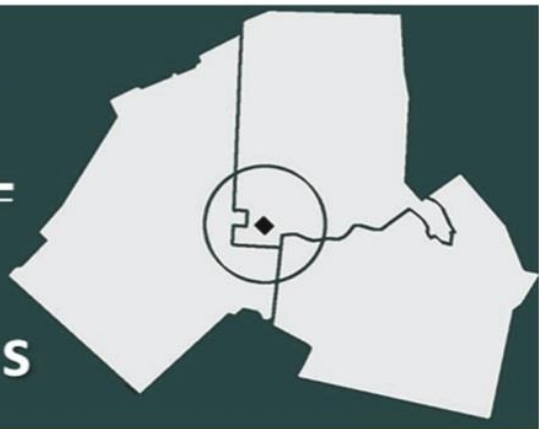
Wachusett

Smart Growth

Corridor Analysis



Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan

June 2014

In cooperation with:

The City of Fitchburg
The City of Leominster
The Town of Westminster

Preparation of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan was funded through a Community Challenge Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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Prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

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Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan Executive Summary and Introduction

I. Background

The Wachusett Commuter Rail Extension Project involves the construction of a new Wachusett Station in Fitchburg, a new Westminster Layover Facility, and upgrades to the existing Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line, a branch of the commuter rail network serving Eastern and Central Massachusetts operated by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). The Fitchburg Line will run between Wachusett Station on the west and North Station in downtown Boston on the east, as shown in Figure 1.1. Wachusett Station will be located in West Fitchburg in close proximity to Route 2 at Route 31 in the existing 231 Industrial Park. The layover facility in Westminster will be located in the existing Westminster Business Park near Route 2A. Both the new station and layover facility are shown in Figure 1.2. These improvements to the Region's commuter rail infrastructure were funding by the U.S. Department of Transportation through a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant.

The project is expected to:

- Improve mass transit options to communities west of Fitchburg;
- Improve the region's economy by reducing commute time from the Montachusett Region to the Boston area job market;
- Increase the supply of commuter rail parking for travelers in the western part of the region; and,
- Improve the operation and capacity of the Fitchburg Line train Layover Facility.

In addition, by improving overall access to region, the project provides an improved opportunity for reverse commuting to job opportunities in the Montachusett Region as well as a means of transporting potential visitors to the region who could utilize the Region's extensive open space and recreational resources.

The design of the project has been completed and construction of the station and layover facility began in late 2012. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of 2014. Commuter rail service to the new station is expected to begin in fall, 2015.

This Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan was developed to identify opportunities strategies to benefit from this significant transportation infrastructure project utilizing Smart Growth principles and to enhance the quality of life for residents of the corridor and the Montachusett Region as a whole. The Plan was funded through a Community Challenge Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). To assess the impacts of the Wachusett Commuter Rail Extension for the Smart Growth Plan, a study area corridor was defined as a circle with a 2.5 mile radius with the new Wachusett Station as the center, shown in Figure 1.3. This study area also encompasses the Westminster Layover Facility.[1] This distance was chosen because it is an easily bikeable distance from the station and is supportive of a fundamental Smart Growth mobility principle. The study area covers approximately 12,566 acres or 19.6 square miles. As shown on the map, the study area covers portions of three communities, including the southwestern corner of Fitchburg, the northwestern corner of Leominster, and east central Westminster.

[1] It should be noted that the Town of Westminster did not support the construction of the layover facility in its location in the Westminster Business Park. A statement of the Town's position, as requested by the Westminster Board of Selectmen, in included in this Plan as Appendix H. This statement is an opinion of the Town of Westminster and does not reflect the opinion of MRPC or HUD.

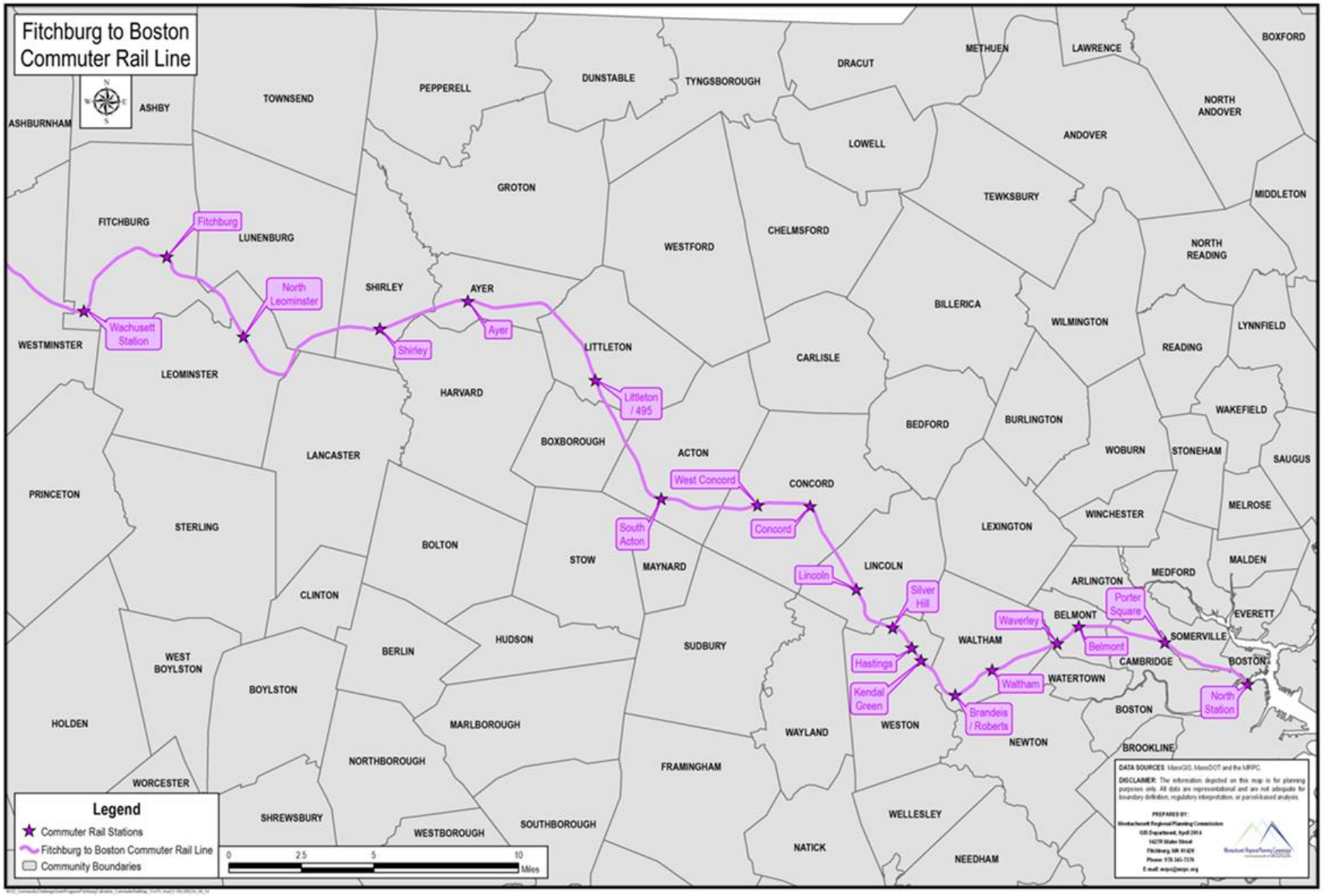


Figure 1.1: Fitchburg Branch of the MBTA Commuter Rail System

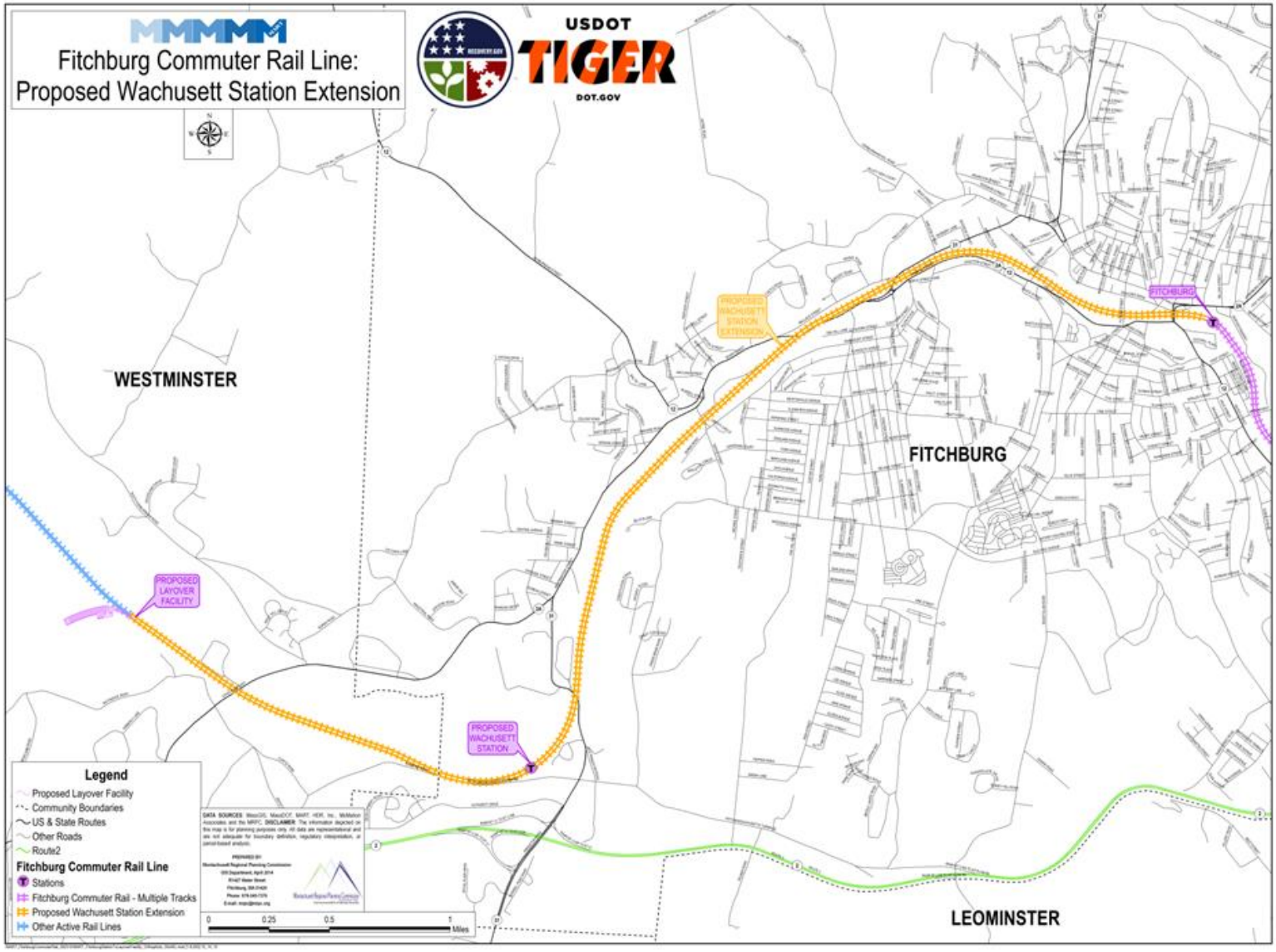


Figure 1.2: Location of Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Facilities

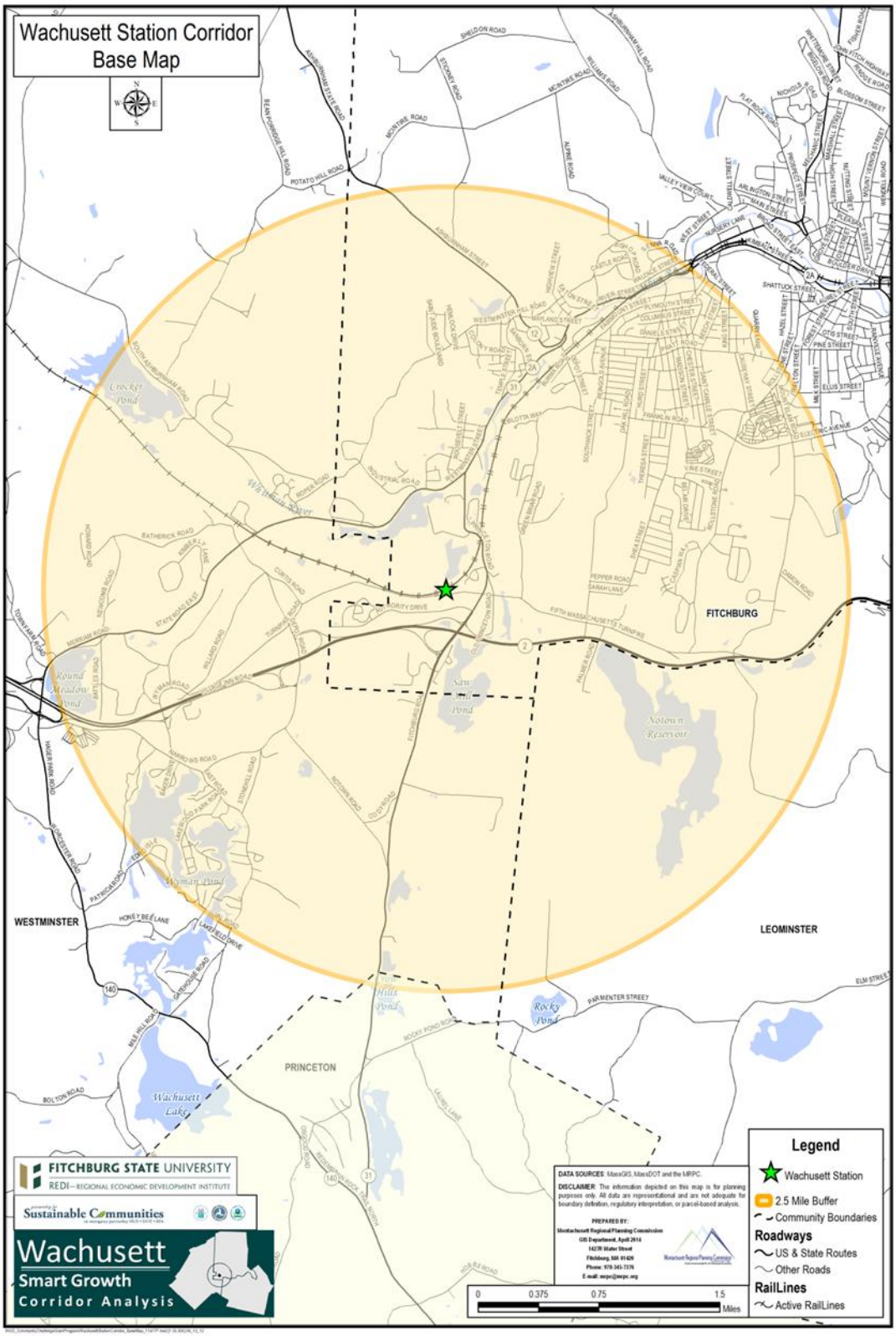


Figure 1.3: Wachusett Corridor Study Area

II. Why "Smart Growth"?

According to the Wachusett Extension Environmental Assessment, prepared during the planning phase of the Wachusett Station project:

"Many areas in the Montachusett region are difficult to access due to limited transportation options, artificially capping the region's growth potential. Workers seeking affordable housing options west of Fitchburg face a difficult commute to work outside of the region. This condition has an adverse economic effect on employers in metropolitan Boston as well, by limiting their potential labor market due to the distance and the associated excessive commute times caused by an inadequate transportation system. Limited travel options adversely affect the Montachusett region; despite the region's relatively affordable housing market, compared to other regions with better transportation alternatives, the Montachusett region is not able to compete economically, and will not be able to until its transportation constraints are resolved. Finally, the lack of "reverse commute" options hinders access for potential workers along the corridor to access employment centers in the region, and limits economic development in the 231 Industrial Park and other underutilized commercial and industrial space in the City of Fitchburg and neighboring municipalities."

Clearly, the new Wachusett Station and extension of commuter rail service has regional implications for transportation, housing, economic development, and overall quality of life throughout North Central Massachusetts. Each of these are issues addressed by "Smart Growth," by supporting the environment, the economy, and the community through an approach to development that is based on interconnections between environmental protection, social equity, public health, and economic sustainability.

According to the Smart Growth Network, a coalition of organizations and agencies including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the American Planning Association, the Urban Land Institute, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, among others, the principles of "smart growth" are:

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

The Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan has incorporated these principles throughout its planning process and embodies these principles in the recommended strategies addressing the various components of the overall Corridor plan.

III. Outreach and Public Involvement

With facilitation by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan was developed in partnership with the three Wachusett Corridor communities (Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster) and an extensive program of outreach and public involvement to engage the affected population within the corridor. A primary source of oversight and input throughout the study was the Wachusett Corridor Steering Committee which met, and continues to meet, on a regular basis to review technical analyses and provide insight and direction on analytic approach and plan recommendations. The membership of the Steering Committee is shown in Appendix A. The Steering Committee is intended to remain intact and functional following the finalization of this plan to oversee and monitor the implementation of the plan's recommendations.

In addition to the ongoing oversight provided through the Steering Committee, MRPC facilitated numerous outreach and public involvement activities including a widely publicized Public Visioning/Charrette, targeted focus group meetings with various ethnic groups residing in Fitchburg (Hispanic, Hmong, and Vietnamese), individual meetings with local officials and agency personnel, a project website hosted by MRPC, and various newsletters and press releases providing

timely information about the activities, findings, and recommendations of the planning effort. Summaries of input and ideas expressed in the Public Visioning/Charrette and focus group meetings are provided in Appendices B, C and D.

IV. Elements of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan

This plan consists of six elements in addition to an implementation plan designed to facilitate accomplishment of the plan's objectives. The individual elements were designed to address key Smart Growth principles. Each element is intended to address the key issues within each topic area. However, given the fundamental need to integrate and coordinate the recommended strategies of each element, there is a certain amount of overlap, recognizing that certain strategies may accomplish multiple Smart Growth objectives. The individual elements are:

- Housing
- Transportation/Circulation
- Economic Development
- Open Space/Recreation
- Facilities/Institutional
- Land Use

The following summarizes the recommendations of each of the six plan elements:

a) Housing

1. Consider a Mixed Use Overlay Ordinance in appropriate areas in the Fitchburg portion of the Wachusett Corridor – Would encourage the creation of a denser residential or mixed-use zoning district.
2. Allow Open Space Residential Development (or Cluster Development) by right – allow for open space or cluster development without requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board.
3. Implement the Community Preservation Act (CPA) as a Smart Growth tool to promote housing – Create a Community Preservation Fund that can be used to acquire open space and provide affordable housing.
4. Westminster should continue to implement its Housing Production Plan (HPP)/Housing Master Plan Element; Fitchburg and Leominster should consider creation of an HPP – A Housing Production Plan (HPP) provides a clear strategy to support development of affordable housing.
5. Education and Outreach Efforts and Partnerships – Utilize available resources and community groups to learn more and take advantage of existing opportunities to facilitate housing production and creation of affordable housing.
6. Comply with Chapter 40B, Massachusetts' Affordable Housing Act – Wachusett Corridor Communities should strive to achieve the statutory 10 percent target for low- and moderate income housing.
7. Submit an application for Priority Development Fund (PDF) Planning Assistance to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the implementation of the recommended housing strategies under this plan – The PDF Planning Assistance Program has remaining funds which could be utilized for implementation of Wachusett Corridor housing strategies.

b) Transportation/Circulation

1. Undertake a Public and Comprehensive Transportation/Circulation (CTC) Study of the Corridor and a smaller CTC Study for a

pilot project at a location in the corridor – CTC's would provide a foundation for project development and prioritization.

2. Develop off-road multi-use trail networks to add bike and pedestrian linkages -- Improve bike/ped connections to Wachusett Station. Work with key entities to establish convenient and functional network to deemphasize automobile use in the Corridor.
3. Apply Complete Streets Concepts for all future road projects in the Corridor – Whether funded through the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMPO) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or other funding sources, Complete Streets Concepts provide for safe and accessible options for all travel modes and are consistent with MassDOT policy.
4. Work with MassDOT District 3 to implement safety improvements – Specific locations for safety improvements are identified in the Plan as Route 2 Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations.
5. Develop a pilot project or projects that can build local support by demonstrating benefits of improved roadway operations and access – Ability to point to a successful project will help overcome any doubt and skepticism about benefits of improvements and ability to implement them.
6. Ensure that the proposed transportation system within the Corridor will meet the goals, objectives and recommendations of the plan by establishing partnerships with key state and regional agencies – Include coordination with MassDOT, MMPO, and the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART).

c) Economic Development

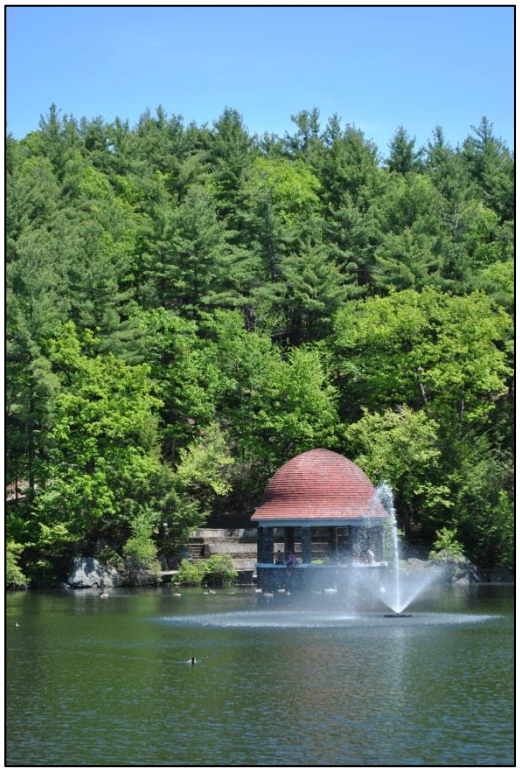
1. Survey Existing Businesses in the Corridor – Further information/data should be collected to better determine how to retain and grow existing businesses.
2. Conduct a Comprehensive Site Evaluation and Establish a Computerized Database of Properties – Each site in the corridor is unique and offers varying opportunities for redevelopment or reuse.
3. Identify Opportunities for Renovation/Reuse of Existing Properties and Proactively Work to Foster Redevelopment of "Brownfields" – Particularly in the Fitchburg sector of the Corridor, there are a number of properties, many which are "brownfield" sites, which offer opportunities to reuse.
4. Identify Needs and Secure Funding for Infrastructure Improvements -- Lack of adequate infrastructure will impede development opportunities in the Corridor, particularly in the Town of Westminster.
5. Work with Local Educational Institutions to Train Future Employees of the Wachusett Corridor – It is essential that the available workforce within the Corridor have adequate and appropriate training to be able to take advantage of employment opportunities within the Corridor.
6. Identify Opportunities for Increased Recreation and Eco-Tourism – Specific opportunities are discussed in the Open Space and Recreation recommendations of this plan. These opportunities present significant economic development potential.
7. Explore Funding Opportunities for Economic Development – A variety of programs are available at both the State and Federal level that could be used to support economic development in the Corridor.
8. Market the Region – Establish a targeted marking strategy to promote opportunities and amenities in the Wachusett Corridor.

d) Open Space and Recreation

1. Establish a network of sidewalks and paths to allow safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the Wachusett Station and connections to adjacent residential and commercial areas -- Non-motorized transportation modes should have a safe, clearly defined network of sidewalks and paths that

provide direct access and protection from vehicular traffic.

2. Provide public transit/shuttle service between Wachusett Station and nearby recreation areas. Examine the operating schedule of train service and enhance the schedule to accommodate recreational travelers to the region – This requires coordination with MART and the MBTA to provide the necessary service.
3. Provide safe and secure bicycle parking facilities at Wachusett Station and other bicycle destinations within the Corridor – Bike parking is an essential component of a functional bicycle network.
4. Allow/promote bikes on all modes of public transportation, including buses, shuttles, and trains – Restrictions on bike use will limit its use as a viable transportation mode.
5. Define and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Steamline and Burma Road Trails and conduct a trail corridor study to facilitate access to trails from Wachusett Station – These two trails provide the best opportunities for pedestrian access from the surrounding area.
6. Define and improve pedestrian connections to the Midstate Trail and conduct a trail corridor study to facilitate access from Wachusett Station – The Midstate Trail, which crosses Massachusetts north/south can be utilized by day- and overnight-hikers. Provide directional signage from the new station to the Midstate Trail via Turnpike Road/ Tuckerman Lane.
7. Explore opportunities to establish a mountain bike destination within or in proximity to Leominster State Forest -- Coordinate access for cyclists including allowance for bikes on trains and connecting trails between Wachusett Station and Leominster State Forest.
8. Assist Wachusett Corridor communities in the identification of appropriate properties for preservation – Identify appropriate tools and/or funding programs to support their efforts; provide assistance as necessary.
9. Create and market a "brand" to publicize and promote recreation opportunities – Establish name recognition for the Wachusett Corridor.
10. Collaborate with commercial recreational enterprises within the Region to promote their facilities and provide coordinated access and marketing strategies – Can be conducted in coordination with overall marketing program for the Corridor.
11. Assure that all facilities developed under this plan or in association with the development of the new station and rail service are constructed and maintained to preserve sensitive environmental resources – Meet appropriate "Green" construction standards.



e) Facilities and Institutions

1. Regionalize and consolidate services where feasible – Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster should explore regionalization opportunities with each other and neighboring towns to reduce operating costs where practical.

2. Establish a Wachusett Corridor Implementation Committee – A formal partnership among the three Wachusett Communities should be established facilitate implementation of the Plan.
3. Define a Water/Sewer System Expansion Policy to promote business and enhance the tax base – The presence of infrastructure often dictates where development can take place and the level of intensity.
4. Continue efforts to coordinate municipal and community services to the benefit of Corridor residents – Establish mechanisms to promote two-way communication between residents and businesses in the Corridor and municipal government.
5. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the Corridor and implement the process – A CIP could be established specifically for the Corridor to guide decision-making by the individual municipalities.

f) Land Use

1. Preserve Open Space – Preservation and enhancement of open space should be facilitated consistent with the open space plans of the three Wachusett Corridor communities.
2. Provide Improved Access to Wachusett Station – Safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections are fundamental to Smart Growth principles and would enable the benefits of the new station to be more fully realized.
3. Create more housing choices – A diverse mix of housing options should be developed to allow people with different housing needs to live in the same neighborhoods.
4. Establish Smart Growth Zoning through a Smart Growth Overlay District – Zoning in the Corridor should be modified to support a mix of land uses that support economic development, enhance quality of life, and preserve open space resources.

V. Implementation of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan

A fundamental first step in the implementation of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan should be the establishment of a partnership or steering committee that can oversee, facilitate and coordinate activities among the various entities that must collaborate in the plan's implementation. The existing steering committee which has overseen the development of this Smart Growth Plan could conceivably provide a basis for this partnership. This entity will take leadership in seeking necessary funding and resources to assure that the plan can be successfully undertaken to accomplish its goals and objectives and also be responsible for motivating participants to follow through with their implementation responsibilities. It is suggested that the formal establishment of this steering committee be initiated through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the three Wachusett communities, the Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster and the Town of Westminster, which will have primary responsibilities for the Plan's implementation while also being the Plan's primary beneficiaries.

The MOU can define the ongoing role, functions, and operation of the committee as well as the overall organizational structure of the partnership. Once the steering committee is established, it can also enlist other entities such as MRPC, MART, MOC, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce, the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center and others as additional partners in the Plan's implementation. The steering committee would then facilitate implementation of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan based on the strategies and schedule presented in the implementation plan. The steering committee would also monitor the implementation activities of the communities and their partners, make adjustments to strategies as necessary, and report back to the respective Wachusett Communities regarding progress and actions which need to be undertaken at the municipal level.

There is a general consensus that there are various regional entities already in place that could provide the foundation for this steering committee and there is little enthusiasm for establishing a new entity which may duplicate capabilities that are already available. One body that would be well-positioned to take on this role is the existing MRPC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee. The CEDS Board includes five members of the private sector and six members from the public sector. It was established in 1994 and has been supporting several economic development strategies in the Montachusett Region, including providing guidance on regional economic issues; updates and amendments to the CEDS document; and guidance, direction, and advice concerning grant opportunities and applications. Given the structure and range of activities already undertaken by this board, it could be in an opportune position to facilitate intercommunity cooperation to achieve maximum benefits for the Wachusett Corridor and the overall Montachusett Region. CEDS meetings are widely publicized and local and state officials/agencies/businesses/the general public and others are highly encouraged to attend and participate. Oversight of the implementation of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan could be facilitated through the CEDS Committee or a subcommittee of the Committee. As discussed above, this function could be integrated with the membership of the existing Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan Steering Committee that has been facilitating the planning process and plan development.

To guide the implementation process that would be undertaken by the steering committee, an Implementation Plan has been prepared and incorporated into the Plan. The Implementation Plan describes each strategy (discussed in greater detail within the overall Plan), identifies which entity or entities have responsibility for its implementation and the approximate timeframe for implementation. It is assumed that adjustments can be made to the Implementation Plan as activities get underway and the participants monitor their efforts and outcomes. As a whole, the Plan provides a framework to apply Smart Growth Principles to an area of North Central Massachusetts which has potential to experience rapid and dramatic transformation within the next few years.

Section II: Housing Element

I. Introduction

Housing has evolved into a major issue in Central Massachusetts from about the mid-1990s with housing demand and high prices driven by low mortgage rates and low availability to the present with the national, state and regional housing crisis including; dramatic drops in home values, increased taxes and utility costs and evaporated bank lending, not to mention, record unemployment levels, bankruptcies and the rise in home foreclosures.

An analysis of the housing stock in the Wachusett Corridor should consider three important aspects: the housing structures, the population inhabiting the housing and the environment in which the housing is located. The following examines the Wachusett Corridor's housing stock in terms of age, condition, cost, and the demographic trends as well as the specific needs of different population groups.

This section also discusses housing affordability in the Wachusett Corridor as well as housing resources and programs, in addition to identifying planning and regulatory considerations to help meet local needs. The data and analysis in the Chapter are based on information obtained from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, the state, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

II. Population Trends

The 2009 American Community Survey counted 14,234 residents in the Wachusett Corridor 2.5 Mile Radius, an increase of 1,018 persons from the 2000 Census count of 13,216 residents or a 7.7% increase. The Wachusett Corridor's growth rate over the last decade was higher than that of the Montachusett Region (3.6%) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (3.0%). Regional growth could be due, at least in part, to persons migrating from the eastern part of the state, where housing costs are significantly higher, in search of more affordable housing in an area with a decent quality of life. With a total landmass that consists of 12,566 square miles, the Wachusett Corridor Study Area has a low overall population density of only about 1.13 people per square mile with less developed/populated areas in Westminster and a significant portion of Leominster State Forest. However, the corridor also has some densely developed areas in Fitchburg such as the Cleghorn Neighborhood.

Table 2.1 Wachusett Corridor 2.5 Mile Radius Population Growth

Year	Number of People	Numerical Change	Percent Change
2000	13,216		
2010	14,234	1,018	7.7%

Table 2.2 shows that the study area grew at a higher rate (7.7%) than the City of Fitchburg (3.1%), Town of Westminster (5.4%), and the City of Leominster (-1.3%). The fastest growing segments of the study area were in the Fitchburg portion of the corridor (7.9%) followed by the Westminster portion (6.5%), and the Leominster portion (5.6%).

Table 2.3 displays the age characteristics of the Wachusett Corridor population. The number of very young children (under 5 years) makes up about 6.8% of the population, while children between 5 and 19 years of age make up about 19.2%. The data reveals that the largest population is among those aged 35-54 (4,161 persons or a 29.2%). Although there are fewer people in the 20-34 year age group from a national perspective, that age group makes up about 19.1% of the Wachusett Corridor Population. It should be noted that older citizens (55 and over) make up a significant portion (25.7%) of the population. Residents between the ages of 55-64 make up about 12.5% of the population while those 65-74 make up about 9.2% and those 80 plus years old are at about 4%.

III. Housing Unit Growth

The housing stock within the Wachusett Corridor grew significantly over the last decade. Housing unit growth (16.55%) outpaced the growth in population (7.7%). Most growth probably took place from the years 2000 up until 2007 when the national recession began.

Table 2.2 Study Area and Study Area Community Population

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Population	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
2000	13,216	11,216	18	1,982	39,098	41,297	6,907
2010	14,234	12,104	19	2,111	40,318	40,759	7,277
% Growth 2000 to 2010	7.7%	7.9%	5.6%	6.5%	3.1%	-1.3%	5.4%

Source: U.S. Census

The housing stock within the study area (see Table 2.5) and all of its segments (Fitchburg in particular) grew more than all three communities in their entirety and were higher than the Montachusett Region average of 9%. However, it can be noted that during this time span housing unit growth also outpaced population growth in all three communities in their entirety.

