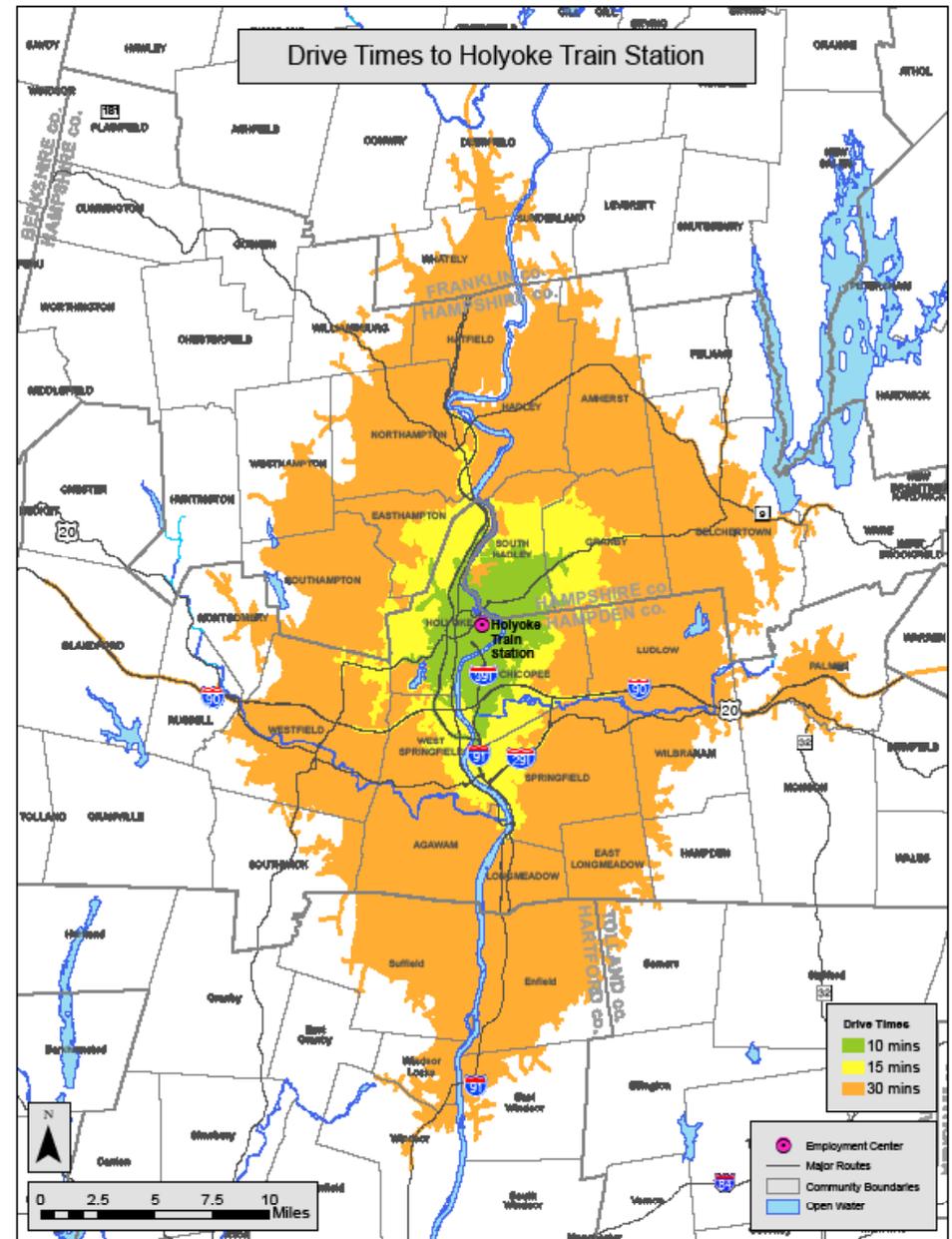


Holyoke, MA - Train Station

A much smaller city than Springfield, Holyoke has several major employers located in the downtown area. Holyoke Medical Center and the city's high school both employ over 1,000 people. City government and the Holyoke Community College are also major employers, with over 500 workers each. With a labor force of over 80,000 people within a 15-minute drive of downtown Holyoke, one expects commute times to be minimal. However, on average, workers commute over 21 minutes to work.

