

# CHAPTER 3

## 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 on 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 2 hour 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 as part of the Chapter 1 of the RTP. There were a total of five focus groups on the RTP.

- October 8, 2014 – Bicycle and Pedestrian Focus Group
- November 6, 2014 – Transit Focus Group
- November 6, 2014 – Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Focus Group
- November 12, 2014 – Infrastructure Focus Group
- November 20, 2014 – Freight Focus Group

In the past PVPC staff also presented elements of the draft RTP at six public meetings geographically spread across the region (Amherst, Chesterfield, Northampton, Springfield, Ware, and Westfield). Attendance at these public meetings was historically very low so an on-line video was developed in consultation with the JTC and MPO to provide a brief overview of the RTP in a format that was more accessible to residents of the Pioneer Valley.

Videos were made available through the PVPC website in December 2014. The video is approximately 15 minutes long and was recorded in both English and Spanish. Complete transcripts of the video narration are also available on the PVPC website. The link to the RTP video is:

<http://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/RTP%20movie%20Medium%20Quality.mp4>

### A. 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.

An environmental consultation day was scheduled to allow the opportunity for discussion and comment on the potential environmental impacts of transportation projects included in the regional transportation plan. PVPC created larger scale maps of many of the figures presented in the RTP and invited a number of special interest groups to comment on the Draft RTP.

- Wednesday, May 13, 2015 – Environmental Consultation Day, 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM, PVPC Office

Two public meetings to solicit public comments on the Draft Regional Transportation Plan were scheduled for 7:00 PM at the following locations:

- July 14, 2015 - Northampton City Hall City Council Chambers, 210 Main Street
- July 16, 2015 - Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Springfield, 60 Congress Street

Copies of the Draft RTP were made available for public review at: the Agawam, Amherst, Blandford, Chicopee, Easthampton, Holyoke, Ludlow, Monson, Northampton, Plainfield, South Hadley, Springfield, Ware, West Springfield and Westfield libraries; the Springfield office of PVPC; and, on-line from PVPC's web page at [www.pvpc.org](http://www.pvpc.org).

**Table 3-1 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP during Environmental Consultation**

<b>Comment</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>MPO Response</b>
List TEC Score Subtotals so that people can see how projects performed in each subcategory	Lynn Benander, Co-op Power	This change has been made for TEC scoring summaries.
Expand the type of projects on the list to find more creative ways to achieve TEC goals in new ways. Consider allocating a larger share of the budget to projects that are unrelated to personal vehicle transportation.	Lynn Benander, Co-op Power	The MPO will continue to work to develop an equitable mix of regional transportation projects.
Please add the new and proposed bikeway projects that the City has been working on. These projects include projects in design and proposed projects.	Wayne Feiden, City of Northampton	These changes will be incorporated into the Final RTP.
Please include the new bike lane on 75. Also, the Town is interested in expanding bike lanes on several roads in town. Please refer to mark-ups on the map.	Michelle Chase, Town of Agawam	These changes will be incorporated into the Final RTP.
The town is interested in bicycling and walking connections to surrounding communities including access to Forest Park. Converse Street is being reconstructed. The Town is interested in a Complete Streets Policy.	Marie Angelides, Town of Longmeadow	The MPO will continue to work with the Town of Longmeadow to advance opportunities to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connections.
Please add the new bikeway projects that the town is developing (see map mark-ups).	Dick Grannels, Town of Southwick	These changes will be incorporated into the Final RTP.
EJ Minority area seems inaccurate (West Springfield)	Anonymous	The Minority areas meet the regional definition as defined by the MPO based on 2010 Census data.
Roundabouts – particularly the forthcoming project for Damon Road should make use of the center island for stormwater management.	Anonymous	Comment Noted
To promote best practices/sustainability, there should be dollars specifically devoted to best example projects in the region, perhaps meeting criteria of “Living Community Challenge.” This dedicated funding could be similar to allocations currently devoted to safety/high crash intersections.	Anonymous	Comment Noted
There should be funds dedicated to projects with high sustainability scoring, similar to how there is safety money available only for high crash locations.	Anonymous	Comment Noted
Damon Road is now a joke! I have stopped using it because of the stupid new traffic light for the train. Any energy savings gained from new people taking the train are far outweighed by wasted fuel and time in the new Damon Road back-ups.	Anonymous	Comment Noted
The projects are all about motor vehicle capacity accommodation and enhancement. Exit 19 project is an example. But putting this money into auto trip demand reduction measures (bikes, transit, ped) is a far more viable, long term approach. Please show us an alternative TIP with 90% of funds dedicated to auto trip reductions.	Anonymous	Comment Noted

