

CHAPTER 1



Photo: Julia Buxton Bridge

INTRODUCTION

The Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) outlines the direction of transportation planning and improvements for the Pioneer Valley through the year 2040. It provides the basis for all state and federally funded transportation improvement projects and planning studies. This document is an update to the current RTP (last published in 2015) and is endorsed by the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

As the Pioneer Valley's blueprint for maintaining a safe and efficient transportation system for all modes of travel, this long range plan identifies the region's goals, strategies, and projects to both enhance and maintain our transportation system. The RTP is developed in concert with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) legislation as well as the recommendations included in statewide transportation planning documents developed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

All projects included as part of the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must come from a conforming RTP. This is extremely important as most major transportation improvement projects rely on federal transportation funds for construction. The following projects are just a few examples of recent transportation improvements in the Pioneer Valley region that advanced through a conforming RTP.

- Restoration of Springfield's Union Station.
- Repairs to the Interstate I-91 Viaduct in Springfield.
- Expansion of regional passenger rail service from Springfield, MA to Hartford, CT.
- Westfield's Columbia River Greenway Trail.
- A new roundabout at the intersection of Pleasant Street with Conz Street in Northampton.
- State of the art electric buses at the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority.

Although the RTP focuses on transportation, it is a comprehensive planning document that has been developed and coordinated with other planning efforts in the region. The plan recognizes that while we do not know the future, change is inevitable and is important to advocate for change that is beneficial to our residents, workers, economy, and landscape. Changes in land use and development patterns transform the traditional visual character and function of the region and transportation plays a significant role in influencing how the region will grow and change.

Strategic planning is a continuing process that produces planning documents and agendas which decision-makers can use to prioritize local needs. A truly effective planning process relies upon the input of the chief elected official(s), city and town staff, and the general public. In addition, the strategic planning process is based on a realistic assessment of external forces - political, social, economic, and technological - that can affect Pioneer Valley communities and residents. All recommendations generated through the strategic planning process must have a real potential for implementation. By developing the RTP for the Pioneer Valley in such a manner, the region will be able to conduct successful transportation improvement programming through the year 2040.

A. VISION, GOALS, AND EMPHASIS AREAS

The Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization developed a vision to provide a framework for the development of the RTP.

RTP Vision

The Pioneer Valley region strives to create and maintain a safe, dependable, resilient, environmentally sound, and equitable transportation system for all. We pledge to balance performance based strategies and projects that promote sustainable development, reduced use of fossil fuels, healthy and livable communities, provide for efficient movement of people and goods, advance economic vitality and enhance connectivity in the region.

1. Regional Goals

To support the realization of the Vision of the plan for the Pioneer Valley MPO, a series of thirteen transportation goals were developed that are consistent with the Fast Act. Cooperation between federal, state, regional, and local decision makers will be necessary in order to achieve these goals. Through cooperative planning efforts the region can maintain a dependable transportation system and develop strategies to maximize the efficiency of transportation funding for the region.

Goals

1. Safety
2. Operations and Maintenance
3. Environment
4. Coordination
5. Energy Efficiency
6. Cost Effectiveness
7. Intermodal Access
8. Multimodal Choices
9. Economic Productivity
10. Quality of Life
11. Environmental Justice
12. Land Use
13. Climate Change

1. **Safety** - To provide and maintain a transportation system that is safe for users of all travel modes and their property.
2. **Operations and Maintenance** - To provide a transportation system that is dependable, resilient, and adequately serves users of all modes. To give priority to adaptable repair of existing infrastructure.
3. **Environmental** - To minimize the transportation related adverse impacts to air, land, wildlife and water quality and strive to improve environmental conditions at every opportunity and incorporate green infrastructure.

4. **Coordination** - - To facilitate collaborative efforts between the general public and local, state and federal planning and project implementation activities.
5. **Energy Efficient** - To promote the reduction of energy consumption through demand management techniques and increasing the use of energy efficient travel modes.
6. **Cost Effective** - To provide a transportation system that is cost effective to maintain, improve and operate.
7. **Intermodal** - To provide access between travel modes for people and goods while maintaining quality and affordability of service.
8. **Multimodal** - To provide a complete choice of adequate travel options that are accessible to all residents, students, visitors and businesses.
9. **Economically Productive** - To maintain a transportation system that promotes and supports economic stability and expansion.
10. **Quality of Life** - To provide and maintain a transportation system that enhances quality of life and improves the social and economic climate of the region.
11. **Environmental Justice** - To provide an equitably accessible transportation system that considers the needs of and impacts on low-income, people of color, elderly and disabled persons.
12. **Land Use** - To incorporate the concepts of Sustainable Development in the regional transportation planning process and integrate the recommendations of the current Regional Land Use Plan into transportation improvements.
13. **Climate Change** - To promote and advance transportation projects that reduce the production of greenhouse gasses, such as CO₂, and advance new energy technologies consistent with the Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan.

2. Emphasis Areas

A total of five emphasis areas were identified to assist in the achievement of the regional goals. The transportation emphasis areas consist of broad topics related to transportation planning that are related to the regional goals. These emphasis areas are not intended to be a replacement for the regional transportation goals; instead, they were established with the recognition that many of the transportation improvement strategies included as part of the RTP can meet multiple goals. The emphasis areas connect regional transportation needs, strategies, and projects and will be covered in greater detail in Chapter 14.

Emphasis Areas

1. Safety and Security
2. Movement of People
3. Movement of Goods
4. Movement of Information
5. Sustainability