Table 2.3 Study Area Population Characteristics by Age

	Wachusett Corridor						
Year	Under 5	5-19	20-34	35-54	55-64	65-79	80+
2010	971 (6.8%)	2733 (19.2%)	2713 (19.1%)	4161 (29.2%)	1784 (12.5%)	1308 (9.2%)	566 (4%)

Source: U.S. Census

Table 2.4: Housing Units

Year	Number of Units	Numerical Change	Percent Change
2000	5,298		
2010	6,175	877	16.55%

However, the housing outpacing population trend seems to have reversed in recent years: According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 2010 U.S. Census, and 2008-2012 American Community Survey, the average household size decreased in Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster from 2000 to 2010 but INCREASED from 2010 to 2012.

Table 2.5: Study Area and Study Area Community Housing Unit Growth

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Year	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
2000	5298	4473	10	815	16001	16974	2694
2010	6175	5246	11	918	17117	17873	2960
% Growth 2000 to 2010	16.55%	17.28%	10%	12.64%	6.97%	5.30%	9.87%

Table 2.6: Average Household Size

	Average Household Size Entire Community		
Year	Fitchburg	Leoinster	Westminister
2000	2.5	2.48	2.73
2010	2.49	2.41	2.68
2012	2.55	2.45	2.72

IV: Housing Unit Inventory

As can be seen in Table 2.7, detached Single family homes make up 55.9% of the housing stock in the Wachusett Corridor. The Fitchburg segment of the Corridor has by far the greatest percentage of multi-family units with about 41.4% of the housing stock being more than one unit.

The Westminster and Leominster Segments of the study area are mostly detached single-family (84.9% and 95% respectively). The Town of Westminster in its entirety is 86.9% detached single-family, while Leominster and Fitchburg have less (50.9% and 41.6% respectively).

Table 2.7: Study Area and Study Area Community Type of Housing Units

	Wachusett Corridor					Entire Community		
Type	Study Area		Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
	#	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
One Unit (detached)	3481	55.9%	49.6%	95%	84.9%	41.6%	50.9%	86.9%
One Unit (attached)	470	7.5%	8.6%	0%	2.8%	6.4%	5.4%	2%
Two Units	956	15.4%	17%	4.0%	8.1%	17%	10.2%	4.5%
Three to Four Units	706	11.3%	13.3%	1.5%	1.9%	14.7%	10.7%	2.8%
Five or More Units	597	9.6%	11.1%	0%	2.5%	19.6%	21.5%	3.8%
Mobile Home	15	0.2%	0.3%	0%	0%	0.7%	1.4%	0%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

V. Age of Housing Stock:

About 36% (2,239 units) of the housing stock in the Wachusett Corridor was built 1939 or earlier. Most of the older units are in the Fitchburg segment of the Wachusett Corridor (39.2%) in comparison to the Westminster and Leominster segment (22.2% and 10.4% respectively). An older housing stock is more likely to contain lead based paint and be less structurally sound - many of those residential structures probably would not meet the State's current building code.

Table 2.8: Study Area of Housing Stock

Age of Housing Stock	Study Area		Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
	#	%	%	%	%
2000-2009	682	11%	11.5%	3.5%	9.2%
1990-1999	317	5.1%	3.2%	22.9%	12.5%
1980-1989	500	8%	7.1%	30.8%	8.2%
1970-1979	565	9.1%	7.7%	4%	18.6%
1960-1969	688	11.1%	11.6%	12.9%	7.2%
1950-1959	797	12.8%	13.5%	10.9%	8.8%
1940-1949	439	7.1%	6.1%	5%	13%
1939 or Earlier	2239	36%	39.2%	10.4%	22.2%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey; ESRI-BAO

VI. Housing Occupancy

About 69.43% of Wachusett Corridor is owner occupied, comparable to the Montachusett Region (68.3%) and the Fitchburg segment of the study area (66.26%) but significantly lower than the Westminster and Leominster segments (86.23% and 100% respectively).

The Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster in their entirely (54.01% and 58.71% owner occupied) correspond somewhat closely to the Wachusett Corridor but the Town of Westminster (86.23%) differs.

Table 2.9: Study Area and Study Area Community Housing Occupancy

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Type	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
Rental	3879	3172	10	697	8191	9871	2330
Ownership	1708	1615	0	93	6974	6942	372

Source: U.S. Census

VII. Housing Vacancy Rates

According to the 2010 Census, the Wachusett Corridor has about a 9.5% vacancy rate, lower than the Westminster segment of the Corridor (13.9%) but a higher vacancy rate than the Town of Westminster in its entirely (8.3%), indicating that perhaps foreclosures have been more of a problem in this area.

Wachusett Corridor has a higher vacancy rate than the Fitchburg segment (8.7%) but lower than Fitchburg in its entirety (11.4%) indicating that foreclosures have been a little less of a problem in the Fitchburg segment than the community in its entirety.

Table 2.10: Study Area and Study Area Community Housing Vacancy

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Type	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
Occupied	5587	4787	10	790	15165	16813	2702
Vacant	588	459	1	128	1952	1109	244
Total	6175	5246	11	918	17117	17922	2946
% Vacancy	9.5%	8.7%	9.1%	13.9%	11.4%	6.2%	8.3%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

VIII. Types of Households

About 67.7% of Wachusett Corridor consists of family households – the Westminster segment of the study area had a high percentage (75.4%) as did the community in its entirety, also 75.4%. The Fitchburg segment had the lowest percentage of family households (66.4%) but was higher than the City of Fitchburg in its entirety (61.7%).

Table 2.11: Study Area and Study Area Community Households by Type

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Type	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
1 person	1401 (25%)	1261 (26.3%)	1 (11%)	139 (17.6%)	4523 (29.8%)	5033 (30%)	511 (18.8%)
2 or more people: Family	3781 (67.7%)	3177 (66.4%)	8 (89%)	596 (75.4%)	9362 (61.7%)	10559 (63%)	2047 (75.4%)
2 or more people: Non-Family	405 (7.3%)	349 (7.3%)	(0%)	55 (7%)	1280 (8.5%)	1175 (7%)	158 (5.8%)

Source: U.S. Census

IX. Affordable Housing

In 1969, the Legislature enacted M.G.L. Chapter 40B with the goal of increasing the amount of affordable housing in communities throughout the Commonwealth. It contains two major components that are meant to assist developers who wish to build housing that meets the affordable housing criteria as outlined within the law. The first component is the Comprehensive Permit process, where several local permits are consolidated into a single application to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). The ZBA is authorized to grant waivers from zoning and other local regulations to make a project economically viable. The second component gives developers the right to appeal ZBA decisions to the Massachusetts Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) in communities where the percentage of subsidized housing units falls below 10% of the community's year-round housing units. A project must contain at least 25% affordable housing to be eligible for a Comprehensive Permit. Comprehensive permits have caused great concern in many Massachusetts communities because they strip cities and towns of their local land use control and sometimes result in developments that are poorly sited in remote or environmentally sensitive areas. On the other hand, they have also resulted in the creation of thousands of units of much-needed affordable housing statewide. In general, housing with a government subsidy contributes to the inventory. At the present time, only 3% of Westminster's housing stock meets the Chapter 40B definition while Fitchburg and Leominster are at 9.7% and 8.0% respectively. While the average home sale price and average contract rent in the Wachusett Corridor and a majority of the Montachusett Region does provide opportunities for some affordable housing when numbers are compared statewide, there is a need for more.

X. Housing Goals and Objectives

The housing Goals and Objectives of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan are as follows:

a) Goal

Increase Housing Opportunities in the Wachusett Corridor for a Broad Range of Income Levels and Household Types.

b) Objectives

- Promote Housing Affordability and Maintain/Enhance the Character of Residential Neighborhoods.
- Strive to Comply with Chapter 40B.
- Improve the Condition of the Existing Housing Stock.
- Promote Home Ownership.

a) Proposals and Recommendations

The following set of action plan recommendations should be investigated in order to further the identified goals and objectives.

1. Consider the Possibility of Mixed Use Development Overlay Ordinance in Appropriate area(s) in the Fitchburg area of the Wachusett Corridor.

The City could start by researching Chapter 40R and Compact Development and then decide how to proceed from there. The Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act, Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004, codified as M.G.L. chapter 40R (the Act), encourages communities to create dense residential or mixed-use smart growth zoning districts, including a high percentage of affordable housing units, to be located near transit stations, in areas of concentrated development such as existing city and town centers, and in other highly suitable locations. Projects must be developable under the community's smart growth zoning adopted under Chapter 40R, either as-of-right or through a limited plan review process akin to site plan review.

DHCD is offering additional incentives to municipalities that adopt zoning districts called "Compact Neighborhoods." This new tool complements Chapter 40R, the Commonwealth's Smart Growth Overlay District statute. Compact Neighborhoods could be one consideration within the Wachusett Corridor. This is a new tool, like Smart Growth Zoning (40R) in its eligible locations and as-of-right zoning, but it has different residential density and affordability requirements. Participating communities are eligible for preference in discretionary funding and possible Chapter 40B relief. There are two specified density thresholds under Compact Neighborhoods which must allow for: a minimum of 4 units per acre for single family development, and; a minimum of 8 units an acre for multi-family (any structure with more than one unit). Compact Neighborhoods is explained further in the following document: http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/cd/ch40r/compact-neighborhoodspolicy.pdf.

A mixed use ordinance in the Wachusett Corridor could also address the reuse of any abandoned, underutilized, or obsolete property for housing purposes including options for senior housing. If such an opportunity presents itself it would help to direct residential growth to already developed locations, alleviating pressure to develop land in areas without existing infrastructure. It could also be a way to preserve and/or restore unique architecture in the community, which can also be of historical significance. Such an ordinance could perhaps permit development of parcels that do not meet current zoning regulations for frontage and lot size to help concentrate development in areas where infrastructure, such as roads, sewer, and water already exist, rather than in undeveloped areas of the Wachusett Corridor, thereby encouraging retention of open space and preserving rural character. This could improve surrounding properties by eliminating vacant lots and abandoned buildings, which may be crime and public health hazards.

Design guidelines could accompany any mixed use ordinance for multi-family dwellings, such as town houses and duplexes, integrated into the context of existing neighborhoods. Multi-family dwellings are a way to increase housing affordability for a variety of groups including single persons, small families, the elderly, and owner-occupants who are able to collect rent to help pay the mortgage. With the proper design standards in place, multi-family dwellings can increase community acceptance of a diversity of housing types. Design standards can be used to guide the development of multi-family dwellings so that they reflect the

character of the neighborhood and will be more easily accepted by neighboring residents.

To initiate the exploration/feasibility of a mixed use ordinance, on March 25, 2014 the City of Fitchburg applied for and obtained technical assistance from MRPC's District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program. DLTA funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enables MRPC staff to provide technical assistance to its 22 communities including land use and planning for new economic and housing growth at no cost to the community.

2. Consider Allowing Open Space Residential Development (or Cluster Development) by Right.

In the Wachusett Corridor, the vast majority of developable land is within the residential districts that make up most of the rural areas. Zoning in Fitchburg, Leominster and the Town of Westminster already allow for open space residential or cluster development by Special Permit from the Planning Board. However, these communities should consider researching the pros and cons of allowing this By Right in rural areas and find ways to promote its use by making it a more attractive alternative to developers. Moreover, Wachusett Corridor communities could also review existing regulations to see if Low Impact Development (LID) standards for all new residential developments fully incorporate LID elements. Low Impact Development (LID) represents a sustainable storm water management strategy that uses appropriate site design techniques in order to protect environmental resources. More information is available at www.lowimpactdevelopment.org.

For the preservation of the rural areas of the Wachusett Corridor, a Natural Resource Protection Zoning (NRPZ) Bylaw/Ordinance could also be researched. A NRPZ Bylaw, initially adopted by the Town of Shutesbury in 2008 and subsequently approved by the Mass. Attorney General, is similar in concept to Open Space Subdivision zoning provisions. However for areas of the community with important identified natural resources, NRPZ provisions would make the adoption of the Open Space Subdivision provision occur on a by-right basis and any conventional definitive plan subdivisions would have to be approved via a Special Permit.

3. Consider the Community Preservation Act as a Smart Growth Tool that Could Promote Housing.

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. While many communities throughout Massachusetts participate, the Wachusett Corridor communities have yet to do so. CPA also helps strengthen the state and local economies by expanding housing opportunities and construction jobs for the Commonwealth's workforce, and by supporting the tourism industry through preservation of the Commonwealth's historic and natural resources.

CPA allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation. Community preservation monies are raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge of not more than 3% of the tax levy against real property, and municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. By adopting CPA, a portion of the funds raised could be utilized for the purpose of providing affordable housing. The Act requires that a community spend or set aside for later spending at least 10% of the revenues collected annually for the creation, preservation, or support of community housing. Community housing is defined as housing for households earning up to 100% of a community's area median income. Of course, to count toward the state's 40B affordable housing inventory, the housing would have to be affordable to those households earning less than 80% of the area median.

4. Westminster should continue to Implement its Housing Production Plan (HPP)/Housing Master Plan Element and Fitchburg and Leominster Should Consider Creating an HPP.

The town of Westminster has a draft Housing Master Plan Element and a Housing Production Plan that was approved by the Commonwealth in April 2011 and is

valid until April 2017. The Implementation Strategy section of these documents lists a variety of options available for accomplishing the goals and objectives of the Affordable Housing Goals section. Such strategies include investigating techniques to utilize existing housing units for both affordable homeownership and rental units, partnering with regional non-profit housing organizations, fostering the development of needed senior housing units and exploring various zoning initiatives, including an inclusionary housing zoning bylaw. It was also indicated that the town should develop and adopt an Accessory Dwelling Units Zoning Bylaw - Accessory apartments allow elderly people to live in close proximity to their family, as well as young people who cannot afford their own home.

With plenty of land available for development in residential districts within and outside of the Wachusett Corridor Fitchburg and Leominster should consider developing a Housing Production Plan (HPP). Development of an HPP would provide an opportunity to understand current housing conditions city wide and determine both the projected housing needs of both the current population and the growth/change in composition of the population (e.g. more families, more elders). Also, if a community has a MA Dept. of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) approved HPP and is granted a DHCD certification of compliance with the plan, a decision by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to deny a Comprehensive Permit application will be deemed "Consistent with Local Needs" under MGL Chapter 40B. "Consistent with Local Needs" means the ZBA's decision will be upheld by the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC).

One potential resource to assist Fitchburg/Leominster to draft an HPP is the Commonwealth's Priority Development Fund (PDF) Planning Assistance grant (see recommendation # 7). Also, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission's (MRPC) District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts could possibly fund such an effort. It should be noted that funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is not guaranteed each year and project eligibility can change from year to year.

5. Education and Outreach Efforts and Partnerships

Education and training to members of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and the Planning Boards related to the review and permitting of Comprehensive Permits (MGL Ch. 40B) should be encouraged. MRPC did host such training during the Fall 2013 training sessions offered by the Citizens Planners Training Collaborative (CPTC) and MRPC intends to offer similar training in the future. CPTC also usually offers a session related to MGL Ch. 40B at their annual March Conference in Worcester. The communities should offer financial support to allow ZBA and Planning Board members to attend such training opportunities.

Homebuyer Counseling and Education are valuable marketing and outreach tools that can help residents to bridge the information gap and prepare them for a successful home buying application. Communities and agencies within the Wachusett Corridor like the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center and Montachusett Opportunity Council could plan a first-time homeownership initiative by partnering with an agency that provides homebuyer counseling, or simply make it known to residents that such educational organizations exist. There are many nonprofit agencies that offer this service that could be promoted in the Wachusett Corridor. RCAP Solutions in Gardner, for example is a regional non-profit housing agency that provides a variety of housing related services, including counseling and resource referral services for first time home buyers, help for renters, and even help for domestic violence situations. Secondly, the Massachusetts Homeownership Collaborative, coordinated by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), provides technical assistance and training to homebuyer counseling agencies, which in turn offer homebuyer education workshops and individual counseling. The CHAPA website (www.chapa.org) maintains a list of counseling agencies and their current and planned activities. Many conventional lenders conduct similar programs.

Also, partnerships should continue to be formed with housing organizations like Habitat for Humanity, Greater Gardner Community Development Corporation (GGCDC), Twin Cities CDC, RCAP Solutions and, the

Montachusett Enterprise Commission (MEC), Inc. in order to increase the amount of affordable housing in the corridor. A review of lists of parcels within the Wachusett Corridor in tax title, tax delinquency, other municipal-owned parcels and the Assessors vacant/abandoned homes list could be developed and offered to these organizations.

Fitchburg and Leominster receive federal HOME Consortium Funding that can be utilized in targeted areas to produce rental housing, provide rehabilitation loans and grant, offer tenant-based rental assistance and/or assist first-time homebuyers. Fitchburg has a considerable amount of older residential buildings within the Wachusett Corridor and could consider/investigate the possibility of including area(s) within the Wachusett Corridor as an additional target area.

Finally, in Spanish/Vietnamese/Hmong focus groups held in Fall 2012, crime and the perception of crime was indicated to be a problem in the more densely developed areas of the Wachusett Corridor. To prevent and reduce real and/or perceived criminal activity and anti-social behavior, lines of communication between tenants, property managers, and police could be enhanced. Perhaps social service agencies could be encouraged to facilitate the development of tenant run organizations that can organize mutual support systems, ensure access to appropriate social services, organize neighborhood watch groups, and assist in preventing and resolving conflicts.

6. Complying with Chapter 40B.

Wachusett Corridor communities should strive to Comply with Chapter 40B. Chapter 40B of Massachusetts General Laws outlines a municipality's responsibilities regarding the provision of low and moderate-income housing. Under the law, communities are obligated to provide 10% of its year-round housing stock restricted to low and moderate-income households, defined as those earning no more than 80% of the area median income. At the present time, only 3% of Westminster's housing stock meets the Chapter 40B definition while Fitchburg and Leominster are at 9.7% and 8.0% respectively. While the average home sale price and average contract rent in the Wachusett Corridor and a majority of the Montachusett Region does provide opportunities for some affordable housing when numbers are compared statewide, as indicated in the Housing Inventory and Assessment there is a need for more. Therefore, the benefits of being proactive in this area include not just compliance with Chapter 40B but also helping to provide affordable housing units for a broad range of income groups, including municipal employees, fire fighters, policemen and teachers.

It should also be noted that all housing units that are rehabilitated with funding under the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation program should be deed restricted for at least 15 years. With the 15-year deed restriction, such would count towards a municipality's Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory. CDBG is a federal program under the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which is implemented at the State level by Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). While Fitchburg and Leominster are entitlement communities, the Town of Westminster could consider drafting a competitive application for housing rehabilitation that could in part, perhaps targets area(s) within the Wachusett Corridor. This year applications were due in February and MRPC staff is available to discuss assistance with application preparation.

7. Explore preparation of a Priority Development Fund (PDF) Planning Assistance grant application to Mass. DHCD for Implementation of this Housing Element.

PDF Planning Assistance has a total of $213,134 in recaptured and unexpended funds available to assist communities expand housing opportunities. Funding is available to communities to support a broad range of planning activities, including community initiated activities on municipally-owned sites; land use and zoning changes; preparation, update or renewal of Housing Production Plans (HPPs); and the implementation of strategies identified in DHCD-approved HPPs. Priority for funding is given to applications that support creation of as of right zoning districts for DHCD approval; address or encourage new

housing production within city or town centers, on brownfields or underutilized commercial or institutional land, or as part of a transit-oriented development opportunity; and the adaptive re-use of existing structures not currently used for housing purposes. The maximum amount any community may apply for is $15,000. The complete list of eligible activities to assist in the implementation strategies is provided on a link to the DHCD's PDF website for more information.

Section III: Transportation/Circulation Element

I. Introduction

The Transportation/Circulation Element examines road, transit, bike and pedestrian transportation modes and their linkages with an emphasis on bicycle, pedestrian and transit planning. Additional analysis will focus on sustainable transportation concepts such as complete streets, intra-city transit service options, and traffic calming techniques that will improve livability (defined below). Sustainable transportation is transportation that promotes sustainable development. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development). The final report will evaluate the sustainability of the existing transportation system and projects future needs with an emphasis on non-automotive transportation along with recommendations, an implementation plan, and funding sources that can supplement train planning for the MBTA commuter rail that will be available at Wachusett Station.

a) The FHWA definition of Livability as it relates to Transportation

Livability is about tying the quality and location of transportation facilities to broader opportunities such as access to good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, and safer streets and roads. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) supports livable communities through funding transportation related projects and sponsoring activities like Context Sensitive Solutions and public involvement that help, enable people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution.

As part of the Department of Transportation's Livability Initiative, FHWA works within the HUD/DOT/EPA Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities to coordinate and leverage federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure policies and investments. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities developed the following principles to guide efforts:

1. Provide more transportation choices.
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.
3. Enhance economic competitiveness.
4. Support existing communities.
5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment.
6. Value communities and neighborhoods.

This introduction coincides with the goals, policies, and strategies of the MRPC Regional Transportation Plan and the MassDOT GreenDOT sustainability initiative which includes Complete Streets. These plans and initiatives are described in section thirteen which is titled the Transportation Role of the Regional Planning Agency.

This Element examines the sustainability conditions of the transportation system by reviewing issues such as historic traffic counts; road safety; pavement conditions; trail inventory; bridges and key locations that will be used to access Wachusett Station. All past transportation studies of locations within the Corridor that remain relevant are reviewed. Other interrelated issues that will be taken into consideration will be open space to develop an interconnected bicycle and pathway system within the Corridor and connections to the adjoining towns and the region.

This Element slightly expands the 2.5 mile buffer to two locations that are just outside the buffer for the safety and implementation sections. One is in Fitchburg and one is in Westminster. In Westminster, the interchange at Exit 25 on Route 2 is included in the study. In Fitchburg, the traffic circle at the River Street (Route 2A/31/12) / River Street (Route 2A/31) / Kimble Street (Route 12) / Daniels Street intersection is included. The interchange and the traffic circle carry a high percentage of the traffic volume into and through the Corridor.

II. Roadway System

a) Existing Network

State Route 2, or the Old Mohawk Trail, is the most important roadway In the vicinity of the study area and the region, running east west through the entire region. This limited access roadway provides the area with a direct link to Boston and to the western half of the state. Route 2 connects Wachusett Station to all the region's major urban centers to the east and west.

Aside from Route 2 other major roadways within the study area are Route 12, Route 2A and Route 31, along with various other Connector and Local roads.

b) Functional Classification

Functional classification identifies a roadway's purpose and use as part of the highway network. The highway network consists of a hierarchy of streets and highways designed to channel traffic from location to location in a safe and efficient manner. In urban areas, streets and highways are classified into four functional highway systems: Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, Collector Streets and Local Streets. Communities where the roadway exists can compete for limited federal aid funding to repair their Federal-Aid eligible roads listed below through the annual TIP process. A roadway classification map can be found below. The map shows roadways in the study area color coded by roadway class. Roads classified as "local" are not eligible for Federal-Aid and are maintained solely by the municipalities. Local roads are eligible for State Highway funds under Chapter 90.

Highways and roads are grouped into classes according to the type of service they are intended to provide. Classification is divided into principal arterials, minor arterials, major collector roads, minor collector roads, and local roads and streets. The table on the following page indicates the classification of some of the major roadways within the study area.

Principal Arterials: The principal arterials are multi-lane roadways that connect major activity centers. These arterials carry the highest volumes of traffic at high speed and are often entirely or partially controlled-access facilities with interchanges or grade separations at major crossings. Principal arterials not only carry a major portion of trips entering and leaving a community; they also carry a significant amount of traffic passing through the community.

Principal arterials generally carry the highest traffic volumes. In Massachusetts, traffic volumes on principal arterials usually exceed 25,000 vehicles per day. Because the function of principal arterials is mostly to provide mobility at a high level of service, service to abutting land is of secondary importance. Parking along principal arterials is usually forbidden or discouraged; driveway access onto principal arterials is also discouraged. Principal Arterials are eligible for Federal Aid. A federal aid eligible roads map can be found below.

Roadway Classification

Principal Arterials	
	Routes 2, 2A, 12, 31
Minor Arterials	
	Route 31 from Route 2A to Princeton Town Line
	Mount Elam Rd.
	Electric Ave.
	Franklin Rd.
	Fairmount St.
Collectors	
	Oak Hill Rd.
	Reingold Ave.
	Depot Rd.
	Narrows Rd.
	Stone Hill Rd.
	South Ashburnham Rd.
	Bean Porridge Hill Rd.
	Fifth Mass TPK. From Route 31 to Oak Hill Rd.
Local	
	All other roads

Minor Arterials: Minor arterials feed into principal arterials and serve the dual function of carrying high traffic volumes and providing access to adjacent land uses. Minor arterials place more emphasis on land access; on-street parking is generally permitted but is heavily regulated in order to maximize the street's traffic-carrying capacity during peak travel periods. Minor arterials generally carry traffic volumes in the range of 10,000-40,000 vehicles. Minor arterials serve as a distribution network to geographic areas smaller than the principal arterials. Trip lengths associated with minor arterials are of a moderate length and travel is at a lower speed than on principal arterials. Minor Arterials are eligible for Federal Aid.

Collector Streets: Collector streets collect traffic from local streets and channel it into the arterial street system. The focus of collectors is more on land access than on mobility. Collector streets provide traffic circulation within neighborhoods and commercial and industrial areas. Travel speeds are generally lower and parking restrictions fewer than on minor arterial streets.

Collectors are usually two-lane roadways with minor widening at intersections with arterial streets. Collectors carry traffic volumes in the range of 3,000 to

20,000 vehicles. The higher flows are associated with collectors that are over two miles in length and where some element of through traffic between arterials is present. Major Collector roads are eligible for Federal Aid and Minor Collectors may be eligible for Federal Aid in some cases.

Local Road and Streets: The local streets include all the remaining streets that are not included in one of the higher systems. Local streets could be residential or industrial in character or could be access roads to recreation areas or parks. Traffic volumes on local streets are generally 4,000 vehicles or less. A great majority of residential streets have volumes of 500 vehicles or less. The high volume local streets are very long residential roadways (over one mile in length) with access to subdivisions.

Local roads' and streets' main function is to provide access to land. Travel speeds on local streets are generally the lowest and parking restrictions generally do not apply. Through travel on residential streets is often discouraged through traffic calming mechanisms. Although local streets carry relatively low traffic volumes overall, they constitute by far the greatest road mileage, accounting for 65% to 80% of roadway mileage in a typical community. Local roads and streets are NOT eligible for Federal Aid, but they are eligible for State Highway funds under Chapter 90.

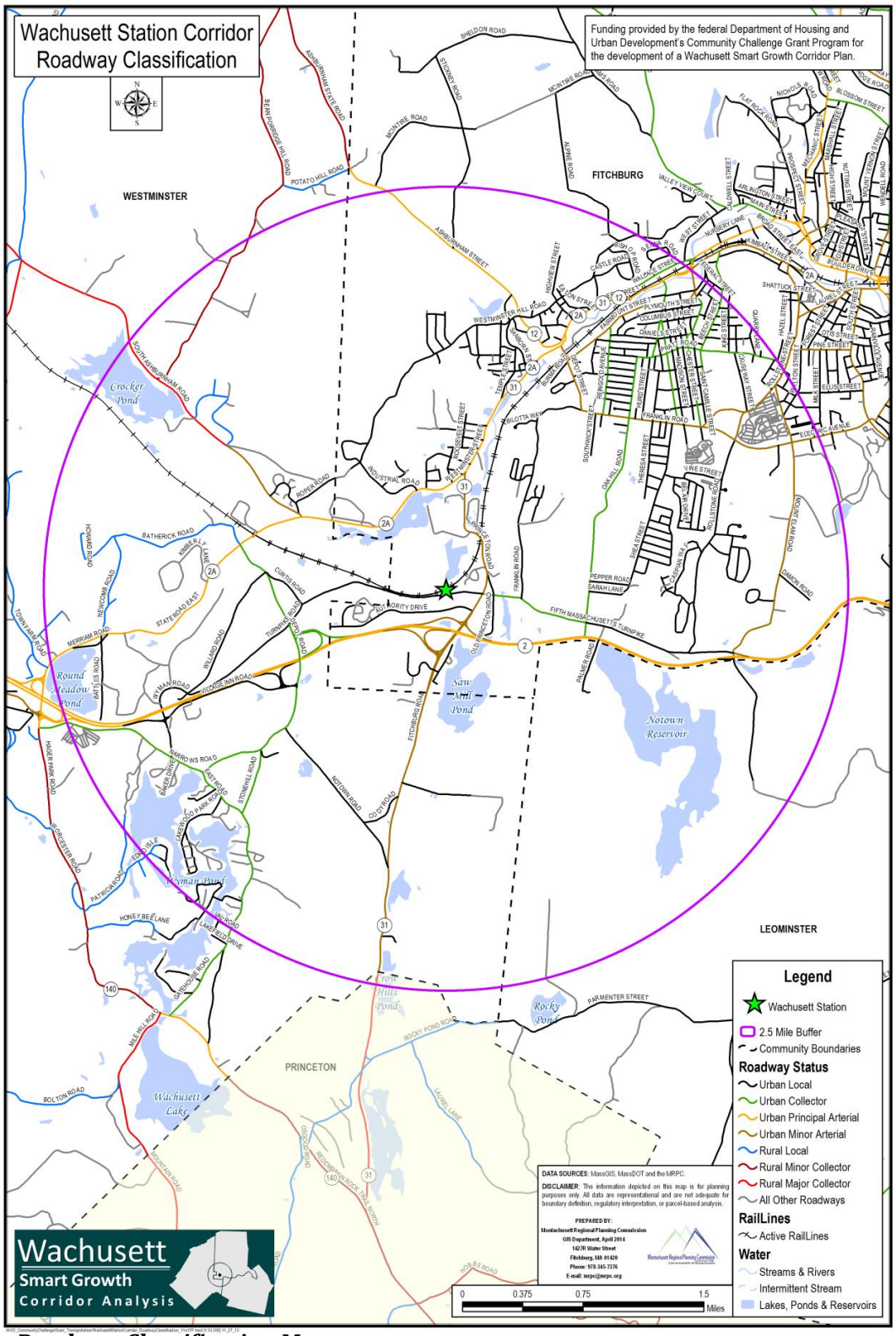


Figure 3.1: Roadway Classification Map

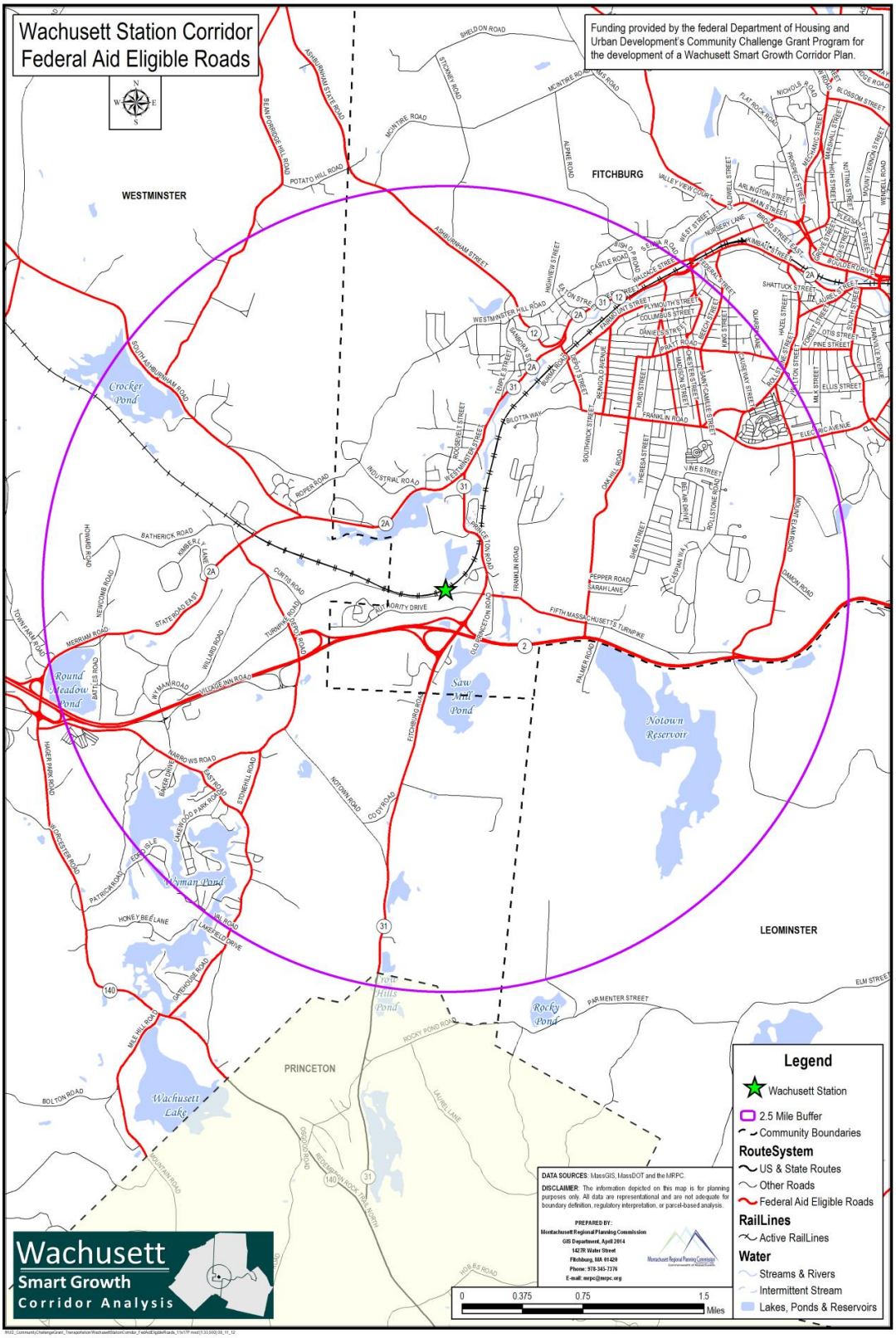


Figure 3.2: Federal Aid Eligible Roads Map

III. Traffic Volume and Congestion

For many years the MRPC and MassDOT Highway Division have taken traffic counts at numerous locations throughout the region, as part of its regional traffic count program. The traffic volume table below lists the traffic counts taken along major routes and other roads over the past 12 years within the Wachusett Corridor. The traffic count locations mentioned in the table that are shown in red on the map below have been conducted regularly for volume comparison purposes. The other locations (green) can also be seen on the map.

