



MONTACHUSETT TODAY

ISSUE 3

SUMMER 2009

Newsletter of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)

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MRPC Expands Services: GPS Now Available

Where are tree limbs interfering with electric, phone and cable wires? What are the locations and conditions of catch basins, fire hydrants and sewer manholes? What are the paths of woodland trails for recreation and delivery of emergency services?

In some communities, local officials are in the process of locating overhanging tree branches in an effort to avert power losses in future ice storms, identifying infrastructure locations to help with long-term capital improvements and maintenance, and identifying recreation opportunities for residents and helping emergency responders utilize MRPC's GIS maps of the trails.

Imagine if local officials had answers to the above questions. Stop imagining: That time has arrived.

If it's on the ground, the MRPC can capture the data with its new global positioning system (GPS) service.

MRPC's newly-purchased Trimble GeoXT GPS equipment provides the MRPC with the ability to collect a host of information critical to the needs of local officials. Locations of data, in "GIS-speak" known as "points, lines and polygons" can be identified and located within a few feet.

The GeoXT is ideal for use by local government organizations interested in, among other things, asset inventory and management. It allows a community to accurately locate assets and collect descriptive information regarding those assets in the field. For example, digital photos and audio clips concerning assets can be collected in the field and linked together for the user at his/her computer back in town hall.

Examples of data sets typically collected for communities includes hydrants, sidewalks, street lights, traffic control devices and signs, electric, telecommunication, road, water, sewer and wastewater infrastructure, tree and trail inventory, as well as scenic, cultural, historical and archaeological assets.

Integrating GPS data into MRPC's existing geographic information system (GIS) will allow MRPC communities to link additional descriptive information to the GPS data in order to easily locate, identify, query and assess condition and performance of particular assets. Combining all of this information together will provide decision-makers with the tools they need to prioritize preventative maintenance and capital planning more efficiently.



Jason Stanton and Renee Marion - capturing data

Meetings

MRPC Meetings

7:00 pm in the MRPC Conference Room
September 29
October 27
November 24

MJTC Meetings

7:00 pm in the MRPC Conference Room
3rd Wednesday of every month
 Call MRPC to confirm meetings (978)345-7376

"The addition of GPS hardware and software increases our geographic information system services to our communities" according to Glenn P. Eaton, Executive Director

MRPC's GIS Department Staff can assist your community. Collecting and mapping data correctly and efficiently can provide local officials with the information they need to make well informed decisions. GPS and GIS service questions can be directed to **Jason Stanton, GIS Director** at 978-345-7376 x313 or jstanton@mrpc.org or fill out the Project Interest form on page 5 of this newsletter and return to MRPC.

GRANT AWARD RECIPIENTS: ASHBY AND HUBBARDSTON TO HELP HOMEOWNERS

MRPC prepared a joint Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application on behalf of the Towns of Ashby and Hubbardston. MRPC assembled the documents with the help of local officials from September 2008 through February 2009. This is Ashby's third CDBG award and the first time that CDBG funds have been awarded to the Town of Hubbardston.

On August 11, 2009 Ashby (lead community) and Hubbardston were awarded \$719,359 to conduct a housing rehabilitation program and to provide financial literacy training in both towns.

Prior to the grant submission, MRPC solicited pre-applications from interested, income eligible homeowners wishing to participate in the housing rehabilitation program: 42 households are on the waiting list in Ashby and 31 in Hubbardston. They have all been contacted to update their existing paperwork.

The housing rehabilitation program is a 0%, deferred repayment loan. A fifteen year lien is placed on the property at the regional registry of deeds. There are no monthly payments and at the end of the 15-year term, the loan is discharged. If the homeowner sells the property within those 15 years, they will pay back a portion of the loan back to the Town based on a declining repayment schedule. Rehabilitation can consist of, but not limited to, removing lead and/or asbestos, replacing failed septic or heating systems, installing new windows and doors, upgrades to the electrical and plumbing systems, and roof repair or replacement.

The Financial Literacy Training will consist of several different topics. There will be sessions in each town for seniors to provide them with information on the reverse mortgage programs available. There will be sessions for First-Time Homebuyers in assisting them with their certificate in order to qualify for some of the today's mortgage requirements. Sessions regarding budgeting, credit card issues, and mortgage foreclosure prevention will round out the program.

