



MONTACHUSETT TODAY

ISSUE 5

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Newsletter of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)

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Special points of interest:

Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) Meeting
January 20, 2010
7:00 PM

MRPC Meeting
January 26, 2010
7:00 PM

MRPC WORKS TO JUICE-UP THE GRID!

December 11, 2009 - A year to the day of the paralyzing ice storm of 2008, elected officials, emergency management staff and others assembled at the Wachusett Village Inn in Westminster to share lessons learned and personal stories from the storm.

Announced at the press conference

“Back up power would have been a Godsend during ice storm 2008”

- Mayor Mark Hawke, Gardner

ference was the funding of a grant application for \$125,360 from the Federal Economic

Development Administration to the MRPC. Monies will be used to develop a disaster mitigation plan in support of emergency back up power sources.

Glenn Eaton, Executive Director deemed the project the “brainchild” of John Hume, Planning and Development Director and the project will involve the creation of a multi-disciplined committee to oversee the MRPC staff during implementation for the creation of this plan.

John Hume indicated “During the 2008 Ice Storm it



was clearly evident that the majority of businesses lacked inadequate back up power supplies and were forced to close. The intention of this study is to mitigate economic consequences of future disaster and enhance the health and safety of the population.

This will be accomplished through a Emergency Back Up Power Sources Evaluation through the Montachusett Region and a region wide analysis of the grid structure.”

(Continued on Page 3: See Power Grid Planning)

REGIONALIZING MUNICIPAL SERVICES—ROUND 2!

Sharing municipal resources to improve efficiencies and save local funding and improving sustainable land development practices: That is what the State’s District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program is all about.

MRPC has received district local technical assistance (DLTA) monies from the MA Department of Housing and Community Development to once again provide technical assistance to communities in the areas of sustainable development and land use

objectives and municipal partnership objectives.

This is the second round of monies MRPC received to assist its members in the above areas.

Requests for Projects will be sent by MRPC to Chief Elected Officials of all 22 MRPC communities in January.

MRPC Staff will review all requests and the full Board will select the projects that will be undertaken.

The first round of funding was used to assist 14 cities and towns with various projects. Samples of projects undertaken last year:

- ◆ A group procurement program for office supplies was established for member communities;

(Continued on Page 3: See Regionalizing Municipal Services)

PARTNERSHIPS ARE IMPORTANT KEYS TO SUCCESS!

A recent outreach to the Geography Department at Fitchburg State College (FSC) resulted in a partnership in which college students assisted MRPC GIS and Transportation staff with the collection of data for trails located on the Northern Fitchburg Watershed land located in Ashby and Fitchburg.

Additional labor was needed to complete this large scale project. Thankfully, the Geography Department of FSC was able to step in and help. The FSC students gained "field experience" using

GPS hardware and software to document trail location starting points, ice storm damage, stream water crossings, difficulty of trail and trail duration. The data collected by the students will benefit emergency response personnel, municipal departments, and local citizens.

Renee Marion, MRPC's GIS Analyst noted that *"The FSC students were a tremendous help throughout this project by providing their resources and time which provided the MRPC, City of Fitchburg, and the North County Land*

Trust with a comprehensive trail database for the Fitchburg Watershed."

Jane Zhang, FSC Professor of GeoPhysical Sciences indicated that *"It has been a wonderful experience for the students to apply GPS technology to a real world project and also to contribute to enhance community's land*

(Partnerships are Important Keys To Success!
Continued on Page 3)

GROTON LOOKS TO IMPROVE INTERSECTION

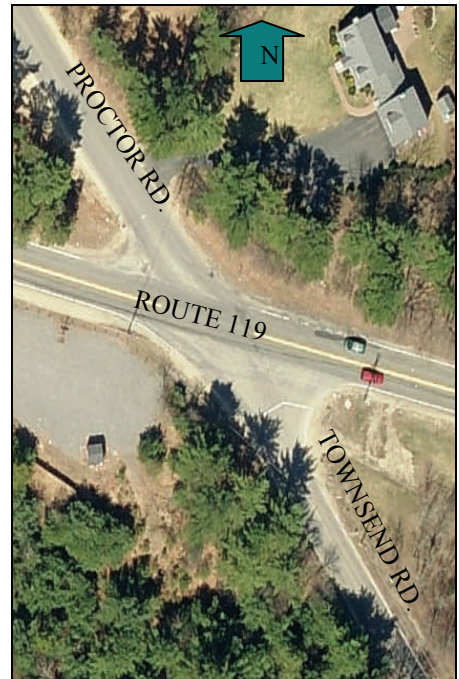
The town of Groton has requested that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission perform a Signal Warrant Investigation at the intersection of state highway Route 119, Townsend Road and Proctor Road. The town has expressed concern over safety issues at this location due to numerous accidents at the intersection.

"Route 119 is the major roadway at this location and is a heavily traveled east-west route connecting the northern part of the Montachusett Region and southern New Hampshire to I-495 and Route 2 in the east. Although straight and relatively flat in this location this route provides a large majority of the traffic that the intersection experiences and makes it difficult for vehicle operators to maneuver into or across its traffic from the minor road approaches."
Brian Doherty - MRPC Transportation Planner. Because of the intersections proximity to both the

towns of Townsend and Pepperell, as well as to North Middlesex Regional High School in Townsend, all three towns have expressed their mutual concern about safety and have assisted in MRPC efforts.