A 15-minute commute includes adjacent areas of South Hadley, Granby, Easthampton, Northampton, Southampton, Chicopee, Springfield and West Springfield. Many workers near the Holyoke CBD commute by personal vehicle (88%), and 10% of these carpool. Walking and using public transit are less common at 5% and 3%, respectively. Despite a dense urban core and frequent public transit service, workers appear to commute to locations outside of Holyoke as well as outside Hampden County. Seventeen percent of the labor force living within 15 minutes of the downtown CBD are employed outside of Hampden County. As a result, mean travel times for those living in and near Holyoke are slightly higher than they are for adjacent towns.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	80,714	300,611
Commuters	72,396	267,850
Work at home	3%	4%
Work Out of County	17%	13%
Work Out of State	8%	9%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	21.2	22.7
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	88%	88%
Carpool*	10%	10%
Walk	5%	4%
Public transit	3%	3%



Ludlow/Chicopee, MA - Westover Air Reserve Base

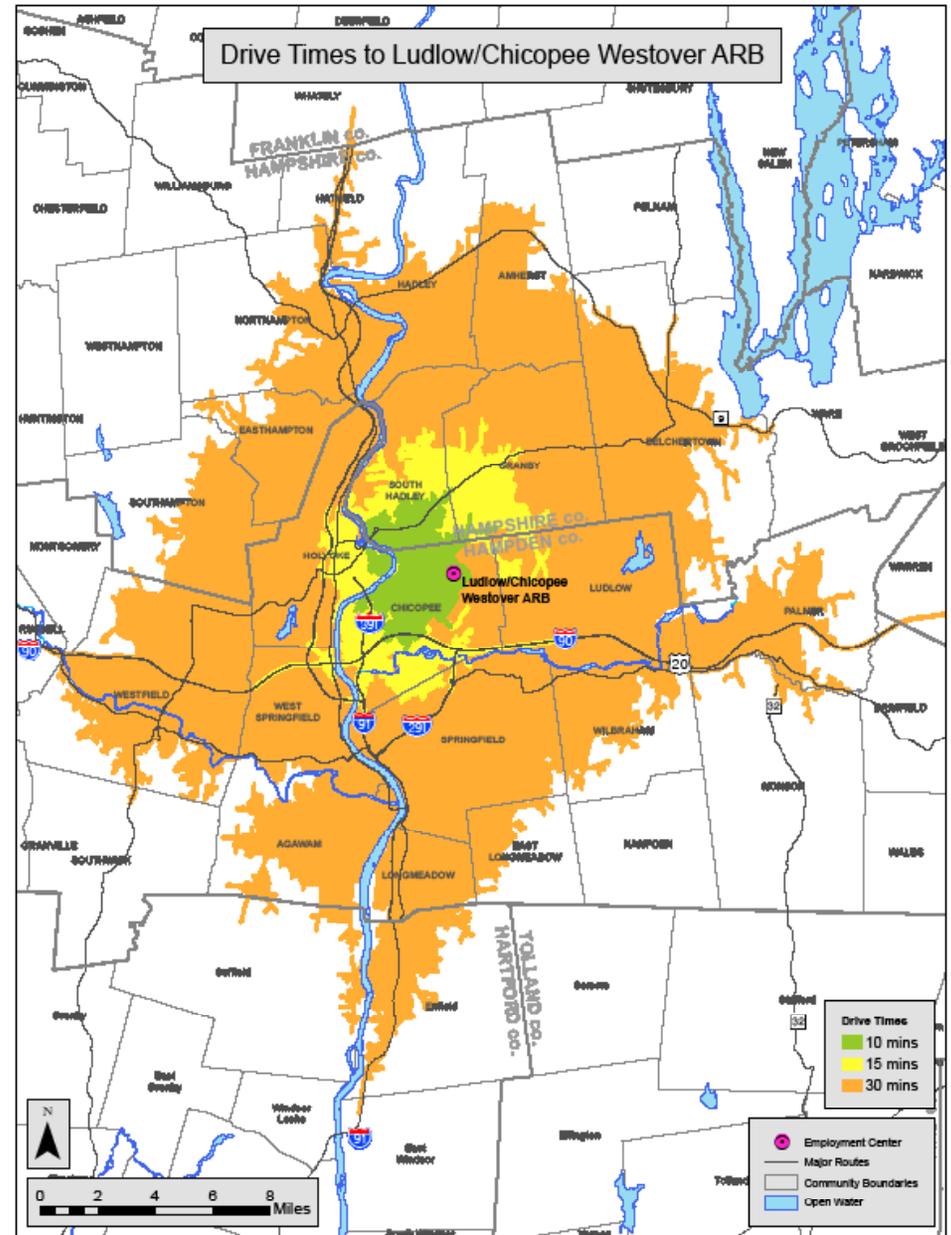
This employment center is located on Interstate 90, but further away from Interstate 91. It houses two major employers -- the Hampden County House of Corrections (with over 1,000 employees) and the Westover Air Reserve Base (with over 2,500 civilian employees). The labor force within 15 minutes of these employers is 42,300 workers, and includes residents of Granby, Chicopee, Holyoke, and South Hadley. Despite the presence of these large employers (and small employee to job ratio), 20% of workers commute to another county.