The counts consist of data collected during a period of at least 24 weekday hours. To reflect seasonal differences in traffic volumes, MassDOT produces seasonal adjustment factors based on data collected at more than 200 statewide locations where traffic volume data is collected 365 days of the year. The seasonal adjustment factors are then applied to the 24 hour count volume to produce an adjusted traffic volume for the location. These factors were applied to all counts listed in the table below with the exception of counts listed on Route 2. The counts on Route 2 are permanent count stations and collect data continuously throughout the year.

a) Key Findings

Traffic volume gradually increased at the beginning of the last decade and then starts to drop in 2005. In most cases, this is likely to be a direct result of the recession and higher energy costs. The cost of driving more than likely kept some people at home and pushed others toward public transportation. It should be noted that a similar decline has been seen throughout the Montachusett Region. Recently, however, traffic volumes are starting to increase slowly as the economy recovers.

Excluding Route 2, based on the traffic volume that principal arterials, minor arterials and collector streets generally carry (see section two), the existing traffic volume on the roads in the Corridor listed in the table below do not meet, or do not greatly exceed, the low end of the traffic volume range for their roadway classification. Two examples are Electric Avenue and Mount Elam Road which are both minor arterials. Minor arterials carry a traffic volume in the range of 10,000-40,000 vehicles. The traffic volume for Electric Avenue in 2009 was 13,600 vehicles while Mount Elam Road carried a traffic volume of only 1,300 vehicles in 2010. Electric Avenue is discussed further immediately below.

b) Findings of Traffic Studies Completed in the Corridor

Electric Avenue from Franklin Road to Rollstone Road Traffic Study (Fitchburg, 2010. See section four for more on this study): This study analyzed traffic congestion at two intersections in the Corridor: The Franklin/Clarendon at Franklin/Electric Avenue intersection which experienced significant delay on the minor street approaches during the AM and PM peak hours. The Rollstone at Electric Avenue intersection also experienced significant delay on the minor street approaches during the AM and PM peak hours but to a lesser extent. The intersections were also analyzed to see if traffic signals should be installed. The Franklin/Clarendon at Franklin/Electric Avenue intersection would warrant a traffic signal based on solely on the peak hour warrant while the Rollstone at Electric Avenue intersection did not pass any of the signal warrants.

Route 140 Corridor Profile (Westminster & Sterling, 2010, See section four for more on this study): This study analyzed traffic congestion at one intersection in the Corridor: The signalized intersection of Route 2A/140 intersection which did not experience significant congestion during peak hours.

Wachusett Extension Environmental Assessment (MART, 2010): This study assessed the need to satisfy the MRPC region's (Region) current and future transit needs between the proposed Wachusett Station (Station), the Region and the Boston area. The study found that the public roadways in the area around the Station have significant capacity available to accommodate the increased traffic volume that will most likely occur as a result of the Station. Also, the Station will most likely result in a net decrease on Route 2 in vehicular emissions, fuel usage, vehicles miles traveled, and crashes.

MassDOT/Westminster Traffic Turning Movement Count request for the intersection of Route 2A and Depot/Batherick Road (2013): This count was

requested for possible signalization of the intersection. The count revealed that traffic volume at this intersection is not high enough to warrant a traffic signal.

Traffic Count Request: If a Community that falls within the Wachusett Corridor is interested in having traffic counts conducted for certain street(s) or intersection(s), a chief elected official such as a mayor or a member of a board of selectmen should forward a written request to MRPC's Transportation Department.

Table 3.1: Wachusett Corridor Traffic Volume

Street/Route	Location	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Ashburnham St (Rt. 12)	W. of River St. (Rt. 12/2A)		6,500	6,100			6,300				5,300			
Batherick Rd	N. of State Road East (Rt. 2A)									730				950
Beech St	N. of Franklin Rd.		1,800			2,000			1,800			1,700		
Causeway St	N. of School Entrance											760		
Clarendon St	N. of Franklin Rd.										3,200			
Depot Rd	S. of State Road East (Rt. 2A)									4,400				5,000
Depot Rd	N. of Fairmont St		5,400			4,700			4,400			4,000		
Depot Rd	S. of Fairmont St.								3,600					
Electric Ave.	W. of Mount Elam Rd.			13,700			14,000			13,200				
Electric Ave.	E. of Franklin Rd.									11,600				
Electric Ave.	E. of Rollstone Rd.										13,600			
Exit 26 off Ramp (EB)	W. of Wyman Rd.									1,100				
Exit 27 On/Off ramps (EB)	N. of Village Inn Rd.									2,600				
Exit 27 On/Off ramps (WB)	E. of Depot Rd.									2,600				
Exit 28 Off Ramp (WB)	E. of Princeton Rd. (Rt. 31)									2,900				
Exit 28 On Ramp (WB)	W. of Princeton Rd. (Rt. 31)									1,500				
Exit 28 On/Off Ramps (EB)	W. of Princeton Rd. (Rt. 31)									5,500				
Fairmont St.	W. of Oak Hill Rd.			850			900			800				
Fitchburg Rd. (Rt. 31)	At Princeton T.L.					2,400				2,400				
Franklin Rd.	W. of Rollstone St.	5,500			3,300			2,100			2,300			2,100
Franklin Rd.	E. of Depot St.											5,200		
Franklin Rd.	W. of Electric Ave.										5,900			
Franklin Rd.	N. of Electric Ave.										2,400			
Franklin Rd.	N. of Fifth Mass Trpk.													1,000
Mount Elam Rd On Ramp (WB)	S. of Mount Elam Rd.									370				
Mount Elam Rd	N. of Damon Rd.	810		1,200				1,100				1,100		
Mount Elam Rd.	S. of Rollstone Rd.		1,500			1,600			1,600			1,300		
Mount Elam Rd Off Ramp (WB)	E. of Mount Elam Rd.									1,600				
Mount Elam Rd On/Off (EB)	S. of Route 2 & Off Ramp									80				
Oak Hill Rd.	N. of Fifth Mass Trpk.	2,000			2,500			2,000						2,700
Oak Hill Rd.	N. of Pratt Rd.		1,300			1,400			1,600		2,700	1,400		

Table 3.1: Wachusett Corridor Traffic Volume (continued)

Street/Route	Location	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Oak Hill Rd.	W. of Pratt Rd.											1,000		
Oak Hill Rd On/Off Ramp (WB)	S. of Fifth Mass Trpk.									1,700				
Pratt Rd.	E. of Oak Hill Rd.											690		
Princeton Rd. (Rt. 31)	S. of Westminster Rd. (Rt. 2A/31)		6,600				8,400				8,400			
Reingold Ave.	N. of School Entrance											840		
Reingold Ave.	S. of School Entrance											990		
River St. (Rt. 12/2A/31)	E. of Wallace St.		14,800			14,600				10,300				
River St. (Rt. 12/2A/31)	W. of Kimball St.	14,100		16,300				13,300				12,600		
Rollstone Rd.	S. of Electric Ave.										3,000			
Rollstone Rd.	S. of Franklin Rd.		2,400	3,100		3,800	2,900		2,800	3,100	2,900	2,700	3,300	
Rollstone Rd.	S. of School Entrance											4,400		
Rollstone Rd.	N. of School Entrance											4,600		
Route 2	E. of Rt. 2A & 140	39,362	40,923			44,400						43,000		
Route 2	E. of Oak Hill Rd.	42,500	40,923							42,700	47,900	45,600	47,245	46,134
State Road East (Rt. 2A)	W. of South Ashburnham Rd.											7,600		
State Road East (Rt. 2A)	E. of South Ashburnham Rd.		7,800				7,500							
State Road East (Rt. 2A)	E. of Batherick Rd.									9,600				9,900
State Road East (Rt. 2A)	W. of Batherick Rd.									6,200				6,400
Westminster St. (Rt. 2A/31)	W. of River St. (Rt. 2A/12/31)		13,200				14,500							
Westminster St. (Rt. 2A/31)	W. of Princeton Rd. (Rt. 31)				8,100				7,900					
Westminster St. (Rt. 2A/31)	N. of Princeton Rd. (Rt. 31)				13,800				12,900					
Westminster St. (Rt. 2A/31)	At Westminster T.L.	7,300						8,300			6,700			
Westminster St. (Rt. 2A/31)	S. of Depot Rd.		13,600					14,400						

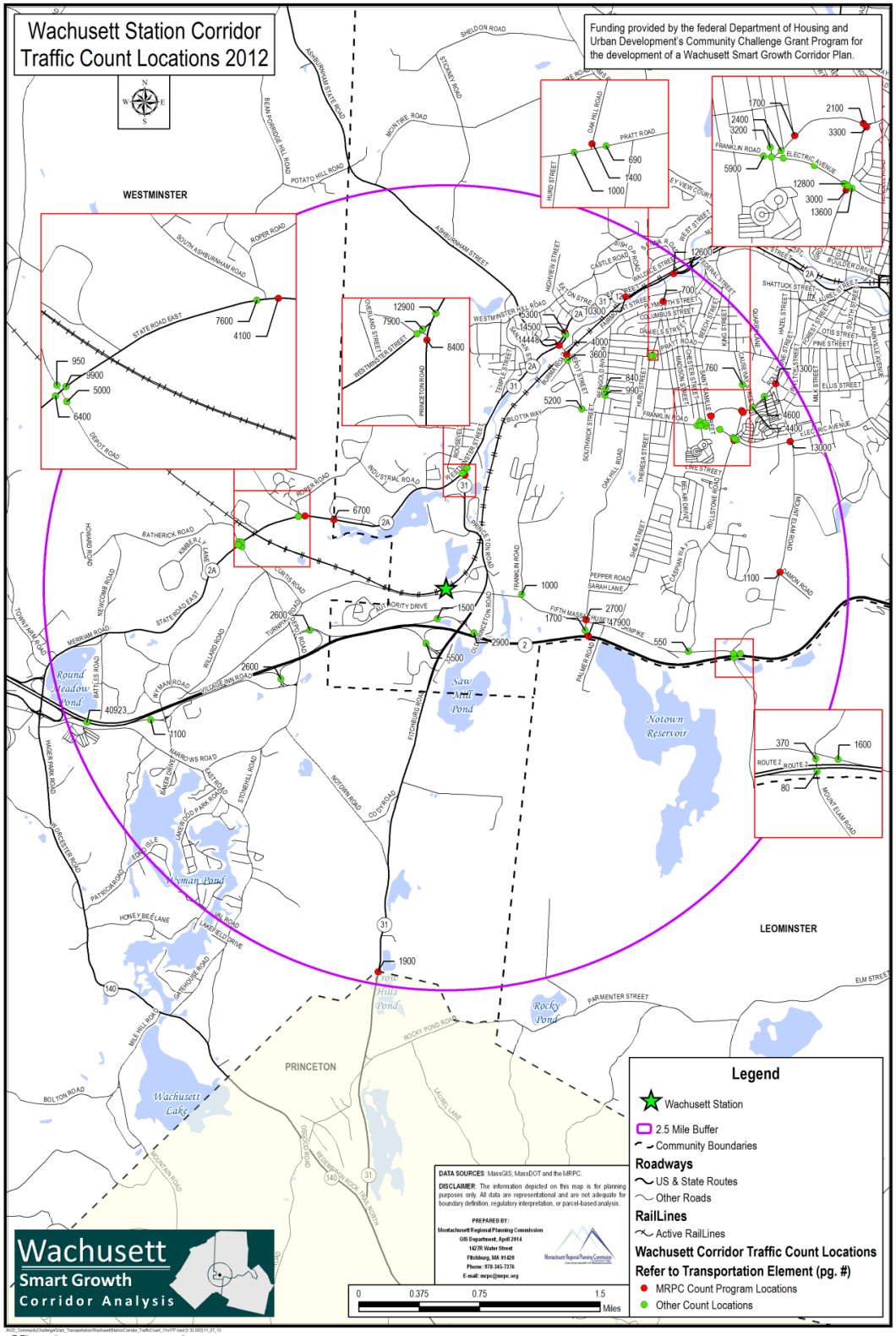


Figure 3.3: Traffic Count Locations Map

IV. Roadway Safety

Improving roadway safety is a top priority at high crash locations for those seeking to improve a roadway. It is especially true for those seeking to improve livability through Complete Street Concepts. Traffic crashes are more often than not avoidable events. Up to 90% of crashes are the result of driver error; however, driver error can be magnified by poor roadway or intersection design, or by inadequate traffic control measures. When crashes occur in high numbers at a particular location, there is probably a common reason for the crashes related to the design and/or signage of the road. These crashes can be predictable and the conditions that increase the chances for crashes are often correctable. Detailed study of crash records can identify these high-crash locations and lead to design improvements that will reduce the numbers and severity of future crashes.

MassDOT mapped crashes are the data source used to develop the crash statistics below. MassDOT obtains crash data from the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) to create mapped crashes for each community in Massachusetts for use in traffic engineering studies, safety planning activities, and distribution to government agencies and the public. The MRPC Transportation Department has a mapped crash database for the MRPC Region that is continually updated in two ways. First, the most recent MassDOT mapped crashes for the Region that currently exist up to 2011 are added to the database. Second, crash reports for specific locations under study by the MRPC are collected from local agencies that are then analyzed and added to the crash database. The MassDOT mapped crashes are used for the purpose of creating crash statistics for the Region, the communities in the Region and specific locations in the Region. To develop crash statistics from the database, MRPC staff analyzes information such as number of crashes, crash location, and crash severity. The crash statistics are based on totaling the crash severity points of the crashes that occur at a location. Crash severity states the type of harm, or the most serious outcome of a crash. There are essentially three possible outcomes:

1. Fatal Injury crash: Is the worst type of harm that involves at least one fatality or death of a person. A fatal injury crash is given a weighted average of 10 points.
2. Non-fatal Injury crash: Is the second worst type of harm that involves at least one injury to a person. A non-fatal injury crash is given a weighted average of 5 points.
3. Property Damage Only (PDO) crash: Is the third worst type of harm that involves damage to property of any type. A PDO crash is given a weighted average of 1 point.

a) Roadway Safety in the Corridor

The crash statistics, as seen in the table below, were presented at the January 17th 2013 Steering Committee Meeting and they are based on the 3-year period of 2007 – 2009. The Corridor saw a total of 773 crashes occur between the years of 2007 – 2009. Of these crashes, 2 (0.25%) were fatal injury crashes, 197 (25.5%) were non-fatal injury crashes, and 574 (74.3%) were property damage only crashes. Please recognize that the crash statistics need to be qualified by further study based on crash data that is verifiable and the most recent 3-year period needs to be examined as the crash statistics may change by varying degrees at locations when further study is undertaken.

Roadway Safety Improvement Project Selection Report: In 2012 the MRPC completed the Roadway Safety Improvement Project Selection Report which identifies the top most dangerous locations in the Region, based on MassDOT crash data from 2007 – 2009. See the Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations map below for the geographic extent of the locations in the Corridor. There are two categories of top dangerous locations in the Region of which both are relevant to the Corridor:

1. A cluster, or group, of crashes that have occurred at a location need to have a minimum crash severity point total of 32 points in order for a location to qualify as a dangerous location.
2. A roadway where the crash severity of a minimum of three lane departure crashes resulted in fatal injury crashes, incapacitating injury crashes or a combination of the two.

The table below is a list of the twelve locations the report identifies as the top most dangerous locations in the Corridor that need further investigation to improve livability through Complete Street Concepts. 26% of the total crashes that occurred in the Corridor occurred at these locations.

Table 3.2: Top Dangerous Locations in the Corridor

Locations	Total Crashes	Injury Crashes	Severity Point Total	Comment
Non Route 2 Intersections				
Route 2A/31	13	6	37	
Route 2A/31/12*	15	4	31	1 Point below minimum
Rollstone Road / Electric Avenue	17	8	49	
Pratt Road / Clarendon Street	19	5	39	
Locations Below are Associated with Rte 2 Interchanges & Intersections				
Route 2A/140 (Exit 25 Ramp)	14	6	38	
On Route 2 at Route 2A Bridge (Exit 25)	19	8	51	
On Route 2 at Depot Road Bridge (Exit 27)	17	6	41	
On Route 2 at Route 31 Bridge (Exit 28)	34	6	58	
On Route 2 at Oak Hill Road	12	5	32	
On Route 2 at Mount Elam Road	35	8	67	
	Total Crashes	**Fatal Crashes**	**Incapacitating Injury Crashes**	**Comment**
Top Lane Departure Crash Roadways				
Route 2: Extends from Exit 25 to Palmer Road	3		3	
Franklin Road & Electric Avenue: Extends from Bilotta Way to Mount Elam Road	3	1	2	

Electric Avenue from Franklin Road to Rollstone Road Traffic Study: In April of 2010 the MRPC completed a study titled Electric Avenue from Franklin Road to Rollstone Road Traffic Study for the City of Fitchburg. The study begins at the Franklin Road at Electric Ave intersection and extends to the Rollstone Road at Electric Avenue intersection, a distance of approximately 1,400 feet. The study considers the operational conditions, safety conditions, and pedestrian issues of the study area and discusses the desired improvement alternatives of the City which includes roundabouts at the intersections.

At the time this study was initiated, the Rollstone Road at Electric Avenue intersection which is currently in the top most dangerous locations list (see above) was not a dangerous location although it was close with a crash severity point total of 25 points. Now that the intersection is included in that list, the recommendations become more applicable to reaching the desired improvements of the City and the Corridor study. The improvement alternatives include:

- Convert the intersection to a roundabout (conceptualized in the drawing to the right)

The following alternatives may be considered as a set of improvements to be implemented as one project:

- Add auxiliary left turn lanes to the Electric Ave approaches
- Realign the northbound through movement to mirror the southbound lane
- Apply access management techniques to the Cumberland Farms driveways
- Install a flashing beacon over the center of the intersection
- Improve crosswalk markings
- Remove vegetation to improve sight distance
- Install all appropriate signage and pavement markings to the approaches

See the study for a full description of the alternatives and recommendations.

Figure 3.4: Conceptual Drawing: Roundabout for Rollstone Rd at Electric Ave Intersection

b) Study Recommendation

To improve safety at this intersection, the following long term improvement is recommended:

- The operational analyses results found in the study shows that a roundabout is feasible at this intersection as it may operate under capacity. Converting the intersection into a modern roundabout for a long term safety improvement should be considered.

Please contact the MRPC regarding this study.

Route 140 Corridor Profile: In December of 2010 the MRPC completed this study for the communities of Sterling, Westminster and Princeton (a Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) community) in conjunction with the CMRPC. The study includes the signalized intersection of Route 2A/140 which is part of the Exit 25 interchange on Route 2 in Westminster. The study considers the operational conditions and safety conditions of the intersection and discusses the desired improvement alternatives of Westminster officials. Exit 25 is one of the two locations mentioned in the introduction (see section one) that were added due to their significance to the Corridor as access points.

At the time this study was initiated, the Route 2A/140 signalized intersection which is currently a ***Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location*** (see above) was not a dangerous location although it was close with a crash severity point total of 27 points. However, the safety analysis completed for the study which is based on local crash reports resulted in a crash severity point total of 54 points. This result placed the intersection in the list and the recommendations were applicable to reaching the desired improvements of the Town. Some of the geometric improvement alternatives are depicted in the figure below. The improvement alternatives include:

- Add protected/permitted left turn phase to signal heads on all approaches
- Add left turn auxiliary lanes to three approaches. An auxiliary lane already exist on the eastbound approach
- Convert intersection to a roundabout

See the study for a full description of the alternatives and recommendations.

c) Study Recommendation

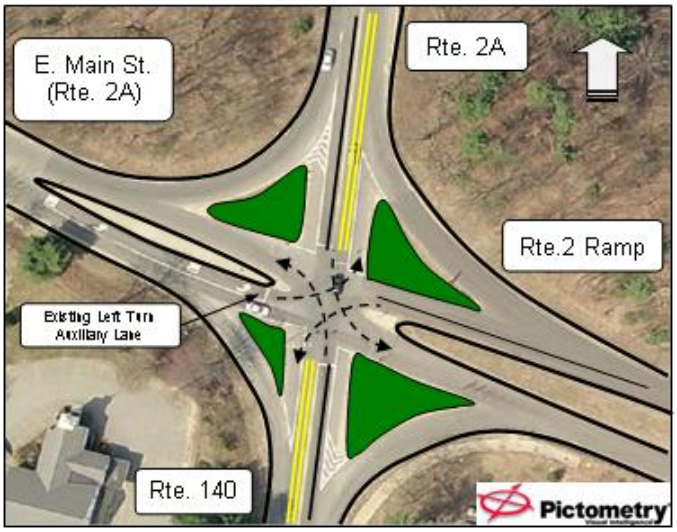
- To improve safety at the intersection, Westminster officials would favor adding protected/permitted left turn phases to the traffic signals on all approaches and left turn auxiliary lanes to the three approaches that lack the lanes.

Please contact the MRPC regarding this study.

d) Project Development Status for this Intersection

The Town of Westminster submitted a Project Need Form to MassDOT in 2012 for Route 140 that is based on the study and includes the Route 2A/140 intersection. MassDOT has a project listed on the Project Information page of their website for the intersection (Project # 607446).

Figure 3.5: Route 2A and 140 Intersection



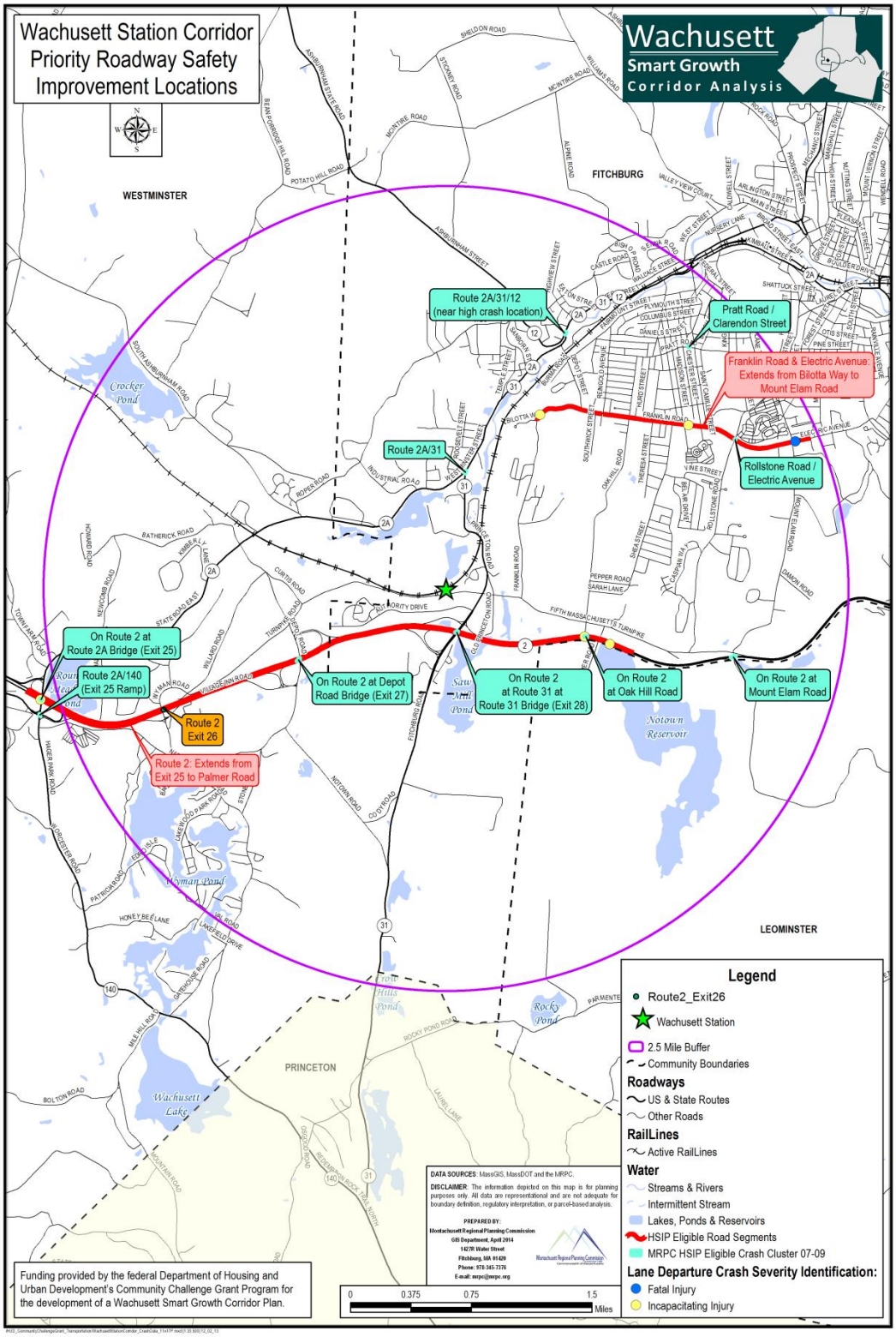


Figure 3.6: Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations Map

V. Pavement Condition

The structural conditions of the Federal Aid eligible roads in the study area have been determined by MassDOT and MRPC pavement surveys. The condition is expressed by assigning a Pavement Condition Index (PCI) number from 0 to 100 to segments along the roadway. PCI is an overall rating of the pavements condition. Conditions are rated as Excellent, Good, Fair and Poor.

The table below shows a general correlation between PCI, condition, repair strategies and associated cost. The estimated repair cost was derived from conversations with a Pavement Management Users Group (PMUG) comprised of other Regional Planning Agencies, the MassDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and reflects the estimated cost to bring the pavement condition to "excellent."

Table 3.3: Pavement Conditions and Repair Strategies

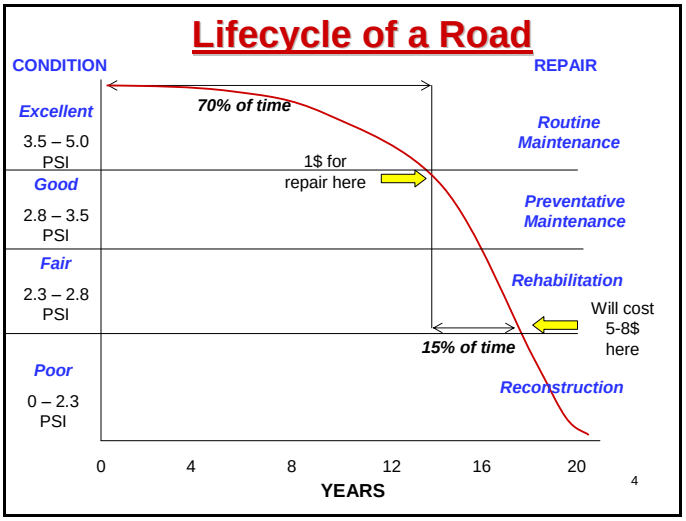
PCI	Condition	Associated Repair	Repair Cost Per. Sq. Yard
0 - 64	Poor	Reconstruction	$45
65 - 84	Fair	Rehabilitation (Mill/Overlay)	$18
85 - 94	Good	Preventative Maintenance	$8.50
95 - 100	Excellent	Routine Maintenance	$0.75

Federal Aid Eligible roads are comprised of all functionally classified as Interstate, Urban and Rural Arterial, Urban Collector and Rural Major Collector roads. These roads include all roads which are State maintained (State Jurisdiction) as well as a select number of roads which are maintained by Municipalities (Local Jurisdiction). The Pavement Conditions map below shows all Federal Aid Eligible roads and the condition of their pavement. Please note that due to the time frame between data collection and report preparation, conditions of the roadways may change. Therefore, this information should be viewed in general terms regarding needs and condition.

Figure 3.7, "Lifecycle of a Road", represents the relationship between repair cost and time, it shows that it is far more economical to preserve roads than to delay repairs and reconstruct roads. A pavements lifecycle is the time between reconstruction periods. Lifecycle cost is the total cost spent on maintenance and repairs for a particular pavement section during its life cycle. One of the main focuses of pavement management is to keep a pavements lifecycle long while lifecycle cost is low to stretch the dollar in what is commonly an ever decreasing maintenance budget.

While it is important to preserve a pavements condition in good standing for as long as possible by implementing various preventative and routine maintenance techniques throughout its lifecycle to keep lifecycle cost low, it is a reality that budgets often do not allow for this. It is encouraged that a pavement management plan be implemented to keep on track of maintenance needs and schedules to contribute to a cost effective approach to maintaining roadways.

Figure 3.7: Lifecycle of a Road



Route 31 Pavement & Drainage (looking south)

Overall the pavement condition of the roads in the study area does not significantly impact Wachusett Station. However, poor conditions exist along Route 31 north of the station and Route 2A/31 east of the Princeton Road/Westminster Street intersection. These segments are maintained by the City of Fitchburg but are eligible for Federal funds. With Wachusett Station attracting additional traffic of all modes it should be a higher priority to keep major access roads pavement in good condition.

