



# Chapter 12 - TRANSIT







## Chapter 12 – Transit

### Introduction

Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) provides a variety of transportation services for residents of the Montachusett Region and other areas throughout the Commonwealth. The communities served by MART have grown steadily over the years. Initially comprised of Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster and their immediate neighbors, MART now serves 22 communities in and out of the MRPC region. In 2013, the town of Athol formally became a member of MART’s Twenty-two communities in the region utilize MART services. Member communities are Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner, Ashburnham, Shirley, Ayer, Lancaster, Sterling, Hubbardston, Royalston, Littleton, Winchendon, Ashby, Templeton, Westminster, Hardwick, Lunenburg, Harvard, Bolton, Boxborough, Stow and Athol. Fixed route bus services, paratransit and subscription services are operated by a private management company, namely, Management of Transportation Services, Inc. All other transportation is operated by a variety of private vendors in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is responsible for commuter rail services from Fitchburg to Boston. MART’s Communities map is included at the end of this chapter.

### Transit Service

#### Fixed Route

The backbone of the region’s public transportation system is the local transit bus service. Local fixed route bus service operates along set routes and follows set schedules. Local Bus service is available in the three cities of Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner and limited sections of Lunenburg and Lancaster. Sixteen (16) bus routes are provided by MART, eleven (11) in Fitchburg and Leominster, four (4) in Gardner and one (1) intercity route between the three cities. Service operates Monday through Saturday (except for the G-Link and Intercity routes which run Monday to Friday). Three (3) peak services routes also run Monday thru Friday in Fitchburg during the school year. Bus services are not offered on Sundays and most holidays.

The cost for adults to ride a fixed route is \$1.25; students, elderly and individuals with disabilities (with proper identification) are 60 cents. Children under five ride free with an accompanying adult. Local bus transfers are free with paid fare and are valid for two (2) hours. Various pass products are available. In 2011 MART implemented a new automatic fare collection (AFC) system to its fixed route service. MART is part of a ten member Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Consortium in the Commonwealth to implement a new regional smart fare-card using the “Charlie Card” technology.

Fixed route bus service in Fitchburg and Leominster is available every 20 to 60 minutes depending on the route. In the City of Gardner bus service is available every 60 minutes.

System route maps for Fitchburg/Leominster, Gardner, and the G-Link can be found at the end of this chapter.

Table 12-1

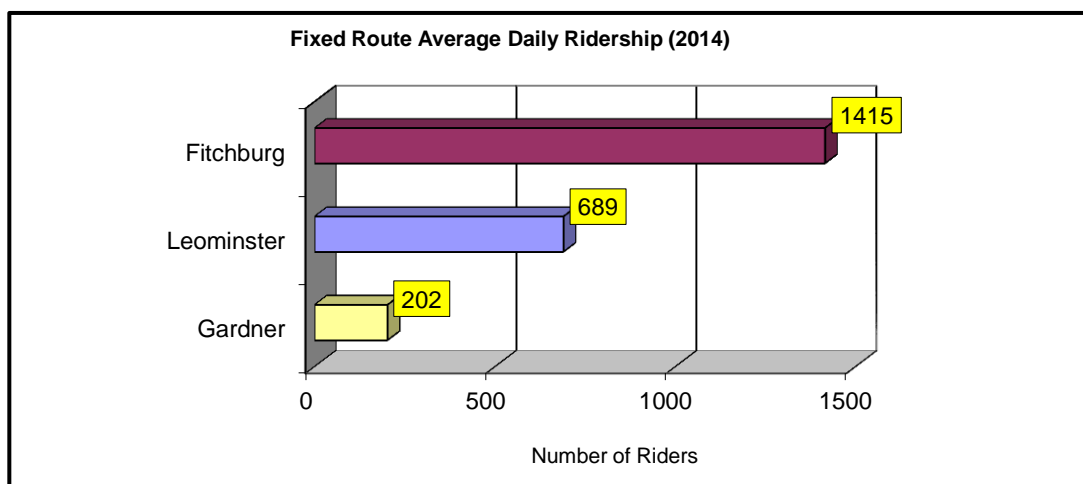
Fixed Routes Yearly Ridership Fiscal Year					
Fixed Routes	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent Change 2011 to 2014
Leominster/Fitchburg	465,527	524,541	581,331	594,342	27.67%
Gardner	59,015	64,132	55,052	59,435	0.71%

Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority

The above yearly ridership figures show a continued growth from 2011 to 2014 with an overall 27.67% increase over the four years in Fitchburg and Leominster. Annual ridership figures show a much more gentle increase over the same four year period. After a decline in 2013 ridership in Gardner, 2014 ridership is now back to 2011 levels. Table 12-1 shows the yearly ridership for the three cities.

Based upon 2014 data, MART averages over 2,300 riders per day in the three cities (1,415 in Fitchburg, 689 in Leominster and 202 in Gardner). The following chart (Figure 12-1) highlights the 2014-ridership data.

Figure 12-1



Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority 2014 Data

A review of data from FY 2013 and FY 2014 shows an approximate 5 percent increase in the average daily ridership for the 3 fixed route communities. Table 12-2 summarizes average daily ridership increases in raw number and by percent.

Table 12-2

Fixed Route Average Daily Ridership				
Community	FY 2013	FY 2014	Increase/Decrease	Percent Change
Fitchburg	1,382	1,415	33	2.39%
Leominster	635	689	54	8.50%
Gardner	182	202	20	10.99%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,199</b>	<b>2,306</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>4.87%</b>

Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority

### G - Link Bus Service

Bus service is available along Route 2/2A between Greenfield and Gardner with stops in the towns of Athol, Orange, Gardner, Phillipston, Templeton, and Winchendon. There are six routes. Times vary on routes with service starting at 5:15 a.m. and ending at 7:00 p.m. on weekdays only. G-Link is operated by the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) and connects to the Route 32 bus operated by the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA). Free transfers between MART and FRTA buses are available at the Hannaford Market in Orange.

Table 12-3

G-Link Yearly Ridership					
Fiscal Year					
G-Link Route	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent Change 2011 to 2014
Athol/Orange Link	16,297	18,655	24,059	29,559	81.38%
Winchendon Link	4,949	4,992	5,484	5,916	19.54%
Greenfield/Orange	34,965	39,132	35,029	24,953	-28.63%

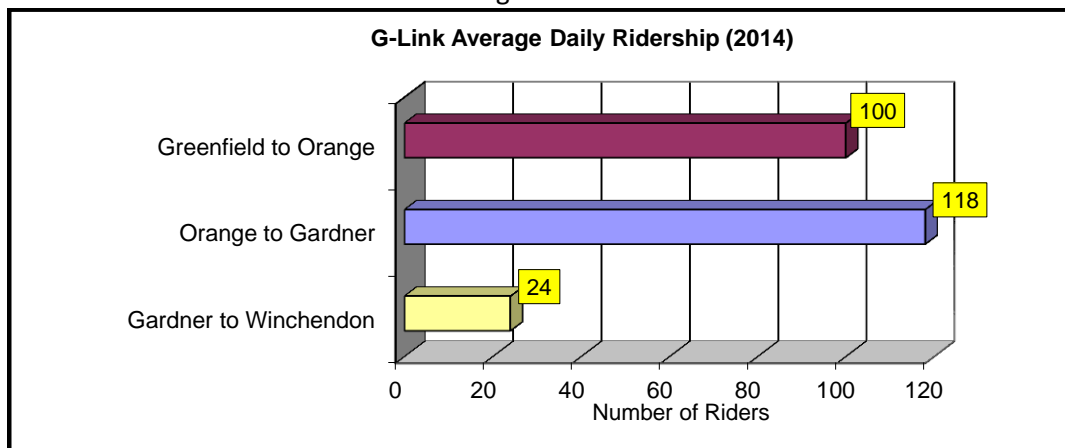
Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority

Over the same four period of 2011 to 2014, ridership has continued to grow consistently along the G-Link routes in the MART service area specially the Athol/Orange segment to over 80%. Table 12-3 shows the yearly ridership and the increase/decrease per bus route.

Average daily ridership on the G-Link service ranges by route from 100 on the Greenfield to Orange segment to 118 on the Orange to Gardner line to 24 on the Gardner to Winchendon route. The following chart (Figure 12-2) highlights the average daily ridership figures for the G-Link service.



Figure 12-2



Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority 2014 Data

Within the G-Link routes, average daily ridership has decreased over 6 percent with the Greenfield to Orange segment seeing an over 29 percent decrease alone; due to FRTA drop the service between Orange and Athol. Table 12-4 summarizes average daily ridership increases/decreases in raw number and by percent.

Table 12-4

G-Link Average Daily Ridership				
Route/Connection	FY 2013	FY 2014	Increase/Decrease	Percent Change
Greenfield to Orange	141	100	-41	-29.08%
Orange to Gardner	96	118	22	22.92%
Gardner to Winchendon	22	24	2	9.09%
Total	259	242	-17	-6.56%

Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority &amp; Franklin Regional Transit Authority

### Intercity Bus Service

Intercity bus service is provided by MART from Gardner to the Fitchburg Intermodal Center, and once a day in Leominster. Main Stops in Gardner are Mount Wachusett Community College and the City Hall. Service operates from 6:15 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. and is on weekdays and during the college school year only.

Peter Pan Transit Line also provides bus service that stops at the Getty station 528 North Main Street in Leominster. Peter Pan has a bus that leaves daily traveling from Leominster to Worcester with connections to Logan Airport, Springfield MA, and Hartford, CT to New York City, or to the Foxwoods Casino. The bus leaves Leominster at 7:35 AM – arrival time for Worcester is 8:25 AM, Springfield at 10:10 AM, Logan Airport at 10:50 AM and New York City at 2:00 PM, and 9:30 AM for Foxwoods Casino. Return trips from New York City leave at 1:30 p.m. and arrive at Leominster at 6:15 p.m. Return trips from Foxwoods Casino depart at 4:30 p.m. and arrive in Leominster at 6:15 p.m.

Individual route schedules are available online at MART's website at [www.mrta.us](http://www.mrta.us).

### Fixed Route Service Analysis

The State Legislature, in response to requirements of the Transportation Finance Bill passed in 2013, tasked each Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to conduct a Comprehensive Service Analysis and create their own Regional Transit Plan. The purpose of this plan is to:

- Examine MART’s existing service,
- Identify local markets with potential ridership, and
- Provide recommendations on ways to improve service operations

The consultant firm of AECOM was selected to prepare this plan with assistance provided by MART, MassDOT, and local stakeholders.

Through the development of this plan, MART identified the following six specific goals to guide future improvements to the service:

- Goal 1: Support Economic Development through better service options
- Goal 2: Promote mode-shift from Para-transit to Fixed Route
- Goal 3: Enhance public information and educate the public on Transit benefits
- Goal 4: Improve transit access for the public
- Goal 5: Enhance the safety and comfort levels of the system to increase ridership
- Goal 6: Improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the system

The result of the analysis is a 3-phased approach to improving MART’s fixed route services and meeting the challenges facing our region. Implementing the phased recommendations would provide benefits to MART and aid them in meeting their goals and objectives to provide a cost-efficient system while maintaining a high level of service to its riders. The phased service improvements would result in the following benefits:

1. Implementing alignment changes would allow MART to provide service to areas that demonstrate demand for transit service.
2. Standardizing headways and implementing clock face frequencies would create a simpler, user-friendly system for MART riders.
3. Expanding service to new areas, extending hours of operation on Saturday, and implementing service on Sunday would expand mobility in the region.

However the second two phases of the plan cannot be implemented without additional operating and capital funding which is required to expand service to new areas, increase frequency, and expand hours such as longer Saturdays and adding Sundays.





Paratransit Service

Paratransit service includes curb-to-curb transportation for individuals with disabilities who are eligible under the criteria of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Service is demand-responsive and available in conjunction with fixed route bus service in Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner and parts of Lunenburg and Lancaster. Paratransit services are available Monday to Friday from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. on Saturday. The service is not offered on Sundays or on holidays. Cost to individuals with disabilities is \$2.00 for rides within Fitchburg Leominster or within Gardner. A \$4.00 fare is charged between the Gardner area and Fitchburg Leominster area. In other communities in the region, twenty-two (22) member Councils on Aging provide service for their senior and individuals with disabilities. Prices and times of operation vary per community with an average fare of eighty cents (\$0.80) for one way in town trips and \$2.50 for one way out of town trips.

Table 12-5

Paratransit Yearly Ridership					
Fiscal Year					
Communities	2011	2012	2013	2014	Percent Change 2011 to 2014
Leominster/Fitchburg	40,106	43,483	44,471	49,766	24.09%
Gardner	10,028	8,094	7,272	8,629	-13.95%

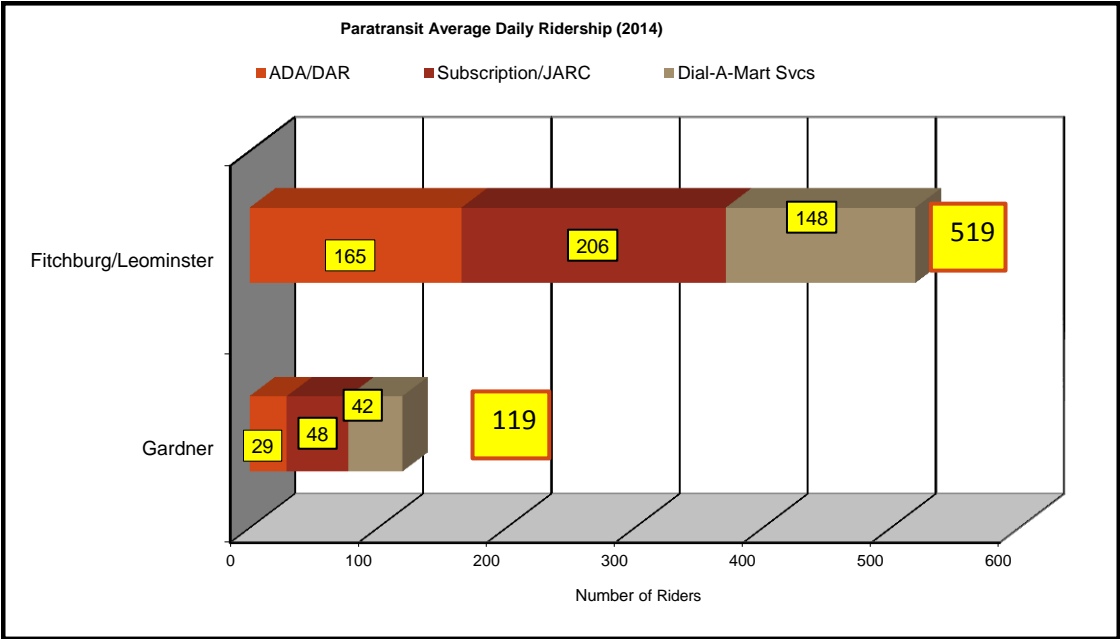
Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority

During 2014, paratransit and COA ridership has increased from FY 2013. Average daily ridership on COA services have increase among all COA’s (Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner and other COA’s) by almost 25 percent with COA’s outside of Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner increasing by 15 percent alone. Table 12-5 shows the yearly ridership for the three cities.