Similar to other suburban employment centers, 89% of workers travel to work by car, and 9% of those carpool. 5% of workers walk and 2% take public transit. With an average commute time of 20.9 minutes, workers may travel to this employment center from Holyoke, southern Amherst, or Springfield.

As a suburban employment center, and further from the interstates, commute patterns near the Ludlow/Chicopee border vary from those described previously. However, the patterns are similar to other employment centers in the central portion of the Pioneer Valley region.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	42,308	246,334
Commuters	39,924	216,895
Work at home	3%	4%
Work Out of County	20%	13%
Work Out of State	6%	9%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	20.9	21.7
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	89%	88%
Carpool*	9%	10%
Walk	5%	4%
Public transit	2%	3%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



Northampton, MA - Cooley Dickinson Hospital

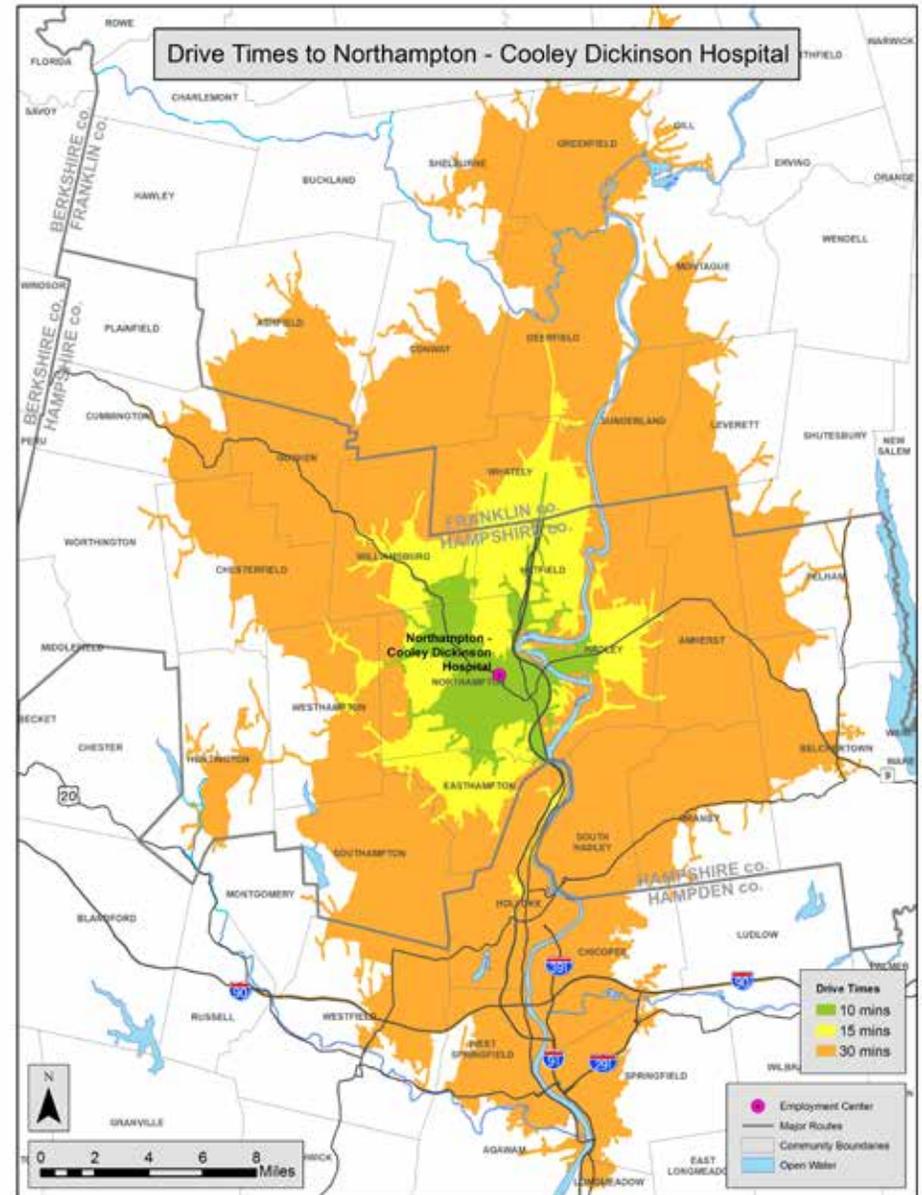
Northampton, smaller in population than Amherst, houses another major employment center. One hospital (1,000+ employees), a liberal arts college (Smith College - 1,000+ employees) and a VA hospital (500+ employees) are situated near the Central Business District, there are many jobs in the medical and education sectors. The labor force within 15 minutes of this employment center is larger than that of Amherst, at about 27,500; however, it shares many similar commute patterns.

