

CHAPTER 2



Photo: PVTA Bus Shelter

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

The Pioneer Valley MPO is required by federal law to conduct the metropolitan transportation planning process for the region based on the requirements of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The final rules on Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning and Metropolitan Transportation Planning were published on May 27, 2016 and set the requirements for the transportation planning process. The Pioneer Valley MPO seeks to develop a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3C) transportation planning process in concert with our federal, state and local partners. As the lead planning agency for the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is responsible for the day to day management of this process.

A. REQUIREMENTS

1. Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act

The FAST Act was signed into law by President Obama on December 4, 2015. This transportation bill specifically addresses all modes of transportation and enhances many of the existing provisions and programs defined in past transportation legislation.

National goal areas identified as part of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act continue to be a priority under the FAST Act and address the following areas:

- **Safety**—To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.
- **Infrastructure condition**—To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.
- **Congestion reduction**—To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the NHS.
- **System reliability**—To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.
- **Freight movement and economic vitality**—To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.
- **Environmental sustainability**—To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- **Reduced project delivery delays**—To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies’ work practices.

a) FAST Act Planning Factors

All metropolitan planning organizations are required to incorporate ten factors into their planning process. The Pioneer Valley MPO has taken great strides to incorporate these ten factors into the regional planning process. The Ten Planning Factors are:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.
- Enhancing travel and tourism.

2. Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990

The Regional Transportation Plan must demonstrate compliance with federal Clean Air legislation – the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Specifically, the RTP must demonstrate of how this plan will work to achieve National Ambient Air Quality standards. This compliance is addressed as part of Chapter 16 of the RTP.

3. Title VI/ Environmental Justice

Title VI states that "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." Title VI bars intentional discrimination as well as disparate impact discrimination (i.e., a neutral policy or practice that has a disparate impact on protected groups).

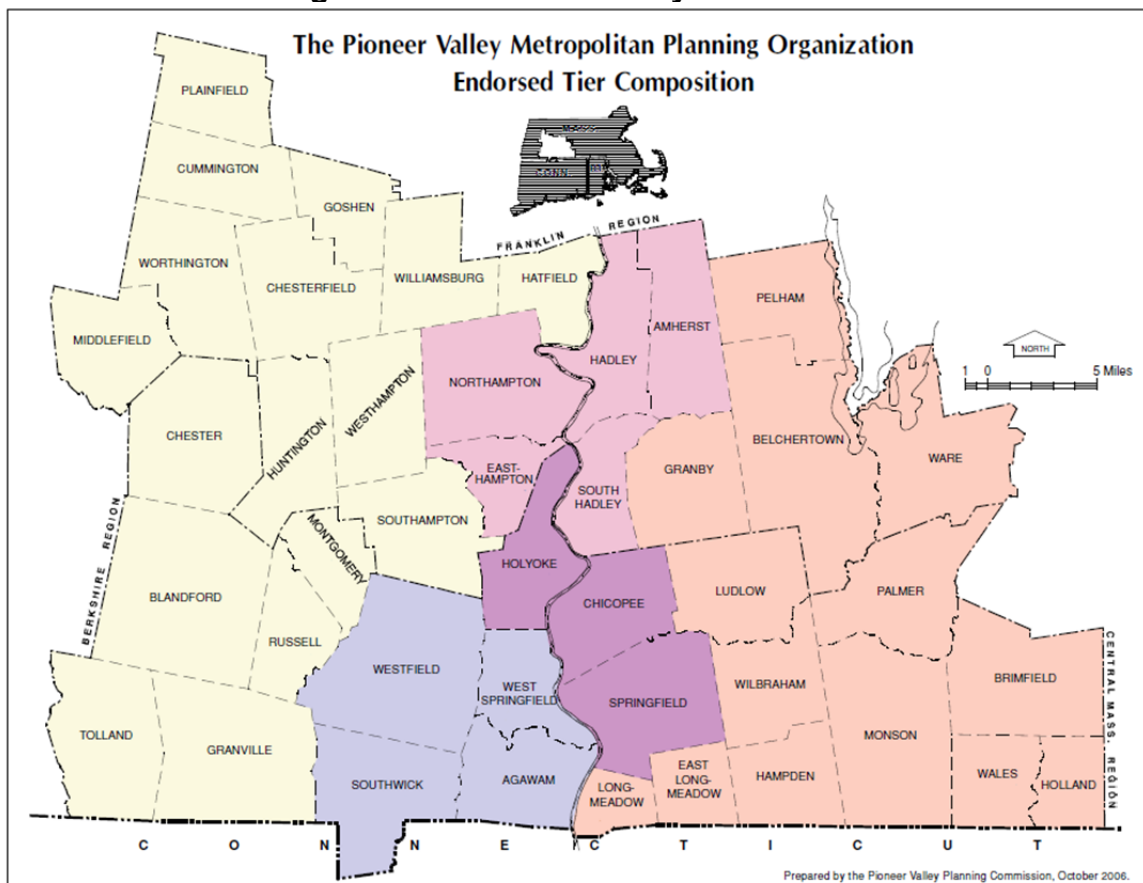
The Environmental Justice (EJ) Orders further amplify Title VI by providing that "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."

Both Title VI and Environmental Justice are covered in greater detail as part of Chapter 4 of the RTP. This also included a self-certification of the MPO's compliance with Title VI and Environmental Justice planning requirements.

B. THE PIONEER VALLEY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

The Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) implements and oversees the 3C transportation planning process to provide an open comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing transportation planning and programming process in conformance with federal and state requirements. The Pioneer Valley MPO was restructured in August of 2006 to enhance the role of the local communities in the transportation planning process and allow local MPO members to represent sub-regional districts respective to community size and geographic location. A more recent update in 2017 recognized the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council as a voting member.

