



MONTACHUSETT TODAY

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Newsletter of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

ARRA Money At Work In The M-Region

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Resurfacing Route 140 in Gardner

A resurfacing and improvement project along a stretch of Rte. 140 in Gardner is one of the latest projects in the Montachusett region completed as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The length of this project is 1.6 miles beginning 1,000 feet north of Route 101 and ending at the Green Street intersection. This section of Route 140 was the subject of a traffic study completed by MRPC in 2008. *“Improvements include upgraded drainage and new pavement markings that will help to keep drivers in their travel lane. New guardrails are also being installed with state of the art energy absorbing end terminals (see right side of photo) that replace the old turned down (buried) end terminals which can cause rollover crashes”* says George Snow, Transportation Planner. When hit the new terminals absorb the force of the crash which decreases the impact on the vehicle and the driver. At locations nationwide fatalities and injuries have been greatly reduced after the installation of this new end terminal.

Ashby Awarded CDBG Dollars

MRPC staff continues to work with towns in our region assisting them with creating and submitting the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications and the administration of funded applications.

The Towns of Ashby and Hubbardston received funding in August of 2009 to conduct a housing rehabilitation program and a financial literacy project in the both Towns.

“To date these funds have assisted eight (8) units in each town with new windows, doors and roofs; upgrades to their plumbing, heating and electrical systems; lead paint abatement; and replacement of antiquated or failed septic systems.

Several financial literacy training sessions and reverse mortgage presentations have also occurred in both towns”, says Shelly Hatch, Community Development Director.

The Town of Ashby also received additional funding in July of 2010 to continue the highly successful housing rehabilitation project and to conduct road reclamation and repaving on Wheeler Road.

MRPC staff is now working on applications for projects in the towns Ashby, Ashburnham, Westminster, Petersham and Lunenburg to submit to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for December 2010.



Special points of Interest:

MRPC Meetings

October 26, 2010
7:00 PM

November 30, 2010
7:00 PM

December 28, 2010
7:00 PM

Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) Meetings

October 20, 2010
7:00 PM

November 17, 2010
7:00 PM

December 15, 2010
7:00 PM

Safe Routes To School Program

The MRPC has been assisting local schools with their Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program for the last three years and has successfully signed up 14 schools to the program within that timeframe.

“This year we will be assisting the communities of Fitchburg and Leominster with their SRTS program”, says Sheri Bean, Transportation Planner.

The SRTS program is a Federal-Aid program of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) with funding from the Federal Transportation Authorization Act SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users Act).

“The program promotes walking and bicycling to school, improves safety of streets from

a child’s perspective, and reduces fuel consumption and air pollution”, Bean says.

The Massachusetts SRTS program educates parents and students on the value of walking and bicycling for travel to and from school. The program collaborates with schools, superintendents, public officials, principals, teachers, parent-teacher organizations, and neighbors to encourage safe, healthy trip options.

“Our assistance includes conducting traffic volume and speed counts within the school zone, mapping the sidewalk locations and conditions, mapping dangerous areas, and vehicle & pedestrian crash locations.”

For more information please contact Sheri Bean at 978-345-7376 x315 or sbean@mrpc.org. You can also visit the MassRIDES website at www.commute.com.

PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT EFFORTS CONTINUE

The Montachusett Pavement Management Program continues its inventory and analysis of approximately 644 miles of Federal Aid eligible roadways in the Montachusett region this summer.

“MRPC has been working with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and other Massachusetts Regional Planning Agencies over the last few months to determine the costs of maintaining the network of pavements on all Federal Aid eligible roads throughout the Commonwealth. The hopes are to have the most informative and up to date report on roadway pavement maintenance needs in over a decade by the end of this program year”, says Transportation Planner Brian Doherty.

In addition to the 2010 Pavement Management Program, the 2011 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) will

feature a chapter on pavements.

“Pavements are the single largest capital investment in any modern highway system and are a huge statewide and municipal burden”, Doherty says.

Initiatives brought about through MRPC’s Pavement Management Program will help make better informed decisions on improvements and investments to roadways of the Montachusett region.

For more information on the Montachusett Pavement Management Program contact Brian Doherty, at x.316 or by email at bdoherthy@mrpc.org.

Monty Tech-Built Home For Sale



MRPC’s affiliate, The Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC) completed construction on their latest affordable housing project in June 2010 in partnership with “Monty Tech”, City of Fitchburg and Enterprise Bank. This single-family home for sale is located on Water Street, Fitchburg.

For more information please contact Shelly Hatch at (978) 345-7376 ext. 305 or Morrison Real Estate at (978) 343-0373.



PICTURE: Pavement conditions can quickly deteriorate as municipal maintenance budgets often do not stretch far enough. The reconstruction of Rte. 62 in Hubbardston (above) was recently completed through funding available in the Montachusett Region Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Update To The 2007 RTP Underway

Over the next several months, staff from the MRPC will be working on a major update to the Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that was completed in 2007. *“The RTP provides guidance to local and state officials in deciding how to spend federal and state transportation funds. The plan identifies both short range and long range projects for local roads, highways, bridges, rail, transit, freight and airports”*, says Transportation Project Manager Brad Harris.