Like Amherst, a high percentage of people (8%) work at home. The average commute time for Northampton residents is about 21 minutes, and non-vehicle modes of transportation are popular. The percentage of workers who walk to work is high (9%), while 3% bicycle to work and 3% take transit. 78% of workers living within 15 minutes of the hospital drive to work and 10% of those carpool. Similar to other employment centers in the northern end of the Pioneer Valley, many workers (25%) commute to another county for work, though only a few (4%) commute out of state.

As seen on the map, the employment center in Northampton is a 15-minute commute from most of the city of Northampton, but also covers adjacent areas of Easthampton, Hadley, Hatfield, Whately and Williamsburg. Most employment centers to the south are over 30 minutes away, increasing the average commute times for workers travelling to employment centers elsewhere in the Pioneer Valley region.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	26,498	183,659
Commuters	24,735	164,790
Work at home	8%	5%
Work Out of County	25%	20%
Work Out of State	4%	7%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	21.4	21.3
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	78%	83%
Carpool*	10%	10%
Walk	9%	6%
Public transit	2%	4%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



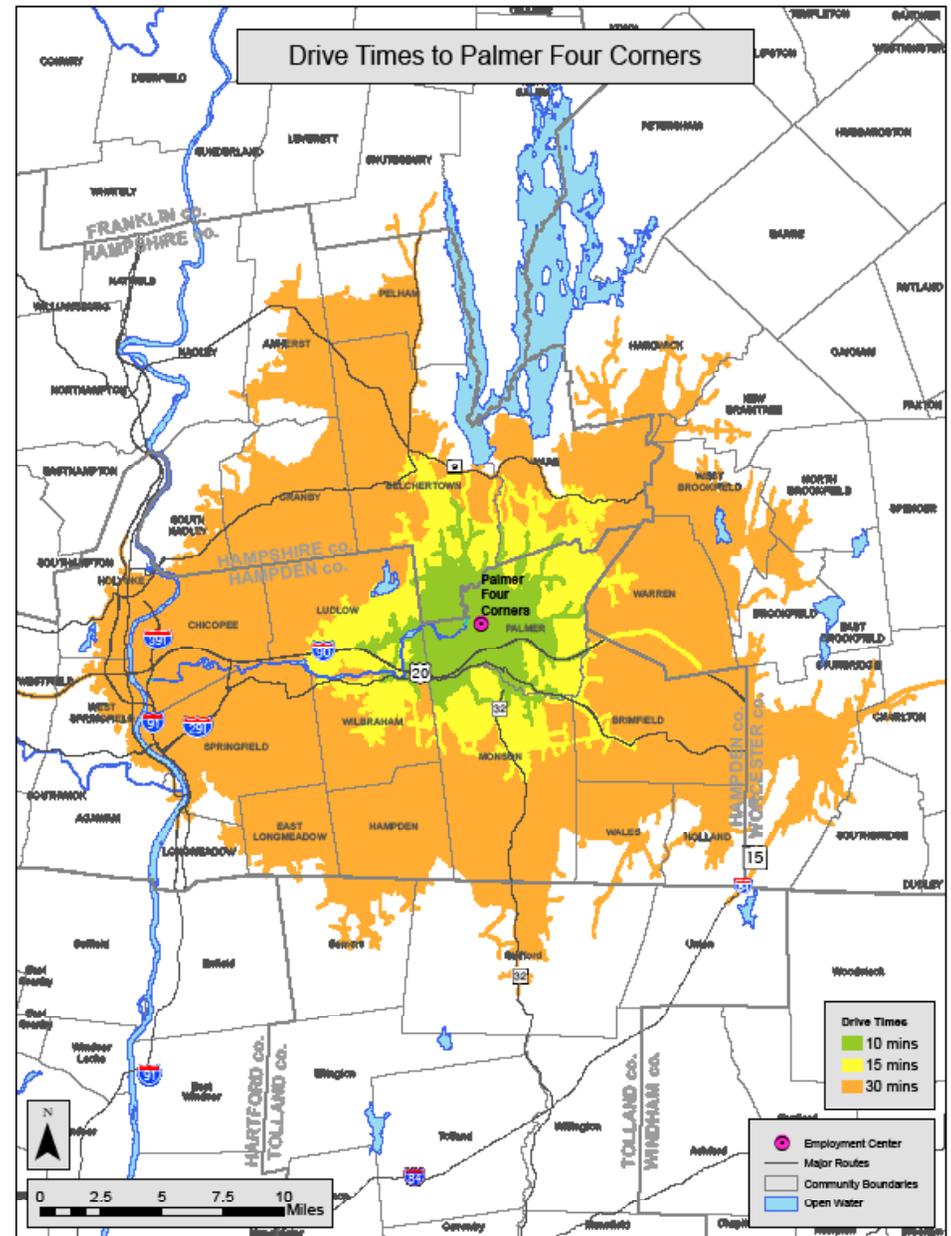
Palmer, MA - Four Corners