"These programs are labor intensive: A program of this complexity take more than six months to create and 18 or more months to implement.", Shelly Hatch, Community Development Director.

Before/After kitchen rehab



Since the 1980s the MRPC has helped 14 of 22 MRPC communities access approximately \$10 million in CDBG funds addressing housing and infrastructure needs.

"The wonderful part about this program is that approximately 16 low- to moderate-income homeowners will be living in improved living conditions in Ashby and Hubbardston by the end of 2010" according to Glenn Eaton, Executive Director. "The reality is that there are more than 70 families on the waiting list. Multiple years of consistent funding, which is not guaranteed, could take four to five years to address every family on the waiting list."

The MRPC has also submitted a proposal to the US Rural Development Administration (USDA) for Housing Preservation Grant Funds (HPG) to expand resources available to home owners for home improvements in the area of renewable energy. If funded, the MRPC will be able to enhance the CDBG-funded Housing Rehabilitation Program to fund such improvements as solar heating.

Shelly Hatch at (978)345-7376 x305 can be contacted for more information.

- ◆ \$40 million has been awarded to 78 communities in Massachusetts.
- ◆ \$4.9 million was awarded in August 2009 to nine communities in the Montachusett Region. They are Athol (lead community) with Royalston, Petersham and Phillipston; Ayer; Clinton; Gardner; Templeton; and Winchendon

INPUT AND ACTION SOUGHT ON THE MONTACHUSETT AND STATE TIP

Do you have a comment to make concerning the transportation improvements projects planned for the next four years? If so, now is the time to let your voice be heard.

The Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), maintained by the MRPC, lists transit and transportation priorities for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010-2013. Highlights of the TIP include the programming of 20 projects ranging from \$0.3 million to \$10.6 million in 11 communities over the next four years. This document was developed for the MRPC for the Montachusett MPO. The State's TIP draft listings are a compilation of roadway, bridge, intermodal and transit projects as de-

"The list developed by the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) reflects the current status of the FFY2010-2013 projects and their likelihood of advertisement in their respective fiscal year.."

Brad Harris, Transportation Director

veloped by the Commonwealth's ten MPOs and the three non-MPOs.

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization or MPO?

There are multiple MPOs and non-MPOs in Massachusetts working in conjunction with local officials and the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT)/ MassHighway to identify and prioritize regional transit and transportation projects.

(see next page for more information)

FFY 2010 - 2013 MONTACHUSETT TIP PROJECT LIST

FFY	Montachusett Projects	City/Town	Total Estimated Costs
2010	Merriam Avenue/Lindell Avenue - Intersection Improvements	Leominster	\$560,000
	Route 140 - Resurfacing & Related Work	Gardner	\$2,580,000
	Highland Avenue - Br# P-09-005 Over Route 202/ Route 2	Phillipston	\$2,867,470
	Wheeler Road - Br# T-07-008 over Willard Brook	Townsend	\$1,868,885
	Route 2 - Resurfacing from mile marker 97.0 to 103.0	Leominster/ Fitchburg	\$6,148,800
	Parking Garage - A & E	Ayer	\$480,000
	Route 2 - Bridge Replacement, Br# P-09-004 Over Route 2A	Phillipston	\$2,709,000
2011	Route 70/Old Union Turnpike - Intersection Improvements	Lancaster	\$1,159,160
	North Central Pathway Phase 5 - Construction of trail segment	Winchendon	\$1,925,000
	Baldwinville Road - Reconstruction Rt 202/68 to Patriots Rd	Templeton	\$2,340,000
	Winter Street - Replacement of Br# G-01-017 over Baker Brook	Gardner	\$991,280
	Mill Street - Bridge #G-01-022 over Baker Brook	Gardner	\$1,141,455
	North Main Street- Br# T-02-019 Over E. Templeton Pond Outlet	Templeton	\$1,735,550
	Parking Garage - Construction	Ayer	\$3,468,080
2012	Route 101 - Reconstruction and Rehabilitation	Ashburnham	\$2,160,000
	Baldwinville Road - Reconstruction Rt 202/68 to Patriots Rd	Templeton	\$3,070,000
	Route 12 (North Main Street) - Br # L-08-024 Over Route 2	Leominster	\$10,657,500
2013	Five Corners - Rt 110/Center Bridge Rd/Old Common Rd Intersection	Lancaster	\$800,000
	Nashua Trail at Searstown - Bike/Pedestrian Trail	Leominster	\$317,040
	South Street - Resurface and related work	Westminster	\$3,573,450
TOTAL			\$50,552,670