The following charts (Figures 12-3 and 12-4) highlight average daily paratransit and COA ridership across different services and communities.

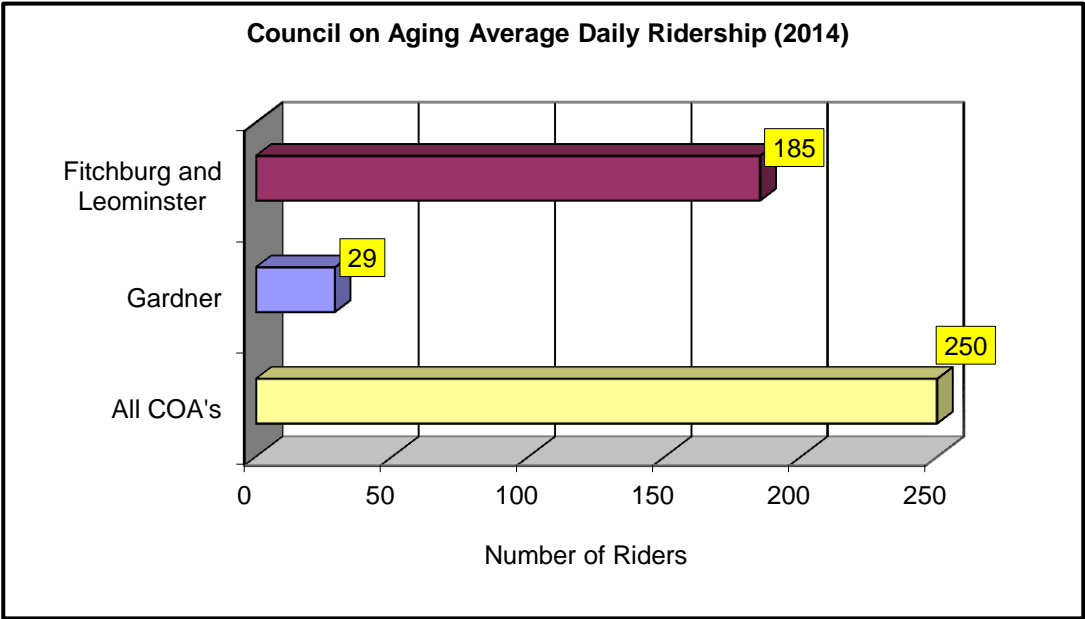


Figure 12-3



Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority 2014 Data

Figure 12-4



Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority 2014 Data



### Subscription Service

Subscription service provides monthly transportation to work and school and is available in Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner. Service is provided on a curb-to-curb basis. In order to utilize this service, an individual must make a monthly commitment. For an additional fee, MART will drop a subscriber's child off at daycare along the way to their workplace. Cost of the service ranges from \$45.00 to \$115.00 per month with stepped thresholds dependent on destination, city of origin, number of trips per week and number of legs. Average daily trips provided by MART are 222.

### Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC)

Evening transportation is provided in Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner to industrial, retail and medical facilities. The service is offered Monday through Saturday; there is no Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) service available on Sunday. The service is primarily for employment purposes. The cost of JARC is \$2.00 one way. Users need to call MART 24 hours in advance to utilize this service. The hours of service in the Fitchburg/Leominster area is Monday-Saturday from 9:00 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The service hours for Gardner are the same Monday-Saturday. MART services approximately 40 JARC rides per day, 26 of which are performed by a private contractor (taxi).

### Shuttle Van Service

MART provides transportation to veterans, elderly and individuals with disabilities to medical facilities in Worcester or Boston. The fare to Worcester is \$20.00 (\$10 one way) round trip and to Boston \$24.00 round trip for general public with discounts for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and PCA's. Through an agreement between MART and the cities of Fitchburg and Leominster, veterans from these communities ride at no charge to the individuals. These shuttles now run on a set schedule and are open to the general public on a first come first served basis originating at the MART Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC). The Boston shuttle now has an intercity zone fare of \$3.00 (\$1.50 half fare) for riders as far as the Littleton Commuter Rail Station. The Worcester shuttle now connects to the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) at its bus Hub at Union Station and also stops at the Worcester Regional Courthouse on every shuttle run. Riders on either shuttle must provide the driver with the name of their destination, which determines fare and routing in the Boston and Worcester regions. Riders must phone the MART offices to notify staff for their return ride home on the next shuttle giving their location. Average riders per day are twenty-six (26).

### Dial-A-MART Van Service

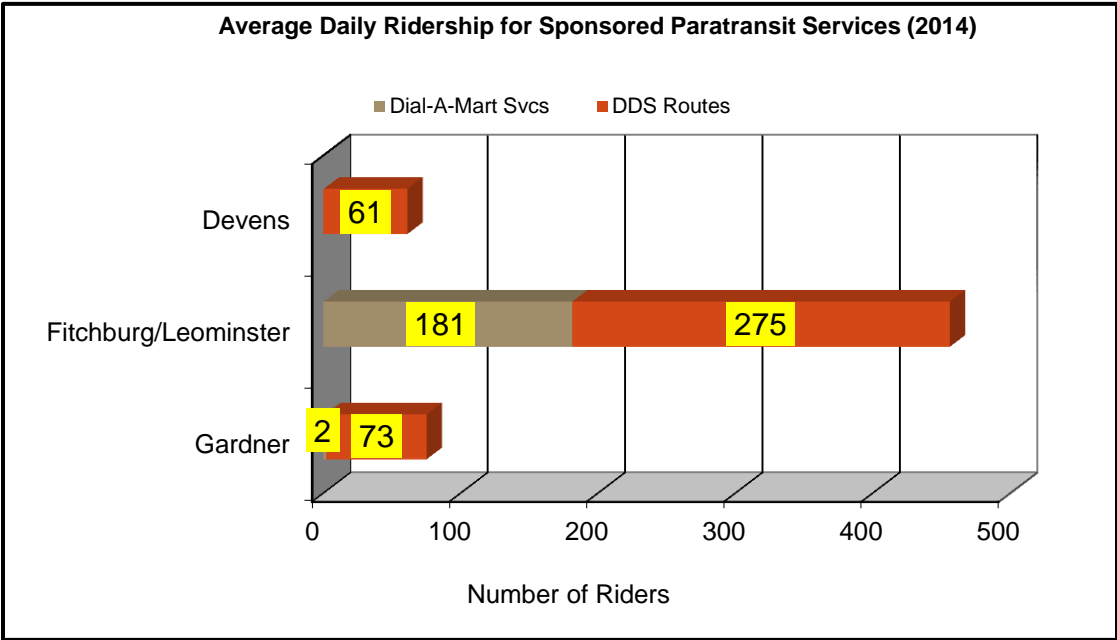
Transportation is available to various social service agencies for their clients. Service is provided Monday through Friday from 5:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. and is provided on a negotiated cost basis with the agencies. MART utilizes the Dial-A-Mart Services to allow its operating company to act



as a private vendor to the Brokerage Services Division of MART. This allows for cost savings to the brokerage program and increased revenue to support paratransit operations.

The following chart (Figure 12-5) highlights average daily ridership figures for the Dial-A-Mart services and the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) routes brokered by MART. Overall, average daily ridership has increased by approximately 3 percent.

Figure 12-5



Source: Montachusett Regional Transit Authority 2014 Data

Brokerage Services

MART is one of 6 Regional Transit Authorities contracted with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) as a transportation Broker to provide Human Service Transportation (HST) to eligible consumers receiving services from the following state agencies: Office of Medicaid (MassHealth), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB).

MART currently transports approximately 70% of HST consumers throughout 75% of the state of Massachusetts under a current contract with EOHHS. Transportation is provided by private transportation operators. The travel is funded by the state agencies. MART also coordinates Special Education transportation for local school districts. Special education departments of the participating districts fund this transportation.



### Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

MART continues to provide broker transportation services for the Department of Developmental Services. MART provides services in the Central/West Massachusetts region, which includes North and South Central MA areas, the Pioneer Valley area, and the entire Metro Boston region including the North and South Shore areas. A map showing the regional breakout is included at the end of the chapter.

Based upon FY 2015 information:

- In the Pioneer Valley region, identified by DDS as Region I Human Services Transportation (HST) Area 03, MART utilizes 8 transportation providers to transport approximately 875 clients daily to 15-day programs.
- In the North and South Central regions, identified by DDS as Region II HST Areas 04 and 05, MART utilizes 25 transportation providers to transport approximately 1,740 clients daily to 31-day programs.
- In the Northeast region, identified by DDS as Region III HST Areas 04 and 09, MART utilizes 30 transportation providers to transport approximately 2,100 clients daily to 31-day programs.
- In the Southeast region, identified by DDS as Region V HST Area 09, MART utilizes 10 transportation providers to transport approximately 560 clients daily to 15-day programs.
- For the Metro region, identified by DDS as Region VI HST Area 09, MART utilizes 25 transportation providers to transport approximately 1,810 clients daily to 50-day programs.

MART currently provides transportation brokerage services for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for approximately \$72 million, (\$59 million funded thru the Mass Health Day Habilitation), over all of the above mentioned areas. In FY 2015, approximately 7,500 individuals were transported daily to 169 programs across the state through 98 private vendors subcontracted to MART. This is up from 2010 figures of 6,000 individuals transported to 174 programs.

### Mass Health Transportation Program

MART provides brokerage services for Mass Health transportation for the Greater Metro Boston Area, which includes Woburn and Cambridge/Somerville (HST 09 Area), Pioneer Valley Area (HST 03), North Central Area, which includes Fitchburg and Lowell (HST 04), and the South Central Area, which includes Worcester (HST 05).





MART currently services the transportation needs of the Mass Health consumers in two hundred and twenty-three (223) cities and towns, with an approximate annual budget of \$27 million. Transportation averages approximately 8,050 one-way trips per day with the highest volume in the Metro Boston area. MART currently has one hundred ninety (190) vendors contracted to provide the transportation for the above-mentioned areas via a low cost bid system.

#### **Department of Mental Health (DMH)**

MART currently provides DMH services for five (5) regions across the state and utilizes 16 transportation providers to transport approximately 425 clients to 14 DMH clubhouses, with an annual budget of approximately \$1.2 million.

#### **Department of Public Health (DPH) Early Intervention (EIP) Program**

MART manages EIP transportation within four regions, Pioneer Valley (HST 03), North (HST 04) and South (HST 05) Central, and Greater Boston (HST 09) areas, with an annual budget of approximately \$3.1 million. Service is accomplished through a quoting process that brokers services with 20 private transportation providers that transport approximately 1,225 children from birth to age three to 87 active Early Intervention Programs averaging approximately 6,650 trips per month. In previous years, MART has achieved a reduction in the overall cost of these services of 15 percent. MART continues to develop the most efficient and cost effective system possible.

#### **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)**

MART provides transportation services to MRC consumers through a primarily demand response service with the majority of transportation for individuals going to meetings, conferences and job sites. Currently to date this model consists of forty consumers going to various appointments in the (HST 03, 04, 05 and 09) areas, with an annual budget of approximately \$150 thousand using 13 private transportation providers.

#### **Mass Commission for the Blind (MCB)**

MART provides transportation brokerage services for the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) the transportation is requested for eligible consumers by the agency on and as needed basis. Currently, transportation services are only required in the HST03 area for five consumers going to various appointments. MART manages transportation needs of eligible consumers via a competitive bids process using 6 private transportation providers with an annual budget of \$2,500.



### Integrated Care Options (ICO)

MART provides transportation services for the Integrated Care Options (ICO) program. This service is for dual enrolled members that receive both Medicaid and Medicare benefits and recipients are between the ages of 21- 64. Under MART current HST Brokerage contract with EOHHS, MART is required to provide transportation to eligible members for a 90 day continuity of care period and MART also provides direct transportation services to ICO's under separate contract. There are three major ICO health care companies, Fallon Total Care, Commonwealth Care Alliance and Network Health.

### Special Needs Transportation (SPED)

MART provides management and brokerage services for Special Education and McKinney-Vento Transportation to five Special Education Departments: Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District (in and Out-of-District and McKinney-Vento), Ayer-Shirley Regional School District (Out-of-District and McKinney-Vento), Fitchburg Public School (Out-of-District and McKinney-Vento), Leominster Public Schools (Out-of-District and McKinney-Vento), and Worcester Public Schools (Out-of-District and McKinney-Vento).

SPED transportation arrangements are made by the Special Education Department responsible for the student. This service can be used for any type of transportation which falls within the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and is generally used to transport students to and from school, work programs, tutoring or therapy sessions, and field trips. MART provides cost shared routes whenever possible by combining transportation for SPED students from cities and towns that fall within MART's transportation service area.

Service is accomplished through quoting and brokerage process with eight private transportation operators using a low bid system while promoting cost-shared routes whenever possible. MART is currently providing FY2015 Fall SPED transportation for 199 students with an estimated budget of approximately \$2.4 million.

### Summary of Transit Improvements since 2012 RTP

MART has been striving to accomplish many of the goals that were set established in the 2012 RTP. Below are some bullets points on the many changes and growth experienced – or perhaps not experienced over the last four years.

1. MART implemented the Charlie Card pass and stored-value system on all our bus routes. This eliminated paper passes and reduces cash transactions, which reduce queue time boarding the bus. This also allows MART's consumers to used stored-value to ride the MBTA and 9 other RTA's throughout the state with a single card.



2. MART as a result of the Comprehensive Service Analysis MART is preparing to revise its bus schedules for all local routes in Fitchburg/Leominster and Gardner effective in September 2015.
3. Routes 10 will be eliminated as part of the schedule change due to redundancy and efficiency.
4. Route 11 will be re-routed to the new Great Wolf Lodge resort to accommodate the workforce of that business.
5. Gardner Routes 1 & 2 are being completely revised and renamed for better circulation and higher frequency while maintaining resources.
6. Fixed route ridership continues to grow and has increased since the automated fare box system was installed. The new changes slated for later this year should help to bolster growth even more.
7. In order to ensure continued service levels a fare increase was implemented in July 2015. MART had not previously increased fares in eight years. Due to the increasing demand and the no increase in Commonwealth funding, this fare increase was an important part of the overall financing of MART.
8. Paratransit service seems to have leveled off, but COA services continue to grow each year as the need for services outside of the fixed route system grows.
9. Brokerage services continue to increase in volume every year. Services have grown from an \$80 million contract in 2011 to \$105 million in 2014.
10. MART received a TIGGER II grant in 2011 to implement projects to reduce our carbon footprint. MART since then has built two solar arrays and implemented other Energy Conservation Measures through capital improvements to our facilities.
11. The parking garage expansion at the Leominster Commuter Rail Station was completed in September 2014. Wachusett Station is on track for completion in late 2016.

### Green Initiatives in Transit

MART applied for a Transit Investments for Greenhouse Gas & Energy Reduction (TIGGER II) grant in August 2010, and was pre-awarded \$1,687,500 to complete its proposed Phase I in November 2010 (with final award on February 17, 2011). MART's project is for a solar energy production and total energy management system named EP3: Energy Production, Proliferation, and Preservation.

