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PVPC NEWS

Regional Data Website Launched for the Pioneer Valley

A new website, www.pioneervalleydata.org, has been launched to provide key regional economic, planning, and workforce data through a publicly accessible portal. This website, known as the Pioneer Valley Data Portal, is a collaborative initiative of PVPC, the Economic Development Council of Western MA (EDC), the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County (REB), and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG).

Known as the Regional Organizations Advanced Data Sharing (ROADS) partnership, the executive leadership of PVPC, the EDC, and the REB initially met in March of 2012 to collaborate on the accuracy and collection of regional information that could be utilized by key regional stakeholders. The partnership was expanded a year later to include Franklin County with the addition of FRCOG. The goal of the working group was to collaborate around data gathering and analysis in new ways that will save time and provide more accurate information. Previously, staff from multiple organizations might be gathering the same data separately in their own offices and storing it in their own files; now, one person will gather that piece of data and put it in a database that can be shared by all.

Now this resource is available to the public. The idea is not to duplicate existing sources of easily accessible data such as Census Bureau or Bureau of Labor Statistics information, but to be a collective resource of information that is difficult to locate for the inexperienced user, to capture these data sets in a database, and to keep them updated.

The development of this cloud-based database system took about 18 months before it was ready for public use, and was supported in part by the Western Massachusetts Electric Company as part of their work to encourage regional collaboration and economic development. Hundreds of data sets, such as statistics on poverty, health, crime, education, employment, transportation, and housing, are available, covering geographical regions from Franklin County, Massachusetts to the Central Region in

Connecticut.

Contact: [Molly Goren-Watts](#), Principal Planner/Manager

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PVPC Embarks on Statewide Food Systems Plan

With staff work to implement the Pioneer Valley's new [Food Security Plan](#) well underway, PVPC is now joining in a statewide food system planning initiative for the Massachusetts Food Policy Council and Department of Agricultural Resources. Led by the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council, PVPC is teaming up with the Franklin Region Council of Governments and the Massachusetts Workforce Alliance to facilitate an 18-month planning effort focusing on food issues all regions of Massachusetts.



La Finquita in Holyoke is a community garden operated by Nuestras Raices, a community-based organization. Ramping up locally based food production with gardens such as this will be one of the many options considered as part of the Massachusetts Food Systems Plan, for which PVPC will be leading community outreach.

The plan will be Massachusetts' first statewide food planning effort since 1978. Since then, the loss of farmland, suburban sprawl, relatively flat population growth, poverty, and hunger have persisted. In addition, Massachusetts produces a very small portion of the food that it consumes (about four percent). If food imports or refrigerated supplies were to be disrupted by severe weather or prolonged power outages, there is no way our local food production could meet demand.

Yet there are exciting new opportunities to increase the production of food in our region and Massachusetts as a whole. These include more farmers markets, so-called CSA (community supported agriculture) farms with paid memberships, "Farm to School" programs, commitments by supermarkets and co-ops to buy from local farmers, healthy community programs, and more local food processing companies, to name just a few. These new activities are demonstrating that local food is not only healthy and tasty. It's good for our local economy, too!

Contact: [David Elvin](#), Senior Planner

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Shared Public Health Nurse Assistance Program Expanded

PVPC has received \$110,000 from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Administration and Finance (EOAF) to expand the efforts of the Hampden County Shared Public Health Nurse Assistance program. With this funding, PVPC and partner communities will continue to diligently work together to address long-term unmet needs and service local public health gaps by expanding the existing Shared Public Health Nurse Assistance Program and offering supplemental shared public health nursing services among nine participating municipalities.

The expansion of the program will include a community-wide public health assessment and the hiring of a Public Health Community Educator. These services will work in concert with the established services of the shared public health nurse, which include but are not limited to disease surveillance and reporting on MAVEN (Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network); public health education; assistance with setting up, administering, and billing flu clinics and flu vaccines; and establishing blood pressure screening clinics.

For this grant period, the nine Hampden County communities participating in this program are the city of West Springfield and the towns of Blandford, East Longmeadow, Granville, Ludlow, Palmer, Southwick, Tolland, and Montgomery. PVPC and the oversight committee will be conducting outreach to non-participating municipalities in the hope of expanding services to include other communities within Hampden County.

Contact: [Joshua Garcia](#), Municipal Services Coordinator

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Draft of Springfield Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Completed

PVPC, in collaboration with the City of Springfield and the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition, has completed a draft of the City's first Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. The plan makes recommendations for a network of Complete Streets that provides safe, accessible transportation options for bicyclists, pedestrians, motorists, and transit riders. Other recommendations include increasing bicycle parking and improving wayfinding signage. The development of the plan involved an extensive public outreach process that engaged the residents of Springfield about what bicycle and walking improvements they would like to see in their city.

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan is part of the City's work on Live Well Springfield, a program dedicated to promoting healthy eating and living. Funded by a \$2 million dollar grant awarded to PVPC from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Community Transformation Grant initiative, Live Well Springfield is working to make healthy living easier and more affordable where people live, work, learn, and play, as well as to promote healthy eating and

active living to help improve health and reduce health disparities. More information can be found at livewellspringfield.org.

Contact: [Josiah Neiderbach](#), Land Use and Environmental Planner

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New GPS Unit Available for Loan to Municipal Staff

PVPC has recently received a Garmin Oregon 650 GPS unit, which will be made available to municipal staff for use in city/town projects. This GPS is not capable of survey or high-accuracy mapping, but is very well suited for mapping locations intended for general planning purposes. The unit is user-friendly and has an 8 Mp camera on-board, which geo-tags photos with coordinate information.

City and town officials wishing to make use of this loaner GPS are invited to contact Todd Zukowski at (413)781-6045 or by email at tzukowski@pvpc.org to discuss your project needs and check availability/scheduling of the Garmin GPS being made available through this program.

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Pine Street Area Traffic Study in Florence

PVPC is preparing a draft report studying the traffic operations and safety along several streets that provide access from Route 9 to Route 66 in Florence. Specifically, the travel direction of Pine Street from Chestnut Street to South Main Street is being further analyzed, as it is believed to be used as a shortcut to the Route 66 area. The goal of this study is to analyze existing transportation conditions and develop recommendations to improve operating conditions in this area.

Contact: [Amir Kouzehkanani](#), Principal Transportation Planner/Manager

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Regional Traffic Counts: 2009-2013

PVPC is in the process of updating its latest traffic count report, which includes average daily traffic data for its member communities. This information can be used as the basis for transportation studies and to identify trends in traffic volumes, which assist in the development of seasonal adjustment factors and future growth rates.

Contact: [Amir Kouzehkanani](#), Principal Transportation Planner/Manager

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Joint Transportation Committee Meetings

April 9, May 14, June 11
10:15 a.m. at PVPC office

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Plan for Progress Coordinating Council Meetings

May 21, June 18
8:15 a.m. at PVPC office

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PVPC Commission Meetings

Executive Committee:

April 24, May 22, June 26
4 p.m. at PVPC office

Commission:

April 10, 5:30 p.m. at Clarion Hotel, Northampton
Annual Meeting June 19 (Hampden County location TBA)

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