Route 31 Pavement & Drainage (looking north)

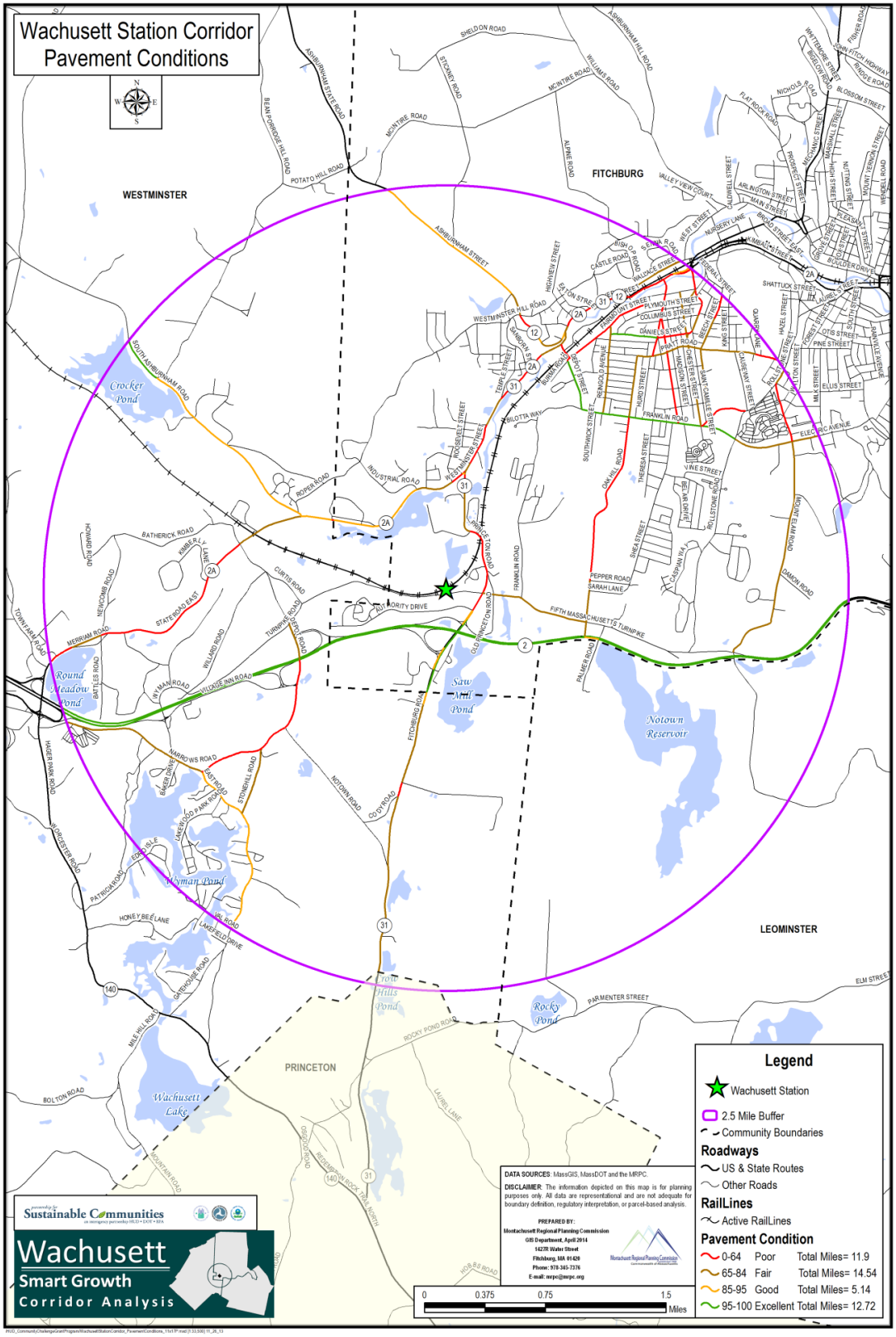


Figure 3.8: Pavement Conditions Map

VI. Bridges (non-railroad)

Throughout the Montachusett region, many of its roads travel over numerous brooks, rivers and water bodies. Within the 22 communities of the Montachusett planning area, some 317 bridges are identified and rated by MassDOT as part of their inventory system. MassDOT has provided a Bridge Rating Table to the MRPC. This table includes the town where the bridge is located, the road name the bridge is located on, the bridge identification number, functional classification of the road, year built, historical significance, rebuilt date (if applicable), AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) rating, and the deficiency status of each bridge, i.e. structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

According to the MassDOT Project Development and Design Guidebook (January 2006), structurally deficient is defined as "a bridge structure that has a defect requiring corrective action." Functionally obsolete bridges are defined as "a bridge which has no structural deficiencies but does not meet standards to adequately serve current user demands."

According to the 2012 Montachusett Region Transportation Plan, there are 70 bridges listed as functionally obsolete and 54 as structurally deficient throughout the MRPC region. This represents approximately 18% of the Region's total bridges.

As of the year 2013 (based on the latest MassDOT Bridge rating testing) there are two functionally obsolete bridges and three structurally deficient bridges in the Corridor at the following locations:

Table 3.4: Bridges

CITY	OVER	UNDER	LOCATION	OWNER	FUNCTIONAL CLASS	BUILT	REBUILT	RATING	DEFICIENCY
Fitchburg	ST 2	WATER WYMAN BROOK	50 FEET WEST OF ST-31	State Highway Agency	Freeway/Expressway	1947	0	63	Structurally Dificient
Fitchburg	ST 31 WESTMNSTR RD	WATER PHILLIPS BROOK	.1 MI WEST OF STATE 12	State Highway Agency	Urban Arterial	1947	0	60	Structurally Dificient
Fitchburg	ST 2	WATER WYMAN BROOK	50 FEET WEST OF ST-31	State Highway Agency	Freeway/Expressway	1947	0	63	Structurally Dificient
Fitchburg	ST 31 PRINCETON RD	WATER WHITMANS RIVER	.1MI. SO. OF ST-2A	State Highway Agency	Urban Minor Arterial	1929	0	72	Functionally Obsolete
Fitchburg	HWY SANBORN ST	WATER PHILLIPS BROOK	.1MI STH.OF ST.12	City/Municipal Highway A	Urban Local	1931	0	29	Functionally Obsolete

The MA DOT Bridge Inventory 2012 map below shows the bridges.

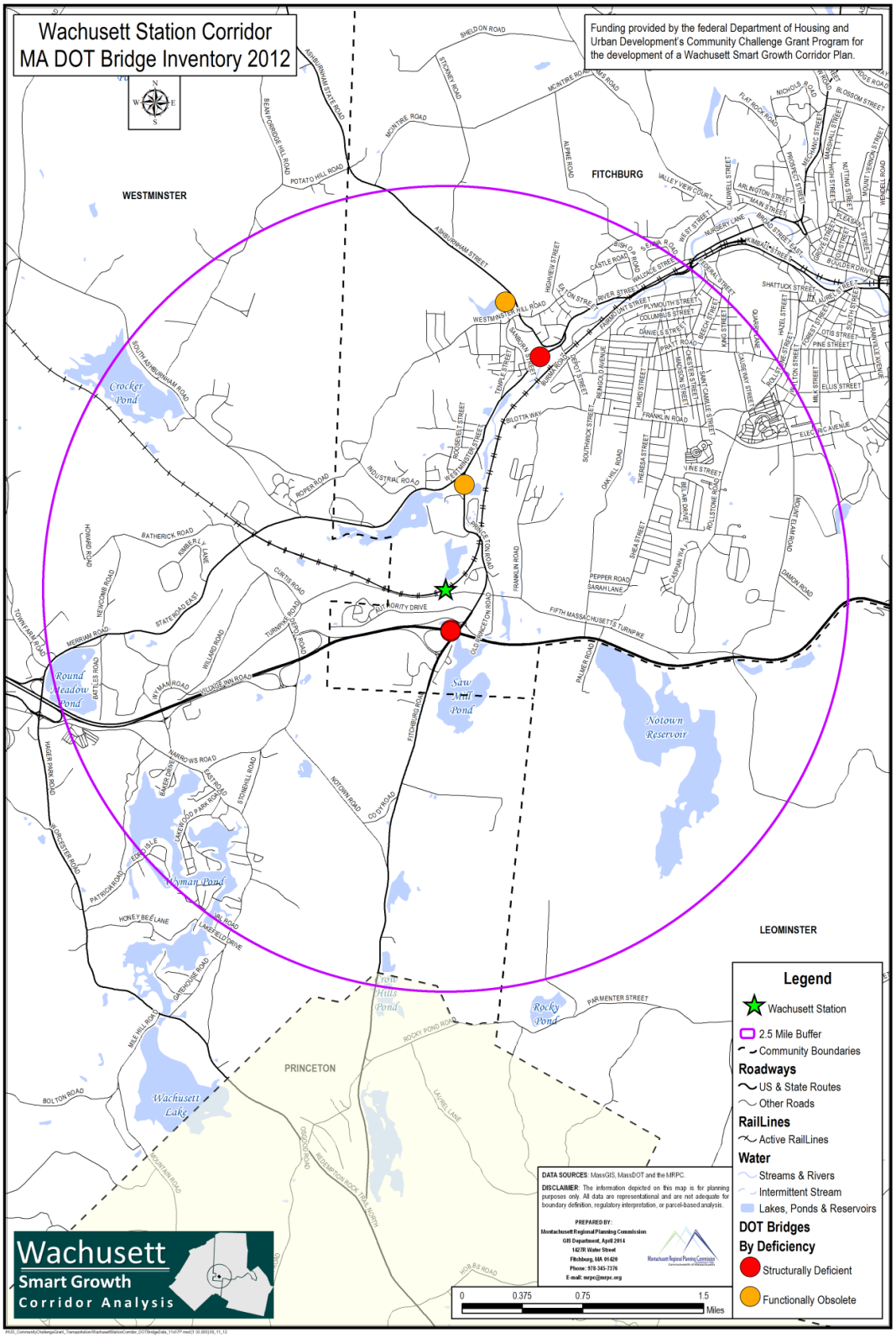


Figure 3.9: MassDOT Bridge Data Map

VII. Public Transit System

a) Fixed Route Service

The Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART) operates fixed route bus service in the Fitchburg-Leominster metropolitan area. Several routes cross the two cities providing access to several area attractions. Currently, fixed route bus service within the study area is provided via Route 11 that runs from the Intermodal transportation Center (ITC) to the Montachusett Industrial Park and the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical High School (Monty Tech). Both of the route stops are located off of Route 2A in Fitchburg.

MART also currently runs a route called the Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) Express/Commuter Rail Bus. This route runs between Fitchburg, Leominster and Gardner city centers in order to provide express service between the two higher educational institutions, Fitchburg State University (FSU) and MWCC during the school year only. The Commuter Rail Bus however provides express service between Gardner and the ITC in Fitchburg in order to provide users with a connection to the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line service to and from Boston.

A recent Transit Development Plan (TDP) update conducted for MART by the MRPC reviewed the current operating conditions of the Fitchburg-Leominster Fixed Route Bus Service in order to assess the system, its ability to serve the public and to recommend potential route and scheduling changes. The TDP included in its analysis and review the planned construction of the new Wachusett Commuter Rail Station (Wachusett Station). The planned redevelopment of the Great Wolf Lodge Resort on Route 31 just south off Route 2 was also included in the TDP analysis. As a result, changes to the current MART Route 11 were recommended. These changes include the expansion of service to the Wachusett Station and the Great Wolf Lodge Resort on Route 31. Recommendations for the MWCC Express/Commuter Rail Bus include the expansion of service to year round, increased frequency of service and the expansion of service to the Wachusett Station once completed. These changes to the current fixed route bus service would result in direct connections between the new Wachusett Station and all three Montachusett Region cities, increase commuter options and open up other areas along the routes to future commercial and/or residential development. For further information regarding the TDP, please contact the MRPC.

b) Commuter Rail

Commuter rail service previously existed from Gardner to Boston. The service to Gardner was drastically cut back late in 1983 and discontinued on January 1, 1987. Today, service along the Fitchburg line to North Station in Boston terminates at the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Station. As previously mentioned, the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Extension and the Wachusett Station and Layover Facility is an expansion of passenger rail service of approximately 4.5 miles west of the present terminus of the MBTA's Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line in downtown Fitchburg at the ITC. The Project consists of four distinct components:

1. Construction of a new passenger station (Wachusett Station) with parking facilities accessed via Authority Drive, an existing industrial park roadway in the City of Fitchburg;
2. Construction of a new layover facility on a current gravel pit within a proposed industrial business park in Westminster;
3. Upgrades to rail infrastructure along the existing railway corridor right-of-way (ROW) owned by Pan Am Railways west of the existing terminal Fitchburg Station; and;
4. A new station track within the existing railroad ROW to access the proposed station and layover facility while enabling existing freight service to continue unimpeded by passenger operations.

The planned improvements to the rail corridor will benefit both passenger rail service and freight operations by upgrading one of two main line tracks to passenger service standards. Construction of the new Wachusett Station for passenger service will also facilitate future freight access to the adjacent industrial park (known as the "231 Industrial Park" due to its location at the junction of State Routes 2 and 31) adjacent to the proposed station. The project allows for the smooth operations of both freight and commuter rail, with the freight company dispatching all service and the MBTA maintaining the shared signals and track.

VIII. Other Transportation Systems

a) Freight Railroads

There are three railroad companies currently operating freight lines in the Montachusett region:

1. Pan Am Railways, formerly Guilford Transportation Industries (GTI) is the largest operator of freight rail lines in the Montachusett Region. It operates on a number of lines including those connecting the Moran Terminal in Charlestown to Mechanicville, New York. With the purchase of the B&M in 1983, GTI was handed control of the Springfield Terminal Railway (STR), a B&M subsidiary. In addition, GTI has controlling interest in both the Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad (V&M) and the Stony Brook Railroad (SBRR). The V&M and SBRR own one track each and they are leased to B&M. In Westminster, the Freight Main Line (Ex Fitchburg Route) is owned by the V&M with the freight operator being STR.
2. The Providence and Worcester Railroad Company (P&W) is an independent operator of freight lines. One line operates in the area from Gardner (providing a connection to the GTI system) to Hubbardston to Worcester.
3. CSX Transportation purchased Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) in 1997. Conrail was previously established to acquire bankrupt railroad company lines. CSX operates one line running from Fitchburg to Clinton in the Montachusett Region.

As previously mentioned, the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Extension that includes the Wachusett Station and Layover Facility is an expansion of passenger rail service that will also benefit freight service in the area. The planned upgrade of one of two main line tracks to passenger service standards will help facilitate future freight access to the adjacent 231 Industrial Park located adjacent to Wachusett Station. The project allows for the smooth operations of both freight and commuter rail, with the freight company dispatching all service and the MBTA maintaining the shared signals and track.

b) Aviation

Within the Montachusett Region, there are three general aviation municipal airports, the Fitchburg Municipal Airport located in Fitchburg between Fitchburg and Leominster; the Gardner Airport in Templeton near the Gardner City Line; and the Sterling Airport in Sterling. Each of these is classified as a general aviation airport. The former Shirley Airport is no longer a public use facility. According to the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission website (www.massaeronautics.org), "The owner/operator of Shirley Airport has decided to change the airport's status from Privately-Owned/Public-use airport to Private Restricted Landing Area, which means that effective immediately, the airport is closed to public use. Pilots must receive prior permission from the owner/operator to use the airport."

The largest of the municipal airports, by far, is the Fitchburg Municipal Airport. Approximately 170 flights per day are handled on its two-runway system. (Source: AirNav.com Fitchburg Municipal Airport) The airport handles the general aviation needs for the greater Fitchburg area and provides facilities for personal, corporate and air taxi services. Access to the Fitchburg Municipal Airport is through Falulah Road, which provides indirect access to Route 2 (via Hamilton Street and Routes 12 and 13), and downtown Fitchburg (via Bemis Road, Route 12 and Summer Street). Improvements to the existing highway network would benefit the airport. As of November 2013, a major reconstruction project is underway for the Route 12 bridge over Route 2. In addition, the on/off ramp configuration for Exit 31 at Route 2/Route 12 is undergoing major construction at the same time. The end result should be an improved situation in terms of congestion and safety. Commuter rail service is also available for airport users via the North Leominster Train Station on Route 13 located approximately one mile from the airport.

IX. Bicycles and Pedestrians

a) Bicycle Travel

The buffer (2.5 miles) that defines the Corridor study area was chosen because it is considered to be an easily bikeable distance to and from Wachusett Station. With the exception of Route 2, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of bicycles around population centers and on the highways in the MRPC region. Bicycles have found a place on the highway network by default, as have pedestrians. Bicycles mixed with motor

vehicle traffic can be dangerous and create traffic delays. Safety problems involving bicycles and automobiles have become an issue in the MRPC region as evidenced by the number of bicycle-automobile crashes. It was reported in the MassDOT crash files for 2008-2010 that 209 bicycle-automobile crashes occurred in the Montachusett Region resulting in 148 injuries and six fatalities.

There is a strong support from the regional communities for designated bikeways for recreational and commuting traffic. Individual bikeway projects are being implemented in some towns within the region. Construction of bikeways will encourage cycle commuting by providing a direct, separate, and safe route between communities. Also, increasing concern for air quality and energy conservation is leading to renewed interest in development of adequate facilities for bicycles throughout the Montachusett region.

Bikeways are special routes and/or facilities established to facilitate the movement of bicycles as an energy efficient transportation and/or recreation mode of travel. There are three types of bikeways: bike paths, bike lanes, and bike routes. These have been categorized as Class I, II and III bikeways respectively. Class I bike paths are routes totally separated from automobile or pedestrian traffic. Class II bike lanes are lanes at the edge of streets marked for exclusive use of bicyclists. Class III bike routes are roadways that bikes share with cars.

Legally, a bicycle has been recognized as a vehicle in Massachusetts since 1973; subject to basically all the rights and responsibilities of an automobile. Bikeways are public rights-of-way, maintained by a responsible state or local agency, just as a municipality's streets are owned and maintained. Where the land for a proposed bike path is privately owned, an easement to permit public passage may be obtained, or the right-of-way may be purchased outright. Bikeways which parallel roads may be located within the existing publicly owned right-of-way, extending beyond the roadway itself.

b) Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian activity is generally limited to small areas within community centers (i.e. schools, libraries, senior centers, town halls, parks, public transit stations etc.). Sidewalks are lacking within the study area including the area around the new Wachusett Station. Sidewalks should be included in new roadway construction, roadway improvements, and residential and non-residential subdivision development such as the new Station. Along major arterial roadways, land should be secured for sidewalks or pathways as development occurs. Pedestrian actuated signals should be in place in densely populated areas where warranted to allow safer movement of pedestrians.

c) Trail Inventory

There are numerous trails that are located within the study area. The most significant trails would be the Leominster State Forest, for its recreational draw to the area, and the Burma Road and Steam Line trails, for their commuter access possibilities. The MRPC is aware of the positive effects that these trails have on the area and would like to work towards securing and making more connections, whether it is additional trail connections or roadway connections with sidewalks and/or bike lanes, between these trails and trail networks. The Trail Inventory map below shows the trails.

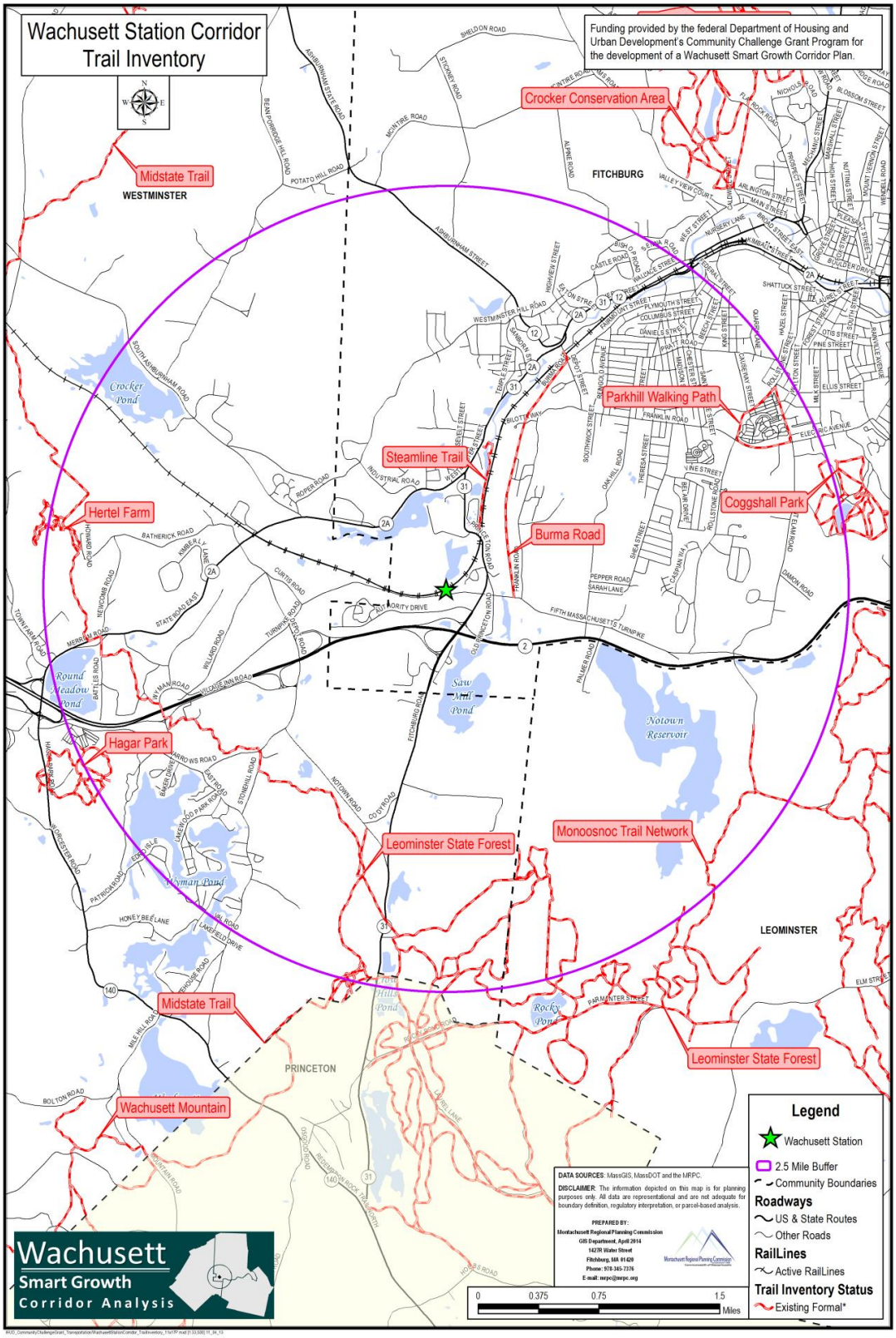


Figure 3.10: Trail Inventory Map

X. Special Focus: Accessing the Station

Key access points along the roadway network within the Corridor that may be used to access Wachusett Station are evaluated in this section. This evaluation is based on field observations of the access points and their readiness to accommodate Complete Street Concepts. For more on Complete Street Concepts and design elements, see section eleven of this Smart Growth Plan. See any one of the attached maps for the locations. The observations and other comments, many of which rely on previous sections, are bulleted. This evaluation seeks to answer the following question about the access points based on Complete Street Concepts:

Is the location safe, comfortable and convenient for travel via bicycle, walking, motorized and transit modes of transportation?

a) Intersections and Road Segments

Authority Drive and Route 31 (Princeton Road)

- When completed, Wachusett Station can be accessed by all transportation modes via Authority Drive. Authority Drive forms an intersection with Route 31 (Princeton Road) about an eighth of a mile to the east of what will be the Wachusett Station driveway.
- For Route 2 traffic, Exit 28 provides the most direct access to the intersection. Exit 28 has a Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location (see section four for the location).
- Only the ramp intersections with Route 31 and the overpass at Exit 28 are eligible for Complete Street Concepts.
- Based on the traffic volume data found in section three for Exit 28 and Route 31, the traffic volumes most likely do not produce any significant traffic delays even after adjusting for future growth.
- An auxiliary left turn lane exists on the Route 31 northbound approach from Route 2.
- The terrain is level.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Route 13 (looking north at Authority Drive)

Authority Drive (looking west)

Fifth Mass Turnpike and Route 31

- Fifth Mass Turnpike forms an intersection with Route 31 about an eighth of a mile north of Authority Drive.
- Route 31 road width narrows on the northern approach to the intersection.
- Fifth Mass Turnpike east of Route 31 will collect traffic destined for Wachusett Station from Franklin Road and Oak Hill Road (locations examined below).
- Traffic will take a left turn from Fifth Mass Turnpike east of Route 31 to reach Authority Dr.
- Fifth Mass Turnpike west of Route 31 will be a dead end street upon completion of Wachusett Station.
- The terrain is level.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking east) (Route 31- left to right of photo)

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking west) (location west of intersection)

Franklin Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike

- Sight distance is severely restricted for all approaches to this intersection.
- Franklin Road forms an intersection with Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike about a quarter of a mile east of Route 31.
- Traffic destined for Wachusett Station will turn right at this intersection.
- Historic buildings exist on either side of Franklin Road.
- The terrain is mountainous going north on Franklin Road while Fifth Mass Turnpike has rolling terrain.

Conclusion: The road widths are narrow but appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes, but many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking east at Franklin Road)

Franklin Road (looking east)

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking west)

In 2006, a new bridge was constructed over Flag Brook which is about half way in between Route 31 and Franklin Road.

Oak Hill Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike

- Southbound traffic destined for Wachusett Station will turn right while northbound traffic from Oak Hill Road and Route 2 intersection will turn left at this intersection.
- The terrain is mountainous going north on Oak Hill Rd while Fifth Mass Turnpike has level terrain.
- Due to Fifth Mass Turnpike being closed off as shown above, traffic east of this location destined to Wachusett Station from Rollstone Road and Mount Elam Road will have to use Route 2. The closed off section of Fifth Mass Turnpike is about a half a mile long.
- The Mount Elam Road intersection with Route 2 is a Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location.
- This intersection is about a half mile east of Franklin Road and an eighth of a mile north of the Oak Hill Road and Route 2 intersection which is ***a Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location.***

Conclusion: *The road widths appear to be narrow and may not be able to adequately accommodate all modes. Also, many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.*

Oak Hill Road (looking north)

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking east)

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking east): this is the dead end farther east of the intersection

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking west)

Route 2 and Oak Hill Road

- This intersection is about an eighth of a mile south of the Oak Hill Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike intersection and nearly a mile to the west of the Mount Elam Road and Route 2 intersection.
- Based on the traffic volume data found in section three for this intersection, the traffic volumes on Route 2 most likely produces traffic delays during peak hours for Oak Hill Road which is STOP controlled.
- The acceleration lane onto Route 2 is very narrow and the length is insufficient.
- Vehicles at a dead stop need a very large gap in traffic before entering Route 2 as it is a very high speed highway.
- The intersection is a Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location.
- Traffic destined for Wachusett Station may use this intersection by taking a right turn from Route 2.
- The terrain is level.

Conclusion: Complete Street Concepts do not apply to this intersection. See section eleven for safety improvement recommendations.

Oak Hill Road (looking east)

Oak Hill Road (looking south)

Oak Hill Road (looking south)

Tractor trailer turning onto Route 2 without an adequate acceleration lane has no choice but to encroach into the inner lane to avoid hitting the guardrail

Rollstone Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike / Mount Elam Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike / Route 2 and Mount Elam Road

Rollstone Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike

- This intersection is about a third of a mile west of the Mount Elam Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike intersection.
- Traffic destined for Wachusett Station from this intersection will turn left and travel to the Mount Elam Road and Route 2 intersection and take a right on Route 2.
- The terrain is mountainous going north on Rollstone Road while Fifth Mass Turnpike has slightly rolling terrain to the east.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be narrow and may not be able to adequately accommodate all modes. Also, many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Rollstone Road (looking north)

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking east)

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking west): this is the eastern end of the dead end that begins east of the Oak Hill Road

Mount Elam Road & Fifth Mass Turnpike / Route 2 & Mount Elam Road

- These two intersections are about a third of a mile east of the Oak Hill Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike intersection.
- There is no acceleration lane onto Route 2.
- The intersections are STOP controlled on the Fifth Mass Turnpike approaches and the southbound Mount Elam approach with Route 2 which also has a flashing red traffic signal.

The two intersections (looking west)

Route 2 and Mount Elam Road intersection
Controls: STOP signs & flashing traffic signals

- Sight distance is restricted for all approaches to this intersection with the exception of the Mount Elam Road and Route 2 intersection.
- Vehicles at a dead stop need a very large gap in traffic before entering Route 2 as it is a very high speed highway with no acceleration lane.
- Based on the traffic volume data found in section three for the Route 2 and Mount Elam Road intersection, the traffic volumes on Route 2 most likely produces traffic delays during peak hours for Mount Elam Road.
- The Route 2 and Mount Elam Road intersection is ***a Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location***.
- Traffic destined for Wachusett Station from the Route 2 and Mount Elam Road intersection will turn right onto Route 2.
- The terrain is mountainous going north on Mount Elam Road while Fifth Mass Turnpike has slightly rolling terrain to the west.

Conclusion for the Route 2 and Mount Elam Road intersection: Complete Street Concepts only apply to the eastbound Mount Elam Road approach and the southbound Fifth Mass Turnpike approach of the Mount Elam Road and Fifth Mass Turnpike intersection. See section eleven for safety improvement recommendations.

Fifth Mass Turnpike (looking west)

Mount Elam Road (looking north)

Conclusion for the Mount Elam Road & Fifth Mass Turnpike: The road widths appear to be narrow and may not be able to adequately accommodate all modes. Also, many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Route 2A/31

- This intersection is nearly a mile to the north of Authority Drive.
- The intersection is STOP controlled.
- The Route 31 approach width is excessively wide that creates many access points for traffic to exit into Route 2A and enter Route 31 from Route 2A.
- Based on the traffic volume data found in section three for this intersection, the traffic volume on Route 2A most likely produces significant traffic delay during peak hours for Route 31.
- The intersection is a ***Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location.***
- The intersection is severely skewed on the southwest approach.
- Sight distance and solar glare from the southwest approach are factors at this intersection.
- This intersection may be the most likely choice of southbound traffic destined for the new Wachusett Station.
- The terrain is level to the northeast but mountainous to the southwest.
- This intersection is especially hazardous for first time users trying to negotiate their way through this intersection.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Route 31 (looking north)

Route 2A (looking southwest): sight distance and solar glare

Route 2A (looking northeast)

Route 2A/31/12

- This intersection is nearly two miles to the north of Authority Drive.
- The geometry is similar to the Route 2A/31 intersection but the road width is narrower on the Route 2A/31 approach and buildings exist close to the intersection.
- Based on the traffic volume data found in section three for this intersection, the traffic volume on Route 12 most likely produces significant traffic delay during peak hours for Route 2A/31.
- The intersection is only one point below the minimum point total of being a ***Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location*** (see section four for more on this location).
- The intersection is STOP controlled and is severely skewed on the southwest approach.
- Sight distance from the southwest approach can be a factor at this intersection.
- The terrain is level to the northeast but mountainous to the southwest.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Route 2A/31 (looking north)

Route 12 (looking southeast): sight distance for Route 2A/31

Route 12 (looking southwest): left turning vehicles

Depot Road and Turnpike Road

- Turnpike Road forms an intersection with Depot Road about an eighth of a mile north of Exit 27 on Route
- Depot Road road width narrows on the northern side of the intersection.
- The terrain is primarily level.
- Only the ramp intersections with Depot Road and the overpass at Exit 27 are eligible for Complete Street Concepts.
- Exit 27 has a Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Location (see section four for the location).
- Turnpike Road will collect traffic destined for Wachusett Station traveling on Depot Road from Exit 27, Exit 26 and Route 2A which is to the north.
- Wachusett Station is east of this intersection.
- Based on the traffic volume data found in section three for Exit 27 and Depot Road, the traffic volume most likely does not produce significant traffic delay.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Turnpike Road (looking east): the Station is east of this intersection

Depot Road (looking south): intersection just north of Exit 27

Depot Road (looking north)

Turnpike Road to Authority Drive West of Wachusett Station

- The terrain is rolling along the length of this roadway.
- Based on the traffic volume data found in section three for Exit 27 and Depot Road, the traffic volume most likely does not produce significant traffic delay even after adjusting for future growth.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be narrow on Turnpike Road and Curtis Road and may not be able to adequately accommodate all modes. Also, many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Turnpike Road (looking east): at the Curtis Road intersection

Farther east, Curtis Road intersects with Turnpike Road (photo above) which may also be used by traffic from Route 2A destined for the Station.

Turnpike Road (looking east)

Still farther east on Turnpike Road, Development Road Extension is being constructed which intersects with Turnpike Road (photo above) just after the cones.

Development Road Extension (looking south)

The new Development Rd Extension (photo above) connects with the existing Development Rd farther south (photo below). Development Rd Extension will be a public road open to the public in the future.

(photos for this section continued onto next page)

Development Road Extension (looking north)

Development Road (looking north)

This is Development Road (photo above) farther south of Development Road Extension where it intersects with Authority Drive. Wachusett Station is east of this location.

b) Trails

The two formal trails discussed below have potential for commuter access. The trails run parallel to each other and are approximately only eighty feet apart horizontally. However, they are substantially apart vertically and a railway lies in between the trails.

Burma Road

- This trail needs extensive development to become a viable transportation link for accessing Wachusett Station. There are many issues that need to be resolved of which several are illustrated below. Please see Railroad Bridges – Over Depot Road below for the railroad bridge related issues concerning this trail.

Burma Road (looking south)

…. which concludes as a dead end street farther south (photo below) where the trail begins.

Burma Road trail (looking south)

Depot Road (looking southeast)

View of Burma Road (photo left) and the vertical curve on Depot Street *from the southeast side of the Depot Road railroad bridge. Off of Depot Street at the top of the vertical curve, Burma Road is a two way road (photo on next page)....*

Farther south, the trail is interrupted by a road that leads to a small subdivision and still farther south by a second much larger subdivision.

The trail terminates farther south (photo left) where it intersects with Fifth Mass Turnpike. At this intersection the trail is currently being used as a driveway to a small business on the left. The trail is very uneven in this area.

- The trail is approximately 1.5 miles long.
- The terrain is mountainous along the length of the trail.

Conclusion: Many design elements are needed to make the trail safe, comfortable and convenient before it can accommodate users.

Steamline Trail

- This trail needs extensive development to become a viable transportation link for accessing Wachusett Station. There are many issues that need to be resolved of which several are illustrated below. Please see Railroad Bridges – Over Route 31 (Princeton Road) below for the railroad bridge related issues concerning this trail.
- The trail begins on Route 2A/31 approximately one thousand feet north of the Route 2A/31 intersection.
- The trail is approximately 0.6 miles long.
- The terrain of the trail is level but mountainous along the eastern side of the trail.