**Table 3-2 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP as Part of the 30 Day Public Participation Process**

#	Comment	From	MPO Response
1	The MPO should clearly distinguish between the Operations & Maintenance as defined in Title 23 and that of the PVPC Financial Plan. The Financial Plan labels Operations and Maintenance as expenditures which include reconstruction, transportation studies, bridge replacement and other various transportation improvements. These activities are different from maintenance that upkeep and preserve the existing system (i.e sweeping, mowing, crack sealing, bridge washing, signals, rolling stock maintenance). For the purposes of operations and maintenance the financial plan shall contact system level estimates of cost and revenue sources that are reasonably expected to main the federal aid highways and public transportation system (23 CFR 450.324(7)(h)). This demonstration should occur prior to project development to ensure there are adequate resources to maintain the system while implementing improvements.	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	The Financial Plan has been updated to address these comments and demonstrate sufficient resources are available to maintain the existing transportation system. This information is presented in Tables 13-4 and 13-5.
2	The Financial Constraint summary should separate highway from transit revenue. It addition it is unclear whether Rail commitments are programmed into these categories.	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	This change has been made as requested.
3	The Financial Plan should identify all necessary sources of funding or strategies to fund transportation projects and needs. The chapter includes several Rail improvements and operational needs. The RTP should identify funding or otherwise specify them as unfunded or illustrative needs.	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	This change has been made as requested.
4	The MPO should verify that the total programmed commitments on Table 13-13 matches total programmed commitments on Table 13-18 and so forth.	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	This change has been made as requested.
5	Verify that the transit capital improvement commitments meet financial constraint of available revenue in table 13-5	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	This change has been made as requested.
6	The MPO should consider describing strategies how “Additional Projects” will be identified in each program category from FY 2016-2040.	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	Additional information has been added to the Financial Chapter to explain how additional projects will be identified.
7	Table 13-8 is missing the Total Estimated Highway Revenue	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	This table has been corrected.
8	Instances of 2012 RTP should be corrected to 2016 RTP where appropriate (Pg. 413, 417, 437)	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	These corrections have been made.
9	The MPO has made significant efforts to incorporate performance measures into its planning and programming documents. The MPO should continue to demonstrate the consistency between the RTP and TIP implementation in regards to performance. The system performance report card will provide a good benchmark for your next RTP update.	Brandon Wilcox, FHWA	Comment noted.
10	Good comprehensive prioritized project lists, including transit.	Nicolas Garcia, FTA	Comment noted.

**Table 3-2 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP as Part of the 30 Day Public Participation Process (cont.)**

<b>#</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>MPO Response</b>
11	Financial section appears to contain all the required information.	Nicolas Garcia, FTA	Comment noted.
12	Please combine the revenue and needs tables so that it's easier to compare costs and revenues (or instead of fully combining them, you could also just carry forward the total revenue figure into the needs table).	Nicolas Garcia, FTA	This change has been made as requested.
13	Please include a grand total column in the needs tables.	Nicolas Garcia, FTA	This change has been made as requested.
14	It looks like Transit Capital needs outweigh projected revenues by a wide margin--this is fine but you need to identify a fiscally constrained subset of projects which will be funded if no additional revenue becomes available.	Nicolas Garcia, FTA	The Financial Plan has been updated to address these comments and demonstrate sufficient resources are available
15	There seem to be some issues with the total capital needs calculations: In the Needs Table (13-4) the grand total comes to \$784M. However, in the discussion on p. 425, it states that the total need is \$660M, a lower figure. And then it goes on to say that the needs are double the available funds (\$518M) which isn't true for either of the above figures. Please clarify what precisely the total needs and revenues are, and fix any discrepancies.	Nicolas Garcia, FTA	Additional information has been added to the Financial Chapter to clarify the transit component.
16	The draft RTP is very long at 519 pages. MassDOT suggests that in 2020 when the next RTP is drafted, that the region take a more contemporary approach to a planning document: short concise narrative, reliant on graphics, maps and figures to communicate complex ideas, under 100 pages for principle content and appendices for technical information understood mostly by transportation professionals.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	Comment noted.
17	MPO staff is commended for identifying discrete problems through public outreach processes, transportation needs categorized by priority and strategy based solutions.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	Comment noted.
18	Please replace the term "alternative modes" throughout the document with "healthy transportation" or "bicycling, transit and walking."	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	This change has been made as requested.
19	Chapter 1 -This chapter seems redundant to the Executive Summary and in some instances seems to contain verbatim text. This chapter could be shortened and be more truly introductory in nature.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	Chapter 1 will be modified as part of future updates to the RTP.
20	Chapter 2 -This chapter should be briefer while more descriptive of the . transportation planning process. The chapter currently reads as a series of descriptions of agencies, programs and initiatives without sufficient linkages. between each for the reader to understand how transportation planning is conducted. Use of graphics to illustrate processes and decision making is recommended.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	Chapter 2 will be modified as part of future updates to the RTP.