Palmer Four Corners area is a unique employment center in that it is the most distant from a large urban center. It also has the smallest labor force with about 18,000 workers living within a 15-minute radius of the Four Corners intersection. This commute area encompasses workers from Palmer and adjacent areas of Belchertown, Ware, Monson, Wilbraham and Ludlow. Currently, the main employer in Palmer is a hospital; however, there are several potential business development sites in the city where future growth is anticipated. Due to its distance from major employment centers to the east or west, the average commute time is over 26 minutes.

This employment center has the highest percentage of workers commuting by car at 94%, with 9% carpooling. 1% walk to work and 4% work at home. Palmer Four Corners is not served by transit, but is located on Interstate 90, and connected to several surrounding communities via state highways. Palmer also has a relatively high percent of workers employed outside the county at 23%, which also explains the longer commute time.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	18,415	184,289
Commuters	16,500	163,436
Work at home	4%	4%
Work Out of County	23%	15%
Work Out of State	6%	9%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	26.3	23.3
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	94%	90%
Carpool*	9%	10%
Walk	1%	3%
Public transit	0%	3%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



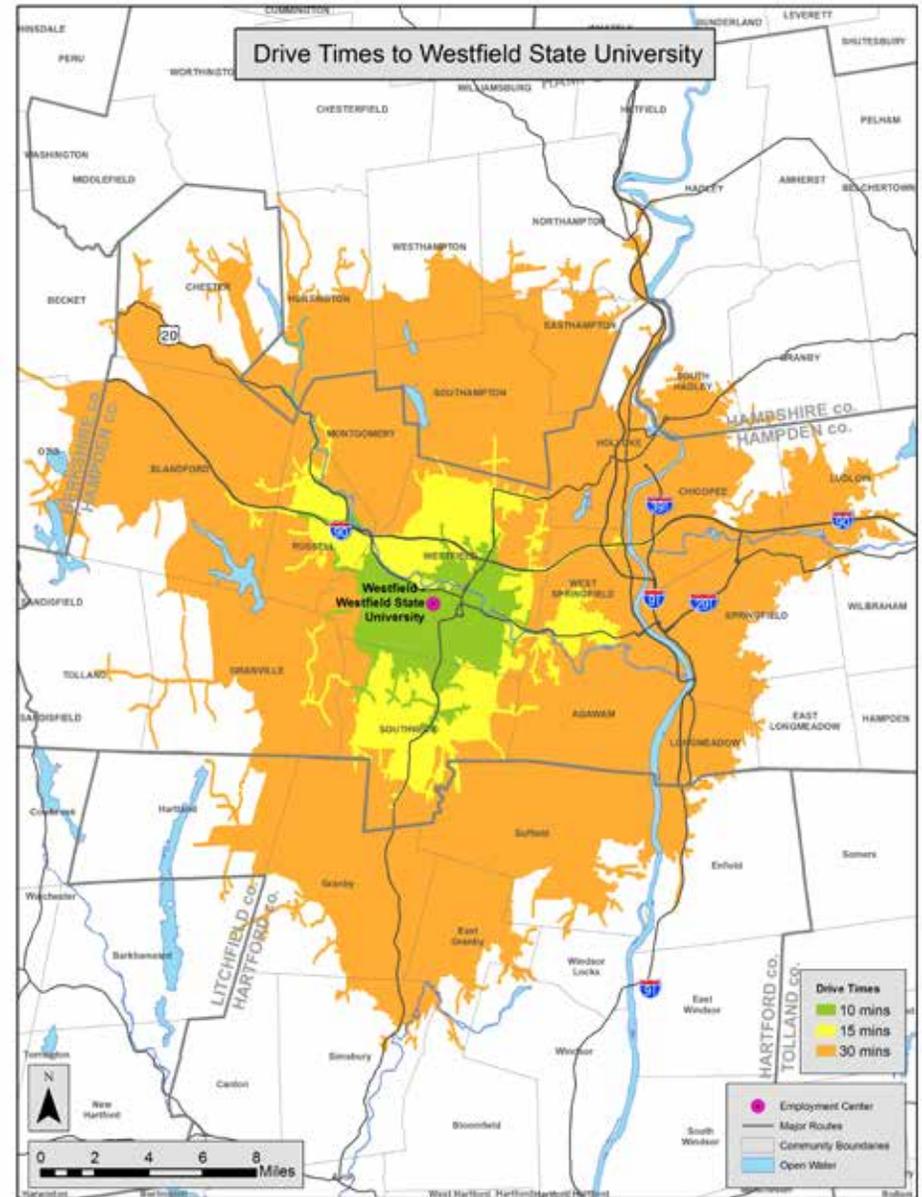
Westfield, MA - Westfield State University