MART has installed Solar PV systems at our Water Street facility in Fitchburg and our Maintenance Facility in Gardner. Solar photovoltaic systems are clean energy and as such are better for the environment and reduce MART's carbon footprint. The PV array generates clean energy from the sun which is connected to the electrical system through an inverter. This inverter turns the DC generated electricity into AC electrical currents, which then provide power to the building and the various components within the building such as lights, computers, and



other equipment. The electricity produced by the solar array reduces the power that MART needs to draw from the power grid and thus reduces the amount of electricity that the power company needs to generate. MART is also certified to sell any unconsumed power generated by the array back to the power company. (See below for a view of Solar Photo Voltaic Array installation).

Figure 12-6



View of Solar Array- Over Fitchburg Facility



View of Solar Array- Over Gardner Facility

MART's goal is to not only generate clean energy but reduce consumption of energy overall. This will be accomplished by installing Energy Conservation Measures (ECM's) throughout all MART's facilities. The first step in the design of the PV systems to be installed at MART was a full energy audit of all MART facilities. The audit indicated all the ECM's that should be instituted to achieve maximum energy preservation. The following ECM's have been instituted in the past year:

- Outside LED Light Replacement at the Fitchburg Parking Garage & Intermodal
- Pole & External LED Light Replacements at Water Street Maintenance Facility
- (Internal lights at Water St and Main St, Fitchburg were done 3 years ago).
- Mechanical Upgrades at Water Street Admin/Maintenance Facility – completely revamped heating and cooling system designed for maximum efficiency.
- Mechanical Upgrades at the Fitchburg Intermodal Facility
- Controls for remote access to high energy devices such as thermostats and electronics
- Will be instituting sensory lighting controls by the end of 2015

MART has made business process changes over the last few years to nurture our green policy. The following processes have been instituted:

- 2 Hybrid staff vehicles (2009)
- 5 Hybrid Buses – 3 Internationals (2010-11) and 2 New Flyers (2013)
- All of our bus-washers at our maintenance facilities use water recycling tanks (2010)
- Recycling bins have been placed in all administrative and operational offices (2010)

- EFT Payments to vendors instead of paper checks (2011)
- Paperless copies, filing, and storage (2013)
- Electronic timesheets (2013)
- Solar lighting and customer information displays in bus shelters (2015)
- Better efficiency thru better Asset Management (2015)

Planned for Future:

- Electronic paystubs (2015)
- Electric-Car Charging Stations at Parking Facilities (2016)
- Bike mode shift by retrofitting buses with bike racks and installing bike storage at stations (2015)
- Mode shift from Para-transit to Fixed Route via travel training (2016)

### Commuter Rail



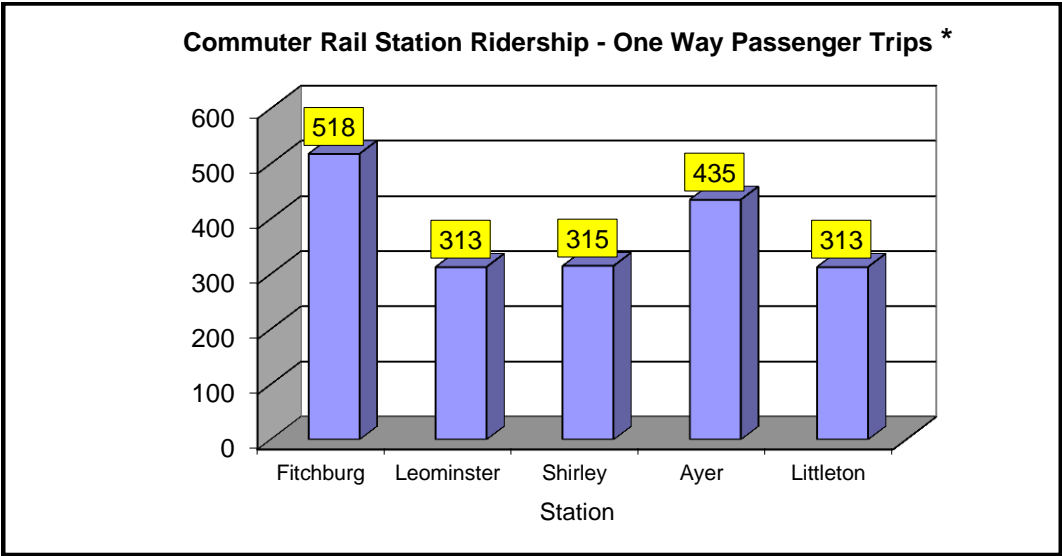
Commuter rail service is managed by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). Commuter rail service operates from Fitchburg to Boston. The train stops in the Montachusett Region include Fitchburg, Leominster, Shirley, Ayer and Littleton. MART provides a transit service from Gardner to Fitchburg for those commuters that wish to travel to Boston by train, as there is no train service available from Gardner. As of August 2014, the fare from Fitchburg to Boston is \$10.50 one-way or \$330 for a monthly pass.

On weekdays, MBTA provides thirteen (13) trips leaving from Fitchburg to Boston (inbound) and thirteen (13) trips from Boston back to Fitchburg (outbound). Inbound service starts at 5:15 a.m. and ends at 10:30 p.m. (in Boston at 11:53 p.m.). Outbound service (Boston to Fitchburg) starts at 8:55 a.m. and finishes with its last trip leaving Boston at 12:10 a.m. and arriving in Fitchburg at 1:39 a.m. Saturday and Sunday service has six (6) inbound trips to Boston and six (6) outbound trips to Fitchburg. Map of MBTA commuter rail line and MART fixed route system is included at the end of this chapter.





Figure 12-6



Source: MBTA 2014 Blue Book 14<sup>th</sup> Edition (Ridership & Service Statistics)

The Fitchburg Line transports nearly 12,000 trips (inbound and outbound) on a typical weekday (FY2013 Annual Average). The stations within our member communities service about 3,800 of those trips. The graph above (Figure 12-6) shows the average number of riders that board the commuter rail train at each station within the Montachusett Region going inbound (one-way) to Boston.

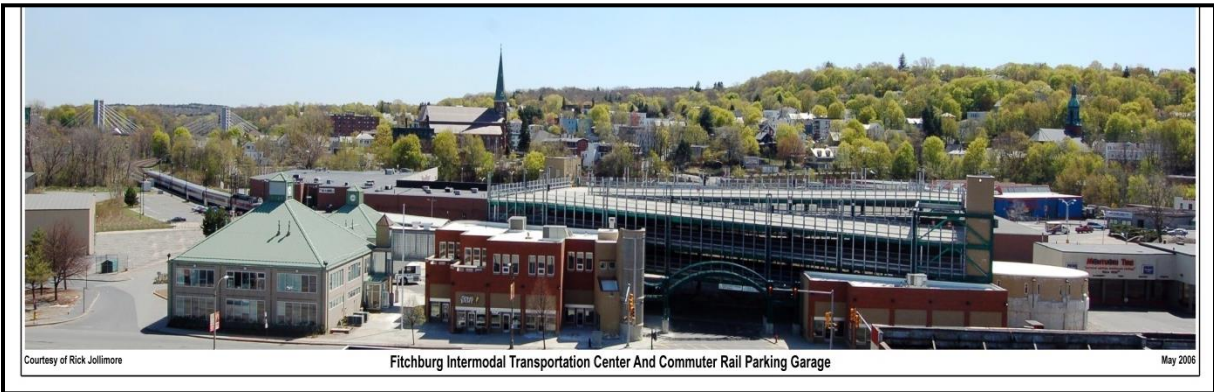
**Commuter Train Stations and Parking Facilities**

***Fitchburg – Commuter Parking Garage***

The Fitchburg Commuter Parking Garage was completed in 2006. Located adjacent to the Intermodal Transportation Center, it provides parking for 425 commuters. Parking cost to commuters is \$3.00 per day. The front of the parking garage contains retail space, which currently houses a restaurant, the Fitchburg State University Center for Professional Studies, and MART offices. (See Figure 12-7, below for an exterior view of the Intermodal Transportation Center and parking garage).

Figure 12-7

Intermodal Transportation Center & Commuter Parking Garage – Main Street, Fitchburg



**North Leominster – Commuter Parking Garage**

North Leominster Commuter Parking Garage was completed in 2013. Located adjacent to North Leominster Commuter Rail Station at Nashua Street in Leominster, it provides parking for 360 commuters. The current cost to park at the station is \$3.00 per day. (See Figure 12-8, below for an exterior view of the parking garage).

Figure 12-8

North Leominster Commuter Station & Parking Garage – Nashua Street, Leominster



**Shirley Commuter Train Station**

The Commuter Rail Station is located in close proximity to the town center on Front Street (see aerial view, below, in Figure 12-9). Limited parking is available for approximately 70 vehicles. Based upon MBTA commuter rail ridership audit figures previously presented, average ridership is 315 one-way passenger trips from the Shirley station. This is more than four times the number of available parking spaces.

Bicycle and pedestrian connections are poor or non-existent. No bicycle routing is present along the street network leading to the station and facilities do not exist at the station to secure a bicycle. Pedestrian connections consist of partial sidewalks. However, at the station parking areas, no sidewalks or designated pedestrian areas are present for commuters walking to and from their vehicles.

Figure 12-9

Shirley Commuter Rail Station & Parking Lot – Front Street, Shirley



**Ayer Commuter Train Station**

Ayer’s commuter train station is located in downtown Ayer on Main Street and has parking available for 65 cars in a lot located just off of Park Street (Route 2A/111) access via Groton Street (see Figure 12-10, below, for an aerial view of the parking lot and Ayer Commuter Rail Station). The parking lot is filled to capacity on a daily basis. The downtown location of the train station provides access for pedestrians, however, bicycle facilities are lacking.

Figure 12-10  
Ayer Commuter Rail Train Station – Main Street, Ayer



**Littleton Commuter Train Station**

Littleton’s train station and commuter rail parking lot for 200 vehicles completed in 2013, located on Foster Street at the intersection of Route 2 and I 495 (see Figure 12-11, below, for an exterior view of the parking lot and the commuter rail station). The parking lot is full to capacity daily. MBTA is conducting a parking needs assessment for the Littleton commuter rail station to determine its future parking needs. Based upon MBTA commuter rail ridership audit figures, average ridership is 313 one-way passenger trips from Littleton. The current cost to park at the station is \$4.00 per day.

Figure 12-11  
Littleton Commuter Rail Train Station & Parking Lot – Foster Street, Littleton





### Wachusett Train Station

The purpose of the project is to satisfy the region's current transit needs between the North Central Region of Massachusetts (Montachusett Region) and Boston, while reducing the overall commute time and facilitating economic development. MART received an award of \$55.5 Million through the US Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) ARRA Transit program in February 2010, which approved the proposed project to build a commuter rail station and 360-space parking lot in West Fitchburg called Wachusett Station. Part of this project will be a new layover facility for the MBTA and commercial freight train engines. Track Improvements will be made between the existing Fitchburg station, at 100 Main Street to the layover facility in Westminster (approximately six miles of track). The final design and construction for all facets of this project will be handled by MBTA with MART handling local coordination and purchase of any required land. The project is expected to result in a variety of environmental and economic benefits including improving public transportation for residents west of Fitchburg, reducing congestion on Route 2, enhancing economic development and creating new jobs. The project is under way and is scheduled to be complete by spring of 2017. (see Figure 12-12, below, for a rendering of the proposed commuter rail station and parking lot).

Figure 12-12  
Proposed Layout of Wachusett Station & Parking Lot – Fitchburg

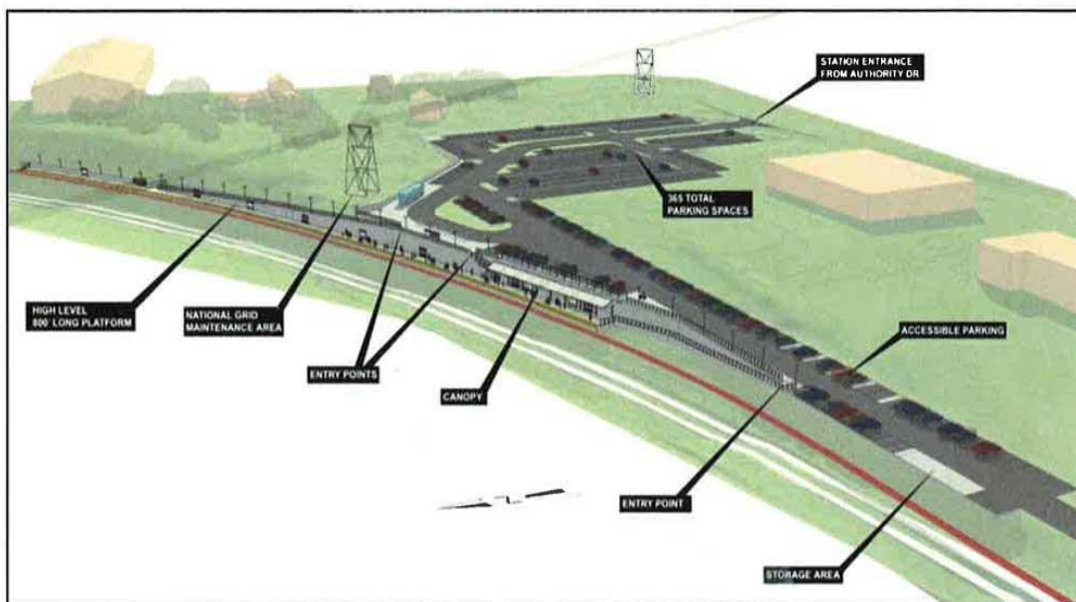


Table 12-6  
Commuter Rail Lot Parking Spaces – Current and Future Potential

Community	Commuter Rail Station	Current No. of Parking Spaces	Potential/Planned Parking Spaces	Estimated Year of Completion
Fitchburg	Wachusett Station	-	360	2017
	Main Street	425	425	Completed
Leominster	North Leominster	360	360	Completed
Shirley	Front Street	70	70	N/A
Ayer	Main Street/Park Street	65	200	N/A
Littleton	Foster Street	200	200	Completed
Total		1120	1,615	

### ***Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Improvement***

Currently, citizens of the "...Montachusett area..." communities have few options for commuting to and from the Boston metropolitan area. These modes of travel are very unreliable, particularly for a daily commute. Ridership levels on the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line is adversely affected by poor reliability, infrequent service, and excessive travel times, the longest in the MBTA Commuter Rail system. Yet, although the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line is the poorest performing line in the system, it has the potential to attract new riders if quality service were provided. Table 12-6 above shows the current and future potential commuter rail parking lot parking spaces.