Over the course of the year, the Commission will hold a series of meetings with local officials and interested citizens to discuss the needs and priorities of the Region and its member communities and to solicit public input on all aspects of the plan.

“The goals, policies and strategies of the current RTP support the Commonwealth of Massachusetts policies to maintain and

support existing transportation networks and to fund projects that encourage sustainable development and support a community’s quality of life”, Harris says.

Specific policies of the current Montachusett Long Range Transportation Plan include: improve and maintain the existing road network, multimodal (rail, air, truck) systems and mobility for people without cars; encourage land use patterns consistent with regional policy; expand transportation services for the elderly, disabled and economically disadvantaged; promote energy efficiency, intermodal and multimodal facilities and develop plans to help reach and maintain air quality standards. Policies in the 2011 Plan are expected to be expanded as a result of public input. New policies may include strategies related to climate change as well as livability.

Interested citizens are encouraged

to watch for meeting announcements on the MRPC website (www.mrpc.org) and to contact the MRPC to be placed on our mailing lists. As products are developed any and all information will be posted to the website for review and comment. The updated RTP will be forwarded to the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for their endorsement in the first quarter of 2011. For further information, please contact Brad Harris of the MRPC at:

bharris@mrpc.org or (978) 345-7376 ext. 311.

The full 2007 RTP as well as a link to the website and survey developed for the RTP is also available online at www.mrpc.org for those interested individuals.

MRPC Delivers Wind Energy Bylaw Services Under DLTA



Westminster engaged the MRPC to develop a Wind Energy Conversion System (WECS) Bylaw and Map. This was due in part to rising energy costs and the impact on town residents. Wind Energy Resource Maps produced by Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC) indicate that with Westminster’s hilly topography, including Mt. Wachusett, there are a number of identified areas within the Town that would be economically feasible to locate wind energy facilities. The Bylaw will assist the Town to regulate

use of WECS within the Town of Westminster as well as create step by step permitting instructions.

In May 2010, a Westminster Planning Board Wind Energy Zoning Public Forum was held to educate the public as well as local officials. Residents of the Town of Westminster were in favor of small scale wind energy systems and to have a local permit friendly application process. *“It’s important to encourage local and renewable energy sources and the bylaw will help foster that development. In addition, discussions with a local light department representative indicated that by creating this bylaw and having it adopted, town residents and wind energy operators will save time and money versus the absence of*

such a bylaw.” says Eric Smith, Principal Planner. Some of the possible benefits to the Town of Westminster would include regulated use and placement of wind turbines and assist in generation of surplus of energy to help lower electricity costs and sale to neighboring communities and the power grid. The goal is to have a Westminster Zoning Bylaw prepared for the Fall 2010 Town Meeting.

“This project is one of 14 that the MRPC is delivering to it’s client-communities through 2010” according to Glenn Eaton, Executive Director.

MRPC Welcomes Two New Employees

MRPC has hired two new employees in the Community and Economic Development Department; Eric Smith, Principal Planner and Jennifer Siciliano, Regional Planner.



Mr. Smith, former Town Planner from Ashburnham, served as the community's representative to the MRPC. He also served as Assistant Planner for the Town of Mashpee for six years. Since his hire in April 2010 he has begun working on several key projects for the Planning Commission. He is currently handling a number of

the aspects of the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program for the Town of Westminster, assisting in the development of a Wind Energy Conversion Systems Bylaw; assisting the Town of Ashburnham in a re-write of the Town's Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) Zoning Bylaw, the development of an Ashburnham Cultural Plan and also the Town of Shirley assisting with the development of an Economic Development Chapter to the Town's Master Plan.



Ms. Siciliano is a recent graduate from the University of Massachusetts, where she acquired her Master's of Regional Planning. She worked at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission as well as the Charlestown Rhode Island Planning Department. She is working on several projects including the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program, the Montachusett Regional Emergency

Back-up Power Sources Mitigation Plan and the Regional Strategic Framework Plan. Ms. Siciliano submitted a \$87,750 grant proposal for a 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant Program and a HUD Community Challenge Grant Proposal for \$103,000 and assisted her colleague, Eric Smith, with a HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative proposal that will compliment the ongoing regional policy planning effort.

Quarterly Message From the Executive Director

At your regional planning district things are hopping.

The agency is seeking input on the Transportation Improvements Program (TIP) (p.2), working on updating the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) (p.3), initiating a long-term regional policy plan with the assistance of a recent Regional Strategic Framework grant award from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), providing zoning bylaw amendments through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program, pursuing State environmental planning and Federal sustainable development planning funds for the region, and supporting and orienting newly appointed local officials to the MRPC and one of its standing committees, the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC). MRPC is monitoring proposed legislation concerning the proposed State Comprehensive Land Use Reform and Partnership Act (CLURPA) and Wind Energy Siting Reform Act, and reauthorization of the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). Contact Glenn Eaton, Executive Director for additional information as needed.

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