Westfield, at the outskirts of the Springfield metro area, has two major employers – a hospital and a state university, both of which employ over 500 people. The labor force within a 15-minute commute of these locations is 26,337, and includes residents of Westfield, Russell, Southwick and West Springfield. The commute time of 23.2 minutes also reflects its distance from other employment centers.

Westfield has one of the highest rates of workers who commute by vehicle at 93%. Eight percent of these workers carpool. 2% walk and 1% use public transit. Similar to Chicopee, 11% of workers travel out-of-state and the same percentage travel outside Hampden County for work. Many employment centers in Hampshire County to the north are 30-45 minutes away, as are many Connecticut towns to the south. Even employment centers in Springfield and its surrounding communities are 30 minutes away. This combination of factors likely explain the higher average commute time.

	Within 15 Min. Commute	Within 30 Min. Commute
Labor force	26,337	211,566
Commuters	25,249	189,399
Work at home	4%	3%
Work Out of County	11%	13%
Work Out of State	11%	9%
Mean Travel Time (minutes)	23.2	22
Commute Mode:		
Personal vehicle	93%	91%
Carpool*	8%	10%
Walk	2%	3%
Public transit	1%	1%

* Carpoolers are a subset of those commuting by Personal Vehicle.



Summary

Analysis of labor force and commute patterns around major employment centers in the Pioneer Valley region illuminate several common themes. First, workers who live further from a major urban center tend to be more car-dependent, have longer commute times and generally have fewer employment options. Second, mid-sized communities located at the northern end of the region, such as Amherst, Northampton and Hatfield, are more likely to have higher rates of walkers, transit-users and individuals who work at home. Lastly, although a majority of the labor force benefits from the distribution of employers across the region, many workers also take advantage of the easy access to the interstate Knowledge Corridor region and commute outside the Pioneer Valley and Massachusetts to employment opportunities in nearby Connecticut.

There appear to be many reasons why commute times in the Pioneer Valley are lower than in other parts of the Commonwealth. The dispersion of employment centers helps to reduce traffic congestion and the growing tendency of some commuters to walk, bike or carpool to work helps to reduce the number of motorized vehicles on the roads. While commuters from some employment centers are more car-dependent than others, this fact doesn't negatively impact the majority of commute times. Instead, since the more car-dependent commuters live in different areas of the region, their affect on traffic congestion is limited. Thus, while there are several large employment centers in the Pioneer Valley region, the regionwide distribution of those centers as well as the workers commuting to them, combined with varied commute modes and a decentralized road network, generate significant in-region job opportunities as well as shorter commute times for the workers looking to access employment within the Pioneer Valley region..