**Table 3-2 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP as Part of the 30 Day Public Participation Process (cont.)**

#	Comment	From	MPO Response
21	Chapter 3 - Page 62 -The last paragraph should be checked for writing and grammatical errors.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	This change has been made as requested.
22	Chapter 10 - Page 287 -The system performance report is a very clear way to communicate the needs of the region. This information may be useful in the Executive Summary to differentiate it from Chapter 1.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	Comment noted.
23	Chapter 12 - This is a very robust discussion on needs and strategies. The projects that are listed should be more clearly shown to be priorities to be considered for regional target funding or recommendations to MassDOT for funding by statewide sources.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	Projects included as part of Chapter 12 have been ranked as "High, Medium, and Low" priorities based on input received from monthly Joint Transportation Committee meetings, focus group discussions, and the public participation process. In addition all projects have been mapped by this prioritization scheme to clearly indicate the regional prioritization.
24	Chapter 13 - This chapter presents the project funding in a somewhat confusing manner. The tables in the chapter could be revised to be clearer, especially in regards to what the MPO will be programming through their target funding sources, and what is being recommended to MassDOT for funding by statewide sources.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	The Financial Chapter has been reorganized and clarified to clearly present all information based on comments received from FHWA, FTA, and MassDOT.
25	Chapter 15 and 16 -These chapters should be presented earlier in the document as to inform the reader of how Title VI, Environmental Justice and public participation in general influenced the vision, goal setting, metrics, needs, strategies and priority recommendations of the RTP. Chapter 16 could be more robust in its discussion of how the public was engaged, and how that feedback was incorporated into the plan.	David Mohler, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	These chapters will be relocated to appear after Chapter 2 in the final version of the document

**Table 3-2 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP as Part of the 30 Day Public Participation Process (cont.)**

#	Comment	From	MPO Response
26	Please find the attached response to CLF for inclusion in either 1) your responses to RTP comments documentation, and/or 2) in you actual RTP documents if not yet finalized. This is in response to the comment letters from the Conservation Law Foundation, contending that air quality conformity determinations for ozone precursors should continue to be conducted in Massachusetts. The last paragraph in particular is essentially the action that we are taking to address the issues raised.	Trey Wadsworth, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	The CLF response will be included as part of the Conformity Chapter of the Final RTP.
27	You likely already have something very similar to the text below for your CO area, but if you have the opportunity to bolster your RTP text for more explanation, you should do so) - The Lowell, Waltham, Worcester and Springfield Areas are classified attainment for carbon monoxide with a limited maintenance plan in place. No regional air quality analysis is required in limited maintenance plan areas as emissions may be treated as essentially not constraining for the length of the maintenance period because it is unreasonable to expect that such areas will experience so much growth in that period that a violation of the carbon monoxide NAAQS would result. Therefore, in areas with approved limited maintenance plans, Federal actions requiring conformity determinations under the transportation conformity rule are considered to satisfy the "budget test." All other transportation conformity requirements under 40 CFR 93.109(b) continue to apply in limited maintenance areas, including project level conformity determinations based on carbon monoxide hot spot analyses under 40 CFR 93.116.	Bob Frey, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	The section on "Carbon Monoxide Limited Maintenance Plan" of the Conformity Chapter has been updated to include this more concise text regarding CO maintenance areas.
28	Please find attached the final MassDOT RTP forecasts out to 2040 for population, households, and employment by municipality for Massachusetts. These totals reflect numerous comments and discussions I have had with many of you since April, and while they continue to be based largely on the forecast work of the UMass Donahue Institute and MAPC, they do reflect input received from all RPA staff for areas outside of the MAPC region.	Bob Frey, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning	The updated socio-economic forecasts have been included as part of the Final RTP.
29	This 522 page RTP is very robust, and a bit overwhelming. For the 2020 RTP, planning efforts should include the creation of a more concise document to encourage community involvement.	Laura Hanson, MassDOT – Projects, Highway Division District 2	Comment noted.
30	From time to time, MassDOT issues formal engineering and policy directives to introduce new design standards or to supplement, clarify or amend existing design standards. This should be referenced in the RTP with the following link since it provides the most recent list of MassDOT Engineering Directives to be used during project design: <a href="http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/DesignEngineering/EngineeringDirectives/ListofEngineeringDirectives.aspx">http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/DesignEngineering/EngineeringDirectives/ListofEngineeringDirectives.aspx</a>	Laura Hanson, MassDOT – Projects, Highway Division District 2	This change has been made as requested.