The MRPC's Draft TIP is available for public review and comment for 30 days (from August 27, 2009 to September 25, 2009). The comment period for the State's TIP is September 1, to September 30, 2009.

Copies of both documents can be obtained at the offices of the MRPC, 1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420 between the hours of 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM Monday to Friday. Copies can also be mailed on request by contacting *Brad Harris or George Kahale at (978) 345-7376 ext. 311 or 307*, respectively. In addition,

What is an MPO...

The Montachusett Metropolitan Organization (MPO) consists of representatives from the three cities; Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster and the nineteen remaining towns in the Montachusett Region.

Each of the twenty-two municipalities in the Montachusett Region is afforded the opportunity to appoint representatives to the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC). The MJTC advises the MPO and MRPC concerning future transit and transportation initiatives.

Community representatives are limited to two: one from the chief elected official (Mayor or Board of Selectmen) and one from the Planning Board.

Communities with filled positions are encouraged to maintain communication with their respective representative to ensure that your local voice is heard.

Communities with vacant positions on the MJTC are encouraged to make their appointments as soon as possible. Feel free to contact Glenn Eaton, Executive Director, Brad Harris, Transportation Director or Linda Parmenter, Administrative Director concerning the annual appointment process.

Planning Commissioner Profile:

John White, Winchendon: MRPC Member for Eight Years

John White has been member of MRPC for about 8 years, first as an alternate for Winchendon while he was a selectman and then as member when he moved to the Planning Board. Mr. White is now in his 7th year as chairman of the Winchendon Planning Board. He has previously served on the Winchendon Finance Committee, School Committee, School Building Committee, Charter Commission, Personnel Board, and Board of Selectmen. About 35 years altogether. He has attended almost every Winchendon town meeting since 1950.

During his tenure the Planning Board has sponsored a flexible residential development bylaw, a mill reuse overlay bylaw, a wind power bylaw and a low impact development bylaw. The Board lead a complete revision of the local zoning bylaw and has completely revised its subdivision regulations and site plans regulations. They have acted on several subdivisions and numerous site plans. The Board is starting on a revision of its master plan and is hoping to adapt the recent Shutesbury open space zoning to Winchendon's rural areas. If this works, it might be a model for other communities.

Mr. White graduated from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and joined his father and uncle in dairy and poultry farming. After that became unprofitable, he worked in industry and finally became an electronics service technician and consumer electronics retailer. Finally retiring in 2003.

Mr. White has also been very active in his church and also active in the (now defunct) local chamber of commerce and the state association of electronics technicians.

His family consists of a son, three daughters and five grandchildren. He now lives with his eldest daughter (who is Winchendon library director) in the same house he and his family have occupied for over 75 years. The former farm has now become a number of homes and two schoolhouses.



Safety: The Good , the Bad and the.....

Within the 2008/2009 MRPC *Phase I Report: Roadway Safety Conditions in the Montachusett Region* Route 2 interchanges and at-grade intersections were identified as experiencing a significant number of motor vehicle crashes. This analysis takes a closer look at all these interchanges and intersections by identifying unsafe locations such as acceleration and deceleration lanes and minor street at ramp intersections. Ramp traffic count data and roadway geometric conditions are provided and used to describe unsafe conditions at the locations. The analysis covers a four year period from 2003 to 2006.

The analysis uses MRPC's Geographic Information System (GIS) to identify and map unsafe locations. The intersection with the highest concentration of (motor) vehicle accidents is the Routes 2 and 12 interchange at Exit 31 in Leominster.