Conclusion: Many design elements are needed to make the trail safe, comfortable and convenient before it can accommodate users.

Steamline Trail entrance

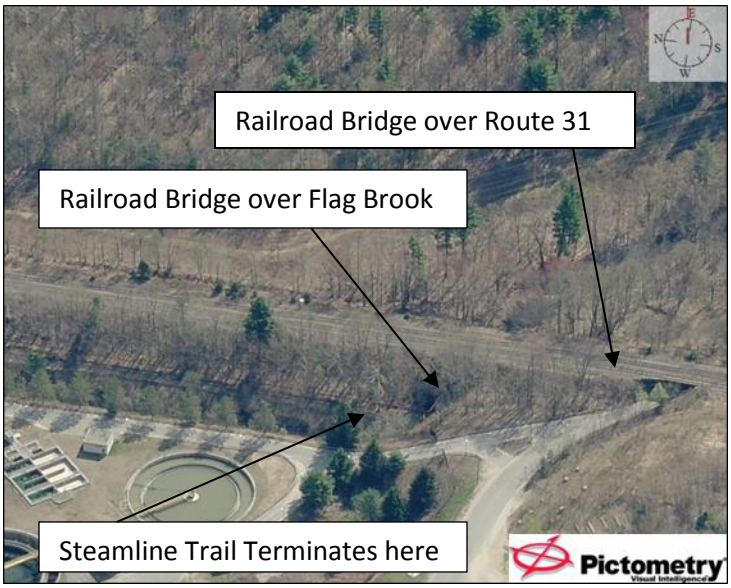
Users travel a short distance from a trail parking lot before entering the trail. Part of the trip includes traversing a paved parking lot that belongs to an abutting building. Users then travel over a wooden bridge. Users then take a left at the other end of the bridge. The full length of the trail area needs to be enhanced which can be seen in this photo as well as the photos that follow.

Steamline Trail (looking east)

The pavement is in poor condition in the area beyond the bridge (photo above). The trail is not discernable. A mounted plaque draws the attention of users to guide users to the south (photo below).

Steamline Trail (looking South)

Elevation Differences of Steamline Trail



The termination point of the trail is somewhere between twenty to forty feet below Route 31 over a distance of between one to two hundred feet (photo above) and does not connect to Route 31. Flagg Brook runs parallel to the trail to the west, and interrupts the trail to the south.

c) Railway Right-of-Way and Railroad Bridges

The railway right-of-way severely limits the development of livable and sustainable transportation projects in the Corridor and constrains access to Wachusett Station from the northwest and north. Direct access to Wachusett Station is limited by one railroad (RR) bridge. Indirect access is limited by one RR bridge. Two RR bridges must be traversed in order to reach roads that access the Station.

Over Route 2A (State Road East) (western most bridge)

- Users seeking to access Wachusett Station must traverse this bridge to access downstream or upstream roads that provide access to the Station.
- The conditions listed below also apply to the railroad bridge over Route 2A/31/12 which is the northeastern most bridge.
- Bridge abutments abut the travel lanes that results in perceived narrow lane widths but also results in no shoulders.
- The different orientations of the bridge and Route 2A create a reverse curve. The bridge is oriented northwest/southeast while Route 2A generally oriented northeast/southeast except in the immediate area of the bridge.
- The different orientations of the bridge and Route 2A partially restrict the view of oncoming vehicles in the opposing lanes.
- The closeness of the abutments and the different orientations of the bridge and Route 2A often prompt users to move to the center of the road.
- The bridge is visible to users on both approaches despite existing vegetation on both sides of the bridge.

Conclusion: The road width underneath the bridge appears to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the segment under the bridge safe, comfortable and convenient.

Route 2A Railroad Bridge (looking northeast)

Route 2A Railroad Bridge (looking southwest)

Over Route 31 (Princeton Road)

- This bridge provides user's direct access to Wachusett Station from the north.
- This bridge was discussed at the January 17th, 2013 Steering Committee meeting. State Representative Stephen Dinatali initiated the discussion during the review of safety conditions in the Corridor. Businesses and local officials want a safe, upgraded roadway. Other parties want facilities for other transportation modes.
- This bridge was also discussed at the July 17th, 2013 MPO meeting.
- Due to many of the conditions listed below, Route 31 operates well under capacity that limits all types of development including livable and sustainable development.
- Bridge abutments abut the travel lanes, shoulders do not exist and lane widths appear to be narrow.
- The different orientations of the bridge and Route 2A create a reverse curve. The bridge is oriented northwest/southeast while Route 2A generally oriented northeast/southeast except in the immediate area of the bridge.
- Horizontal curves on both sides of the bridge, the reverse curve caused by the bridge and heavy roadside vegetation combine to restrict user view of the bridge.
- The different orientations of the bridge and Route 2A and the horizontal curves restrict the view of oncoming vehicles in the opposing lanes.
- The closeness of the abutments and the different orientations of the bridge and Route 2A combine to create a safety hazard that tends to prompt users to move to the center of the road.
- Heavy roadside vegetation creates a canopy that causes shadows and darkens the roadway.
- Steep side slopes and stone walls are located close to the roadway on both sides of bridge.
- Motorists approaching the bridge often stop before proceeding under the bridge until existing vehicles under the bridge have cleared.
- The combined conditions listed above most likely tend to discourage other transportation mode users from using the facility.

Conclusion: All transportation modes cannot be accommodated at this location. The design elements will need to overcome many restrictive conditions to make the road segment under and on both sides of the bridge safe, comfortable and convenient.

Route 31 Railroad Bridge (looking north)

Route 31 Railroad Bridge (looking north): tractor trailer traveling in middle of road

Route 31 Railroad Bridge (looking north): stopped auto waiting for tractor trailer to clear bridge

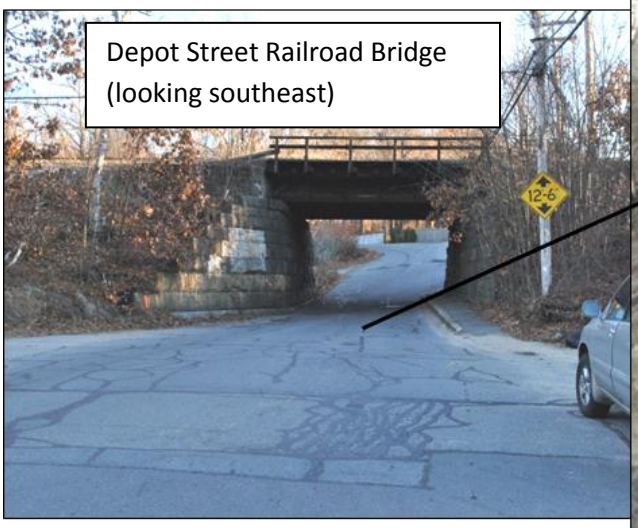
Route 31 Railroad Bridge (looking south): stone wall on right abuts lane

Over Depot Street

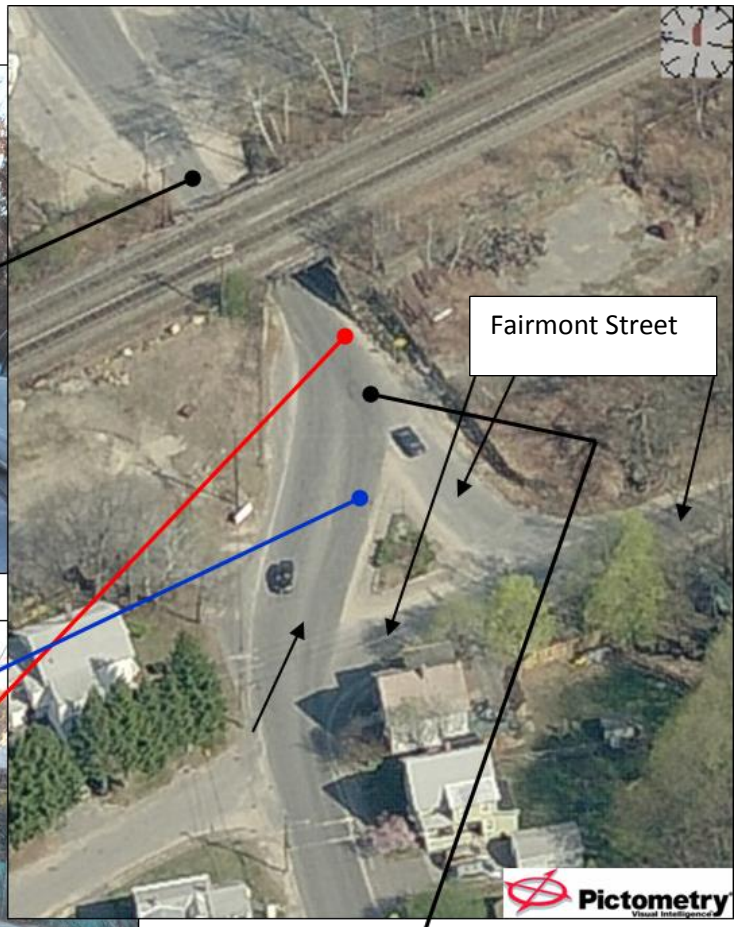
- This bridge provides user's indirect access to Wachusett Station from the north. This bridge will be traversed by users on Route 2A/31 that will then proceed onto Burma Road or Franklin Road.
- Bridge abutments abut the travel lanes, shoulders do not exist and lane widths appear to be narrow and a sidewalk exists on the southwest abutment.
- Depot Street and Fairmount Street merge just before the bridge on the northwest approach to the bridge.
- After clearing the bridge, users on the southeast approach can bear right onto Depot Street or continue straight onto Fairmount Street.
- The view of Depot Street as it curves to the right on the northwest approach to the bridge is blocked to users on the southeast approach by the southwest bridge abutment.
- The view of Depot Street under the bridge is blocked to users on the Depot Street northwest approach by the southwest bridge abutment
- Motorists approaching the bridge stop before proceeding under the bridge until existing vehicles under the bridge have cleared.
- A positive vertical curve exits on the northwest approach to the bridge approaching from the southeast.
- The pavement on the northwest approach is expansive and has been patched many times.
- The combined conditions listed above results in many conflict points for crashes to occur and most likely tends to discourage other transportation mode users from using the facility.

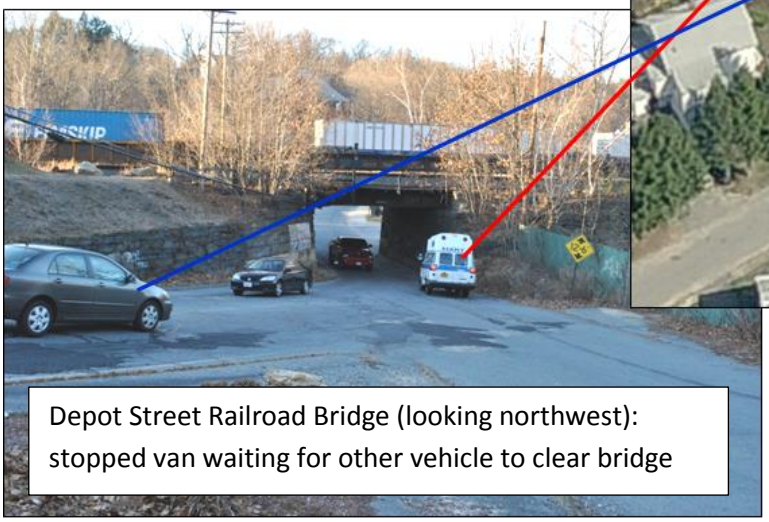
Conclusion: All transportation modes cannot be accommodated at this bridge. The design elements will need to overcome many restrictive conditions to make the road segment under and on both sides of the bridge safe, comfortable and convenient.

(Photos on next page)

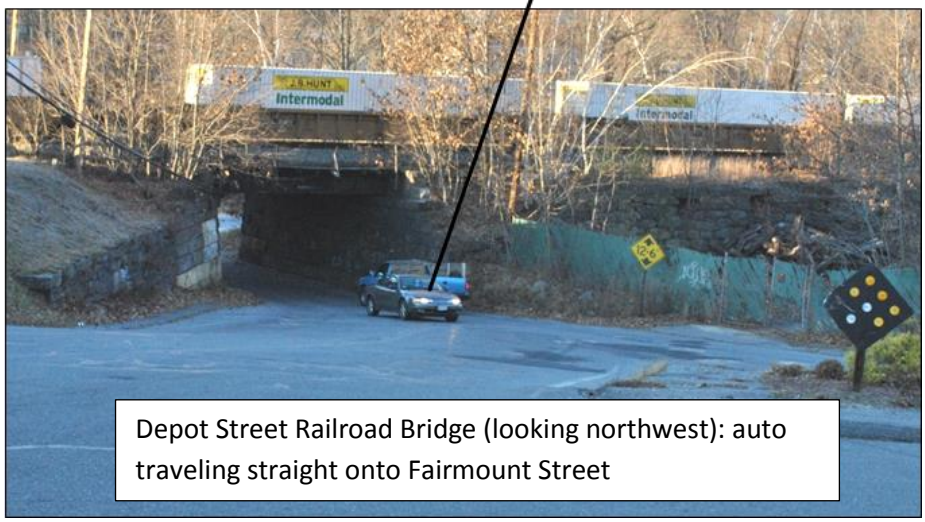


Depot Street Railroad Bridge (looking southeast)





Depot Street Railroad Bridge (looking northwest): stopped van waiting for other vehicle to clear bridge



Depot Street Railroad Bridge (looking northwest): auto traveling straight onto Fairmount Street

d) Expanded Buffer Locations

Traffic Circle at River St (Rte 2A/31/12) / River St (Rte 2A/31) / Kimble St (Rte 12) / Daniels St intersection

- The terrain is level but the railroad bridge and the large building on the northern side of the traffic circle create sight distance problems.
- The intersection northwest of the railroad tracks is signalized.
- Based on the traffic volume data and the geometry of the approaches to this traffic circle, the traffic volume most likely does not produce significant traffic delay.

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the intersection safe, comfortable and convenient.

Traffic Circle

This is one of the two locations mentioned in the introduction (see section one) that were added due to their significance to the Corridor as access points. This location is just outside the 2.5 mile buffer northeast of Wachusett Station.

The Interchange at Exit 25 on Route 2

- This interchange provides access to the Corridor from downtown Westminster which is the central business district for the Town.
- Only the ramp intersections with Route 2A and Route 140 and the overpass at Exit 25 are eligible for Complete Street Concepts.
- Based on the traffic volume data for Exit 25, the traffic volume most likely does not produce significant traffic delay even after adjusting for growth.
- The terrain is level.
- There are two Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations at this interchange (see section four for more on this location).

Conclusion: The road widths appear to be adequate to accommodate all modes. But many design elements are needed to make the interchange safe, comfortable and convenient.

Downtown Westminister

This is one of the two locations mentioned in the introduction (see section one) that were added due to their significance to the Corridor as access points. This location is just outside the 2.5 mile buffer southwest of Wachusett Station.

XI. Implementation

a) Transportation/Circulation Goal and Objectives

Goals:

- To achieve the creation of a smart growth multimodal transportation system that –
  - Will improve livability (see section one) for residents within the Corridor;
  - Will improve access and safety for visitors to the Corridor and enhance their experience;
  - Will contribute to the MassDOT GreenDOT (see section thirteen) goal of tripling the distance traveled by users through transit, bicycling and walking by 2030;
  - Will improve the movement of goods for the Corridor to facilitate the improvement of the economy within the Corridor.

Objectives:

- For residents and visitors the recommendations for the Corridor which will be based on the Goals will provide –
  - Multimodal and low cost transportation solutions to access and regress for:
    - Wachusett Station;
    - Job opportunities within, and a limited number of locations outside, the Corridor;
    - Residential, retail, service and recreational establishments within, and a limited number of locations outside, the Corridor;
  - Sustainable concepts that will not only improve the existing transportation network but also meet the future needs of the Corridor.
- Encourage all parties that have various interests in the Corridor to work together towards improving the movement of goods by identifying specific recommendations that will comply with the Goals.

b) Strategies and Action Steps

1. ***ACTION STEP: Undertake a Public and Comprehensive Transportation/Circulation (CTC) Study of the Corridor and a smaller CTC Study for a pilot project for a location within the Corridor.***

The two Studies would further develop the topics analyzed in sections two through eleven by examining them in greater detail, updates relevant data, provide site specific recommendations, and involve public outreach. The two Studies would provide a foundation for project development (see section thirteen) in the Corridor and allow for projects to be prioritized.

The Partnership should communicate with MRPC Transportation Staff to investigate the possibility of the MRPC contributing to the Studies through the MRPC's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP is a financial programming tool developed annually as part of the federally certified transportation planning process. The document contains task descriptions of the transportation planning program of the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization. The purpose of the UPWP (see section thirteen) is to ensure a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3C) transportation planning process in the Montachusett Region.

For multi-use trail networks, the Study should include the following:

The off-road routes that multi-use trail networks take should be feasible and have support from the community. If a trail crosses multiple community boundaries, support should be sought from all the communities involved. With that in mind, the Partnership should seek the creation of a citizen led multi-use trail advocacy group that is recognized by the local governments to contribute to the Study. The MRTC, or several of its members, may be key members of the group. The group should be actively engaged with planners, engineers, and elected officials.

To gain public support a conceptual multi-use trail plan and trail map should be completed. The map should identify existing features and facilities where linkages could be made. The plan should prioritize the routes while taking into consideration:

- origins and destinations, access points and road crossings;
- the topography along the trails;
- existing and recommended land uses and right-of-way issues;
- the estimated cost of each multi-use trail;
- the facilities within the community and other features as needed;
- the MRPC should be contacted about the possibility of creating the plan map;
- the needs of people with disabilities are to be included in the process;
- all of this information should then be presented to the Partnership and the communities

Responsible Entities: To initiate the Study, the primary entities would be the Mayor's office of the Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Westminster. Other Partnership entities are also encouraged to participate.

Timeframe: Up to two years for the full Corridor Study and up to one year for the pilot project study.

2. ***STRATEGY: The Partnership should seek the development of off-road multi-use trail networks to add bike and pedestrian linkages to origins and destinations that includes Wachusett Station.***

This strategy does not address topics such as safety education and the encouragement of bicycling and walking as modes of transportation. Rather, it will serve as a guide to entities in the Partnership to begin the development of a functional network of trail facilities to be used for transportation purposes. A conclusion that can be drawn from sections nine and ten above is that bike and pedestrian linkages need a considerable amount of project development. Currently there are only two potential off-road trails that could be used as bike and pedestrian linkages however they need substantial physical improvements before they can be utilized as such. The trails are the Steamline Trail and Burma Road.

Developing this Strategy would contribute to deemphasizing automobile use while improving roadway infrastructure sustainability and be part of a multimodal transportation system.

ACTION STEP: The implementation of off-road multi-use trail networks to add bike and pedestrian linkages to origins and destinations for the Corridor should include the following actions steps.

- Work with the City of Fitchburg which plans to develop a network of trails along the Nashua River that will connect to a potential trail in Leominster (Twin City Rail Trail) and trails in Westminster. The Steamline Trail is the first result of that effort. Also, work with the City to plan a trail on Burma Road and the closed off section of Fifth Mass Turnpike.
- Work with the City of Leominster and the Town of Westminster to seek the development of trail networks in their communities.
- The Open Space (OS) element of this plan addresses trails. Work with the contributing entities of the OS Element to integrate using trails for transportation as well as recreational purposes. Consider beginning the process by opening a dialogue with the MRTC.
- Make the trail network convenient and attractive by adding at trail heads improvements such as information kiosks, signs, secure bicycle parking with racks and pedestrian facilities. A key existing trail in the Town of Westminster where this would be a benefit is the Midstate Trail. Install guide and directional signs that would direct foot traffic from the new Station via Turnpike Road/Waterman Lane to the Midstate Trail.
- Encourage residential developments, business owners and employers to provide bicycle parking with racks for residents, employees and customers.

- Developing this recommendation would contribute to deemphasizing automobile use while improving roadway infrastructure sustainability and be part of a multimodal transportation system.

(photos below illustrate off-road multi-use trail networks on previous page)

Responsible Entity: The three primary entities to contact MRTC would be the Mayor's office of the City of Fitchburg and the City of Leominster and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Westminster. Other entities are also encouraged to be involved.

Timeframe: to be determined

3. ***STRATEGY: The Partnership should seek the development of Complete Street Concepts for the Corridor for all future road projects whether they are funded through the MMPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or through other funding sources.***

Complete Street Concepts provide for safe and accessible options for all travel modes. The modes include foot, bike, transit and automobile. The Concepts includes the idea that people of all ages and abilities, including disabilities, should have access to the roadway. The Concepts seeks to increase the role of non-motorized and transit options by providing continuous sidewalks, public transit options, bicycle lanes, or wide shoulders to create a safe, accessible environment throughout the transportation network. This increased role for pedestrians, bicyclist and transit in roadway design and operation standards are meant to ensure that safe travel options exist for all users. The MassDOT Project Development and Design Guide follows this approach to roadway design and provides guidance on how to implement Complete Street Concepts.

When compared to the automobile as a transportation mode, transit options need to be perceived as affordable, timely, provide convenient access to key locations, and be within walking distance. Some of the potential benefits that developing public transit options for the Corridor include:

- Public transit options that could be provided between key origins and destinations within, and a limited number of locations outside, the Corridor. This includes options to Wachusett Station. For underserved populations and the non-driving population this option would improve livability. Once the new Wachusett Station opens, these populations will have access to areas throughout Massachusetts and beyond and would help to decrease the amount of income they spend on transportation;
- Increased public transit options could be operating well in advance of other Complete Street Concepts and off-road multi-use trail networks in the Corridor;

- This option would help to mitigate the railway right-of-way constraint by bypassing the need for major construction projects involving the right-of-way.

ACTION STEP: The implementation of Complete Street Concepts for the Corridor for all future roadway projects should include the following action steps.

Transit

- Transit stops should connect, and be developed, near key origins and destinations. Key origins and destinations should include, but not be limited to: industrial parks and other employment centers; shopping centers; residential locations; community centers; recreational centers; and key locations in rural areas (see photos right).
- Two key shuttle bus connections to be developed for the Town of Westminster are:
    - Between Wachusett Station and Wachusett Mountain Ski Area.
    - Between Wachusett Station, the new senior center, and Wellington senior housing.
- Work with MART to implement changes to the services that MART and the commuter rail provide that will take place as a result of Wachusett Station (see section eight).

Develop Transit Stops in Residential Locations

Develop Transit Stops at Shopping Centers & Employment Centers

Develop Transit Stops in Rural Areas

- Work with the owners and/or managers of origins/destinations to encourage their participation in developing transit options.

- When planning the transit options, the needs of people with disabilities need to be included in the process.
- Developing new public transit options should begin with various entities of the Partnership opening a dialogue with the Montachusett Area Regional Transit (MART). Discussion between these entities and MART should include relevant/current MART programs, and the possibility of starting new and expanding current commuter shuttles at various locations in the communities through existing services.
- Foster the concept of transit oriented development (TOD). According to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), TOD is compact, mixed-use development constructed near transit facilities that are easily accessible by walking. Studies show that TOD leverages transit infrastructure that promotes economic development and smart growth, and caters to shifting market demands and lifestyle preferences. TOD works to create sustainable communities where people of all ages and incomes have transportation and housing choices, and increases location efficiency where people can walk, bike and take transit. Also, TOD boosts transit ridership and reduces automobile congestion and works to create a sense of community and place.
- Make transit convenient and attractive by adding improvements such as shelters with benches, information kiosks and signs, secure bicycle parking with racks, sidewalks and crosswalks for pedestrians, temporary parking spaces for drop-offs and pick-ups, and landscaping.
- Public transit facilities should be integrated into a complete street where needed.

Roadway / Intersection

Complete Street Concepts provide a community with the ability to improve a roadway that is unsafe for all users and in poor condition …

… to a roadway that provides a safe, and organized environment with guidance for all users. Stormwater runoff is also properly engineered and managed to protect the environment.

The most complete Complete Street solutions include separate accommodations for each transportation mode: travel lanes for motorized vehicles, bike lanes for bicycles, sidewalks and crosswalks for pedestrians, traffic island pedestrian refuge, and crosswalk ramps for disabled pedestrians. Traffic calming techniques, signs and pavement markings are also included.

At intersections, Complete Street Concepts provide a community with the ability to improve the intersection with crosswalks and ramps for the disabled, signs, bike lanes and pavement markings that provide a safe and organized environment with guidance for all users.

Roadway Bicycle Networks

- Develop continuous roadway bicycle networks that would include loop networks. Consider including the MRTC due to their off-road trail development experience.

One possible network may link downtown Westminster to Wachusett Station:

- From the Station proceed west on Authority Drive and continue north on the new Authority Drive extension;
- Head west on Turnpike Road then northwest on Curtis Road;
- Continue on Depot Road then southwest on Route 2A;
- At Exit 25, users would then follow Route 2A (Main Street) west into downtown Westminster.

One possible loop network could link Wachusett Station to the Coggshall Park trail and the Cleghorn neighborhood in Fitchburg:

- From the Station head east on Authority Drive then north on Route 31;
- Head east on Fifth Mass Turnpike (that would include the completion of a proposed short trail link on the closed off portion of Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike);
- Proceed north on Mount Elam Road then west on Electric Avenue;
- Follow Franklin Road south to Fifth Mass Turnpike;
- Head west on Fifth Mass Turnpike to Route 31, south to Authority Drive and west on Authority Drive to the Station.

Traffic Calming

- An important element in creating complete streets is traffic calming techniques. If properly applied these geometric techniques help curb speeding and aggressive driving which benefits pedestrians and bicyclist. Roundabouts, traffic islands, curb bulb-outs and chicanes are forms of traffic calming that can provide site opportunities for bioswales, trees, and rain gardens.
- Complete Street Concepts should be applied to the three Route 2 interchange overpasses within the Corridor (Exits 26, 27 and 28).
- Complete Street Concepts should also be applied to the overpass at the Exit 25 interchange on Route 2 in Westminster and the traffic circle at the River Street (Route 2A/31/12) / River Street (Route 2A/31) / Kimble Street (Route 12) / Daniels Street intersection In Fitchburg. The Fitchburg traffic circle could be a candidate for conversion to a roundabout while the Route 2A and Route 140 four way signalized intersection at the Exit 25 eastbound ramp could be converted to a roundabout (see section four).
- Road safety audits should be conducted at all non-Route 2 Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations in the Corridor that are described in section four.

Roundabout

Curb Bulb-out

Chicane

Training Community Staff

- The staff of each community included in the Corridor that would be responsible for applying Complete Street Concepts such as planning, zoning and public works staff should have a thorough knowledge of the Concepts. Staff training may be needed. Smart Growth America offers training opportunities. Follow the link below for more information:

  http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/get-help/workshops

  Although the Baystate Roads Program is not offering complete street workshops at this time the Program may be able to offer the Partnership assistance in locating training opportunities.

  Baystate Roads Program phone:
  (413) 577-2762
  Email: info@baystateroads.org

Revise Community Project Development Process

- Complete Street Concepts should be incorporated into the Project Development Process of each community covered in the Corridor for all roadways within the Corridor. Complete Street Concepts will only be implemented fully and successfully on the roadways within the Corridor if they are incorporated into the project development review and approval process. Community policies and procedures should incorporate requirements for private developers to implement Complete Street Concepts. At a minimum, the planning and zoning boards of the communities should develop regulatory standards and procedures that:
  - Require bus stops for transit options at locations that are easily accessible by walking;
  - Require sidewalks and bicycle accommodations in new developments;
  - Require bike parking accommodations along with parking for automobiles;
  - Require the needs of people with disabilities to be met;
  - Require development proposals and site plans to meet complete street requirements;
  - Require off-road linkages for bikes and pedestrians between neighboring developments;
  - Limit driveway access points to provide continuous and uninterrupted sidewalks and bike lanes;
  - Develop complete street signage and pavement markings standards;
  - Develop standards for landscaping that would include bioswales, trees, and rain gardens for stormwater runoff.

Revise Community Planning Documents

- Revise applicable planning documents of each community covered in the Corridor to include Complete Street Concepts. Adopt complete street goals, objectives, and strategies into the applicable elements of the Master Plan. The circulation, land use, and bike and pedestrian elements are good places to start. The interactions of transportation modes and land use should be considered together so that needs and priorities can be found and Complete Street Concepts can be retrofitted. Other types of plans that may need to be updated include redevelopment plans, neighborhood plans and corridor plans.

Responsible Entities: The three primary entities to contact MART, the MRTC, and MassDOT would be the Mayor's office of the City of Fitchburg and the City of Leominster and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Westminster. Other entities are also encouraged to be involved.

Timeframe: to be determined.

4. ***STRATEGY: The Partnership should contact MassDOT District 3 to seek safety improvements at the Route 2 Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations in the Corridor that are presented in section four of this plan.***

ACTION STEP: The implementation of safety improvements at the Route 2 Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations in the Corridor should include the following action steps.

- Road safety audits should be conducted at all Route 2 Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations.
- At a minimum, the acceleration and deceleration lanes on at the Mount Elam, Oak Hill Road and Palmer Road intersections with Route 2 should be widened and lengthened along with other geometric improvements where needed. Removal of the Mount Elam Road and Route 2 traffic signal should also be considered. These improvements would also help to improve tractor trailer access.

Responsible Entities: The three primary entities to contact MassDOT would be the Mayor's office of the City of Fitchburg and the City of Leominster and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Westminster. Other entities are also encouraged to be involved.

Timeframe: to be determined.

5. ***STRATEGY: The Partnership should seek the development of a pilot project, or projects, which can work to build support locally by demonstrating the improved operation of the roadway and improved access to a location. The ability to point to a successful project will help to overcome doubt and skepticism.***

ACTION STEPS: The implementation of a pilot project, or projects, in the Corridor should include the following action steps.

- Implementing a Complete Streets Concept pilot project on an existing roadway or at a standalone intersection may be the most practical type of project because the roadway infrastructure already exist and would only need to be retrofitted with sidewalks, crosswalks with ramps, pavement markings, traffic calming techniques, and possibly some road widening. A location with an existing transit option should also be considered.
- The Partnership should decide the pilot project location in consultation with the MRPC and MassDOT.

Responsible Entities: The three primary entities to contact the MRPC and MassDOT would be the Mayor's office of the City of Fitchburg and the City of Leominster and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Westminster. Other entities are also encouraged to be involved.

Timeframe: to be determined.

6. ***ACTION STEP: To ensure that the proposed transportation system within the Corridor will meet the goals, objectives, and recommendations of this section, the Partnership will need to coordinate project development efforts with:***

- MassDOT;
- Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMPO);
- MART.

Section thirteen provides guidance for developing projects through MassDOT that would address the off-road multi-use trail networks and the non transit related Complete Street Concepts recommendations listed above.

Project development for the improving of existing public transit options and developing new transit option recommendations will need MART planning assistance. For TOD development the Mass.gov website has a

toolkit that provides guidance to communities for developing a TOD in their community:

http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-tod.html.

The toolkit also provides local governments with technical assistance and a model TOD bylaw.

The MMPO and project development: Decisions related to project development, prioritization, funding and scheduling are made through the metropolitan planning process of the MMPO and the MRPC serves as staff to the MMPO. Through continued and active involvement in the planning process via the MRPC, the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) and the MMPO, issues and projects important to the Corridor can be discussed, heard and acted upon with the Partnership's input and knowledge. MRPC staff can work with the Partnership in creating and implementing a smart growth multimodal transportation system and provide technical assistance.

Responsible Entities: To initiate project development, the primary entities would be the Mayor's office of the Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster and the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Westminster. Each entity is responsible for designating MJTC representatives who should make every effort to attend monthly MJTC meetings and communicate with MRPC transportation staff and MassDOT staff. Other Partnership entities are also encouraged to participate.

Timeframe: Ongoing until all recommended projects are completed.

XII. Funding

a) Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program

The Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a list of highway and transit projects and their funding sources which will be discussed below. The TIP is a federally required, annually updated, prioritized listing of short-range highway construction and transit projects proposed for implementation during a four federal fiscal year cycle. It is a means of allocating scarce federal and state monetary resources across the state to projects that each region deems to be its highest priorities. The TIP must be financially constrained to projections of available federal aid. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Highway Division, moreover, is committed to funding those projects that will be ready for advertisement in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014 and beyond. To this end the regional TIP contains a financial plan showing the revenue source or sources, current or proposed, for each project, for each anticipated FFY of advertisement.

To receive Federal or State funding, a transportation project must be included in the TIP. Projects listed in the TIP must also conform to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for Air Quality Conformity in accordance with the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA), giving special consideration to "regionally significant" projects. Transportation projects funded with Federal funds from other Federal agencies, or with local or private resources, should be identified in the document to reflect the integrated and intermodal nature of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The TIP must also be consistent with the current RTP for the Montachusett Region. In addition the TIP estimates future funding sources for operating and maintaining the current transportation network as well as the costs of capital improvements. The agency responsible for implementing highway projects in the TIP, unless otherwise noted, is the MassDOT Highway Division and, for transit projects, the Franklin County or Montachusett Regional Transit Authorities.