**Table 3-2 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP as Part of the 30 Day Public Participation Process (cont.)**

#	Comment	From	MPO Response
31	Page 493 Item B 1.a should mention or discuss Estimated Habitat, as a GIS sub set of Priority Habitat, or in general. Priority should be capitalized. <a href="http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/regulatory-review/regulatory-maps-priority-and-estimated-habitats/">http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/regulatory-review/regulatory-maps-priority-and-estimated-habitats/</a>	Robert Natario, MassDOT – Environmental, Highway Division District 2	This change has been made as requested.
32	Page 493 Item B 1. b Mass Stream Crossing Standards were developed by the Dept of Fish and Game, Division of Ecological Restoration, and UMass is normally given credit for developing the original Standards in 2004.	Robert Natario, MassDOT – Environmental, Highway Division District 2	This change has been made as requested.
33	Page 494 Item B 1. c It is suggested to include or mention The Design Guide, Chapter 14, Wildlife Accommodation. Chapter 14 - <a href="http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/8/docs/designGuide/CH_14.pdf">http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/8/docs/designGuide/CH_14.pdf</a> Design Guide - <a href="http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/ManualsPublicationsForms/ProjectDevelopmentDesignGuide.aspx">http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/ManualsPublicationsForms/ProjectDevelopmentDesignGuide.aspx</a> . It is also suggested to change the Link provided to the Link below: <a href="http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/Departments/EnvironmentalServices/FormsPublicationsDocuments/StormwaterManagement.aspx">http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/Departments/EnvironmentalServices/FormsPublicationsDocuments/StormwaterManagement.aspx</a>	Robert Natario, MassDOT – Environmental, Highway Division District 2	This change has been made as requested.
34	Suggest changing the existing language on Page 494 regarding the Wetlands Protection Act to:  The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act provides definitions of wetland resource areas and their 100 foot Buffer Zones, and gives jurisdiction to the Conservation Commission of each City or Town. If a project is located within a 100 foot Buffer Zone, or proposes work within a wetland, stream or intermittent stream, a proponent must go before the appropriate local Con Com. Depending on the impacts of the project the proponent may need to file either a Request for Determination of Applicability or a Notice of Intent. In turn the Con Com, and DEP would review the project and issue a Determination or an Order of Conditions. If the project requires a NOI and is also within NHESP Habitat, the NOI must be sent to NHESP for their review and comment. There are Buffer Zone and other limited exemptions within the WPA, and as listed above there are exemptions to work within NHESP Habitat. <a href="http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/regulations/310-cmr-10-00-wetlands-protection-act-regulations.html">http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/regulations/310-cmr-10-00-wetlands-protection-act-regulations.html</a>	Robert Natario, MassDOT – Environmental, Highway Division District 2	This change has been made as requested.



**Table 3-2 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP as Part of the 30 Day Public Participation Process (cont.)**