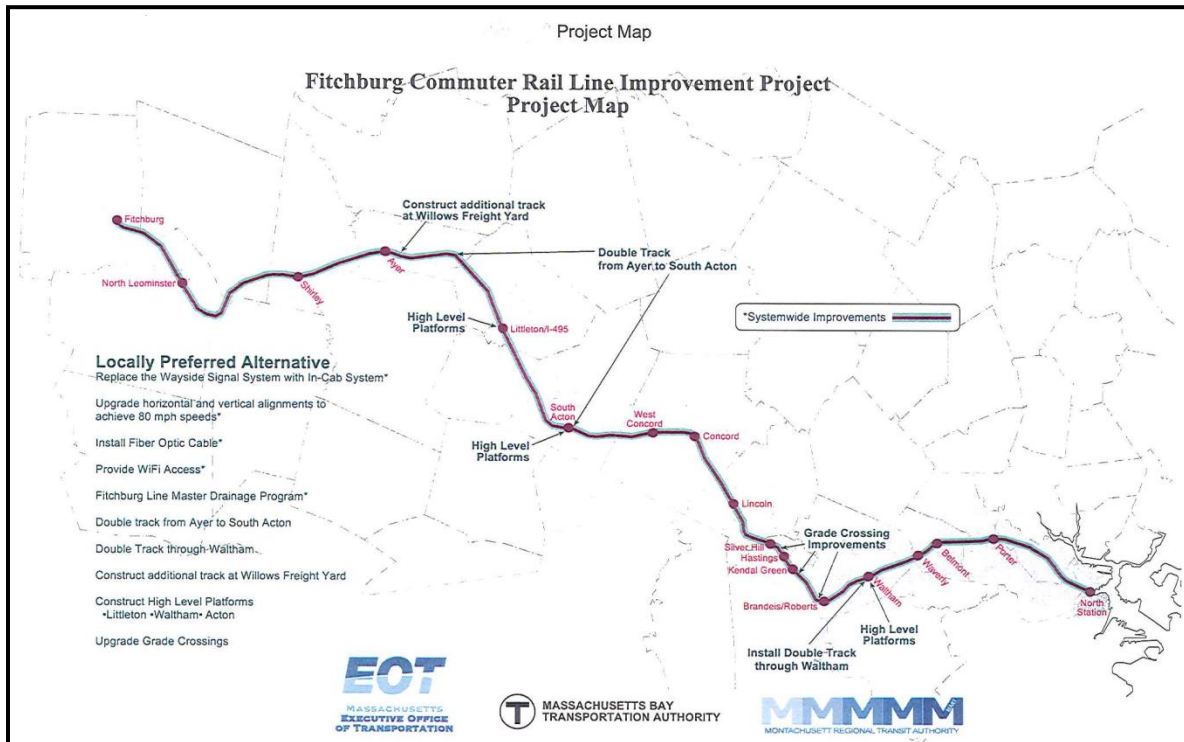
The primary goal of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Improvement Project is to increase ridership by offering reduced travel times and improved service reliability between Fitchburg and Porter Square. The secondary goal of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Improvement Program is to increase frequency of service. One physical constraint, which currently hampers service frequency and reliability, is the single tracked section of the line between South Acton and Ayer. Installing double track along this segment will enhance operating flexibility and improve on-time reliability. Double tracking will also create additional scheduling opportunities and could lead to more frequent service.

Improved service on the Fitchburg Line should entice a number of drivers to switch from highway to rail for their commute to Boston. The resulting reduction in personal automobiles will decrease traffic congestion and delays on Route 2 during peak commute times.





Figure 12-13  
Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Project Map



### Rail Line Project Recommendations

The ultimate goal of this project is to significantly improve travel speeds and reliability through modernizing the infrastructure of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Corridor. The modified project scope of work will include:

- Update Wayside Signals from Swift Interlocking (in Somerville) to West Acton
- Upgrade vertical and horizontal track alignments to achieve 79 MPH from Swift Interlocking (in Somerville) to Fitchburg
- Install Fiber Optics Cable from Swift to West Acton
- Double track from South Acton to West Acton
- Construct/reconfigure track at Willows Freight Yard
- Construct high level dual side platforms at South Acton
- Replace grade crossing rail and roadway surface at 10 locations
- Upgrade grade crossing warning systems at 26 locations
- Modify grade crossing warning systems at four (4) locations
- Replace/repair six (6) bridges
- Nine (9) new/modified interlockings
- Transfer Waltham Tower to MBTA Control Center

- Drainage and right of way (ROW) improvements
- Replace a bridge in Concord carrying the railroad over Route 62.

### **Summary of Commuter Rail Improvements since 2012 RTP**

Improvements to the commuter rail system in the Montachusett Region since the last Regional Transportation Plan in 2012 include:

1. The preferred alternative of Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line has been advanced to construction and funding for the improvement has been allocated as follows:
  - Funding of \$75.0 million in earmarked federal funds allocated by Congress in FFY 2008.
  - State funding of \$75.0 million approved by the State Joint Transportation Committee and authorized by the Secretary of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).
  - Total federal and state funding of \$150.0 million.
2. The reinstallation of double tracks from Ayer to South Acton, in addition to construction of an ADA accessible high-level platform at Littleton Station, has been completed. Funding of \$40.0 million for the improvement has been allocated from ARRA federal stimulus funds.
3. Interlocking track work in Leominster/Lunenburg, which would allow trains to go from one track to the other, has been completed. Funding of \$10.0 million for the improvements has allocated from ARRA federal stimulus funds.

The following are recommendations and projects related to MART operations beyond those of previously identified commuter rail needs.



Table 12-7  
Transit Recommendations

Community	Project Description	Funding Category	Funding Sub Category	FFY 2016 TO FFY2019	FFY 2020 TO FFY2040	TOTAL
Regionwide	Urban Assistance Formula (5307) - Urban Operating Assistance	5307	Operating	\$7,575,000	\$45,925,000	\$53,500,000
Regionwide	Urban Assistance Formula (5307) - Equipment Purchases	5307/5339	Capital	\$725,000	\$2,175,000	\$2,900,000
Regionwide	Urban Assistance Formula (5307) – ITS Projects	5307	Capital	\$750,000	\$4,250,000	\$5,000,000
Regionwide	Urban Assistance Formula (5307) - Facility Improvements	5307/5339	Capital	\$3,798,000	\$16,202,000	\$20,000,000
Regionwide	Elderly & individuals with disabilities (5310) - MAP Purchases (Elderly & individuals with disabilities )	5310	Capital	\$1,550,000	\$6,450,000	\$8,000,000
Fitchburg	Wachusett Station & Parking Facility	5309 TIGER	Capital	\$55,500,000	\$0	\$55,500,000
Regionwide	Bus and Van Procurement	5307/5339	Capital	\$4,551,500	\$42,500,000	\$47,051,500
Fitchburg/Leominster	Secure Bicycle Parking at Commuter Rail Stations	5339	Capital	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000
Regionwide	Electrical Vehicle Recharging Stations at Commuter Parking Facilities	5307/5339	Capital	\$75,000	\$0	\$75,000
<b>TOTAL FUNDING NEEDS</b>				<b>\$74,574,500</b>	<b>\$117,502,000</b>	<b>\$192,076,500</b>

Note: FFY2016-2019 numbers based on TIP. Long Range Operating Assistance and Equipment purchase funding is based upon the increase from 2014 to 2015 (0.0025) and is assumed to be funded at the same rate of increase from 2020 to 2040. Figures shown are Federal dollars only. Amounts do not include any state or local match.

Table 12-8  
Transit Recommendations

Community	Project Description	Recommendation
Regionwide	1. Operational Changes To Expand Services – implement last two Phases of Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA).	Find Funding to implement
Regionwide	2. Fixed Route Bus Services From Fitchburg to Lancaster, Westminster, Shirley, Ayer, Littleton and Devens – covered by CSA	Fiscal Constraints
Regionwide	3. Bus Connections Extension To Lowell, Nashua, Athol, Orange And Worcester	Further Study
Regionwide	4. Light Rail Extension From Littleton To Athol And Fitchburg To Worcester And Fitchburg To Lowell To Nashua And Fitchburg To Framingham And Worcester to Ayer	Further Study
Regionwide	5. Light Rail Attachment To Statewide High Speed Rail Line	Further Study
Fitchburg/Gardner	6. Expansion of Bus Services From Fitchburg To Gardner	Further Study
Regionwide	7. Examination of A Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System	Further Study
Ayer/Devens/Shirley	8. Potential Maintenance Facility to serve regional stations/routes	Further Study



### Transit Recommendations from Regional Transportation Meetings

The following recommendations/issues were raised as part of the RTP Public Input meetings held in late 2006. The updates to these issues are in the added comments column.

Table 12-9  
Transit Meeting Recommendations

Community	Recommendation/Issue	Comments
Ayer Ayer/Shirley	Additional Bus Stations and Connections Regional Commuter Rail Station to address needs.	Not Accomplished Study in Progress
Fitchburg	Wachusett Parking Station – Development of Facility	Project now active. Commuter Rail Station should be open in Spring 2017.
Gardner	Expansion of Bus Service to serve added needs	Some service will be expanded after Wachusett Station is finished.
Regionwide	Public Transportation Information – better distribution/dissemination of service availability	In Progress
Regionwide	Examination of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System – to address possible Commuter Rail expansion issues to Gardner and points west of Fitchburg	Not Feasible at this time.
Regionwide	Improved Commuter Rail Service – High Speed Rail	Fitchburg to Boston rail service improvements are in progress. Should be completed by Spring 2016.

### Transit Challenges

#### Challenges

##### 1. Challenges - Fixed Route

Transit Development Programs (TDP) are routinely conducted in Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner to assess the needs of the economically disadvantaged and elderly populations. As part of this plan development, a survey is conducted of riders to assess the services available, determine user impressions and to identify additional needs. The latest passenger surveys done in mid-2013 (summer) and early 2014 (winter) were also done in Spanish in order to solicit input from other populations that utilize the system. Two open ended questions in the survey asked respondents their feelings and opinions regarding service expansion and overall comments on the system. The comments received were grouped into four general categories: Extended Weekend Hours and/or Sunday Service; Later Hours of Operation for Weekday Service Including



2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Shift Hours; Service Issues (i.e. passenger congestion, schedule comprehension, timeliness, etc.); and Route Expansion within the cities or with other communities. Some 600 to 700 responses were recorded to these survey questions. Based upon these responses and the public outreach meetings conducted by MRPC in 2015; the following gaps, needs and issues were identified.

- Expand weekday and weekend operating hours to accommodate working individuals both at night and in the early morning.
- Initiate Sunday service to shopping and cultural centers, etc.
- Expand service routes, frequency and hours of operation to existing shopping centers and residential neighborhoods.
- Expand service between Fitchburg, Leominster, Gardner and neighboring communities.
- Expand service to Worcester.
- Improve on time operation to assist individuals on medical trips.
- Improve service connections and times to commuter rail stations to align with trains.
- Improve marketing and outreach to public regarding services, schedules, routes and policies.
- Examine/institute web access for bus routes and schedules.
- Institute bus tracking applications for users to monitor bus times and locations.
- Review Spanish language schedules and instructions throughout system.

However concerns have been raised by members of the community – specifically in the Cleghorn Neighborhood of Fitchburg and in Leominster, regarding MART’s rate of frequency for the routes that service these areas. What limits MART from making these service changes is the ability to receive adequate operational and capital funding now and in future years. MART’s Link Service, although ridership is on the increase, has concerns due to the instability of available funds. MART is examining alternatives proposed by private transit companies to form a partnership that will reduce costs and improve services.

Demands for fixed route services have increased from towns such as Westminster, Lunenburg, and the working community on Devens. The towns of Littleton and Boxborough would also like to see shuttle services to the commuter rail stations in Littleton and Acton. The problem remains of where to obtain the funds to increase and maintain these services.

## **2. Challenges - Paratransit**

As part of the outreach effort for the RTP, the MRPC conducted a series of public meetings and events to solicit comments and input. From these activities, comments were received on various transportation related topics from infrastructure to transit. The following identified needs and challenges related to paratransit services:



- Coordinate and promote councils-on-aging (COA's) van service for individuals with disabilities in communities.
- Promote changes to COA policies in order to expand services to meet other community needs.
- Expand COA van services to operate on weekends and nights.
- Expand COA van services to commuter rail shuttles and job access.
- Expand MART van utilization within member communities for paratransit service.
- Seek funding resources to maintain and expand operations.
- Improve outreach and information dissemination regarding veteran services that are available.

The transportation systems operated by councils-on-aging (COA's) are among the greatest potential resources in the area. However, except in a few cases, few disabled individuals were being served even though all Councils-on-Aging that utilize MART owned vehicles are mandated to transport individuals with disabilities. Few towns coordinate or share services between each other in any way. A noticeable improvement over the years has been the willingness of Councils-on-Aging to expand their transportation services beyond just medical and nutritional trips; COA's are now servicing the individuals with disabilities in their communities.

MART would like to see more COA's change their policy's to expand their services to meet other needs of their community – while still staying within the regulations promulgated by the Mobility Assistance Program (MAP) which often funds the vans that MART supplies to the member COA's. Currently most Councils-on-Aging do not run van service on weekends or at night. Some communities would like to see these resources shared for commuter rail shuttles and job access.

MART would also like to better utilize the vans which are used for sponsored trips within its member communities for paratransit services. However the biggest challenge in meeting these needs remains finding the resources to fund and maintain operations and interagency approval.

### **3. Challenges - Other Transit**

Fixed route bus service is limited with the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority operating in only six out of the twenty-two member communities (includes three communities on the Link Routes). Commuter rail service from the region to Metro Boston is limited to thirteen inbound and outbound trips on weekdays and six round trips on both Saturdays and Sundays. Interstate bus service is limited to one company providing minimal service to the region. Taxi service is provided in six Montachusett communities; however fares may be a deterrent to use.

The greatest single need in the region is for out of town transportation to medical appointments and work sites for individuals with disabilities and low income. The major medical and rehabilitation centers are located in cities like Worcester and Boston. In 2011, MART implemented three daily set schedule shuttle services between Fitchburg and the Worcester



and Boston area hospitals and opened it to the general public (from the previous on-demand veteran/COA appointment service). The Worcester shuttle connects to the WRTA at its bus Hub near Union Station. The Boston shuttle includes guaranteed stops to Devens (MWCC Campus) and Littleton Station. There has been an increase in demand for greater frequency from Fitchburg/Leominster to Devens and Worcester, and reverse commute from Littleton to Devens. A study needs to be done on whether service frequency would bring in greater ridership on these shuttles and while lowering the subsidy costs.

A serious deterrent to cooperative planning and the development of coordinated service in the region relates to policies prohibiting inter-agency ridesharing agreements. The following is an examination of alternatives that could be considered when developing a coordinated transportation service:

- Do Nothing - To do nothing would only perpetuate the unmet needs already identified.
- Ridesharing - Ridesharing is the result of formal or informal agreements made to provide transportation to be shared by more than one person. As previously stated, agency policies preventing such arrangements have been in place for years. Also, many government programs restrict trip purposes and client use making it illegal to transport clients of unaffiliated agencies. However, cooperative van sharing could work effectively for councils on aging. Although they fear that sharing would result in loss of control over their vehicles, such obstacles need not be insurmountable. Contracts ensuring all parties their proper rights and financial responsibilities can be written.
- Join an RTA – Towns, located not more than one town away from existing Montachusett Regional Transit Authority communities, are eligible to join MART. Since Transit Authorities are conduits for state and federal transportation funds, several benefits accrue to RTA member towns. Membership establishes a town's eligibility to receive both capital and operating assistance.
- Brokerage - Brokerage arrangements are uniquely tailored to accommodate each situation. Basically, brokerage involves the use of a broker or "middleman" to coordinate persons or agencies needing service with providers of that service. Responsibility for management, administration, establishing policy, contracting with operators, funding, bookkeeping, scheduling/dispatching, and vehicle maintenance can be delegated in a variety of ways.