The #1 location is the most dangerous of the four locations shown. This location had a total crash count of 87 crashes of which 36% (31 crashes) involved injuries and lies at, and in between, the acceleration and deceleration lanes on Route 2 that covers a length of approximately 300 feet. This short distance creates an unsafe condition for vehicles trying to accelerate onto Route 2 or decelerate onto the OFF ramps. The good news is that MassHighway is planning a safety improvement project for this interchange. Locations 2-4 had a total of 44 crashes of which 23% (9 crashes) involved injuries.



Use of the MRPC's GIS aided in the analyses of all vehicle crash data to identify and map unsafe locations.

The full study can be found on our website at www.mrpc.org under *Documents - Reports/Studies/ Forms*. Please contact George Snow at 978-345-7376 ext 312 or by email at gsnow@mrpc.org for more information.

GIS/GPS/Pictometry Project Interest Form

I represent the local municipal:

I am interested in learning more about a potential GIS/GPS and or Pictometry data analysis an imagery project in the area of:

- CEO/Mayor or Selectmen
- Planning Office
- Cemetery Commission
- Parks/Maintenance Department
- DPW or Highway Department
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Water Department
- Sewer Department
- Historical Commission
- Community Development Office
- School District or Department
- Other Municipal Department
- Infrastructure Mapping (i.e. catch basins, etc.)
- Analysis of Fires/Fire Hazards and Access and Fire Hydrants
- Traffic Signal/Devices or Road Signs
- Land Use
- Crime Location Analysis
- Burial/Monuments Mapping
- Other

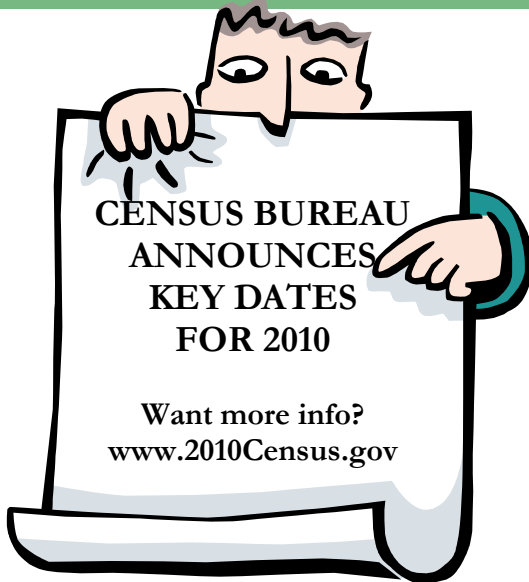
CONTACT INFO:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

PLEASE FILL OUT AND THIS FORM AND FAX IT TO JASON STANTON, GIS DIRECTOR AT 978-348-2490



Fall 2009
Job recruitment begins for local census jobs

Feb-Mar 2010
Census questionnaires are mailed or delivered to households

April 2010
Residents fill out a return census questionnaires

April-July 2010
Census takers visits households that did not return questionnaire

December 2010
Census Bureau delivers population counts to President for apportionment

March 2011
Census completes delivery of redistricting data to states

QUARTERLY MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Regionalization: The process of...

Recently, a conference was held at College of the Holy Cross, Worcester concerning regionalization of municipal services. There is so much interest in this subject, that the conference at the Hogan Center was filled to capacity. The Lieutenant Governor awarded \$7.96 million to communities throughout the State to enhance 911 and emergency dispatch communication centers. Devens, Harvard, Shirley, Ashburnham, Ashby, Fitchburg, Hubbardston, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Phillipston, Sterling, Templeton and Winchendon were all recipients. Another type of sharing of municipal service, was an example from a Council of Government (COG) in Connecticut that works with its DPW Directors to share equipment, such as street sweeper and catch basin cleaner. The four-town effort resulted in a municipal agreement that detailed all scheduling, funding, and roles and responsibilities of all parties. The program has achieved success. Group procurement of goods and services is another area in which MRPC communities have expressed interest. The MRPC recently procured for office supplies on behalf of six public entities. More data on this program can be obtained by contacting MRPC. Information will also be available in future newsletters and on our website www.mrpc.org.



Glenn Eaton
Executive Director

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