As a supplement to the Signal Warrant Investigation a traffic study was conducted to determine traffic flow, delay, sight distance, motor vehicle crash statistics and analysis, geometrics and other characteristics at this location. The final report was completed and submitted to the town in December along with recommendations for improvements.

For more information on this study call Brian Doherty, Transportation Planner at (978)345-7376 extension 316.



Signal Warrant Investigation: The Manual on Uniform Traffic Devices (MUTCD) established several warrants, or criteria, that need to be satisfied in order to justify the placement or installation of a traffic signal. The investigation is undertaken to look at the data and compares it to warrants.

GRANTSMANSHIP: THE ART OF OBTAINING GRANTS-IN-AID

For 29 years now, MRPC has written Community Development Block Grant proposals for its municipalities. **This year we are doing it again.** Grant applications are underway for:

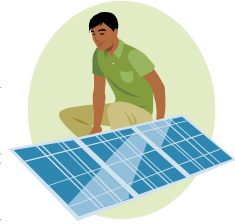
- ◆ Lancaster and Townsend for Regional Housing Rehabilitation;
- ◆ Ashburnham for Senior Center Design and Infrastructure and Housing Rehab, and
- ◆ Ashby Infrastructure and Housing Rehab.

Receipt of competitive Economic Development Administration (EDA) Planning Grant funds will enable the MRPC to create a pre-disaster mitigation plan to make the electrical power grid more resilient to future power outages, thus decreasing down-time post-storm events. *(See related story, page one.)*

MRPC is under contract with the University of Massachusetts to assist communities in completing certain applications for state and federal funding.

MRPC recently assisted Lancaster, Hubbardston, and Townsend in apply-

ing for monies through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) to fund energy improvements to their municipal buildings. If and when additional funds become available - MRPC will outreach to its communities.



Power Grid Planning (Continued from Page 1)

Lisa Wong, Mayor of Fitchburg noted the importance of planning for the future ... *“We need to work together regionally to get the best electrical grid system for the region.”*

Relating a personal story about the impact of the December 2008 ice storm upon his family, Lew Evangelidis informed the attendees that his family was without power for five days. *“The first day the power came back on, I went to check on my daughter before bed and asked her -Why are your lights on?. She responded - I like looking at them- and she kept the lights on all night.”*

Mass Development’s Ann Pierce stated that *“Mass Development is pleased to be part of this and will be working with MRPC to move forward with this project.”*

MRPC will begin by forming an ad-hoc Energy Policy Advisory Committee holding meetings with committee members throughout 2010. Meeting topic will include:

- Conducting research and reports

related to the inventory or regional assets,

- Analyzing existing emergency back up power sources, and
- Conducting an in depth analysis of the electric grid structure.

The study will be begin early 2010 and a final report will be completed October 2010.

For more information on this project contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director at (978)345-7376 ext. 302.

Regionalizing Municipal Services (Continued from Page 1)

- ◆ The need for a Regional Special Needs Emergency Shelter was analyzed and a report prepared for Lunenburg, Fitchburg and Leominster; and
- ◆ A guidebook for streamlined permitting was developed for local commercial and industrial land use permitting.

For more information on DLTA contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director at (978) 345-7376 ext 302.

Partnerships are Important Keys to Success!

(Continued From Page 2)

Management and resource stewardship.” MRPC hopes to continue its relationship with FSC with upcoming projects.

Another partnership, is one MRPC has with Oakmont Regional High School. Space limitations at MRPC’s Offices necessitated some arrangements to be made to house our rather large digitizer. Through a prior relationship with Oakmont, the MRPC was aware of their environmental planning and GIS labs. MRPC contacted Oakmont’s principal, David Uminski and reached and agreement to loan the digitizer table equipment to the school for their use.

You use a digitizer to convert paper maps (i.e. assessor’s parcel maps, soil maps) to digital, GIS data. MRPC staff delivered the equipment to the school and Principal Uminski thanked MRPC for the use of the equipment indicating it will be useful in their studies.

STAFF PROFILE- BRIAN DOHERTY



This graduate of Worcester State College (2007) has been a great contributor to many projects completed on behalf of MRPC communities. Brian is one of three Transportation Planners at the MRPC and he has taken on the lead role on the regional Pavement Management System Program and several emergency planning projects. As part of an examination of intersections with signal pre-emption devices, Brian created a detailed database of all signalized intersections in the region. He has also made significant contributions to the Templeton Center Common Master Plan Project and a signal warrant investigation for Groton. Brian is fortunate to have George Snow and Sheri Bean, Transportation Planners and Brad Harris, Transportation Director as teammates and mentors. Brian is a native of Lunenburg that decided to work in the area contributing to the betterment and improvement of the region.

ment of the region.

Quarterly Message from the ED

2009 was a tough year for a lot of people. The economic downturn continued, Municipal budgets woes, and post-storm (12/08) cleanup stories dominated media reports.

MRPC took a proactive stance in an attempt to: make the electrical power distribution and accessing federal funding making the grid more resilient. (*see MRPC Works to Juice-Up the Grid! P. 1*)

- ◆ Continued to foster regional partnerships through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program (*see Regionalizing Municipal Services, p. 1*);
- ◆ Fostered new partnerships with Fitchburg State College (*see Partnerships are Important Keys to Success, p.2*)

MRPC will continue to provide its regular planning services in the areas of Community Development, Economic Development, Housing Rehabilitation, Grantsmanship, GIS, Transit and Transportation and respond to the needs of its municipal clients in the Montachusett Region.

GLENN P. EATON, MRPC Executive Director

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