#### **4. Challenges - Human Services Transportation**

In January of 2015, The Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MMPO) formally endorsed the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HST) Update needed to reflect MAP-21's provisions and requirements. The CPT-HST Plan documents the MMPO region's unmet human-service transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals (or persons below the poverty level) and the elderly. Maps of the elderly,



individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals and minority populations in relation to MART fixed route system are included at the end of this chapter.

Based upon the outreach effort conducted by MRPC and the issues identified during the development of The CPT-HST Plan, a series of challenges were established. In general, the challenges and moving forward-addressing the challenges can be summarized as follows:

- Extension of Existing Fixed Route Service Hours and Days of Operation

1. Extend/Expand Transit Services

MART and other RTAs should continue to explore options to expand existing routes, service areas and hours and days of operation. Many of the responses to the needs question highlighted in The CPT-HST Plan have indicated a desire to see service expanded both in terms of hours and days of operation. Expansion of service hours are seen as important to those individuals employed, or seeking employment, during non-typical work hours, i.e. late night, weekends, etc. Expanded service will also benefit those seeking to access colleges, employment training centers and commercial activities.

2. Sustain Existing Services and Maintenance of Vehicles

Given the uncertain nature of operating and capital funding for transit services, it is important to continue to maintain the existing system and its fleet. The importance of the current services is demonstrated by the ridership figures and the survey responses that indicate the reliance a number of individuals have on the system. These services are important to the target populations as other means of transport are often limited and scarce. Every effort should be made in order maintain, at least, the current level of operation. In particular, the focus should be on ensuring the continuation of MART, Council on Aging vans, and paratransit services.

- Medical Transportation Service in Both the Fixed Route Areas and In the Rural Communities.

Seek to Extend Medical Services to Rural Communities

The lack of a reliable or consistent service to assist elderly, individuals with disabilities and low income individuals in the more rural communities of the region was a consistent point of concern. Often individuals are unaware of transit options through MART, their COA, etc. and consequently may suffer unnecessarily. Expansion of information on the availability of these services, clarification with COA's on their roles and what can be done with their vans can address some of these concerns. Expansion of services through additional funding and resources should also be sought where appropriate.

- Expansion and Connection of Fixed Route Service to Additional Communities.

Expand Transit Services to Other Communities

Several comments related to the current fixed route services not only indicated a desire for expanded hours of operation but also to additional locations and communities.





Linkages to communities such as Lunenburg, Shirley, Devens, Westminster, Clinton and Worcester are often mentioned as a need by respondents. An expansion of routes into other communities will allow for additional access to services, medical and otherwise, that reside in the more urban communities of Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner. Residents of the more rural communities would thus see an increase in opportunities for employment, education, work and shopping.

- Education and Training of Available Services

Expand Outreach and Training of Transit Services to Target and LEP Populations

Several comments were received on the need to educate individuals on the fixed route and paratransit services available in the region. RTAs should examine the establishment of training material and resources for the target populations of this plan as well as to those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). These education and outreach services should include the councils-on-aging as they are often the initial contact for many of the individuals covered in this plan.

### **5. Challenges - Other Areas of Emphasis**

Based upon the information developed, the following are additional priority areas that more general in nature but are no less important.

- Encourage Employer Vanpools  
Employer vanpool options should be encouraged for businesses in the Montachusett Region. Some employers have had success with these services and it would decrease the burden placed on other public transportation services. In addition, connections between existing transit services and vanpool routes can be coordinated to enhance both public and private entities.
- Expand and Increase Commuter Rail Options  
Connections with existing services to commuter rail stations should be examined, expanded and improved as necessary. Commuter rail expansion and improvement in the region also provide the target populations with more options for medical, employment and shopping. As such, coordination between existing transit services and the commuter rail stations and schedules would enhance opportunities.
- Explore Additional Funding Options  
Limited funding and resources is a barrier to meeting the needs of the target populations. Funding is particularly important for RTAs. Continued efforts to identify and seek out additional funding sources would help to implement service expansion and improvement.
- Explore Fare Options to Encourage Additional Commuter Rail Ridership  
Current fare pricing along the commuter rail system may contribute to ridership issues. Comments received on this report stated that due to the high cost of rail passes from Zone 1A (urban core), several employer supported shuttles run to Alewife Station. To encourage reverse commute ridership, a discounted pass option should be considered



by the MBTA. The Montachusett MPO supported this comment and its inclusion as a recommendation.

- Explore Additional Scheduling Methods for the individuals with disabilities and Target Populations

Comments received supported the valuable service provided to the individuals with disabilities and targeted populations by local providers. However, it was mentioned that the available scheduling methods for the individuals with disabilities cliental can be difficult and can require assistance on the individuals end. It was recommended that an electronic or computerized, i.e. email, type of system would be beneficial to all users, especially those with any type of speech impediment.

## Moving Forward – Addressing the Challenges

### Moving Forward – Addressing the Challenges - Human Services Transportation

- Seek funding and alternative sources to extend and expand the days and hours of operation for current fixed route and paratransit services. This includes extended daily hours of operation, establishment of Sunday service, refinements and expansion of routes to employment training centers, commercial malls/areas, industrial parks, etc.
- Public transportation providers should seek to maintain current funds for operations and services and repair or replace vehicles as needed. JARC and New Freedom types of activities and MAP funding should be maintained and expanded to address the identified needs and services.
- Improve the dissemination of information related to current services by MART, RTAs, taxi companies, COA's, etc. to rural communities. Improvements to appropriate websites for MART and the communities regarding available services are strongly recommended. Non-traditional services such as web based ride sharing may also prove beneficial.
- Seek funding and alternative sources to extend and expand fixed route and paratransit services to other communities around Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner. Route expansion should include linkages to commercial, employment, medical and cultural centers.
- Seek to develop targeted training resources for the target populations as well as those in the LEP communities. Materials could include training workshops at various neighborhood centers, a train the trainer seminar, web based videos, and alternative language information. Outreach should be provided to all social service agencies linked to MART as well as through newspaper campaigns through articles/advertisements, radio advertising and promotional marketing. In addition, several comments made reference to smartphone apps related to schedule availability, system text alerts and

real time bus/vehicle tracking. Development and implementation of such technology should be explored and implemented with appropriate funding.

### **Moving Forward – Addressing the Challenges - Other Areas of Emphasis**

- Identify and encourage employer based vanpool options as well as connections to existing services.
- Seek to improve and expand connections and coordination between transit services and the commuter rail stations in the region. Expansion options should address areas such as reverse commute, service frequency, and rail line extension. Both fixed route and demand responsive services should be examined if funding is available.
- Continue all efforts to seek out additional funds to assist in the support and expansion of the various transit systems in the region.
- Encourage the MBTA to review commuter rail fare options, in particular as they relate to reverse commute, to determine potential discounts for users to promote additional ridership and access to this region and its employers.
- Encourage local providers and MART to investigate the possible establishment of a more automated scheduling or “booking” system for individuals to utilize. This would assist those persons with a communication limitation or challenge.

### **Action Items - Transit**

In order to provide increased mobility for Montachusett area residents that do not own automobiles or that choose to be less dependent on the automobile, MART will need to continue to refine and implement appropriate and innovative public transit programs designed to increase ridership and build sustainable communities. The continuous examination of routes and schedules to determine the most efficient and effective service will be necessary. MART is open to expanding services wherever possible to fill service gaps, meet unmet regional needs and increase accessibility to health facilities and social services. Where the need for additional services is identified, MART should continue to work with those institutions to examine needs, organizational involvement and find ways to help defray the cost of the additional services. Continued participation of local industries, businesses, major shopping centers and schools in developing appropriate schedules, routes and promotional programs must be encouraged. Special service provided to the elderly and the individuals with disabilities will need to be monitored to ensure continuation of appropriate levels of service in light of MART's complementary ADA plan. Continued brokerage programs with the Department of Public Health, Department of Developmental Services, and Special Education departments of local school districts are planned.

In addition to increased and improved routing and scheduling, it will be necessary for MART to maintain and improve the operating condition of its vehicle fleet. The present vehicle fleet is constantly being replaced with new lift equipped ADA compliant equipment. The Montachusett



Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process should continue to be utilized to upgrade and replace aging buses and vans.

Most of the above actions are designed to improve efficiency and lower overall demand on the highway system at a relatively low cost. In summary, the main recommendations to improve the MART transit system include:

- Continued monitoring of routes and schedules so that any beneficial changes can be identified and implemented;
- Alternative sources of funding for continued transit operations must be developed and instituted;
- The marketing effort must be upgraded and increased to inform the public of transit availability and efficiency;
- Additional equipment such as radios, lift equipped buses, lift equipped vans, etc., should be acquired;
- Driver safety, CPR, first aid, and sensitivity courses should be maintained;
- Transit services for the elderly and the individuals with disabilities should continue to be upgraded as necessary to insure both availability and accessibility in compliance with MART's ADA complementary paratransit plan;
- Paratransit services provided by MART to social service agency clients should continue to be monitored for coordination of effort;
- Brokerage programs with Department of Public Health, Department of Transitional Assistance, Department of Mental Health, and local schools should be monitored for greater coordination and continued use of private enterprises.

#### **Action Items - Commuter Rail**

Commuter rail service is managed by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). Commuter rail service operates from Fitchburg to Boston. The train stops in the Montachusett Region include Fitchburg, Leominster, Shirley, Ayer and Littleton. MART provides a transit service from Gardner to Fitchburg for those commuters that wish to travel to Boston by train as there is no train service available from Gardner.

- Shirley Train Station - Improve bicycle facilities, i.e. racks, lockers, guide signs and pavement markings. Improve pedestrian walkways with designated crosswalks, paths or sidewalks both to the main commercial areas and the parking lots.
- Ayer Train Station - Improve bicycle facilities, i.e. racks, lockers, guide signs and pavement markings. Directions and clearly defined routes to the Ayer-Dunstable Rail Trail should be developed. In addition, MBTA officials need to consider how potential trail users will transport their bikes on the train. This rail trail can be a significant



- attraction for the Region and as such appropriate accommodations should be implemented. Improve pedestrian access with designated crosswalks, paths or sidewalks both to the main commercial areas, parking lots and the Ayer-Dunstable Rail Trail.
- Increase in available parking at the Shirley, Ayer and Littleton commuter rail stations.
- Littleton's train station and commuter rail parking lot for 200 vehicles completed in 2013, the parking lot is full to capacity daily. Conduct a parking needs assessment for the Littleton commuter rail station to determine its future parking needs. Based upon MBTA commuter rail ridership audit figures April 2013, average ridership is 313 one way passenger trips from Littleton.
- Lighting and safety should be improved and upgraded at the various stations.
- Installation of an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) type solution. A screen or monitor that shows the passengers the estimated time of arrival and status of the train can be placed at each station. Consideration should also be given to installing a phone on the platform that is linked to a toll free information line. Both of these actions would assist the rider in reducing out of vehicle wait time.
- Extend train service to Gardner. Local public officials continue to express the need to re-establish direct service by rail to the city. The cost to re-implement service has in the past proven to be considerable, however, as stated; officials continue to request that the option remain under consideration.
- Improve quality of amenities on train to enhance passenger comfort.

Through prior workshops and public meetings, input from local elected officials and the general public has resulted in system wide recommendations regarding bicycle and pedestrian connections. These include:

- Appropriate warning signs and/or signals of pedestrian and bicycle crossings and pathways.
- Installation of racks and/or lockers at rail stations to secure bicycles.
- Identification of commuter rail stations on pedestrian and bicycle maps and guides as a destination and/or point of interest.
- Improve Handicapped accessibility at Shirley and Ayer Train Stations.
- Train service from Boston to Fitchburg between 1:15 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.
- Reverse commute train from Boston arriving in Fitchburg by 8:00 a.m.
- Explore possibility of a regional commuter rail facility in the Devens Enterprise Zone.

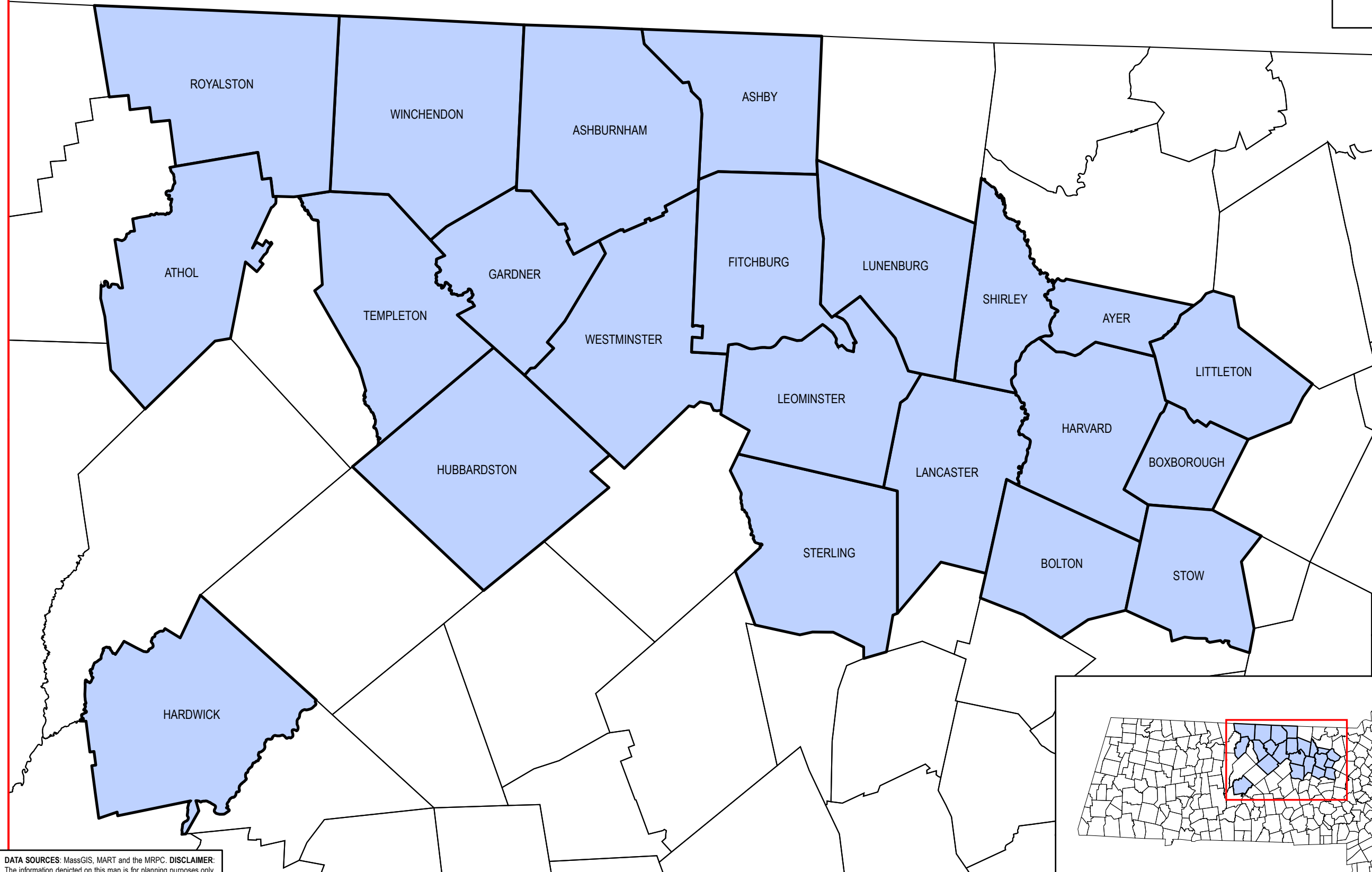


This page left blank.