The Montachusett TIP is the product of a comprehensive, continuing and cooperative effort (the 3C Process) to improve the regional transportation

system by local officials, the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC), the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART), the MRPC and the MassDOT. Together these organizations along with local officials comprise the signatories representing the MPO.

b) Description of Federal Aid Highway Programs*

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed into law the new Federal Surface Transportation Authorization known as Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). Federal Aid is received by the State as reimbursement, and the State is required to contribute a matching share to most projects receiving Federal funds.

MAP-21 has restructured core highway programs by incorporating several activities previously carried out under existing formula programs, such as the National Highway System Program (NHS), the Interstate Maintenance Program (IM) and the Highway Bridge Program, into a new core formula program structure that includes the following:

- National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)
- Surface Transportation Program (STP)
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)
- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The TIP includes projects funded under these programs as well as potentially carried over programs from prior federal authorizations such as High Priority Program (HPP) funds.

All of the programs listed are administered by the MassDOT. A project may be initiated by MassDOT or the local community. If approved, the project is submitted to Federal Highway Administration for funding. A description of each of these programs follows:

- ***National Highway Performance Program (NHPP):*** The enhanced National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) is composed of rural and urban roads serving major population centers, international border crossings, intermodal transportation facilities, and major travel destinations. It includes the Interstate System, all principal arterials (including some not previously designated as part of the NHS) and border crossings on those routes, highways that provide motor vehicle access between the NHS and major intermodal transportation facilities, and the network of highways important to U.S. strategic defense (STRAHNET) and its connectors to major military installations. The funding split for this program is generally 80% federal 20% state.
- ***Surface Transportation Program (STP):*** MAP-21 continues the STP by providing flexible funding that may be used by the States and localities for projects to preserve or improve conditions and performance on any federal-aid highway, bridge projects on any public road, facilities for nonmotorized transportation, transit capital projects and public bus terminals and facilities. A portion of the state's allocation is set aside for the state's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). The funding split for this program is generally 80% federal 20% state.
- ***Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ):*** The CMAQ program is continued in MAP-21 to provide a flexible funding source to State and local governments for transportation projects and programs to help meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act. Funding is available to reduce congestion and improve air quality for areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, carbon monoxide, or particulate matter (nonattainment areas) and for former nonattainment areas that are now in compliance (maintenance areas). The funding split for this program is generally 80% federal 20% state.
- ***Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP):*** MAP-21 continues the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, including non-State-owned public roads and roads on tribal lands. The HSIP requires a data-driven, strategic approach to improving highway safety on all public roads that focuses on performance. The funding split is 90% federal and 10% state.

- ***Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP):*** MAP-21 establishes a new program to provide for a variety of alternative transportation projects, including many that were previously eligible activities under separately funded programs. The TAP replaces the funding from pre-MAP-21 programs including Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, Safe Routes to School, and several other discretionary programs, wrapping them into a single funding source. The TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for the planning, design or construction of boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways. The funding split for this program is generally 80% federal 20% state.
- ***High Priority Projects:*** This program provides designated funding for specific projects identified in SAFETEA-LU. Projects are identified with a specified amount of funding over the 5 years of SAFETEA-LU. The funds designated for a project are available only for that project until expended. HPP projects are fully funded and are included on the TIP when they are expected to be "ready to go." The funding split is 80% federal and 20% state.

MAP-21 funding information from "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) A Summary of Highway Provisions" by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Office of Policy and Governmental Affairs, July 17, 2012 and Fact and Guidance Sheets from the FHWA MAP-21 website can be found at:

www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/factsheets.cfm and www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/index.cfm

c) Description of Transit Funding Programs*

The new Federal Surface Transportation Authorization known as Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) significantly changed the categories of transit funding available to grantees from what was under the prior authorization known as the Safe Accountable Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). However carryover funds from SAFETEA-LU are still available as carryover funds for some projects programmed under previous TIP's.

The biggest change between MAP-21 and SAFETEA-LU is the reduction of discretionary funding. Most of the discretionary categories such as "State of Good Repair" and "Bus and Bus Facilities" which were formerly 5309 funds are now formula funds and have their own new 53 subsection categories (5337 and 5339 conversely). Other discretionary funding categories have been repealed under MAP-21 such as the "Clean Fuels" (5308) program. Formula grant programs are funded to States based on formulas of population. Each grant program is referred to by name and most also by a number that correlates to the section number of Chapter 53 of Title 49 of the United States Code, as Amended by MAP-21. Specific allocation of funding amounts into each category is laid out in Section 5338.

Formula Grants:

- ***Urbanized Area Formula Program (5307) Funds:*** This formula program makes funds available on the basis of a statutory formula to all urbanized areas in the country. Eligible activities are capital projects, planning and job access/reverse commute projects (JARC - formerly 5316 funds). Operating assistance is continued as an eligible expense under Section 5307. Operating assistance caps are now in place for urbanized areas over 200,000 but operating fewer than 100 buses (no rail), not just those under 200,000 (as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau), as is the case in previous law.
- ***Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (5310) Funds:*** This program provides capital funding for transportation services for elderly and disabled persons. Authorization under MAP-21 has

moved the formula allocation from a single statewide allocation to an Urbanized Area allocation. The funds may go to private, non-profit organizations or to public bodies which coordinate service. Also funds available to our area are in a single allocation with two other "Small Urban" areas, therefore MassDOT has made all the apportioned funds a competitive application. No less than 55% of these funds must be used for capital projects. Up to 45% may be used for operating assistance projects that would formerly been eligible under New Freedom funds. No more than 10% may be used be a recipient for Administrative Expenses associated with a project. The Rail and Transit Division of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation through the State Transportation Bond authorization program, makes capital grants available through its Mobility Assistance Program to public agencies to purchase vehicles and related equipment for transporting elderly and disabled persons.

- ***Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas (5311) Funds:*** This program provides funds on the basis of a statutory formula for rural areas using the latest available U.S. decennial census data. Its share is established at 7.07 percent of the total overall MAP-21 funding and 12% of Sections 5307 and 5311 fund combined, which is an increase over previous law. Eligible activities now included projects previously classified under JARC for rural areas.
- ***Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (5316) Funds:*** Repealed – integrated into 5307 and 5311 funds.
- ***New Freedom Program (5317) Funds:*** Repealed – integrated into 5310 funds.
- ***Bus and Bus Facilities (5339) Funds:*** This program provides capital assistance for new and replacement buses, related equipment, and facilities. It was formerly a discretionary program but is now formula based by urbanized area. As with the 5310 formula, 5339 is apportioned to our region via the state thru an allocation for "Small Urban," with a statewide allocation as well. Therefore a competitive process thru MassDOT has been established for the 3 small urban and 3 rural RTA's to obtain these funds. The Federal share of eligible capital costs is no more than 80 percent of the net capital project cost.
- ***State of Good Repair Formula Grants (5337):*** Eligible recipients are state and local government authorities in urbanized areas with fixed guideway public transportation facilities operating for at least 7 years. Although the Fitchburg-Leominster urbanized area does receive a formula allocation for these funds under MAP-21, the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority is not an eligible recipient since there is not currently any fixed guideway or high-speed motorbus operated under the authority. These funds can be transferred to the MBTA for use in rehabilitation projects related to the commuter rail which runs in our area.

Discretionary Grants:

The Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation still have a few discretionary grant programs that MART is eligible to apply under. A Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) is published in the Federal Register each year stating program amounts and instructions for applying for these Competitive grants. Please see FTA's website for more details at http://www.fta.dot.gov/map21.html.

- Fixed Guideway Capital Investment Grants ("New Starts") (5309): The Bus and Bus Related Equipment and Facilities program (Bus program) provides capital assistance for new and replacement buses, related equipment, and facilities. It is a discretionary program to supplement formula funding in both urbanized and rural areas. The Federal share of eligible capital costs is 80 percent of the net capital project cost, unless the grant recipient requests a lower percentage. The Federal share may exceed 80 percent for certain projects related to the ADA, the Clean Air Act (CAA), and certain bicycle projects.
- TIGER (USDOT): The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grant program, provides a unique opportunity for the U.S. Department of

Transportation to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve critical national objectives. The TIGER program enables DOT to use a rigorous process to select projects with exceptional benefits, explore ways to deliver projects faster and save on construction costs, and make investments in our Nation's infrastructure that make communities more livable and sustainable.

*Source: Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Improvement Program FFY2014 – 2017.

XIII. Transportation Role of the Regional Planning Agency

(this section includes key MassDOT Policies and Documents)

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) acts as staff to the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that has the responsibility of prioritizing transportation projects within the Montachusett Region. This presents municipalities with greater chances for input in setting local priorities. This shift in priority setting is intended to give municipalities a stronger role in planning transportation improvements that directly affect them. It is important to note that transportation projects and plans must be included in a regional transportation plan in order to receive federal funding for implementation. Key transportation documents include:

a) MRPC: Regional Transportation Plan

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) outlines the transportation priority needs and policies for the region. Before projects receive federal funding, they must be identified and incorporated into the policy goals and visions of the RTP. The RTP is developed through studies, discussions with local officials, boards and commissions and public comment. Each MPO in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts develops a RTP to provide guidance to local and state officials in deciding how to spend federal and state transportation funds. The RTP for the Montachusett Region identifies both short and long range projects for local roads, highways, bridges, rail, transit, bike and pedestrian trails, freight and airports as well as priorities, goals, visions and strategies.

The existing RTP prepared by the MRPC was endorsed on August 24, 2011. It should be noted that after the plan is completed and endorsed, the Montachusett MPO can still incorporate any changes through an amendment to the RTP. Information on the development of the RTP can be found on the MRPC website at www.mrpc.org.

b) MRPC: Transportation Improvement Program
For more on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) see sections twelve above.

c) MassDOT: Project Development Summary
Project Development is the process that takes a transportation improvement from concept through construction.

Every year the Montachusett Region receives federal and state funds for projects to improve the transportation network in local communities. These funds and projects are prioritized through the MPO, a regional advisory group that annually develops the Montachusett TIP.

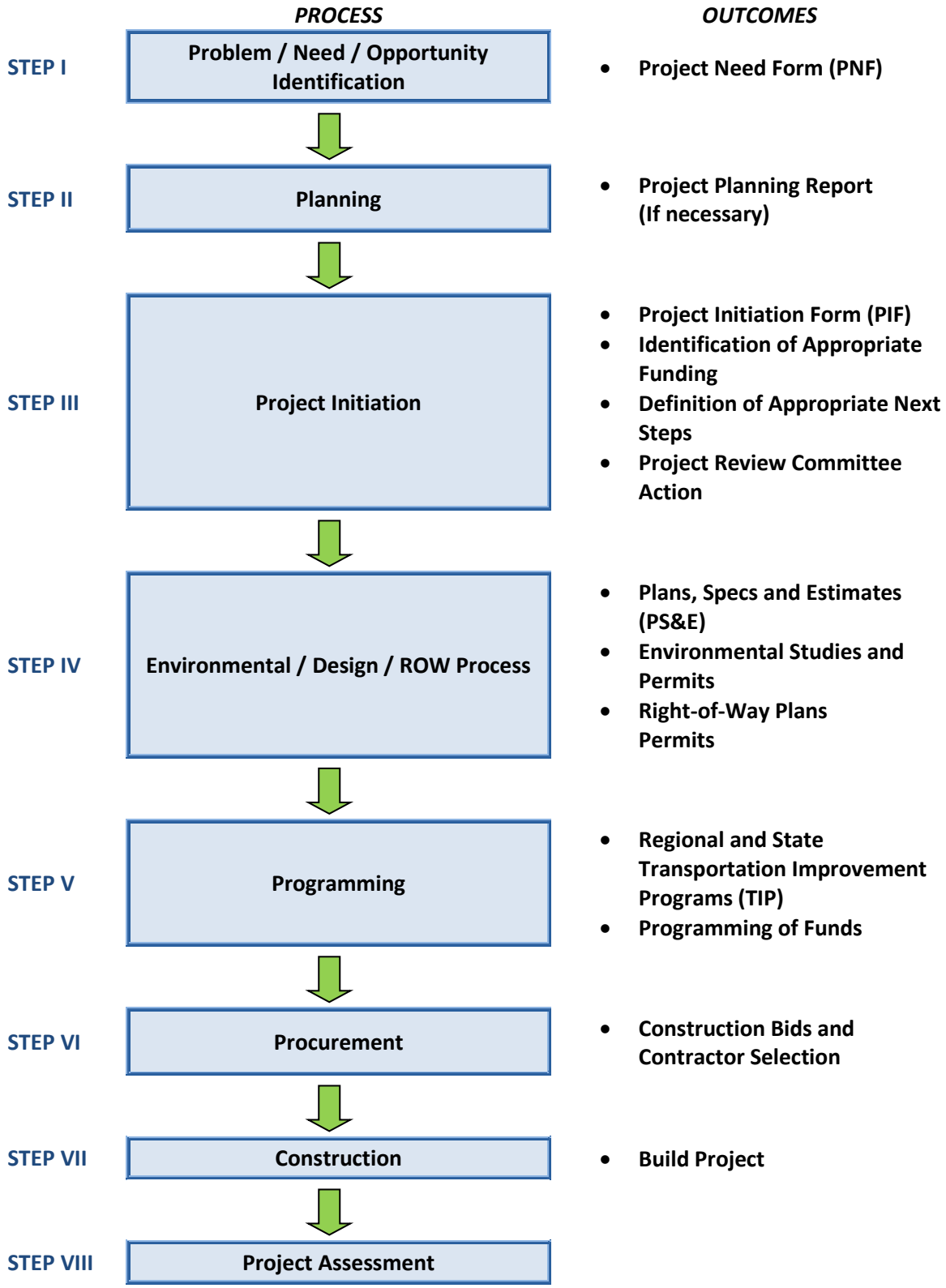
For a community to receive funds, the project must follow a multi-step review and approval process required by the MassDOT (MassDOT) Highway Division. This process is summarized in the figure below.

Project proponents are required to follow this process whenever MassDOT Highway Division is involved in the decision-making process. The project development procedures are, therefore, applicable to any of the following situations:

- When MassDOT is the proponent; or
- When MassDOT is responsible for project funding (state or federal-aid projects); or
- When MassDOT controls the infrastructure (projects on state highways).

Projects with local jurisdiction and local funding sources are not required to go through this review process unless the project is located on the National Highway or Federal-Aid Systems.

Figure 3.11: Project Development Process Steps & Outcomes Flow Chart



Source: MassDOT Highway Division

The project development process is designed to progressively narrow the projects focus in order to develop a project that addresses identified needs at that location. There should be opportunities for public participation throughout.

The eight steps in the above figure are described in detail in Chapter 2, Project Development Guide of the MassDOT Highway Division Design Guidebook:

(http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/designGuide&sid=about)

In summary, to get a project constructed, a community should:

1. Meet with the District Office of the MassDOT Highway Division to review and discuss the potential project. The District office can provide the community with information and feedback about the possible project's scope, cost, issues, etc.
2. Submit a Project Need Form (PNF), along with any support materials, on the potential project to the District office.
3. After review and feedback from MassDOT Highway Division on the PNF, a Project Initiation Form (PIF), again with any supporting materials, is prepared and submitted to the District office.
4. MassDOT and the Project Review Committee (PRC) act upon the PIF. If the project is approved by the PRC, the community is notified and, if applicable, initiates the design process for the project.
5. The municipality hires a design consultant and also begins work on the right of way plans as well as any permits, local approvals, etc.
6. During this phase the project is incorporated into the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Placement and prioritization of the project is based upon available funds, evaluation criteria scoring, design status and public support and comments.
7. Design public hearing is held at the 25% design phase.
8. Design progresses to 100% and all plans, specifications and estimates (PS&E) are completed. Project is then ready for advertisement by MassDOT.

d) MRPC: Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a financial programming tool developed annually as part of the federally certified transportation planning process. This document contains task descriptions of the transportation planning program of the MPO, with associated budget information and funding sources for the current program year. The purpose of the UPWP is to ensure a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3C) transportation planning process in the Leominster-Fitchburg Urbanized Area and the Montachusett Region. In addition, this document provides for the coordination of planning efforts between communities in the Montachusett Region.

e) MRPC: Public Participation Procedures

Public participation continues to be a vital element of the transportation planning process. Community representatives of the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) meet every month on the third Wednesday to discuss transportation projects and issues of regional importance. Over the last year, the MJTC expanded its membership with the acceptance of the Montachusett Opportunity Council, Inc. (MOC) as an organizational member. It is felt that MOC will be able to expand MRPC's outreach efforts to more diverse populations, groups and agencies as the involvement of private sector participation is a major effort of this committee. In order to guide the Montachusett MPO in this outreach effort, a Public Participation Program (PPP) was developed to solicit input to the various tasks undertaken. The PPP will continue to be reviewed and refined as necessary to insure compliance with federal regulations and improve the public input process.

g) MRPC: Title VI

The issue of Environmental Justice and how it relates to the MRPC will continue to be reviewed. As part of this effort, the regulations and requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 will continuously be

examined. Prior efforts have led to the development and adoption of a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Access Plan for the MPO as well as submittal of annual reports indicating the work done to meet state and federal regulations. In addition, the MRPC substantially revised its web page at www.mrpc.org in order to be more informative and easier to use. The site will continue to be used to post information in order to provide an additional outlet for public awareness.

h) MassDOT: GreenDOT

GreenDOT is the Massachusetts Department of Transportation sustainability initiative. It is designed to support the implementation of the following state laws.

- Climate Protection and Green Economy Act (Mass. Gen. L. c. 21N)
- Green Communities Act (Chapter 169 of the Acts of 2008)
- Healthy Transportation Compact (section 33 of Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2009)
- Leading by Example (Executive Order of Governor Patrick, no. 488)
- MassDOT's weMove Massachusetts planning initiative
- The "Complete Streets" (see below) design standards of the 2006 MassDOT Highway Division Project Development and Design Guide, as amended

The GreenDOT initiative incorporates three main goals:

1. Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
2. Promote the healthy transportation modes of walking, bicycling, and public transit
3. Support smart growth development

Through the GreenDOT policy, MassDOT will promote sustainable economic development, protect the natural environment, and enhance the quality of life for all the Commonwealth's residents and visitors through the full range of our activities, from strategic planning to construction and system operations.

GreenDOT was designed in response to several existing state laws, Executive Orders, and MassDOT policies. These include the 2009 Transportation Reform Law that created MassDOT and established the Healthy Transportation Compact that promotes improved public health through active transportation; the Global Warming Solutions Act, which calls for measurable and enforceable economy-wide greenhouse gas reductions; and MassDOT's Complete Streets design approach that calls for appropriate accommodation of all transportation system users. MassDOT GreenDOT can be found at: https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/GreenDOT.aspx.

As part of the implementation plan for GreenDOT:

> "Secretary and CEO Richard Davey in October 2012 announced MassDOTs mode shift goal to triple the distance traveled by our customers through bicycling, transit and walking. That goal now joins other goals incorporated into MassDOT's GreenDOT Implementation Plan with tasks and indicators.
>
> MassDOT established the goal to build a more efficient transportation system where fewer of our customers depend on driving alone to get where they are going. We want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation system and support better public health outcomes by working to give our customers more healthy travel options.
>
> MassDOT will measure our progress on this ambitious mode shift goal using Personal Miles Traveled (PMT) - distances traveled by all our customers for bicycling, driving, transit and walking in a one year period. It also measures all the trips taken by our customers, not just work trips which are often the focus in transportation planning. Measuring the distance traveled by each mode allows MassDOT to see strategic opportunities to improve the travel options for our customers, strengthen the relationship between land use and transportation planning, and draw a link to greenhouse gas emissions.
>
> Goal numbers are listed in the table below."

Table 3.5: GreenDot initiative Goal Numbers

Year	Bicycling PMT	Transit PMT	Walking PMT	Total
2010 (baseline)	150.4m	1.83b	101.1m	2.08b
2020 (benchmark)	330.0m	3.99b	223.9m	4.55b
2030 (goal year)	516.m	5.93b	333.6m	6.78b

Source: http://transportation.blog.state.ma.us/blog/2012/12/massdot-goal-triple-bicycling-transit-walking.html

The policies and goals of the Commonwealth, such as GreenDOT and Mode Shift, will be reviewed, considered and incorporated in all relevant MRPC planning studies. Recommendations derived from these studies will be consistent with state policies.

i) MassDOT: Complete Streets

The concept of Complete Streets is that all users of the road should be accommodated. Automobiles, bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities should have equal access to roadway use. Instituting a Complete Streets policy ensures that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate the entire roadway with all users in mind. MRPC considers the Complete Streets as an important part of our planning process.

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Section IV: Economic Development Element

The development of the new Wachusett Station and extension of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail service to the Wachusett Corridor provides a major catalyst for economic development in the Wachusett Corridor. The following section discusses the Corridor's assets and opportunities to leverage the benefits of this new transportation facility to grow the local economy, stimulate new employment and benefit the Corridor and the surrounding Montachusett Region.

I. Assessment of the Wachusett Corridor's Current Economic Base

a) Population and Households

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the population and households in the study as distributed among the three communities of Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster and for the study area communities as a whole.

As shown in the table below, approximately 85 percent of the study area's population is located in Fitchburg. Westminster accounts for slightly more than 13 percent of the study area's population. As discussed elsewhere in this Plan, although Leominster accounts for approximately 15 percent of the study area's land area, its portion of the study area is largely within the Leominster State Forest and therefore has limited development, accounting for less than one percent of the study area's population and households.

Table 4.1: Study Area and Study Area Community Population

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Population	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
2000	13,216	11,216	18	1,982	39,098	41,297	6,907
2010	14,234	12,104	19	2,111	40,318	40,759	7,277
% Growth 2000 to 2010	7.7%	7.9%	5.6%	6.5%	3.1%	-1.3%	5.4%

Source: U.S. Census

As shown in Table 4.1, population in the study area increased by nearly 8 percent from 2000 to 2010. Each community within the study area also grew. In each case, growth within the study area for each community sector exceeded the rate of growth for the larger community of which it is a part.

Change in the number of households within the study area, shown in Table 4.2, shows a similar pattern to population, with a growth in study area households of slightly over 11 percent from 2000 to 2010. It should be noted that the rate of household growth exceeded population growth because, concurrent with the change in population, was a trend toward smaller household size, from 2.6 in 1990 to 2.5 in 2010.

Table 4.2: Study Area Households

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Households	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
2000	5,011	4,270	9	732	14,942	16,489	2,529
2010	5,587	4,787	10	790	15,165	16,767	2,716
% Growth 2000 to 2010	11.5%	12.1%	11.1%	7.9%	1.5%	1.7%	7.4%

Source: U.S. Census

b) Education

As shown in Table 3, residents of the study area with a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) diploma represent the largest segment of the study area population in terms of educational attainment. Approximately 21 percent of the study area population has some college and 12 percent has an Associate's Degree. The proportion of the study area with a Bachelor's Degree or higher (including Professional School degrees) is 23.4 percent. Within the individual communities in the study area, 21.1 percent of the Fitchburg population has a Bachelor's Degree or higher, while 49.7 percent of Leominster's population and 29.0 percent of Westminster's population have Bachelor's Degrees or higher.

To support job development within the study area and the region as a whole, it will be important to assure that the available workforce has the necessary technical skills to meet the needs of area employers. The Montachusett Regional Vocational School ("Monty Tech") located in Fitchburg and also within the study area offers trade school curriculum at the high school level. Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) located in Gardner (to the west of the study area) offers two-year degree programs and Fitchburg State University (FSU) offers four-year degree programs. In addition, the North Central Massachusetts Workforce Investment Board, Inc. promotes the economic and social welfare of the region through education, employment and training programs that increase the employability of young people and adults. Further investigation into the technical skills needed by existing and prospective employers should be conducted as part of the overall economic development effort undertaken in conjunction with the Wachusett Smart Growth Plan.

Table 4.3: Study Area Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment 25+	Study Area		Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
	#	%	%	%	%
No Schooling	105	1.0%	1.1%	0.0%	0.7%
Some School	1176	11.2%	12.0%	3.7%	9.1%
GED or Equiv.	3338	31.9%	33.4%	18.4%	27.5%
Some College	2169	20.7%	21.0%	16.8%	20.2%
Associate's Degree	1223	11.7%	11.4%	11.4%	13.5%
Bachelor's Degree	1632	15.6%	14.2%	32.4%	19.2%
Master's Degree	655	6.3%	5.5%	13.8%	8.6%
Professional School Degree	96	0.9%	0.9%	1.6%	0.6%
Doctorate	63	0.6%	0.5%	1.9%	0.6%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey; ESRI-BAO

c) Median Household Income and Household Poverty

Median household income in the study area is $62,480. As shown in Table 4.4, this is higher than the median household income of the Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster, but less than the Town of Westminster. It is also less than the statewide median household income of $64,496. Median household incomes for residents of the study area in all three communities are higher than the overall community in which they reside. The median household income of the study area residents who live in Fitchburg is the lowest of the three communities at $58,635.

Table 4.4: Study Area Median Income

Study Area	Fitchburg Sector	Leominster Sector	Westminster Sector
$62,480	$58,635	$106,277	$81,983
Worcester County	**Fitchburg City**	**Leominster City**	**Westminster Town**
$63,720	$47,369	$56,582	$74,931

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey; ESRI-BAO

There were 559 households in the study area that had income below the poverty level in the past 12 months or 9.8 percent of study area households. This is slightly below the rate experienced by Worcester County during the same period (9.9%). Of these households, 11.0 percent of the study area households in Fitchburg, 5.0 percent of the households in Leominster, and 3.2 percent of the households in Westminster had income below poverty level in 2010.

II. Profile of Employment and Employers

a) Employment and Unemployment

Recent employment and unemployment statistics are not reported at a level that would enable an assessment at the study area level. Only community level statistics or greater are reported by the Massachusetts Labor and Workforce Development office. Table 4.5 presents employment and unemployment statistics for study area communities as of August 2013.

region's economy compared to the County, particularly in the Metropolitan Worcester area with its educational and medical institutions and the State which is anchored by the vibrant economy of the Metropolitan Boston area with its strong technology and professional services base.

b) Employment and Jobs

Table 4.6 shows the estimated distribution of employment of study area residents by industry based on American Community Survey data from 2005 to 2009.

Table 4.5: Employment and Unemployment (August 2013)

	Fitchburg City		Leominster City		Westminster Town		Worcester County		Mass. State	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Labor Force	18,264	44.5%	20,078	47.7%	3,714	49.7%	403,486	50.7%	3,529,700	54.2%
Number Employed	16,435	90.0%	18,141	90.4%	3,417	92.0%	372,135	92.2%	3,287,900	93.1%
Number Unemployed	1,829	10.0%	1,937	9.6%	297	8.0%	31,351	7.8%	244,700	6.9%

Source: Massachusetts Labor and Workforce Development Office

As indicated in the table, the City of Leominster has the largest overall labor force among the three Wachusett communities. It also had the largest number of unemployed of these three communities, but this represented 9.6 percent of the City's workforce compared to 10.0 percent of the workforce which was unemployed in Fitchburg during the same period. Of particular concern, however, was the fact that the percent unemployed in all three Wachusett communities was higher than the unemployment rate for both Worcester County and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts during the same period. All three of the study area communities have lost total employment since 2000. This is an indicator of the relatively stagnant state of the North Central Massachusetts

Table 4.6: Employment of Study Area Residents

Study Area Resident Employment	Total		Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
Total	8089	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	60	0.7%	0.2%	4.2%	2.6%
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	14	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Construction	563	7.0%	7.4%	4.5%	5.5%
Manufacturing	1220	15.1%	15.7%	13.3%	12.2%
Wholesale trade	236	2.9%	2.9%	2.3%	3.4%
Retail trade	925	11.4%	11.3%	12.3%	11.9%
Transportation and warehousing	265	3.3%	3.5%	0.0%	2.8%
Utilities	42	0.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.1%
Information	266	3.3%	3.1%	9.1%	2.8%
Finance and insurance	531	6.6%	6.4%	6.1%	7.4%
Real estate and rental and leasing	178	2.2%	2.0%	2.9%	3.2%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	309	3.8%	3.6%	5.8%	4.5%
Management of companies and enterprises	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Administrative & support and waste management services	448	5.5%	5.2%	2.6%	7.8%
Educational services	734	9.1%	9.3%	7.8%	8.1%
Health care and social assistance	1147	14.2%	13.6%	17.2%	16.6%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	82	1.0%	0.9%	0.0%	1.8%
Accommodation and food services	319	3.9%	4.2%	4.9%	2.4%
Other services, except public administration	284	3.5%	3.5%	3.2%	3.6%
Public administration	467	5.8%	6.4%	3.6%	3.3%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey; ESRI-BAO

As indicated in the table, the top three industries employing study area residents are Manufacturing, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade in that order. Within the individual study area communities, these same industries are the primary source of employment although Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest source of employment among these three industries in Leominster and Westminster, rather than manufacturing. It should be noted that historic U.S. Census statistics show that 43.7 percent of the Region's workforce was employed in manufacturing in 1980. As shown in the table, recent statistics from the American Community Survey show that current employment in manufacturing is 15.1 percent of the workforce, a decline of more than 65 percent over approximately 25 years. This is certainly indicative of the changing employment profile of the region and also

shows the need to take proactive steps if the Region's existing manufacturing employment is to be retained or expanded.

c) Workplace Location

Workplace journey-to-work information is available at the community level from the U.S. Census but not at the subarea level. Table 4.7, on the following page, indicates the major workplaces where workers within the three Wachusett communities are employed. Not surprisingly, the primary workplaces for workers in the three communities are their own hometown places of residence, with 38.4 percent of Leominster residents working within Leominster, 32.3 percent of Fitchburg residents working in Fitchburg, and 27.6 percent of Westminster residents working in Westminster. Looking at the Montachusett Region overall, the largest proportion of residents from the Region who work within the Region are employed in the City of Leominster (13.9%). However, as will be discussed below, few, if any, of these jobs within Leominster are actually located within the Wachusett study area. It should also be noted, given the future availability of commuter rail from Wachusett Station with service oriented to the Boston core, that fewer than 2 percent of the Region's residents commute to Boston. This, of course, could change in the future as a result of improved commuter rail service.

Table 4.7: Residence to Workplace Flows for Fitchburg, Leominster, Westminster and Montachusett Region 2010

Residence		Workplace											
		Hometown		Gardner		Fitchburg		Leominster		Worcester		Boston	
Community	# of Workers	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
Fitchburg	18,188	5,876	32.31%	431	2.37%	5,876	32.31%	3,332	18.32%	1,005	5.53%	259	1.42%
Leominster	19,713	7,560	38.35%	356	1.81%	1,776	9.01%	7,560	38.35%	1,176	5.97%	384	1.95%
Westminster	3,826	942	24.62%	317	8.29%	540	14.11%	516	13.49%	189	4.94%	102	2.67%
Region Totals	111,601	30,813	27.61%	7,672	6.87%	11,780	10.56%	15,558	13.94%	6,110	5.47%	2,195	1.97%

Source: U.S. Census 2010

Employers

To provide some context for the types of industry and employment in the vicinity of the Wachusett Station site, it is useful to have an understanding of the economic history of the area. The following is quoted from the City of Fitchburg website but is also applicable to Leominster and, to a lesser extent, Westminster:

> History points clearly to the Nashua River as the original source of growth for the community. From around the river, the factories that were built became the source of employment and income that built Fitchburg's neighborhoods. As Fitchburg grew and prospered, it became a destination for the immigrant -- moving west from Boston, building the city and its future.
>
> Fitchburg's location on the Nashua River led to its development initially as an industrial center where mills were built to take advantage of the readily available water power. The construction of rail lines passing through Fitchburg on the Boston to Albany line increased the city's position as a manufacturing center. Heavy industries such as machine and tool works, clothing, and paper mills were the engines of significant growth throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.
>
> Since the 1960s, there has been a general trend of heavy industry migration away from the northeastern United States. The paper industry, one of the oldest and historically the largest in Fitchburg, has increasingly chosen to locate its pulp-to-paper mills closer to its northern pulping plants in order to reduce transportation costs. The erosion of the manufacturing base led to a less prosperous population, which in turn took its toll on Fitchburg's commercial sector. During this same period, the rise of the regional shopping center further diminished the role of Intown Fitchburg as a commercial center. This loss of more traditional industries has, in recent years, been mitigated by growth in non-manufacturing industries such as construction and professional services, as well as a rise in certain manufacturing industries such as plastics, medical goods and services, and chemicals.