Figure 2-1 – Pioneer Valley MPO



The Pioneer Valley MPO consists of the following officials, their designee (as allowed under the current Memorandum of Understanding), or alternate.

- The Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation
- The Administrator of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Highways Division
- The Chair of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- The Chair of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
- The President and CEO of the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council (EDC)
- The Mayors of two of the following three (3) urban core cities:

Chicopee	Holyoke	Springfield
----------	---------	-------------
- The Mayor or a Selectman of one of the following four (4) cities and towns:

Agawam	Southwick	Westfield
West Springfield		
- The Mayor or a Selectman of one of the following five (5) cities and towns:

Amherst	Easthampton	Hadley
Northampton	South Hadley	
- A Selectman of one of the following fourteen (14) suburban and rural towns:

Belchertown	Brimfield	East Longmeadow
Granby	Hampden	Holland
Longmeadow	Ludlow	Monson
Palmer	Pelham	Wales
Ware	Wilbraham	
- A Selectman of one of the following seventeen (17) suburban and rural towns:

Blandford	Chester	Chesterfield
Cummington	Goshen	Granville
Hatfield	Huntington	Middlefield
Montgomery	Plainfield	Russell
Southampton	Tolland	Westhampton
Williamsburg	Worthington	

In addition, the Administrator of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) Chair, and one representative each from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the five (5) alternate community MPO representatives, and one representative each from both the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Highway Division District One and District Two Offices shall be

considered ex-officio, non-voting members of the Pioneer Valley MPO. Alternate members shall be additional chief elected officials from each of the above-cited categories of communities and he/she shall be eligible to attend, participate and vote at MPO meetings in the event that the primary member cannot attend.

The MPO jointly develops, reviews, and endorses core planning documents such as the Regional Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program and Transportation Improvement Program. The MPO also oversees all amendments to these core plans and other programs that are required by federal and state laws and regulations.

a) Joint Transportation Committee (JTC)

The Pioneer Valley Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) is the region's transportation advisory group for the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The committee is designed to assist the MPO in incorporating citizen participation in transportation decisions which provides a mechanism for federal, state, and local input into the regional transportation planning process. Each member community is asked to appoint two representatives (a representative and an alternate) to the committee. The Pioneer Valley MPO also appoints other transportation organizations in the region to serve on the JTC.

The JTC convenes monthly meetings open to the public. The planning program and the various functional elements of the planning process are developed cooperatively with the JTC with the purpose of establishing a recommendation for action by MPO. The JTC is responsible for coordination of all regional transportation related plans and programs in cooperation with PVPC staff and Pioneer Valley MPO.

i) **Bicycle, Pedestrian and Complete Streets Subcommittee**

The Pioneer Valley Joint Transportation's Bicycle, Pedestrian and Complete Streets Subcommittee was established by the JTC in 2000. The subcommittee is responsible for the oversight and coordination of planning activities related to non-motorized modes of transportation.

ii) **TIP Subcommittee**

The Pioneer Valley Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Subcommittee was established by the JTC in 2003. The goal of the subcommittee is to develop recommendations for the entire JTC on candidate projects to be included as part of the current TIP. Factors such as the project's score from the Pioneer Valley Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC), current design status, environmental permitting status, and

status of any needed right of way acquisition are all used to develop the listing of projects recommended for inclusion in the TIP.

C. KEY PRODUCTS

1. Transportation Improvement Program

The Pioneer Valley TIP is a four-year schedule of priority highway, bridge, transit, and multimodal projects identified by year and location complete with funding source and cost. The TIP is developed annually and is available for amendment and adjustment at any time. Each program year of the TIP coincides with the Federal Fiscal Year calendar, October 1 through September 30. All TIPs and amendments are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley region and are financially constrained. More information on the TIP can be found [here](#).

2. Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a narrative description of the annual technical work program for the region. The UPWP provides an indication of regional long and short-range transportation planning objectives, the manner in which these objectives will be achieved, the budget necessary to sustain the overall planning effort, and the sources of funding for each specific program element. Work tasks included as part of the UPWP are reflective of issues and concerns originating from transportation agencies at the federal, state, and local levels. More information on the UPWP can be found [here](#).

3. Public Participation Process

The MPO has a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access to MPO activities at all key stages in the decision making process. The MPO involves the public early in the planning process, and actively seeks out the involvement of communities most affected by particular plans or projects. The Region's transportation plans and programs are developed in a manner that assures that the public, and affected communities in particular, are consulted and afforded ample opportunity to participate in the development of such plans. The most recent version of the Public Participation plan for the MPO can be found [here](#).

4. RTP Amendment Process

If, during the four year cycle of the adopted long range transportation plan (RTP), it becomes apparent that changes are necessary, the RTP will be amended by redefining the appropriate chapter or section as necessary. All

changes will be developed in cooperation with MassDOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA), and other concerned agencies as appropriate. Typical changes include, but are not limited to:

- Modification of the Financial Constraint Chapter to reflect changes in projected transportation funding as presented in the endorsed RTP.
- Changes required by FHWA or FTA to demonstrate conformity.
- The addition or removal of a regionally significant project that impacts the current Transportation Improvement Program.
- Other actions as defined or requested by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), or the Pioneer Valley MPO.

Proposed amendments to the RTP will be presented to the Pioneer Valley MPO for release for a minimum 21 day public comment period and require MPO endorsement at the end of the agreed comment period.

Figure 2-2 – Regional Transportation Planning Process Flowchart