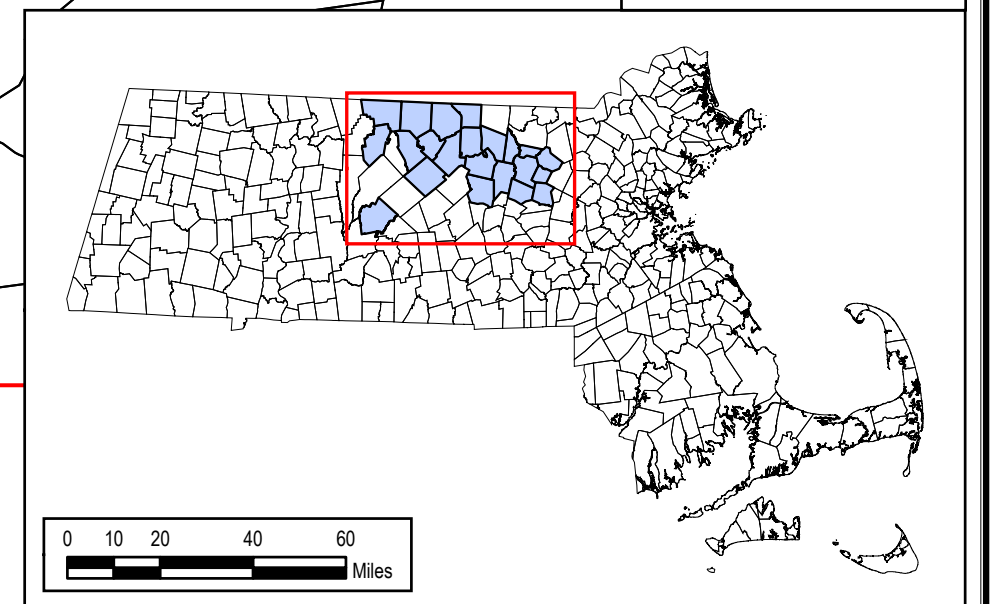


# MART Communities Locus Map



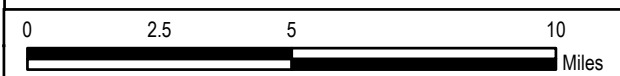
**Legend**

- MA Community Boundaries
- MART Communities



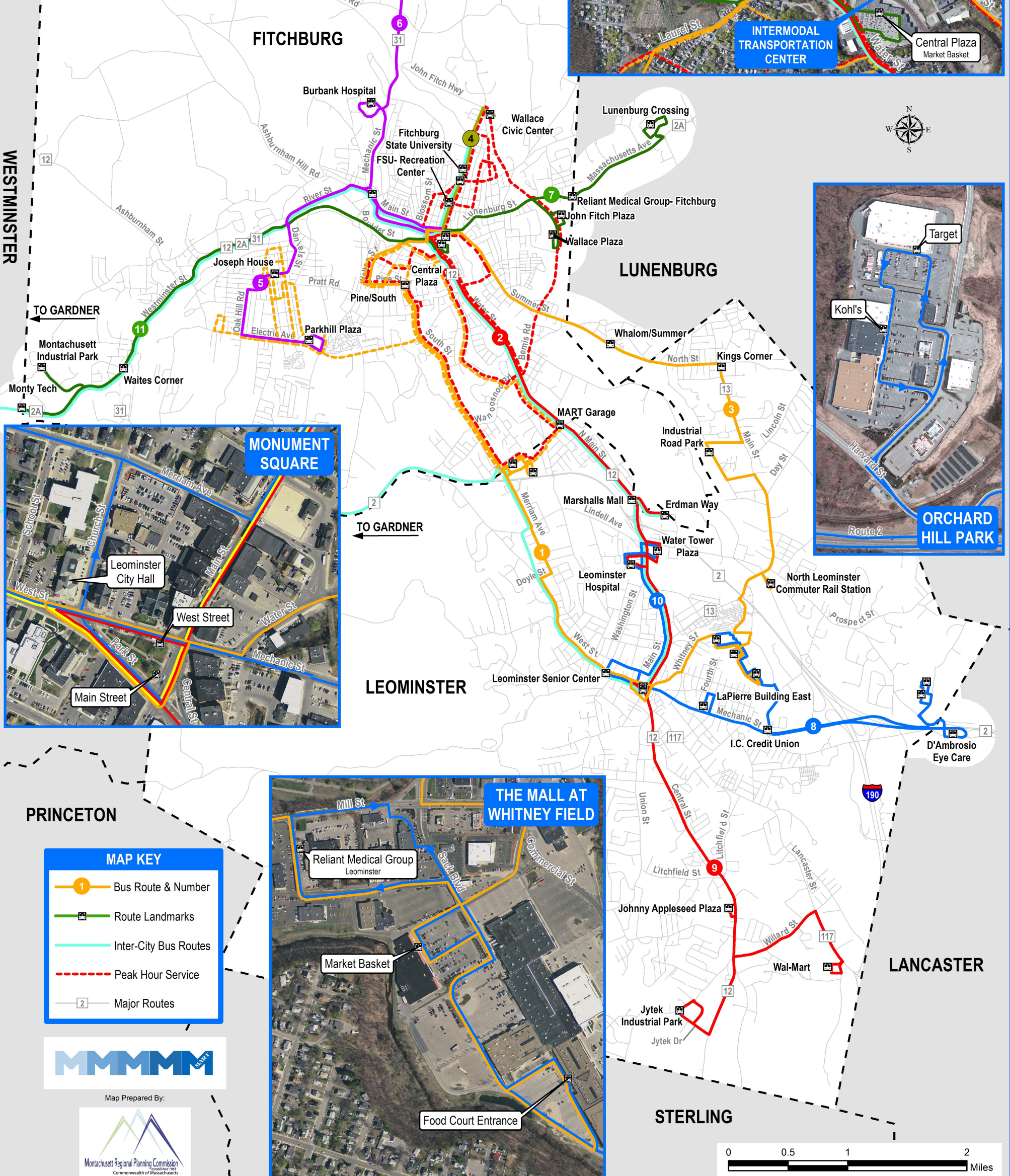
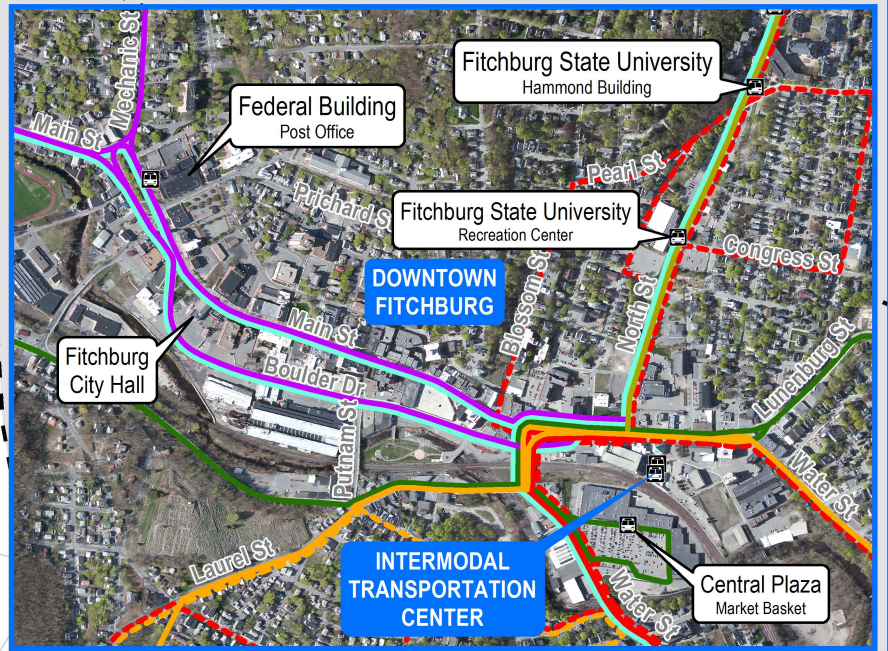
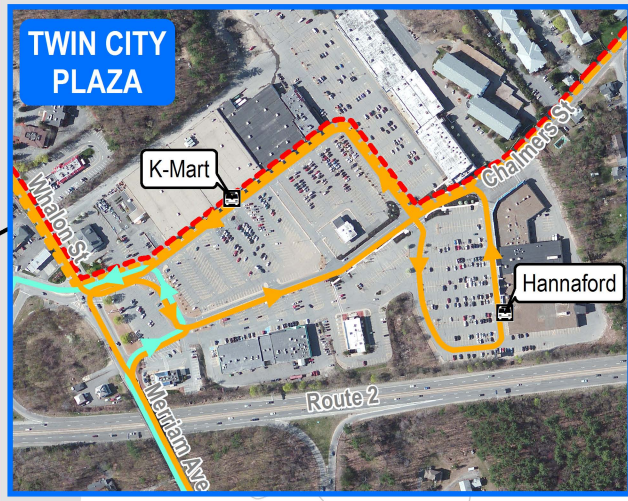
**DATA SOURCES:** MassGIS, MART and the MRPC. **DISCLAIMER:** The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. All data are representational and are not adequate for boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-based analysis.

**PREPARED BY:**  
Montachusett Regional Planning  
Commission  
GIS Department, July 2013  
1427R Water Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420  
Phone: 978-345-7376  
E-mail: [mrpc@mrpc.org](mailto:mrpc@mrpc.org)

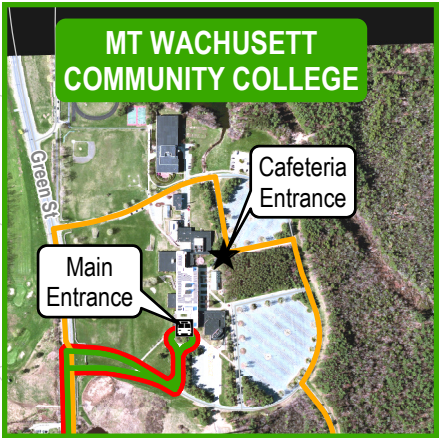




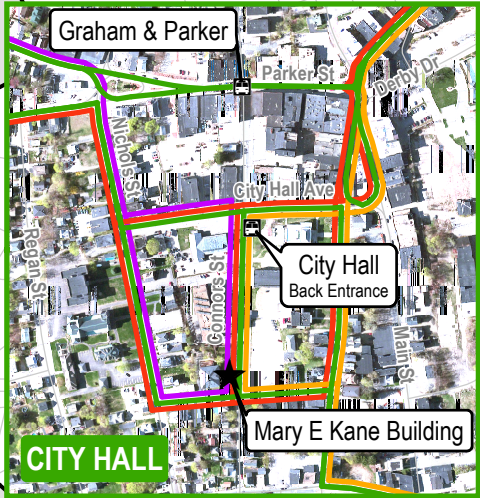
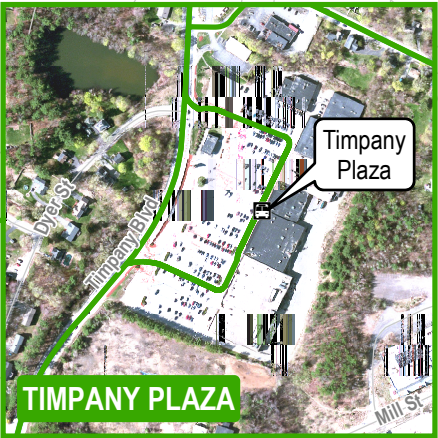
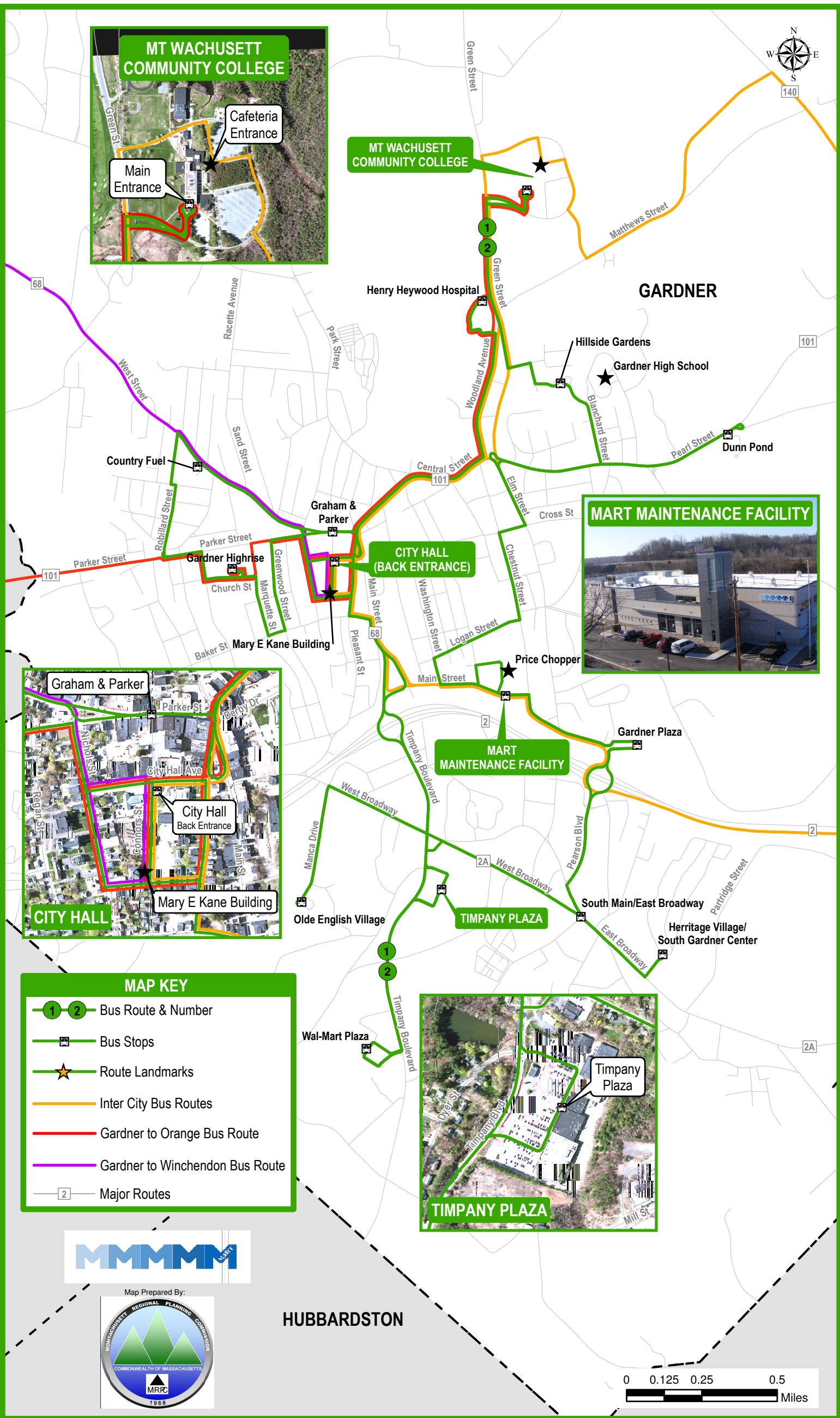
# Fitchburg/Leominster Bus Routes & Bus Stops