This evolution is reflected in the current mix of industries located within the study area, many of which were originally established in connection with the paper manufacturing industries that once dominated the local economy. Table 8 lists the top 25 employers in the study area on the basis of number of employees. Although the largest single employer, TRW Automotive, is located in Westminster, the majority of larger employers are located in Fitchburg. Most of these employers are located on or in the vicinity of Authority Drive, immediately adjacent to the Wachusett Station site.

Table 4.8: 25 Largest Employers in Study Area

Business name	Address	City	Employees	NACIS Code
TRW AUTOMOTIVE U.S. LLC	State Rd. E	Westminster	273	3321
AVERY DENNISON CORPORATION	Industrial Rd.	Fitchburg	220	3222
L.U.K. CRISIS CENTER, INC.	Westminster St.	Fitchburg	155	6241
BOUTWELL, OWENS & CO., INC.	Authority Drive	Fitchburg	140	3231
THE NEWARK GROUP INC	Newark Ave.	Fitchburg	120	5622
ROYAL PLAZA CORP	Royal Plaza Dr.	Fitchburg	120	7211
MAR-LEE COMPANIES, INC.	Authority Drive	Fitchburg	80	3335
COURTYARD OF MARRIOTT FITCHBURG	Royal Plaza Dr.	Fitchburg	80	7211
FITCHBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT	Reingold Ave.	Fitchburg	80	6111
FORM MODU INC	Industrial Rd.	Fitchburg	75	3371
PUBLISHERS STORAGE AND SHIPPING CORP.	Development Rd.	Fitchburg	66	4931
NEW ENGLAND KEYBOARD, INC.	Princeton Rd.	Fitchburg	50	3341
CROCKER TECHNICAL PAPERS, INC.	Westminster St.	Fitchburg	50	3221
DENARDO WIRE AND CABLE CO., INC.	Industrial Rd.	Fitchburg	45	4236
CANO CORPORATION	Industrial Rd.	Fitchburg	41	3372
MILES KEDEX CO, INC.	Rowtier Rd.	Westminster	35	3133
FITCHBURG WELDING CO., INC.	Curtis Rd.	Westminster	35	3323
VINYL TECHNOLOGIES, INC.	Industrial Rd.	Fitchburg	35	3339
M R RESOURCES INC	Authority Drive	Fitchburg	33	3345
CADO PRODUCTS, INC.	Princeton Rd.	Fitchburg	30	3252
OMNOVA SOLUTIONS INC.	Authority Drive	Fitchburg	28	3251
ROCHELEAU TOOL AND DIE CO, INC.	Industrial Rd.	Fitchburg	28	3332
LOCK INSPECTION SYSTEMS, INC.	Authority Drive	Fitchburg	26	3339
EYLES ELECTRIC, INC	Westminster St.	Fitchburg	25	2382
MINUTEMAN INTERNATIONAL COMPANY LIMITED	Arbor Way	Fitchburg	22	4232

Source: ESRI-BAO

http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/visitors/about/history/

III. Retail Market Potential

To assess the retail market potential as an aspect of commercial economic development for the study area, an analysis was conducted using the Esri Business Analysis Online (Esri-BAO) analytic tool. This tool was developed to provide a "snapshot" of retail market supply and demand within a given study area. It provides an analysis of consumer spending to show market demand or retail potential and an examination of business revenues or retail sales to show market supply.

The database used for this analysis includes the latest market statistics for Retail Trade and Food Services and Drinking Places (the retail market), utilizing data from the 2007 Census of Retail Trade and Consumer Expenditure Surveys (2010 and 2011) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retail sales data also incorporates business data input from Dun & Bradstreet. Consumer spending data is drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' annual Consumer Expenditure Surveys and

the Census of Retail trade which is then adjusted by Esri based on demographic profiles specific to the given study area. This provides for improved differentiation of spending, particularly in smaller markets where distinctions can be difficult to measure and for big-ticket items where consumer preferences are more pronounced.

The database reflects geographic inventories and boundary definitions such as block groups, tracts, and counties based on 2010 geography, enabling the analysis to be applied at a finer level than the overall community. In this case, the analysis was conducted for the defined Wachusett Study Area which includes subareas of three communities, consolidated into a single study area. Dollar estimates of supply and demand are presented in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) which defines 27 industry groups in the Retail Trade sector as well as four industry groups within the Food Services and Drinking Places subsector.

By comparing supply and demand, the analysis is also able to estimate a Leakage/Surplus Factor which provides a measure of the balance between the volume of supply (retail sales) generated by retail industry and demand (spending by households or retail potential) within the same industry. "Leakage" in an area represents a condition where a market's supply is less than its demand. Therefore retailers outside the area are fulfilling demand for retail products from area consumers and demand is "leaking" out of the trade area. Surplus represents a condition where the area's supply exceeds the area's demand. Therefore retailers are attracting shoppers that reside outside of the trade area, so there is a surplus in market supply. This information can be used in a variety of ways, but one aspect of its use is as a potential indication of retail opportunity in instances where the leakage factor is high. Caution must be used in interpreting results however, taking into account the size of the market, the type of commodities involved, the extent of the overall regional market and the location and relative strength of competitive retail markets.

Table 9 presents the results of the retail market analysis. The first set of rows indicate total demand and supply by major industry categories (retail, food & drink, and retail and food & drink combined). Looking at all industries combined, there is a total demand of $147.4 million for retail and food & drink by the market represented by the Wachusett Study Area but only $42.5 million in goods supplied by the 71 businesses represented in the market. This means that there is "leakage" of approximately $104.8 million spent by Study Area consumers for goods purchased outside of the study area. Looking at specific industries, only the categories of Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores and Non-store Retailers, shown as Direct Selling Establishments, are shown as providing a surplus within the Study Area. In terms of total magnitude, Grocery Stores and Automobile Dealers are the categories showing the greatest leakage in dollar value, although Shoe Stores and Vending Machine Operators show the greater leakage "factor" based on the percentage of goods actually sold within the Study Area. Whether these industry categories represent opportunities for development and investment within the Study Area would require further investigation.

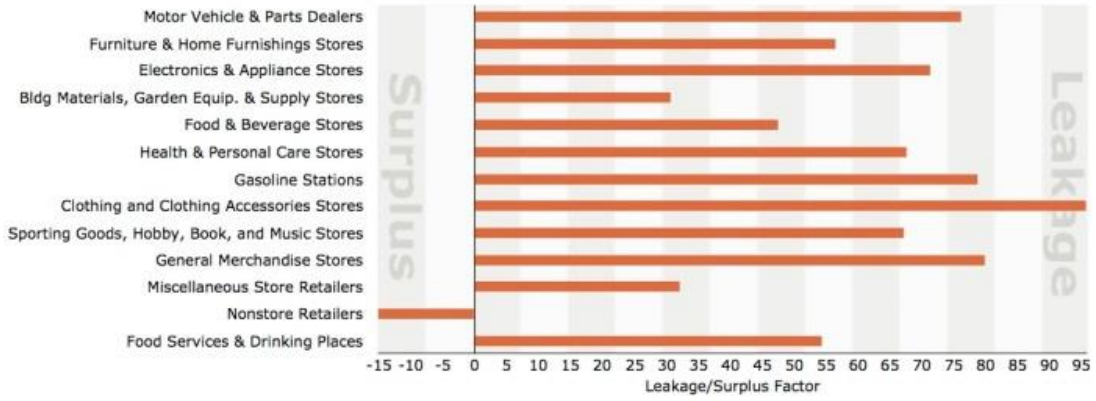
Table 4.9: Study Area Retail Market Analysis

	Demand	Supply	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus	Number of
Industry Summary	(Retail Potential)	(Retail Sales)		**Factor**	**Businesses**
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	$147,392,164	$42,545,179	$104,846,985	55.2	71
Total Retail Trade	$132,502,955	$38,143,241	$94,359,715	55.3	59
Total Food & Drink	$14,889,208	$4,401,938	$10,487,270	54.4	12
	Demand	**Supply**	**Retail Gap**	**Leakage/Surplus**	**Number of**
Industry Group	(Retail Potential)	(Retail Sales)		**Factor**	**Businesses**
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	$24,768,815	$3,919,416	$20,849,398	72.7	4
Automobile Dealers	$21,602,240	$3,629,018	$17,973,222	71.2	3
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	$1,318,669	$5,171	$1,313,498	99.2	0
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	$1,847,905	$285,227	$1,562,679	73.3	1
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	$3,373,935	$884,090	$2,489,845	58.5	3
Furniture Stores	$1,671,333	$195,192	$1,476,141	79.1	1
Home Furnishings Stores	$1,702,602	$688,899	$1,013,704	42.4	2
Electronics & Appliance Stores	$4,668,959	$792,885	$3,876,074	71.0	5
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	$4,160,854	$2,235,351	$1,925,503	30.1	5
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	$3,597,261	$1,986,397	$1,610,864	28.8	4
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	$563,593	$248,954	$314,639	38.7	1
Food & Beverage Stores	$26,369,207	$10,150,751	$16,218,455	44.4	10
Used Merchandise Stores	$574,235	$132,182	$442,053	62.6	1
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	$1,411,376	$980,475	$430,902	18.0	4
Nonstore Retailers	$8,896,759	$11,462,876	-$2,566,117	-12.6	7
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	$6,314,114	$627,139	$5,686,975	81.9	2
Vending Machine Operators	$221,730	$0	$221,730	100.0	0
Direct Selling Establishments	$2,360,915	$10,835,737	-$8,474,823	-64.2	5
Food Services & Drinking Places	$14,889,208	$4,401,938	$10,487,270	54.4	12
Full-Service Restaurants	$7,835,937	$2,107,646	$5,728,291	57.6	4
Limited-Service Eating Places	$5,876,957	$2,157,624	$3,719,333	46.3	5
Special Food Services	$766,275	$51,046	$715,229	87.5	1
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	$410,040	$85,622	$324,418	65.5	1

Results of this analysis are illustrated in the following figures. Figure 4.1 shows leakage and surplus by the major industry subsectors. As indicated in the table above, Nonstore Retailers is the only market category for which the Study Area provides a surplus.

Figure 4.2 provides a more detailed breakdown of leakage and surplus by individual industry groups. As discussed only the categories of Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores and Non-store Retailers are shown as providing a surplus within the Study Area.

Figure 4.1: Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Subsector



second quarter, which has now had four consecutive quarters of growth. However, the Route 495/Route 2

Figure 4.2: Leakage/Surplus Factor by Industry Group

IV. Real Estate Conditions: 2013

a) Industrial Real Estate Market

According to CBRE Global Research and Consulting, "The Greater Boston Industrial Market continued to trend in a positive direction…in the second quarter of 2013." The first half of 2013 was found to be a transitional time and showed continued recovery. Landlords were still willing to drop their rates to attract tenants due to significant vacancy in the market but the frequency of extremely low rates diminished as the market continued to recover from the recession. The Metro West market was particularly strong in the West portion of the Metro West market still had the highest availability rate (39.7%), the second highest vacancy rate (35.3%), and the lowest average asking rent ($4.94 SF/YR) of all of the Suburban Boston submarkets. The Route 495/Route 2 West submarket has approximately 7.5 million square feet of rentable area of industrial space, representing 5.2 percent of the overall Suburban Industrial market.

Nevertheless, according to the Foster Report, the Fitchburg-Leominster market for modern industrial real estate appeared to pick up in 2012, the first year of positive absorption since 2006, and there is a growth in

investor confidence in Central Massachusetts. Increased production demand is resulting in increased demand for industrial space. As of January, 2013, the vacancy rate for modern industrial space in the Fitchburg-Leominster area is 19.8 percent, a decrease from the previous year when it was 21.6 percent. Typical modern industrial space is defined as single-story masonry/steel buildings. They include open warehouse and manufacturing facilities which generally include 5-10 percent office space with ceiling heights of at least fourteen feet. Newer buildings typically have higher clearance, closer to twenty feet, a greater proportion of office space, and also may have climate controlled manufacturing areas.

Table 4.10: Modern Industrial Space in Fitchburg and Leominster: January 2013

City	Gross Building Area	Percent of Building Area	SF Available/Vacant	Percent Vacant
Leominster	6,177,986	70.1%	1,483,793	24.0%
Fitchburg	2,630,639	29.9%	262,399	10.0%
Combined Total	8,808,625	100.0%	1,746,192	19.8%

Source: The Foster Report – Fitchburg/Leominster Massachusetts, January 2013

As shown in Table 4.10, Leominster has a total supply of almost 6.2 million square feet of modern industrial space, representing approximately 70 percent of the Fitchburg-Leominster market. Leominster's vacancy rate is 24 percent. Fitchburg's total supply of approximately 2.6 million square feet represents about 30 percent of the market and had a vacancy rate of 10 percent as of January 2013.

No new industrial buildings were constructed in 2012 or are proposed for 2013, as of January, 2013. According to the Foster Report, sales of properties in 2012 were substantially below replacement cost. As a result, demand for new construction would be limited to specialized and high image facilities or additions to existing facilities which would otherwise be expensive to relocate. Until the price differential between existing and new construction narrows, there will be limited demand for new facilities.

in the past year as manufacturing operations have relocated to modern space for improved efficiency.

Table 11: Mill Space in Fitchburg and Leominster: January 2013

City	Gross Building Area	Percent of Building Area	SF Available/Vacant	Percent Vacant
Leominster	1,069,351	21.2%	300,798	28.1%
Fitchburg	3,970,734	78.8%	805,460	20.3%
Combined Total	5,040,085	100.0%	1,106,258	21.9%

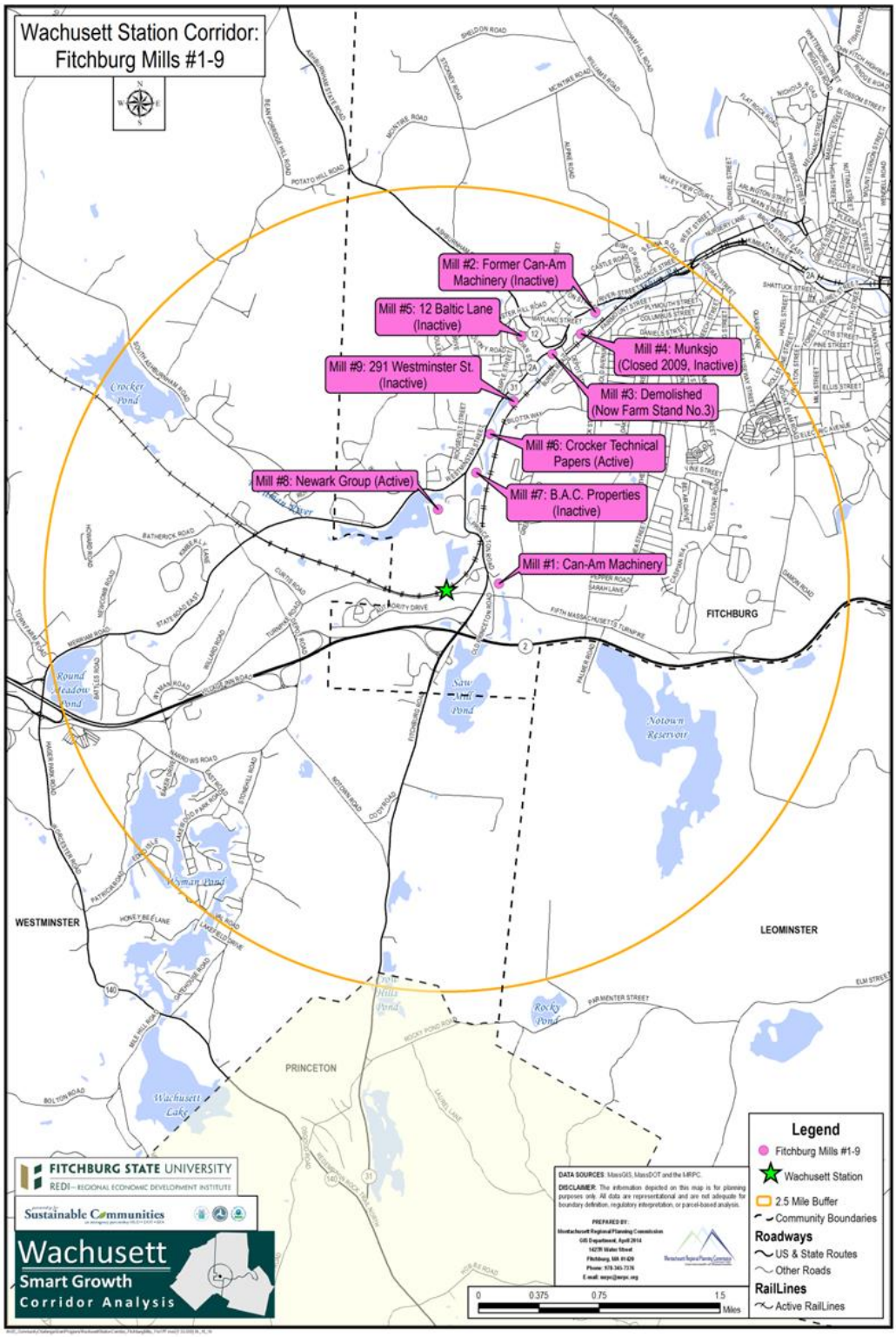
Source: The Foster Report – Fitchburg/Leominster Massachusetts, January 2013

As shown in Table 4.11, over 78 percent of the area's mill space is located in Fitchburg. The locations of mills in the vicinity of the Wachusett Corridor, all of which are in Fitchburg, are shown in Figure 4.3. Mill type space is older, and was generally constructed around the turn of the nineteenth century. They were originally built for single occupant businesses such as textile and paper. Many of these mills in the Fitchburg-Leominster area were later used for plastics manufacturing. They are primarily brick multi-story buildings, generally in fair to poor condition. There is a large inventory of mill space in the Fitchburg-Leominster area. The vacancy rate for mill space as of January 2013 was 21.9 percent, an increase from January 2012 when it was 20.6 percent. Available lease space can often be obtained for low rent and often can be used to meet short term needs or by start-up users requiring lower cost space. However, with the availability of modern space at low pricing, utilization of mill space may no longer be cost effective. There are also environmental issues with mill space such as chemical saturation in the floors and older in-ground oil or chemical tanks. While remediation is possible, it can be expensive and can also result in reluctance from lenders to finance mill property acquisition. Some of these properties are classified as "brownfield" sites as discussed below.

Leominster's base of existing mill space is declining as properties are being converted to residential or commercial use or are demolished or abandoned as they are no longer considered economically feasible to restore. Vacancy in Leominster mill space has increased

Some mill space in Fitchburg is also being converted to residential housing. In Fitchburg, the greatest absorption of mill space has been as entire buildings have been converted to residential use. However, there is still a substantial supply of mill space for start-up businesses and seasonal storage. Assuming continued improvement in economic conditions, as the supply of modern properties is absorbed, there may be increased demand for mill space at least on a short-term basis.

Figure 4.3: Fitchburg Mills in the Wachusett Corridor



b) Office Real Estate Market

According to CBRE Global Research and Consulting, the Suburban Boston Office market absorbed more space in the first half of 2013 than it had since 2005. In general, CBRE reports that "the Suburban Office market has passed the point of recovery after the last recession and has strengthened into growth mode." Total availability of office space is down (20.4% compared to 22.6% from the same period in 2012) and build-to-suit activity continues to be the primary interest of larger tenants. The Metro West area remains the strongest performing office market in Greater Boston with positive absorption of office space and a decrease in vacancy to 14.5 percent, making it the tightest of the three suburban metro markets. However, much of this activity is centered in the Route 128 West submarket. In contrast, the Route 495/Route 2 West submarket of the Metro West market, which includes the Fitchburg-Leominster area, had a higher availability rate (24.2%), a higher vacancy rate (18.2%), and a lower average asking rent ($14.23 SF/YR) than the Metro West market and overall Suburban Office market as a whole. The Route 495/Route 2 West submarket has approximately 4.7 million square feet of rentable area, representing 4.2 percent of the overall Suburban Office market.

c) Brownfields

While considering the status of the commercial and office real estate market in the Wachusett Corridor, it should be noted that there are a number of "brownfield" sites in the area which may offer potential redevelopment opportunities. There are numerous sites which are considered "Brownfields" within the Wachusett Corridor according to an inventory compiled by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Within that inventory, Chapter 21E sites are contaminated by petroleum or other hazardous material and are subject to special restrictions for redevelopment. Such sites are classified by tiers based on their level of contamination and their owner's compliance with regulation. According to a search of the MassDEP website (http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/it-serv-and-support/application-serv/office-of-geographic-information-massgis/datalayers/massdep-21e.html), the Wachusett Corridor study area has four active Tier Classified Chapter 21Es sites detailed in Table 4.12 and Figure 4.4. It should be noted that there are other Chapter 21E sites in Massachusetts that are not contained in MassDEP's data layer. For example, MassDEP's data layer does not include (1) contaminated sites that have not been reported to MassDEP or (2) sites for which a Response Action Outcome (RAO) has been submitted to MassDEP. Also, Chapter 21E sites that have not yet been Tier Classified are not contained in this data layer.

Table 4.12: MassDEP Tier Classified Chapter 21E Sites Wachusett Corridor Study Area

Site Name	Address
Bedard Residence	89 Vine St., Fitchburg
Nagy Springs	749 Westminster Hill Rd. Fitchburg
Cresticon Sub NGGEC (Former Litton)	180 State Rd. E Westminster
Between 359 and 699	Franklin Rd. Westminster

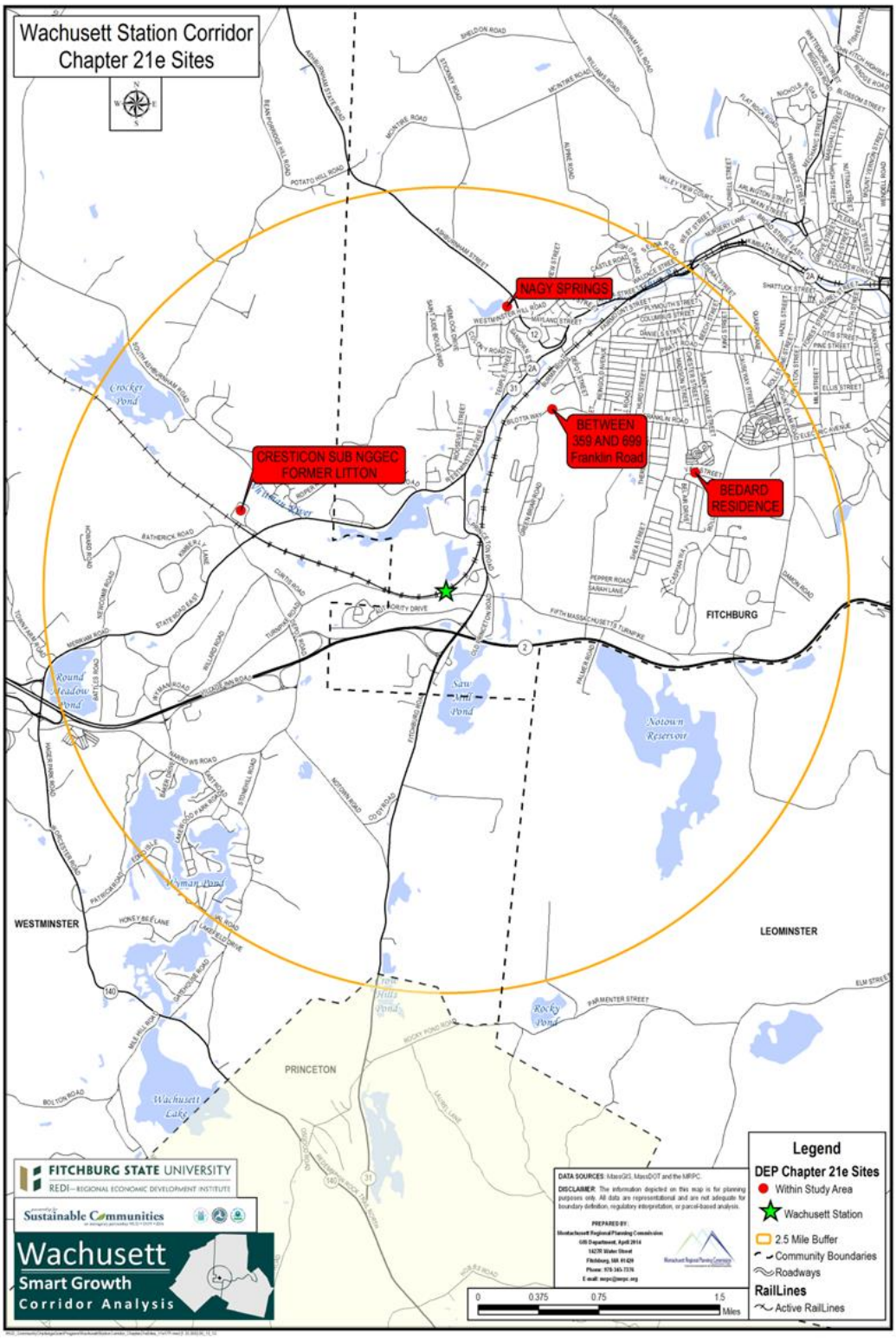
Source: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

Brownfields properties are often located where there is an existing infrastructure and other amenities. The cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields properties can be a way to stimulate the economy and promote environmental protection goals. There are federal and state brownfields programs incentives available to buyers, and sometimes sellers, of contaminated property provided there is a commitment to cleanup and redevelopment. Brownfields properties are often located where there is an existing infrastructure, workforce and other amenities such as available in the Wachusett Corridor. State incentives can help parties identify risk, limit liability, and fund the cleanup of brownfields sites enabling their reuse for industry, housing and other purposes.

Potentially, there could be brownfields grants available that could assist with the remediation of brownfield sites. In the past, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) was awarded five Brownfields Site Assessment grants and a Brownfields Clean-Up Revolving Loan Fund from the US Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA). Although MRPC Brownfields funds have been exhausted, MRPC applied to EPA in winter 2014 for additional grant funds for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments of eligible "brownfield" sites in the Montachusett Region. If MRPC is successful in attaining grant funds, funds could be available to conduct site assessments in Montachusett Communities as soon as fall 2014. Moreover, MRPC also applied in winter 2014 for a Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund to facilitate the actual clean-up of priority sites.

Figure 4.4: MassDEP Tier Classified Chapter 21E Sites



The US EPA defines a brownfield as such:

> "Brownfields are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties takes development pressures off of undeveloped, open land, and both improves and protects the environment."

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment typically includes the following:

1. Physical inspection of the entire subject property.
2. Interviews with persons knowledgeable of the property.
3. Review of state and federal lists of known contaminated sites, hazardous materials users, spills and underground tanks.
4. Evaluation of nearby operations for their potential to affect subject property.
5. Interpretation of topographic maps and aerial photographs.
6. Review of any existing environmental documents for the project area.
7. Current and past use of the property.
8. Review of recorded owner history at applicable register of deeds office.
9. Conclusions and recommendations.

The purpose of a Phase I report is to determine if there is a need for a Phase II Environmental Assessment. If a site has a potential for soil and/or groundwater contamination, a Phase II Site Assessment should be conducted by an experienced environmental engineering firm. Subsurface analysis of water and soil is conducted during a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment. A comprehensive understanding of soil and groundwater is required in order to design the correct soil boring and monitoring well installations that should discover, characterize or delineate contamination that could be impacting human health, the water supply and the value of the subject property, and neighboring properties.

V. Impact of Commuter Rail Services on Real Estate Values

In conjunction with the assessment of environmental impacts from the construction of Wachusett Station and the Wachusett Layover Facility, MART's and the MBTA's consultants documented research into the impacts of commuter rail facilities on real estate values in the vicinity of the project area. Two studies are cited:

- One study is specifically a Real Estate Analysis of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line including the effect on property values. Results indicate that there is an increase in single family residential property values of approximately 6.7 percent by virtue of being located near a community having a commuter rail station.
- One study in Philadelphia of Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority and Port Authority of New Jersey Commuter Rail service found strong evidence that accessibility from commuter rail stations is indeed capitalized into house values with an "increase of 6.4 percent of the average house value being observed."

However, a somewhat contradictory study compared effects of commuter rail in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Tacoma to Everett, Washington; and San Jose, California and found, over a 10 year period, that homes adjacent to a commuter rail corridor increased in value by 162 percent while homes in the same overall zip code area increased in value by 165 percent. The study concluded that property values "were more effected [sic] by overall local and regional market forces than by new immediately adjacent passenger rail lines."

VI. Economic Development Goals of the Wachusett Communities

As part of the process of identifying goals and objects for economic development in the Wachusett Corridor, a review of municipal economic development and Master Plans was conducted to identify the specific community-wide economic development goals of each of the three Wachusett Communities.

- The City of Fitchburg documents its economic goals and objectives in its Vision2020 Comprehensive Master Plan which was adopted in 1998. Goals which have relevance to the Wachusett Corridor are:
- Retain, attract, foster, and celebrate companies that will contribute to Fitchburg's revitalization by nurturing citizens through opportunities to work, learn, and advance; investing in the community; and meeting residents' and visitors' needs for goods and services.
- Stimulate the creation of new employment through a diverse economic base.
- Seek economic development that will have the least possible negative impact on neighborhoods and the physical environment.
- Expand Fitchburg's job and tax base by developing an inventory of industrial space that will be attractive to industry in the 21st Century.

The City of Leominster does not have a Master Plan but adopted a Community Development Plan in 2004. This plan identifies a number of economic development goals for the community. Goals which have relevance to the Wachusett Corridor are:

- Promote regional cooperation in housing, transportation and boundary development issues.
- Promote diversification of jobs in the community.
- Support and expand existing community efforts to increase development of businesses that provide jobs, increase tax revenues and expand opportunities for existing businesses.
- Encourage businesses that are compatible with adjacent land uses and resource protection concerns.
- Create and consistently implement and fund a capital improvements program to maintain existing infrastructure in order to facilitate business development, enable the workforce to access local commercial and industrial businesses and facilitate the delivery of raw materials and shipment of finished goods.
- Promote development that is consistent with the Sustainable Development Principles promulgated by the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development. In addition, promote compact development, expand housing opportunities, reutilize brownfields and abandoned buildings, plan for livable communities, promote livable communities, advance sound water policy, preserve working natural landscapes and promote sustainable development via other actions.

The Town of Westminster is currently going through an update of the community's Master Plan. The following is the primary economic development goal of the Master Plan's Economic Development chapter, revised in January 2014, and is highly relevant to the Wachusett Corridor:

- Westminster desires a robust and diverse local economy that provides tax revenues for the town and living wage jobs for local residents in a business friendly environment, with a timely and predictable permitting system and a municipal infrastructure capable of supporting new and expanding businesses and industries.

VII. Economic Development Issues and Opinions Cited by Ethnic Community Focus Groups

In addition to the identification of economic development goals and objectives for the Wachusett Communities, additional outreach was conducted to better understand the economic development issues of the primary ethnic communities residing in the corridor. Three focus groups were held with ethnic communities in the Wachusett Corridor to gather information and ideas relevant to the anticipated impacts and benefits of the new station which would be in close proximity and provide service to these communities. A Latino focus group was held at the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center on October 2, 2012, a Hmong focus group was held at the Fitchburg Public Library on October 27, 2013 and a Vietnamese focus group was held at the Fitchburg Public Library on November 1, 2012.

A number of different topics were discussed at these sessions including Economic Development. A wide range of opinion was expressed at each session on the economic development opportunities and strategies that relate to the new station's development. The Latino group emphasized rehabilitation of existing plants and factories within the study area, potentially as new housing or entertainment centers, and the need to attract new investors. The group also identified a number of commercial needs within the community such as food businesses, clothing and shoe stores, bakeries and pastry shops. As strategies, the group cited a need for economic aid to assist in developing small businesses and educational programs to assist entrepreneurs. The Hmong community also saw a need to develop small retail businesses to support anticipated growth in the area. The Vietnamese community believes that the new station would bring more visitors and business to the area and also felt that a train schedule with earlier trains would enable visitors to arrive in the area earlier in the day to conduct their business.

VIII. Economic Development Strategies for the Wachusett Corridor: Goals, Objectives and Recommendations

Based on the information gathered to assess economic development opportunities resulting from the development of the Wachusett Station, the following goal, objectives, and recommendations were developed to facilitate the economic development of the Wachusett Corridor and Montachusett Region and to improve the overall economic climate and quality of life in the affected communities.

a) Goals and Objectives

Goal

To leverage the benefits of improved commuter rail service and the development of the Wachusett Station and Layover Areas to enhance the economy of the Wachusett Corridor and improve the quality of life of area residents, consistent with the character of the affected communities and area development plans.