#	Comment	From	MPO Response
35	<p>It is suggested to revise the section on the River Protection Act from Pages 494 &amp; 495 to: Chapter 258 of the Acts of 1996 protects areas within 200 feet of rivers and perennial streams, beginning at the mean annual high water line on both sides of the river or stream. This 200 foot resource area known as Riverfront Area is a consideration the Wetlands Protection Act and is under jurisdiction of the Local Conservation Commissions and DEP.  <a href="http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/regulations/massachusetts-rivers-protection-act.html">http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/regulations/massachusetts-rivers-protection-act.html</a></p>	<p>Jennifer Richard,                      MassDOT Highway                      Division District 2</p>	<p>This change has been made as requested.</p>
36	<p>In looking over the map and text in chapters 8 (page 253) and 9 (page 266-7) that refer to Critical Linkages data on culverts, I had a question (not a formal comment, just asking for clarification). I am wondering if there might have been a slight misinterpretation of these data. The plan refers to these as showing the top 5% of culverts and stream crossings for ecological and hydrological connectivity. If you are using the data TNC sent, or you are using the raw Critical Linkages data but using the delta IEI or impact score, then this interpretation is not entirely matched up to the data. What we sent (which uses the impact score), measures the potential increase in habitat connectivity that results from improving a road-stream crossing. In other words, these would be the top 5% of culverts and stream crossings with the greatest potential to increase the connectivity of surrounding habitat if they were improved.</p> <p>Critical Linkages is very powerful and is being used by MassDOT and EEA and many others, so I think it's a great update to the RTP, but its weakness is that it can be very difficult to explain when you are trying to work it into a document like this. If you have questions about any of the above, or if it would be easier for you to direct the author of this section to take a look and connect with us with questions, feel free to contact Jessica Dyson at <a href="mailto:jdyson@tnc.org">jdyson@tnc.org</a> or 617-532-8349. As she helped develop these data, she's probably the best person to answer questions about their interpretation and how to accurately explain them.</p>	<p>Laura Marx, The Nature Conservancy                      Massachusetts Chapter</p>	<p>This section will be rewritten to clarify the representation of Critical Linkages data as it appears in the RTP.</p>
37	<p>We are still working on getting the NECR 286K upgrade rail project off the ground. We have met with the new MASSDOT secretary and her rail manager. The new DRAFT MASSDOT one year plan notes:                      "The next five-year capital plan will have the opportunity to reflect the priorities of our communities through their respective Regional Transportation Plans that will be endorsed by MPOs this summer."                      I would like to talk about how the NECR 286K project fits into this plan. As you remember, the project was in the bond bill last year and it is highly ranked in the MA State Rail Plan.</p>	<p>Charles Hunter, Genesee &amp; Wyoming Railroad Services, Inc.</p>	<p>Additional information has been added to the RTP on the NECR 286k rail project. The project has also been added as a Visionary project in Chapter 14.</p>

**Table 3-2 – Comments Received on the Draft RTP as Part of the 30 Day Public Participation Process (cont.)**

#	Comment	From	MPO Response
38	I am requesting that a new project the Town has recently started designing be included as a High Priority project in the plan. The project I am referring to is the Memorial Avenue Complete Streets project. The project entails the rehabilitation of the Memorial Avenue (Route 147) corridor from the Route 5/Memorial Avenue Rotary to the Route 147 Bridge over the Westfield River connecting the Town with Agawam.	Edward C. Sullivan, Mayor of West Springfield	This project has been added to the financially constrained section of the RTP as requested.
39	Agawam believes that the Feeding Hills Intersection reconstruction project should be changed from a medium to a high priority. When comparing the TEC score for this project with the other projects that are ranked as a high priority, it seems like this project should fit in that same category. Also, this project is in a critical area that experiences significant congestion. The project also has a great deal of both public and political support.	Michelle C. Chase, Agawam Town Engineer	This change has been made as requested.
40	I wish to express my interest in improvement of Brimfield Road, Holland, MA.	Elaine Lengowski	Comment noted. This project is included as part of the financially constrained section of the RTP.
41	I am writing in support of the Brimfield Road repaving project in Holland. This is one of the main roads leading into Holland and the connector road to Interstate 84 in Union, CT. the road gets a lot of traffic and is in poor condition. I hope this project will be funded soon.	JoAnn Higgins	Comment noted. This project is included as part of the financially constrained section of the RTP.
42	<p>This email is to provide support for the Town of Holland's attempt qualify for a TIP Grant for use in repaving Brimfield Road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As you probably know, major sections of Brimfield Road in Holland are badly in need of resurfacing, with the cost of repair increasing each year as the roadway surface and support deteriorates.</li> <li>• The Town struggled to come up with the funds to proceed with the preliminary engineering work, hoping that having the project 'shovel ready' would improve our chance of receiving the grant when funds became available. Appropriating dollars for the engineering work was no small task, as our small town's funds are limited and spending these dollars came with significant risk that a grant for the project would not become available.</li> <li>• Brimfield Road is the major connector between Holland and Brimfield, and the most direct route taken by the Brimfield Ambulance Services in serving medical emergency needs in our town.</li> <li>• Although the dollars needed for the Brimfield Road repaving are small in comparison to most 'big city' projects, these dollars are of MAJOR support in maintaining roadway infrastructure in smaller towns such as Holland.</li> </ul>	Andrew and Lynn Harhay	Comment noted. This project is included as part of the financially constrained section of the RTP.