MT WACHUSETT  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

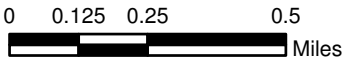


**MAP KEY**

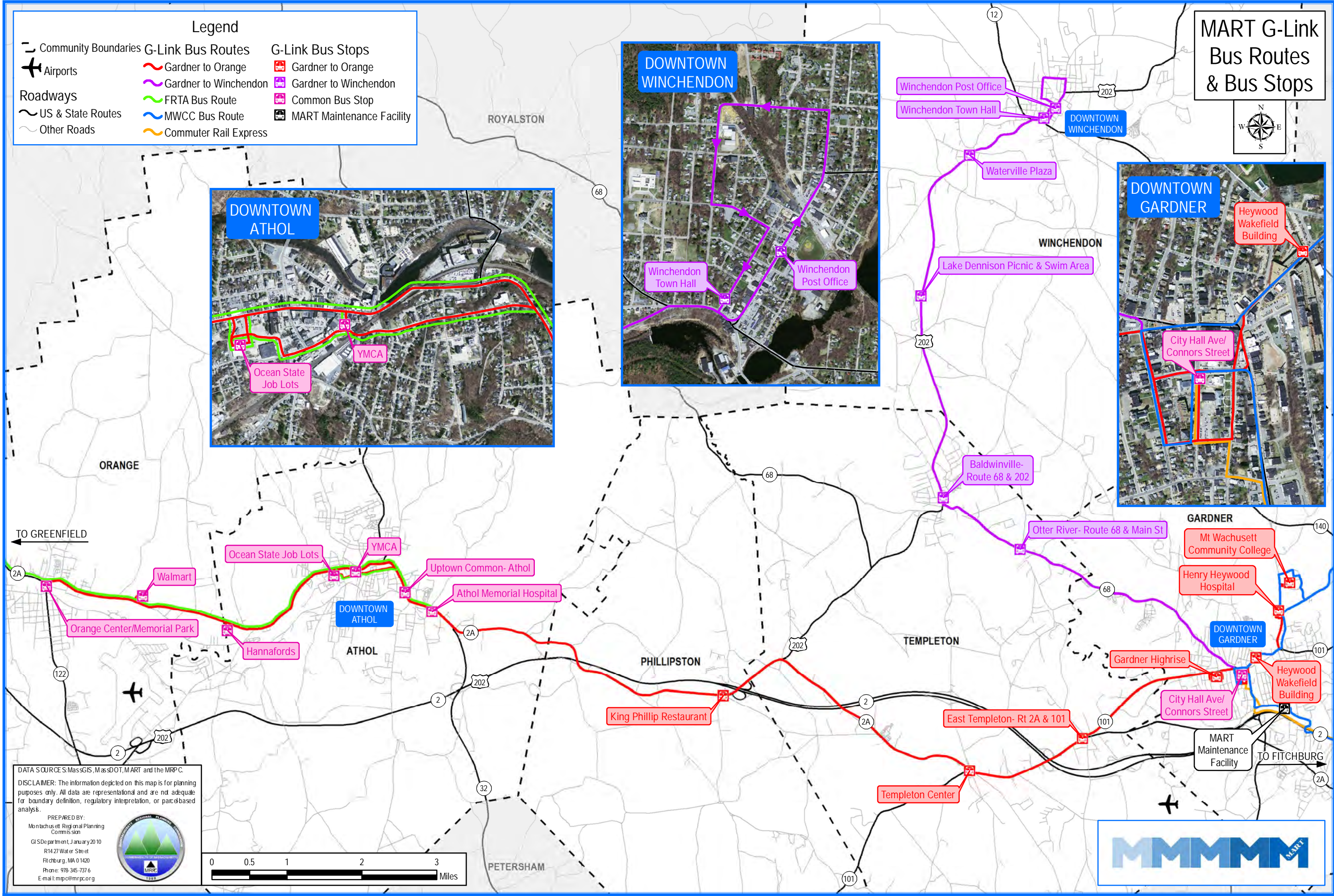
- 1 2 Bus Route & Number
- Bus Stops
- Route Landmarks
- Inter City Bus Routes
- Gardner to Orange Bus Route
- Gardner to Winchendon Bus Route
- 2 Major Routes



HUBBARDSTON

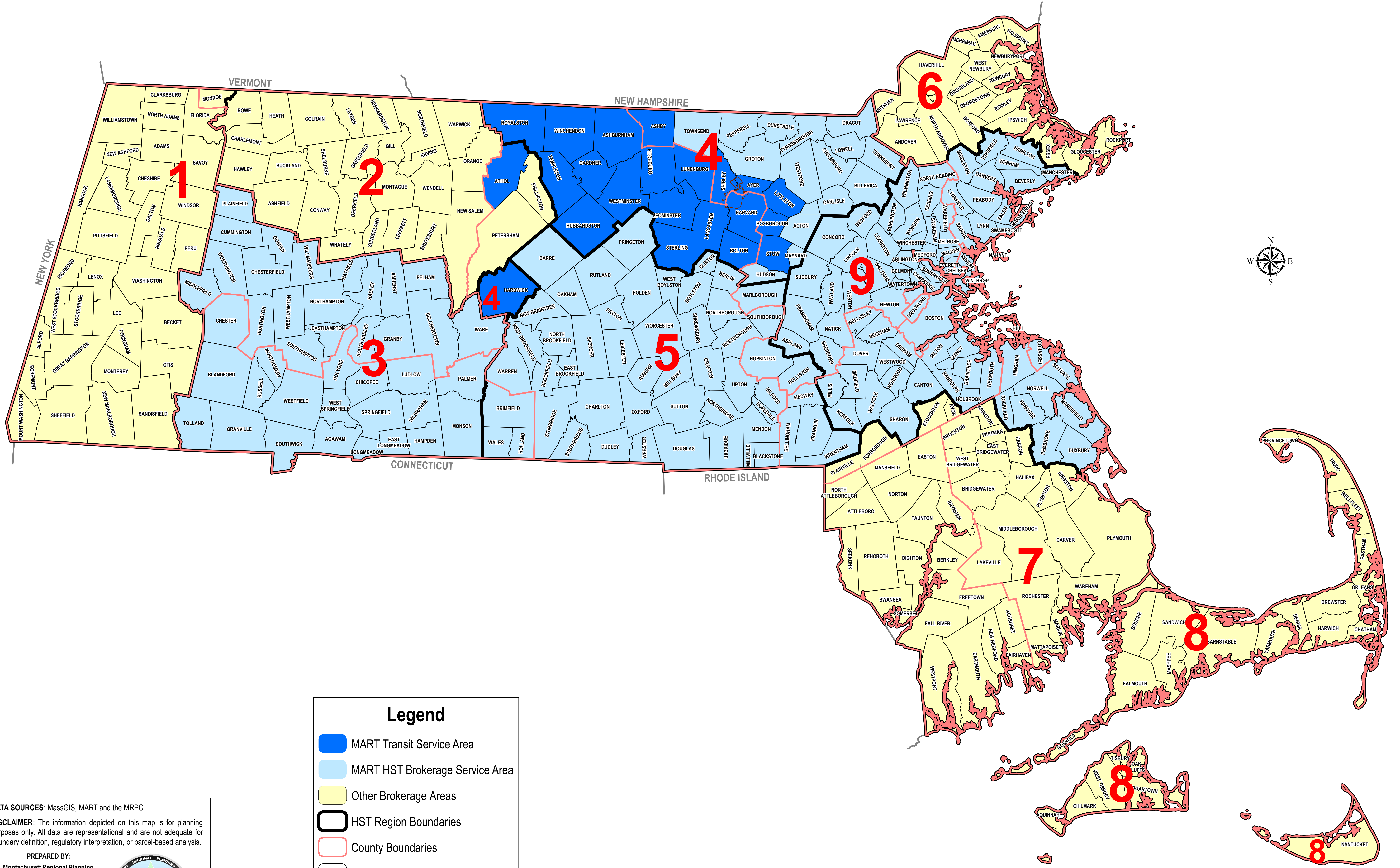








# Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) Human Service Transportation (HST) Brokerage Area




### Legend

- MART Transit Service Area
- MART HST Brokerage Service Area
- Other Brokerage Areas
- HST Region Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- Community Boundaries
- Devens Boundary
- Surrounding State Boundaries


**DATA SOURCES:** MassGIS, MART and the MRPC.

**DISCLAIMER:** The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. All data are representational and are not adequate for boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-based analysis.

**PREPARED BY:**  
Montachusett Regional Planning  
Commission  
GIS Department, July 2013  
1427R Water Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420  
Phone: 978-345-7376  
E-mail: mrpc@mrpc.org

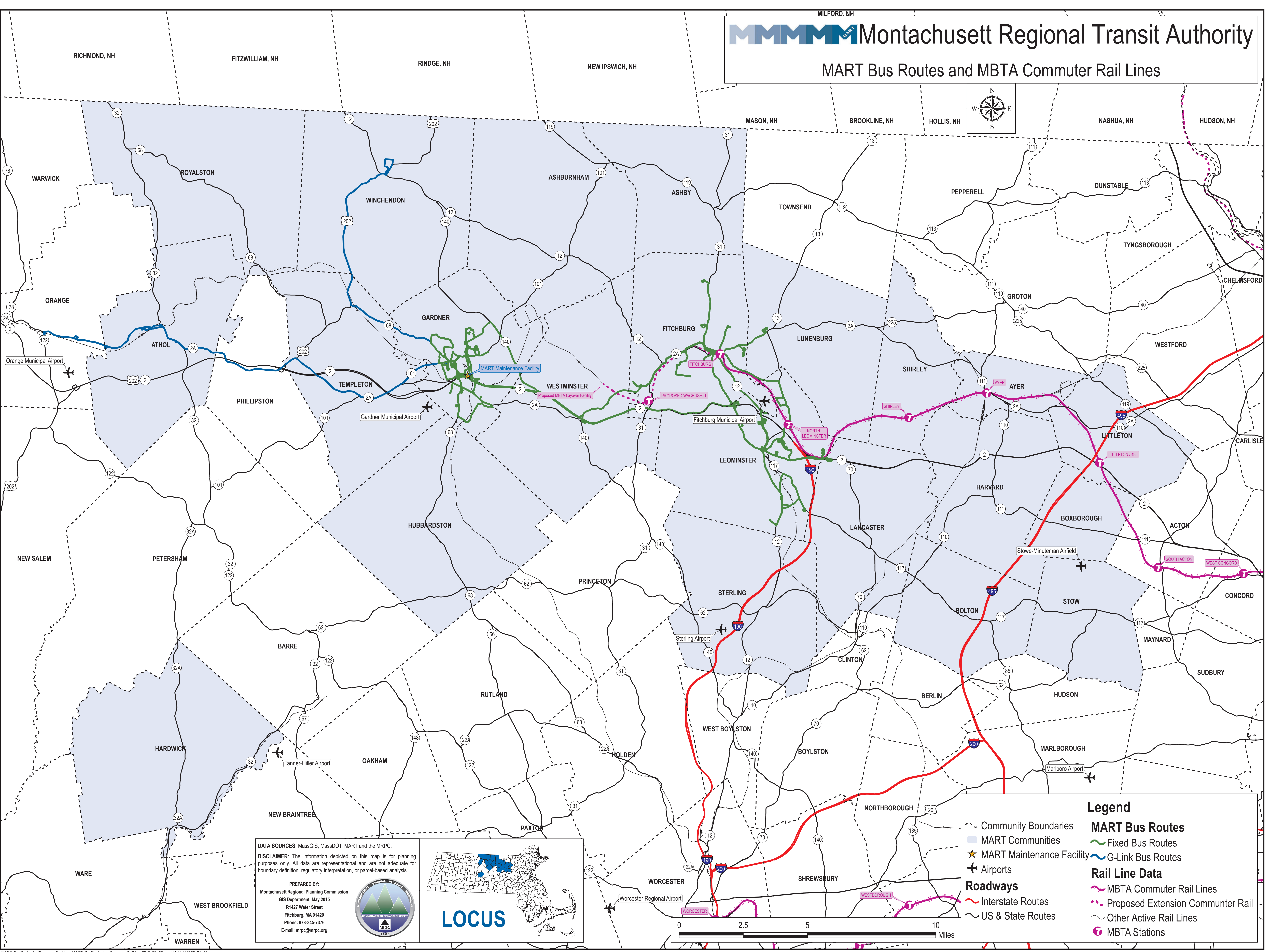




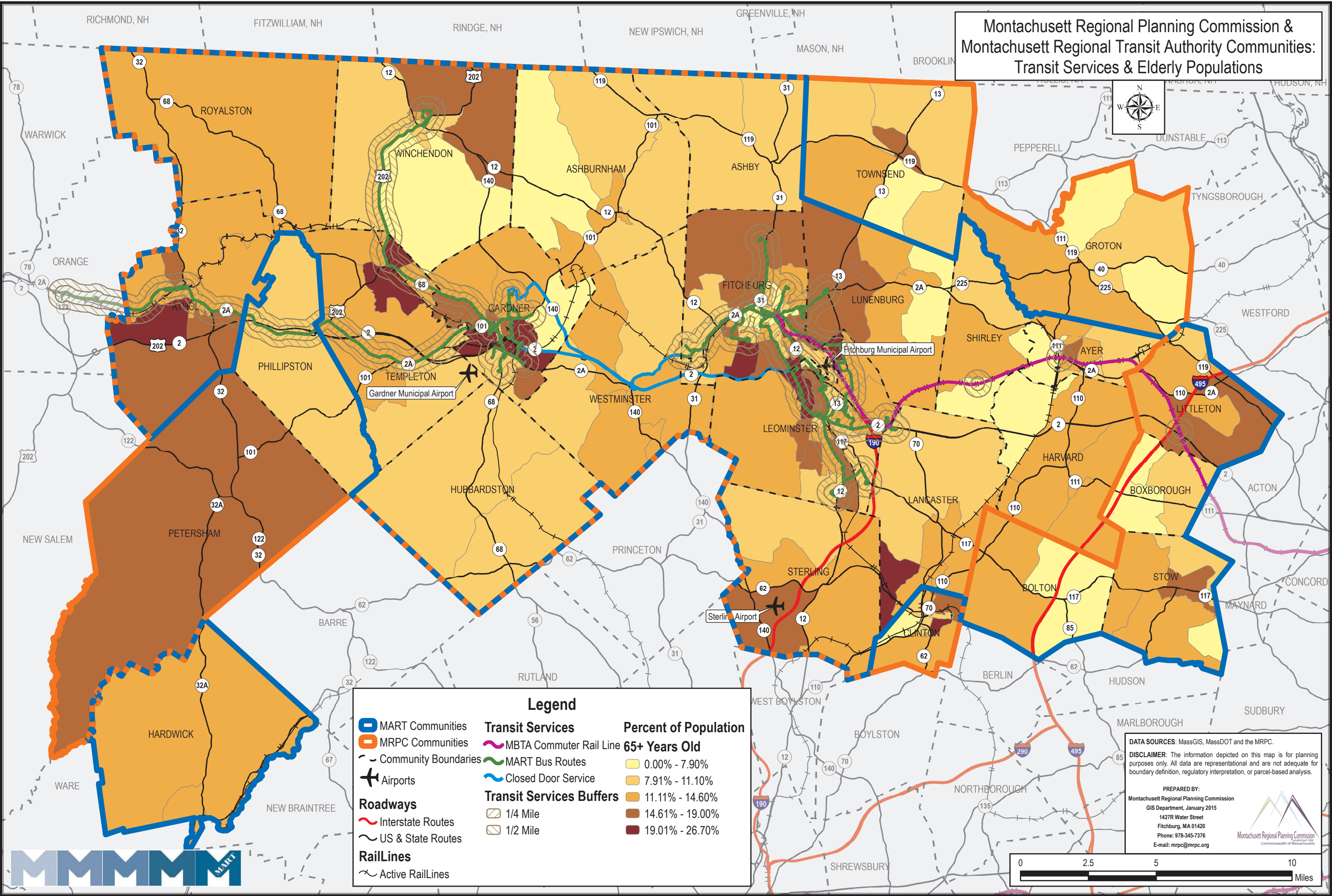
# Montachusett Regional Transit Authority

## MART Bus Routes and MBTA Commuter Rail Lines

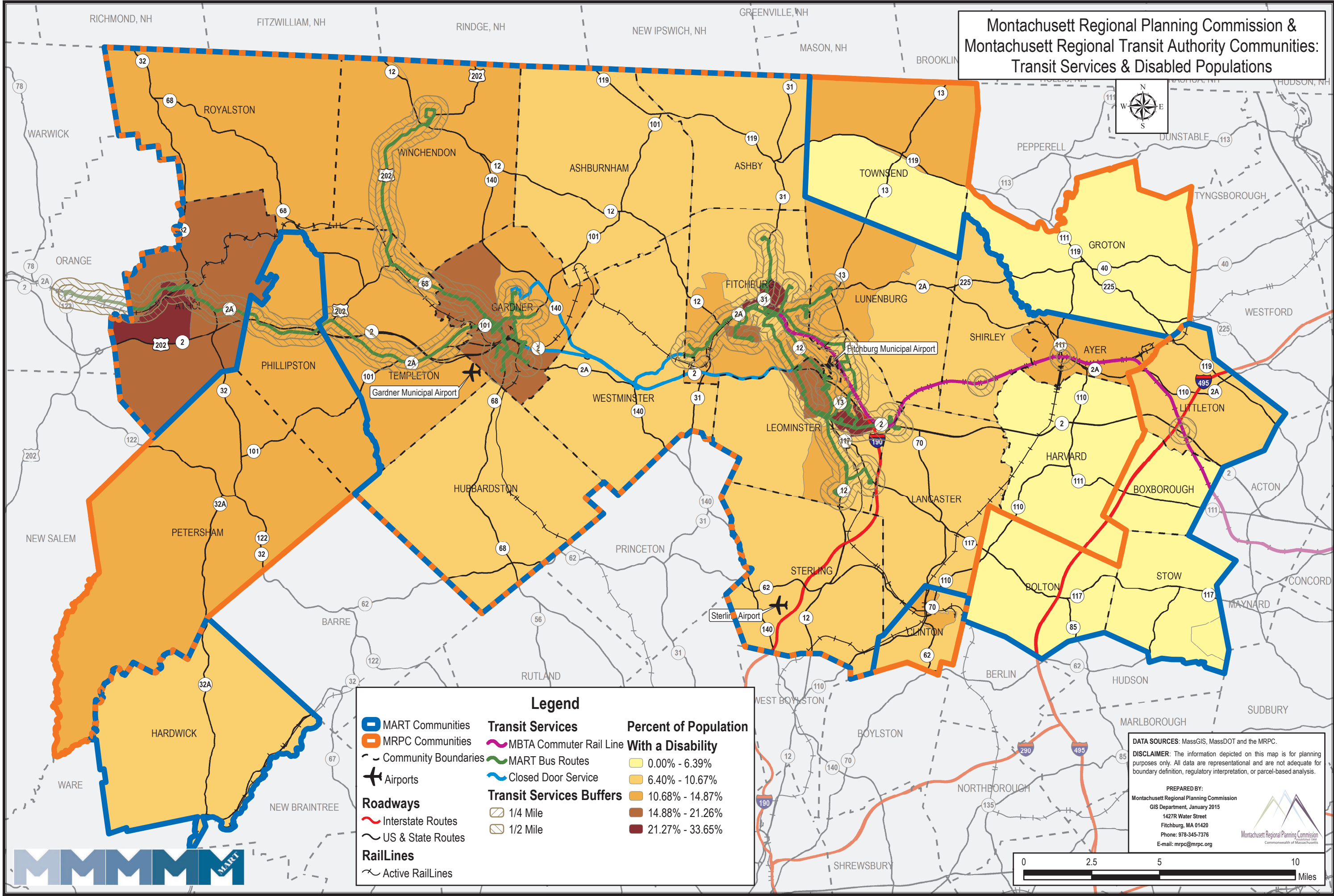




# Montachusett Regional Planning Commission & Montachusett Regional Transit Authority Communities: Transit Services & Elderly Populations



# Montachusett Regional Planning Commission & Montachusett Regional Transit Authority Communities: Transit Services & Disabled Populations



MART Communities

MRPC Communities

Community Boundaries

Airports

**Roadways**  
 Interstate Routes  
 US & State Routes

**RailLines**  
 Active RailLines

**Transit Services**  
 MBTA Commuter Rail Line  
 MART Bus Routes  
 Closed Door Service

**Transit Services Buffers**  
 1/4 Mile  
 1/2 Mile

**Percent of Population With a Disability**  
 0.00% - 6.39%  
 6.40% - 10.67%  
 10.68% - 14.87%  
 14.88% - 21.26%  
 21.27% - 33.65%

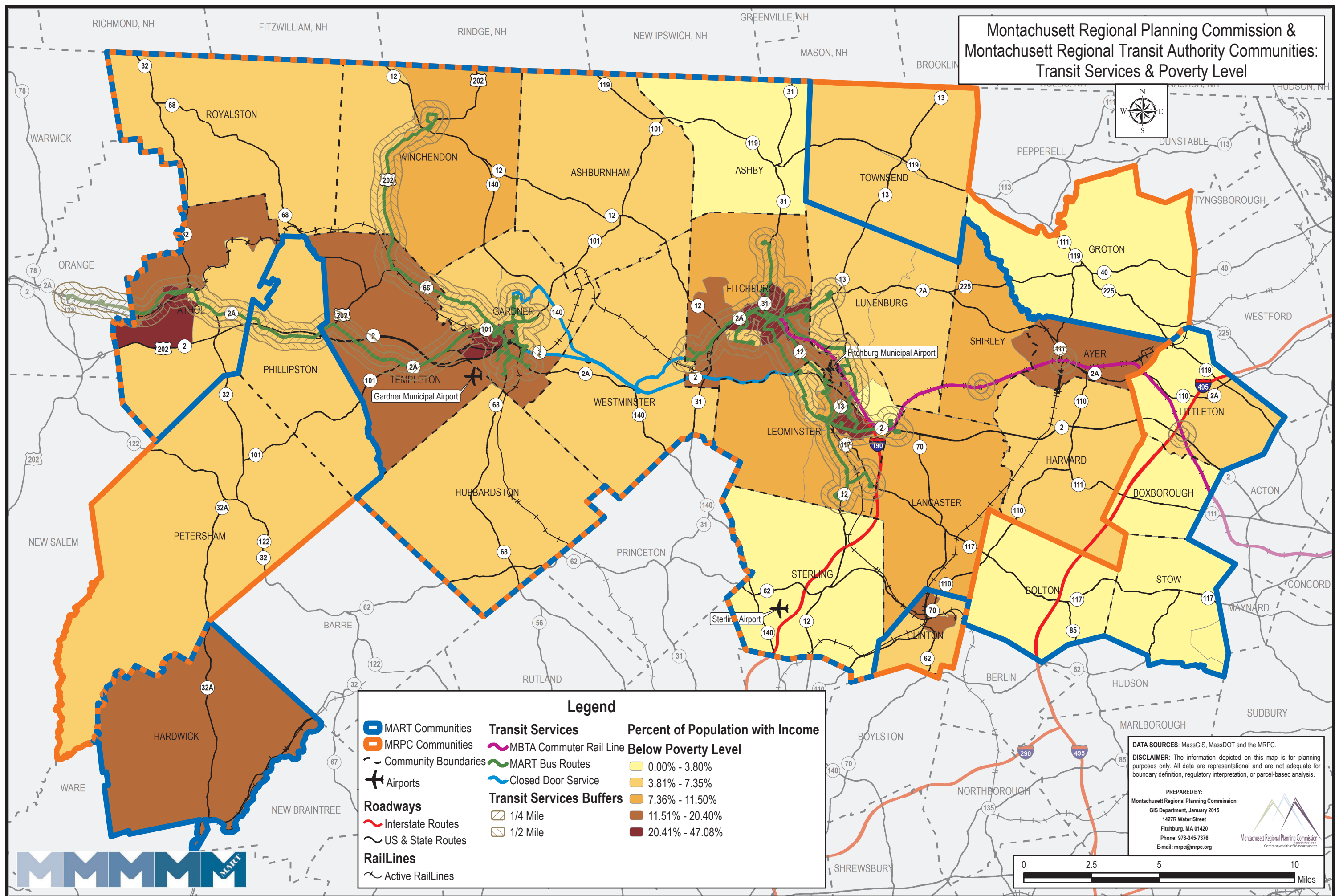
**DATA SOURCES:** MassGIS, MassDOT and the MRPC.

**DISCLAIMER:** The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. All data are representational and are not adequate for boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-based analysis.

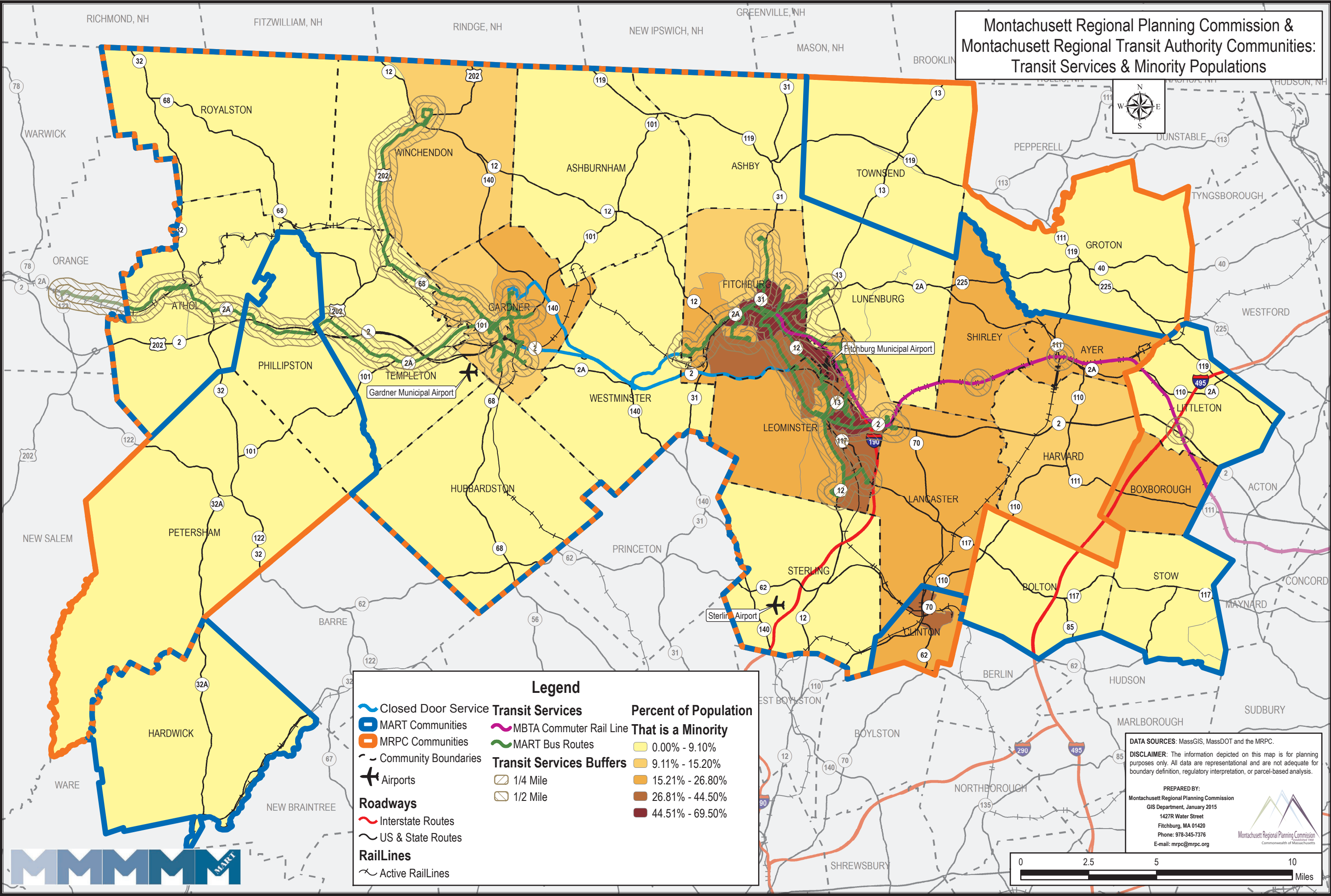
**PREPARED BY:**  
 Montachusett Regional Planning Commission  
 GIS Department, January 2015  
 1427R Water Street  
 Fitchburg, MA 01420  
 Phone: 978-345-7376  
 E-mail: [mrpc@mrpc.org](mailto:mrpc@mrpc.org)







# Montachusett Regional Planning Commission & Montachusett Regional Transit Authority Communities: Transit Services & Minority Populations



**Legend**

- Closed Door Service
- MART Communities
- MRPC Communities
- Community Boundaries
- Airports
- Roadways**
  - Interstate Routes
  - US & State Routes
- RailLines**
  - Active RailLines

**Transit Services**

- MBTA Commuter Rail Line
- MART Bus Routes

**Transit Services Buffers**

- 1/4 Mile
- 1/2 Mile

**Percent of Population That is a Minority**

- 0.00% - 9.10%
- 9.11% - 15.20%
- 15.21% - 26.80%
- 26.81% - 44.50%
- 44.51% - 69.50%

**DATA SOURCES:** MassGIS, MassDOT and the MRPC.

**DISCLAIMER:** The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. All data are representational and are not adequate for boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-based analysis.

**PREPARED BY:**  
 Montachusett Regional Planning Commission  
 GIS Department, January 2015  
 1427R Water Street  
 Fitchburg, MA 01420  
 Phone: 978-345-7376  
 E-mail: mrpc@mrpc.org