Objectives

- Establish a collaborative and coordinated economic development strategy that reflects the interests and needs of the affected Wachusett Corridor communities and recognizes the mutual benefits of regional cooperation.
- Diversify the local economic base by retaining existing businesses and attracting new businesses that provide competitive salaries and employ the locally-available workforce.
- The study area communities should work together to attract those businesses and industries that will provide living wage jobs for the residents of the region and tax revenues for the municipalities.
- Assess the development and redevelopment opportunities that are offered within the Wachusett Corridor and provide the necessary support to enable these opportunities to be realized.
- Assess the workforce skills needed by current and potential future area employers and work with local educational institutions to assure that appropriate training and educational programs

are offered that support the development of these skills.

- Take advantage of the extensive natural, scenic, and recreational resources of the region to enhance opportunities for recreational and eco-tourism.
- Obtain federal and state grants to support workforce and infrastructure development and support for business development and expansion.

b) Recommendations

To identify opportunities for economic development in the Wachusett Corridor and strategies that could be employed to achieve the goals and objectives for the economic development of the Wachusett Corridor, discussions were held with local community planners and representatives of key organizations, initially focusing on a set of generic economic development strategies. These strategies were then refined through these discussions. These strategies are discussed below:

1. Survey Existing Businesses in the Corridor – The most effective economic development opportunities start with the businesses that have already been established within the corridor. This begins with support to enable these businesses to be retained or to expand. Support could be logistical and/or financial. If effective assistance is to be provided to these businesses, it is necessary to understand their needs, constraints and challenges. This information can be assembled through a comprehensive survey of these businesses. However, it can be difficult to identify the key personnel who might have this critical information or, once contacts are identified, to elicit a response from these personnel given their typical range of responsibilities. An organization which has extensive insight into area businesses and preexisting relationships with key personnel within these businesses is the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce (NCMCC). Given the linkages which NCMCC already has with area businesses, it offers an excellent means of connecting with the personnel who would be in the best position to provide the necessary information to support the retention and/or expansion of area businesses. Therefore a business survey could be effectively facilitated through the NCMCC.

2. Conduct a Comprehensive Site Evaluation and Establish a Computerized Database of Properties – A wide variety of potential development properties, along with a wide range of constraints and attributes, exist within the Wachusett Study Area. Each site is unique and offers varying opportunities for redevelopment or reuse. Information about these properties can be difficult to access although it is vital for potential developers who may be considering investment in the corridor. Assembling this information can be challenging and time consuming. It can also be difficult to maintain to assure that it is kept current. A comprehensive database could be established and maintained through a cooperative effort involving the NCMCC, MRPC, and the three communities (most likely in conjunction with the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority and the Assessor's Offices of the individual communities). The database could be centrally maintained and publicly available to prospective developers with a mechanism in place to assure that it is kept up-to-date as conditions change. (It should be noted that the Town of Westminster is currently working with the Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce to compile a similar development inventory for Westminster. This inventory could conceivably be consolidated with an inventory of the full Wachusett Corridor.)

3. Identify Opportunities for Renovation/Reuse of Existing Properties and Proactively Work to Foster Redevelopment of "Brownfields" – Particularly within the Fitchburg sector of the Wachusett Corridor, there are a number of existing industrial properties that are either underutilized or currently vacant that offer opportunities for reuse. Many of these properties may have environmental issues that would need remediation and are classified as "brownfield" sites. Some of these sites have existing structures which could be renovated for various uses. Other sites are either undeveloped or would require demolition of existing structures. Given their environmental issues, remediation of these sites would be necessary before any redevelopment could occur. The Federal Brownfields Program is administered through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The typical process involved in remediating a contaminated site involves Site Assessment, Site Investigation (a more thorough review of site conditions), and a Remedial Action Plan. This process could potentially be facilitated

through the CEDS Board, described above, and the Montachusett Brownfields Opportunity Group which is supported by MRPC. It is also conceivable that funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) to MRPC could be used to support a grant application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for Brownfields assessment and clean-up.

4. Identify Needs and Secure Funding for Infrastructure Improvements – Based on discussions with planners from the affected communities, it is apparent that the City of Fitchburg has adequate utility, sewer, and water infrastructure in place to accommodate expected levels of development and/or redevelopment in the Wachusett Corridor. Given development constraints in the Leominster portion of the corridor, new commercial or industrial development within Leominster are not expected to be extensive and would likely be accommodated by existing infrastructure. The Town of Westminster also has adequate utility and water and sewer service to serve the needs of the first phase of development of the Westminster Business Park (Phase I). However, according to the Westminster Town Planner, there is not adequate sewer capacity to accommodate full build-out of Phase II of the Business Park's development without expansion of the Whitman River Treatment Plant. The Town is currently looking for funding to support expansion of the plant. One other option to consider could be tying into the Fitchburg treatment system. That would likely require a feasibility analysis and a cooperative agreement between the Town of Westminster and the City of Fitchburg. While there may be a number of ways these sewer needs might be met, it is apparent that full development of the Westminster Business Park would require further infrastructure improvements in order to move forward.

With regard to transportation infrastructure, a potentially significant impediment to economic development in the Wachusett Corridor is the railroad bridge over Route 31/Princeton Road to the north of Fifth Mass Turnpike. As discussed in the Transportation Element of this Smart Growth Plan, this bridge involves a reverse curve, a narrow cross section, poor sight distances, and low clearance. It is currently a hazardous location for motorists and a constraint for trucks carrying freight in the corridor. In its current condition, these constraints could have an impact on future economic development in the vicinity of this bridge, limiting the flow of freight traffic into and out of the corridor. Another circulation issue potentially affecting development in the corridor is the limited accessibility to the property within and adjacent to the Newark America site, west of Route 31/Princeton Road, south of its intersection with Route 2A/Westminster Road. This property offers development potential which would be restricted given current access to the site. These are issues which should be considered as plans for the area are developed.

5. Work with Local Educational Institutions to Train the Future Employees of the Wachusett Corridor – To support the growth of the Wachusett Corridor, it is essential that available workforce within the corridor can benefit from the opportunities that development of the corridor offers. In order to do this effectively, adequate training and educational opportunities must be available that can provide local residents with the technical skills needed by current and future employers in the corridor. To accomplish this, a cooperative effort needs to be undertaken in coordination with local employers, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Massachusetts Office of Business Development and

local educational institutions such as Fitchburg State College, Wachusett Community College, and Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School to identify the skills needed by existing and potential new employers. An assessment of the technical skills needed by area employers can, in part, be gathered through a survey of existing businesses (see Strategy #2). Depending on the skills needed, training and educational programs should be developed that will support the long-term vocational needs of the community to provide the technical talent needed to maintain and grow the industries and enterprises of the Wachusett Corridor. This is clearly not a strategy that can be quickly implemented and will necessitate cooperation among a number of entities and require a long-term commitment of resources.

6. Identify Opportunities for Increased Recreational and Eco-Tourism – As discussed in the Open Space Element of this Plan, areas of Westminster and Leominster within and adjacent to the Wachusett Corridor provide extensive opportunities for outdoor recreational activities. These areas include Leominster State Forest and Wachusett Mountain State Reservation. Both of these areas offer facilities for four-season recreation including hiking, bicycling, fishing, skiing/snowboarding, and snowmobiling. A full-service ski area is operated at Mount Wachusett, approximately 6 miles from the station site. The ski area operates in conjunction with the Wachusett Village Inn. In addition, the former Courtyard by Marriott/ CoCo Key Resort is being redeveloped into a 400+ room Great Wolf Resort which will offer the largest indoor water park in New England, less than a mile from the Wachusett Station site. These facilities, in addition to other area hotels, bars and restaurants, could benefit from increased patronage assuming adequate transportation linkages can be provided with the new station. These could include shuttle services and extensions of existing trails and bike paths. Discussions have already occurred with the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) regarding shuttle connections to the new Great Wolf Resort. Further coordination with local trails committee such as the Leominster Trail Stewards, recreational commissions, and private enterprises such as local hotel operators should be supported to inventory and promote local recreational opportunities with particular focus on amenities available in the Leominster State Forest and Wachusett Mountain State Reservation and to identify opportunities to facilitate utilization of these facilities by visitors from outside of the Wachusett Corridor.

7. Explore Funding Opportunities for Economic Development – A variety of programs are available at both the State and Federal level that could support economic development activities in the Wachusett Corridor, particularly through investment in new or expanded infrastructure. For example, the Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) makes construction, non-construction, and revolving loan fund investments under the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs. Grants or loans made under these programs can be used to "leverage regional assets to support the implementation of regional economic development strategies designed to create jobs, leverage private capital, encourage economic development, and strengthen America's ability to compete in the global marketplace." These grants are intended to develop initiatives that advance new ideas and creative approaches to address rapidly evolving economic conditions. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also supports economic development through MassDevelopment, the state's finance and development authority, and the MassWorks Infrastructure Program through the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. These programs can be used to support infrastructure improvements and facility development. A thorough assessment of funding opportunities should be conducted to identify the programs which would be most applicable and beneficial to support the needs and development of the Wachusett Corridor. Establishment of partnerships among communities will enhance the likelihood of successful pursuit of these opportunities.

8. Market the Region – To a large extent, marketing of business opportunities in North Central Massachusetts is already being conducted through the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce (NCMCC) and the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority (FRA). In conjunction with the NCMCC, the FRA, and the Steering Committee proposed in Strategy #1, a targeted marketing strategy should be undertaken to promote the opportunities and amenities offered by the Wachusett Corridor. Some of these attributes include:

- Location in relation to the regional transportation network
- Quality of life
- Excellent educational resources
- Comparatively lower cost of housing
- Talented, skilled workforce
- Strong civic leadership
- Scenic and recreational amenities
- Easy access to Metropolitan Boston without the costs

A comprehensive marketing plan for the corridor could be developed to promote these attributes and attract new businesses and employers to the area.

Section V: Open Space and Recreation Element

I. Existing Land Use

The land examined in this plan covers approximately 12,566 acres (19.6 square miles) within the circle designating the corridor with the new Wachusett Station as the center. The radius of the circle is 2.5 miles. This distance was chosen, because it is an easily bikeable distance from the proposed Wachusett Station which is considered important, particularly in the context of recreation and open space.

The existing land use within the corridor as calculated through MRPC GIS is shown in Table 5.1 and Figure 5.1. As indicated in the Table, the vast majority of land use within the corridor, 8017 acres or 63.8 percent of total area, is classified as Forest. While much of this forested land is within the Leominster State Forest, there is also substantial forested land outside of the State Forest. Within the three Wachusett communities, Forest is the dominant land use for all three. Although a substantially smaller share of total acreage, other primary land uses are Water (5.4%), High Density Residential (4.5%), and Low Density Residential (4.1). Most of the High Density Residential acreage is within Fitchburg while most of the Low Density Residential is within Westminster. It is interesting to note, given the industrial history of the corridor, that only 1.9 percent of the corridor's acreage is classified as Industrial, with the majority of that acreage in Fitchburg. Also, as indicated in the table, nearly 99 percent of Leominster's land use is shown to be undeveloped and is classified as Forest, Forested Wetland, Non-Forested Wetland, Powerline/Utility, or Water.

In terms of areas generally considered "open space," the combined land use categories of Cropland, Forest, Forested Wetland, Golf course, Non-Forested Wetland, Open Land, Participation Recreation, Pasture, Water, and Water-Based Recreation account for over 9,700 acres or over 77 percent of the entire Wachusett Corridor. Recreation land use categories of Golf Course, Participation Recreation, and Water-Based Recreation account for approximately 174 acres or slightly over 1 percent of the Corridor's land use, a small share of total land use. This, of course, excludes the wide variety of active and passive recreation uses within the larger land use category of Forest.

Table 5.1: Existing Land Use

	Acres within Wachusett Corridor				% of Area within Wachusett Corridor			
Open Land	213.7	61.7	1.5	150.6	1.7%	1.2%	0.1%	2.7%
Participation Recreation	60.1	32.1		28.0	0.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%
Pasture	48.3	29.2	2.8	16.3	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%
Powerline/Utility	204.0	127.3	35.5	41.2	1.6%	2.5%	1.9%	0.7%
Transitional	116.1	48.0		68.2	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	1.2%
Transportation	146.8	79.5		67.2	1.2%	1.6%	0.0%	1.2%
Urban Public/Institutional	70.4	65.7	2.8	1.8	0.6%	1.3%	0.1%	0.0%
Very Low Density Residential	107.9	32.3	5.5	70.1	0.9%	0.6%	0.3%	1.3%
Waste Disposal	105.9	27.1	0.2	78.6	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	1.4%
Water	683.2	116.3	254.1	310.6	5.4%	2.3%	13.4%	5.6%
Water-Based Recreation	5.4			4.2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Total[2]	12566.4	5115.8	1893.9	5539.5	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[2] Note: There is approximately 17.2 acres of land within the Wachusett Corridor that are within the Town of Princeton. This includes 13.9 acres of Forest, 2.1 acres of Water, and 1.2 acres of Water-Based Recreation acreage that are not shown in this table within the community breakdowns.

Table 5.1: Existing Land Use (continued)

	Acres within Wachusett Corridor				% of Area within Wachusett Corridor			
Land Use Description	**Entire Corridor**	**Fitchburg**	**Leominster**	**Westminster**	**Entire Corridor**	**Fitchburg**	**Leominster**	**Westminster**
Brushland/Successional	13.7	11.3		2.5	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Cemetery	66.9	56.8		10.1	0.5%	1.1%	0.0%	0.2%
Commercial	112.1	81.0		31.2	0.9%	1.6%	0.0%	0.6%
Cropland	119.7	30.6		89.1	1.0%	0.6%	0.0%	1.6%
Forest	8017.1	2689.4	1444.7	3869.0	63.8%	52.6%	76.3%	69.8%
Forested Wetland	328.5	77.4	109.7	141.4	2.6%	1.5%	5.8%	2.6%
Golf Course	109.1	108.1		1.0	0.9%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
High Density Residential	568.0	559.5		8.5	4.5%	10.9%	0.0%	0.2%
Industrial	242.0	197.2	2.6	42.2	1.9%	3.9%	0.1%	0.8%
Junkyard	5.7		5.7		0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Low Density Residential	516.5	230.2	5.5	280.8	4.1%	4.5%	0.3%	5.1%
Medium Density Residential	174.0	120.8		53.1	1.4%	2.4%	0.0%	1.0%
Mining	78.8	13.6		65.2	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	1.2%
Multi-Family Residential	302.5	281.9		20.7	2.4%	5.5%	0.0%	0.4%
Non-Forested Wetland	149.9	38.7	23.3	87.8	1.2%	0.8%	1.2%	1.6%

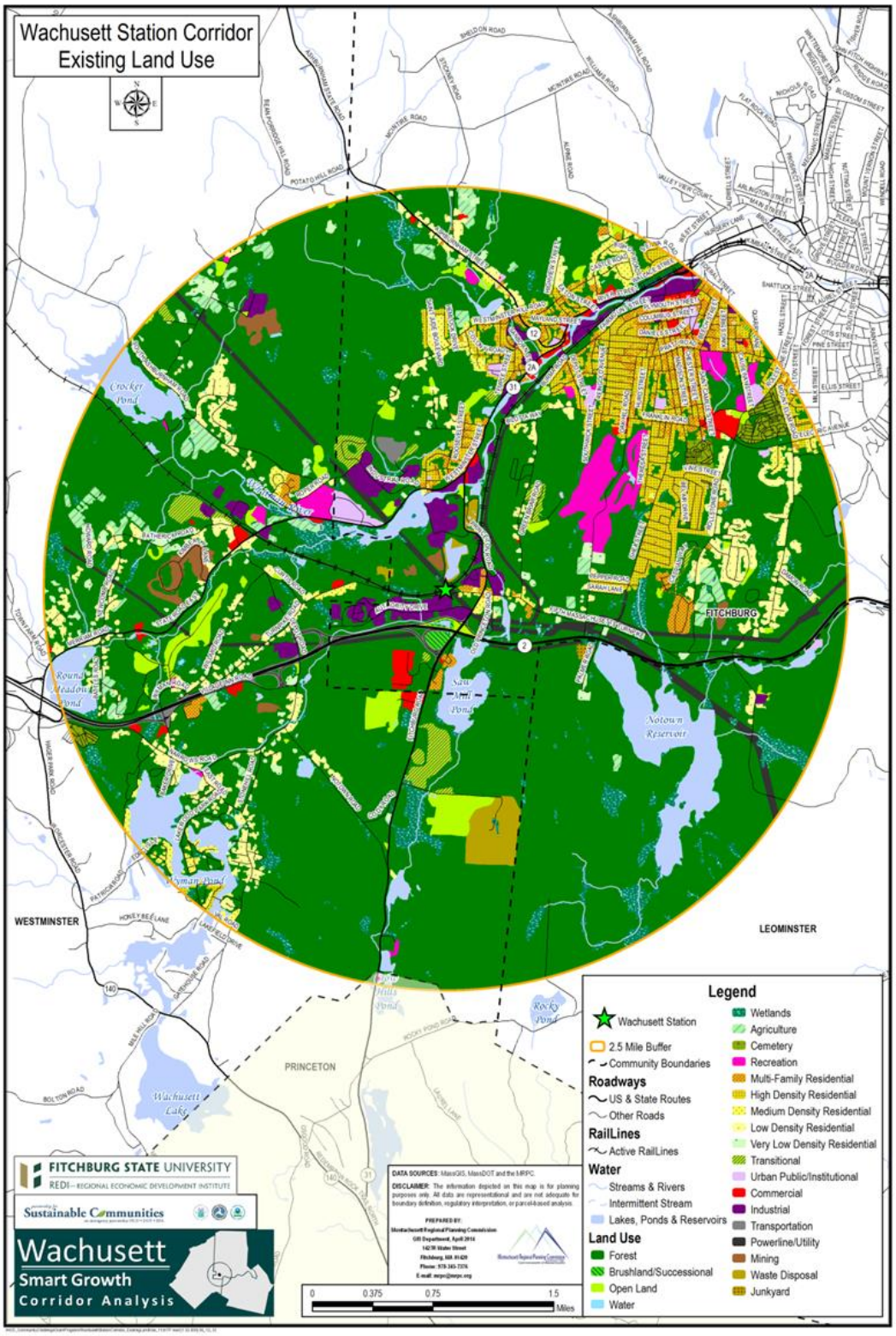


Figure 5.1: Existing Land Use in Wachusett Corridor

II. Trails and Parks

There is a wealth of recreational opportunities currently available within the Wachusett Corridor in each of the Corridor communities. Public facilities include numerous trails and parks as well as a private country club. The location of these facilities and their proximity to Wachusett Station is shown in Figure 5.2. A detailed map of the trails and parks adjacent to Wachusett Station is shown in Figure 5.3.

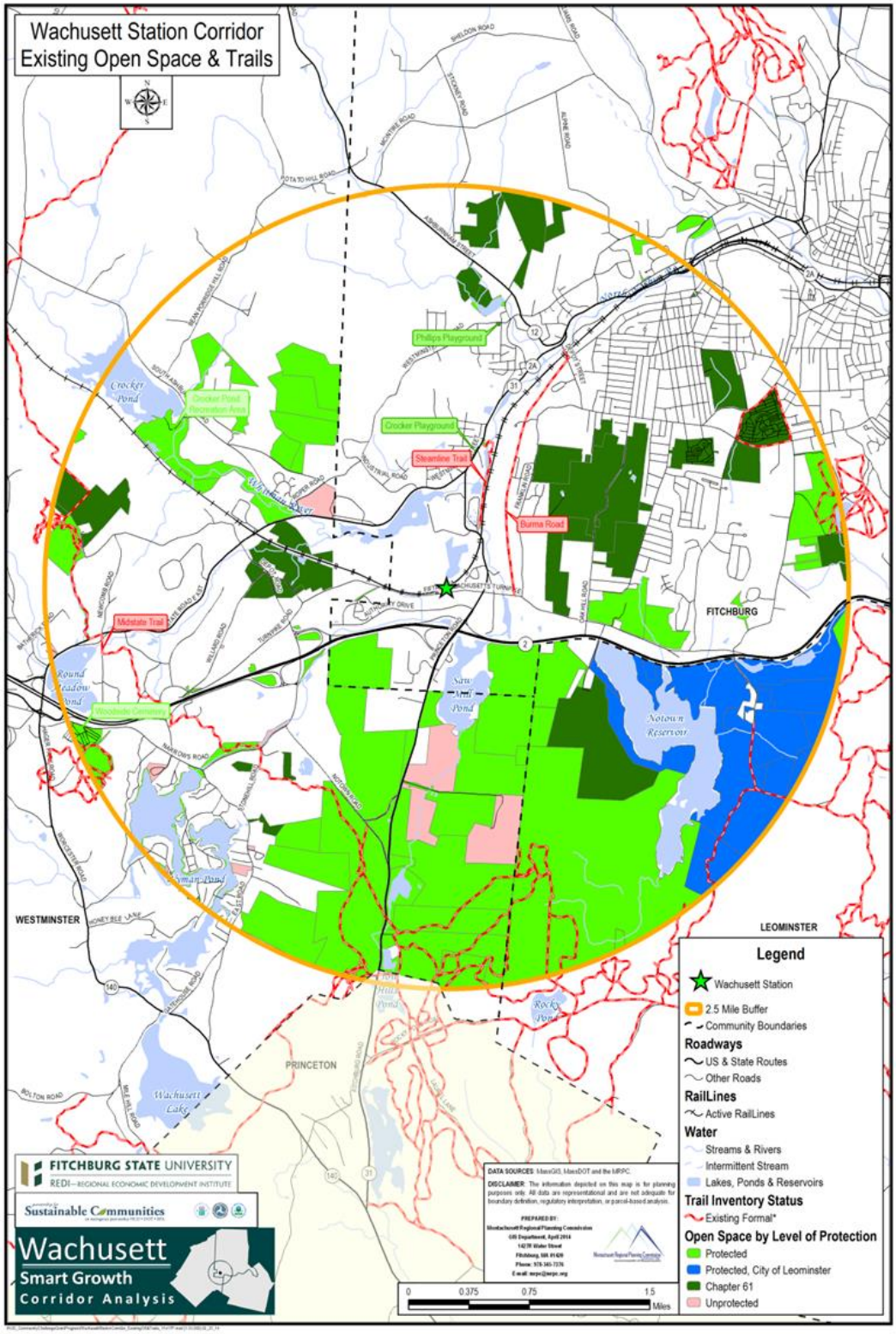


Figure 5.2: Trails and Open Space in Wachusett Corridor

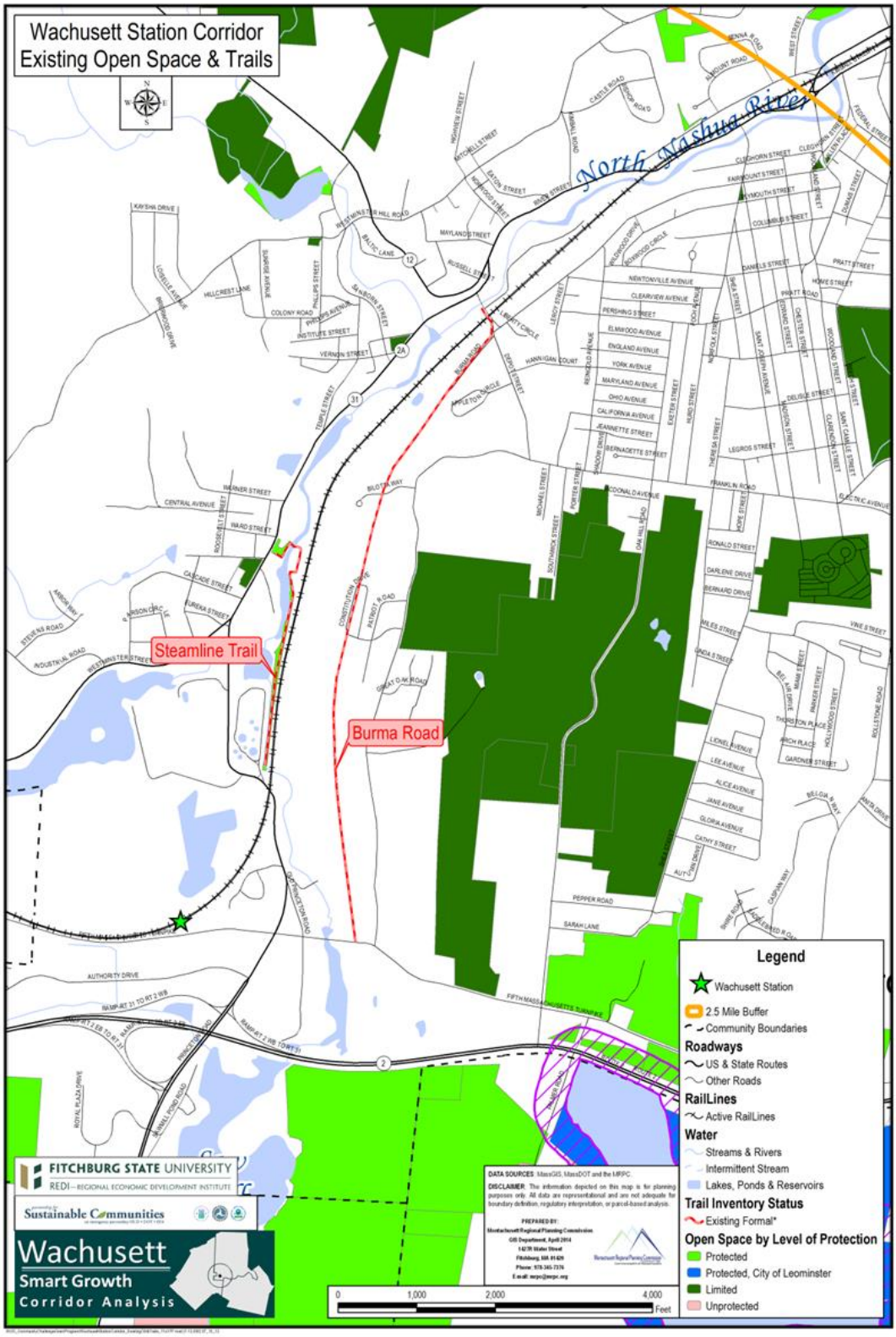


Figure 5.3: Trails in Vicinity of Wachusett Station Area

a) Trails:

Midstate Trail (Westminster and adjacent communities): The Midstate Trail is a scenic footpath located in Worcester County, 45 miles west of Boston. As shown in Figure 4, this 95 mile hiking trail extends from Rhode Island crossing the gentle hills of central Massachusetts and eventually connecting to the Wapack Trail in New Hampshire. A portion of the Trail runs through the Leominster State Forest in Westminster with connections to various trails in the State Forest. The Midstate Trail is considered highly accessible, scenic, and remarkably rural despite its proximity to urban Boston. The trail includes the summits of Mount Wachusett and Mount Watatic, as well as many interesting geologic, historic, and natural features. The highest point on the Midstate Trail is the 2006-foot summit of Mount Wachusett from which the Boston skyline, 45 miles away, is visible in clear weather.

Steamline Trail (Fitchburg): The Fitchburg Steamline Trail is a bike and walking path located in Fitchburg off of Route 2A. The trail is located within the West Fitchburg Steamline Trail Park at 465 Westminster Street which covers 4.15 acres and includes a parking lot. The trail itself is 0.6 miles long and runs along the Nashua River and Flag Brook in the Waites Corner neighborhood. The path has a packed gravel surface and is relatively easy terrain. The trail is the first contracted part of a planned project to build a mixed-use bike and walking trail through Fitchburg. Additional parts of the proposed trail are in the Riverfront and Gateway Parks. It is hoped that this trail will eventually connect with other trails in Fitchburg (see discussion of the Burma Road Trail below) and the neighboring towns of Leominster and Westminster.

Burma Road Trail (Fitchburg): The Burma Road Trail is not currently a "public way" although it is owned by the City of Fitchburg, running over a major City of Fitchburg water main. It is approximately 2 miles from the end of Burma Road off of Depot Street on the north to Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike on the south. Although not formally maintained as a trail, it is passable despite crossing Bilotta Way and running through the Chamberlain Hill condominium development. The trail presents a potential opportunity to connect to the Steamline Trail and also a potential trail connection between Wachusett Station and the Cleghorn neighborhood to the north.

Leominster State Forest Trails (Leominster, Fitchburg and Westminster): Numerous hiking and mountain biking trails are maintained within the Leominster State Forest, including the Midstate Trial and a network of trails which connect to the Midstate Trail. A description of facilities available in Leominster State Forest is provided below in the discussion of Leominster Parks. A map of trails within the State Forest is shown in Figure 5.5.

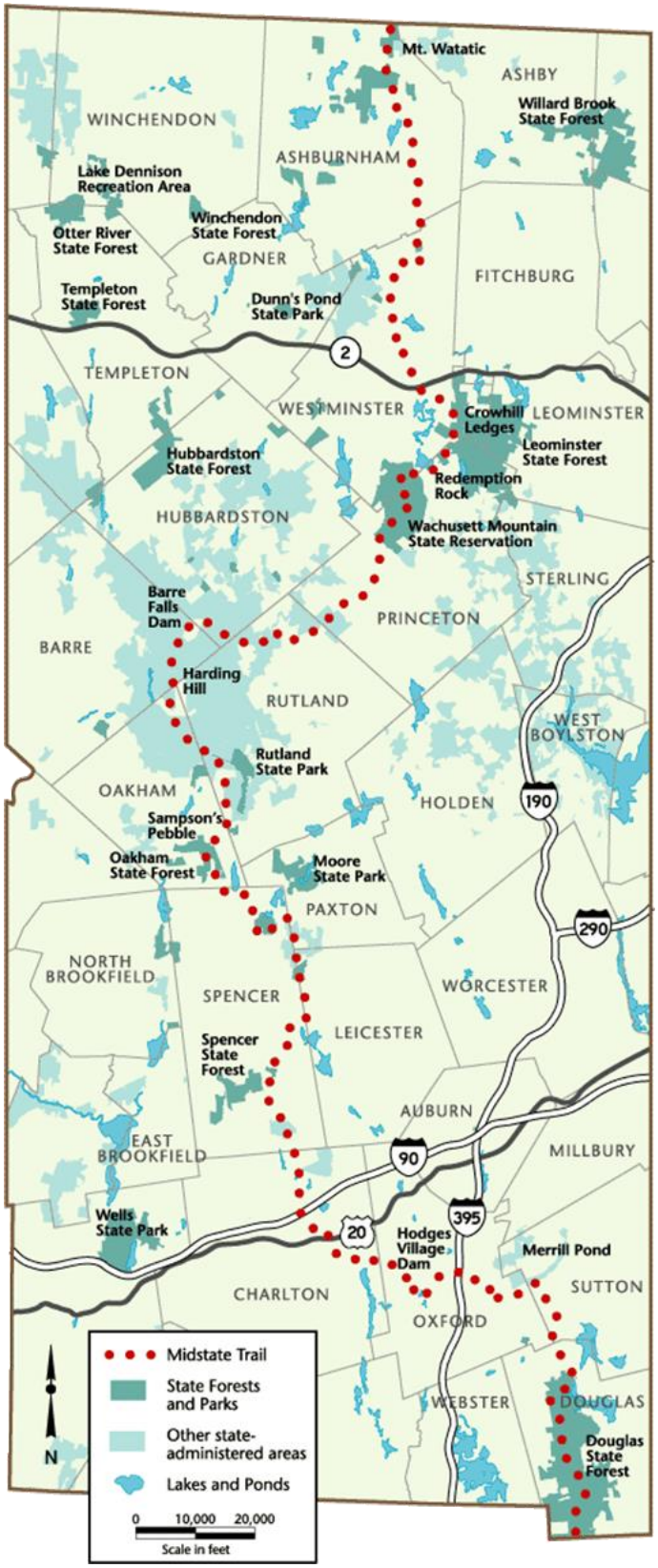


Figure 5.4: Map of the Midstate Trail

b) Leominster Parks:

Leominster State Forest, shown in Figure 5.5, is a 4,500-acre parcel of forested land, located in the five towns of Westminster, Princeton, Leominster, Fitchburg and Sterling in North Central Massachusetts. The forest is located off of Rt. 2 (exit 28), is an easy drive for local residents, and convenient from the Boston and Worcester communities. Parking is available along Rte. 31 in several areas. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, parking fees are charged in the paved parking lots. The forest provides miles of hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails with recreational opportunities year round, ranging from mountain biking, picnicking, rock climbing, fishing and swimming in the summer to cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling in the winter. The numerous hiking trails offer the opportunity to observe all kinds of wildlife and the prolific mountain laurel bloom in late June, early July. Leominster State Forest Headquarters is located within Westminster. Near its western perimeter on Route 31 the Department of Conservation and Recreation has developed a 150 foot sandy swimming beach, a 2-acre picnic grove, a parking area, an information kiosk, and sanitary facilities. Demand for use of these facilities is particularly intense during peak summer days, particularly weekends and holidays.

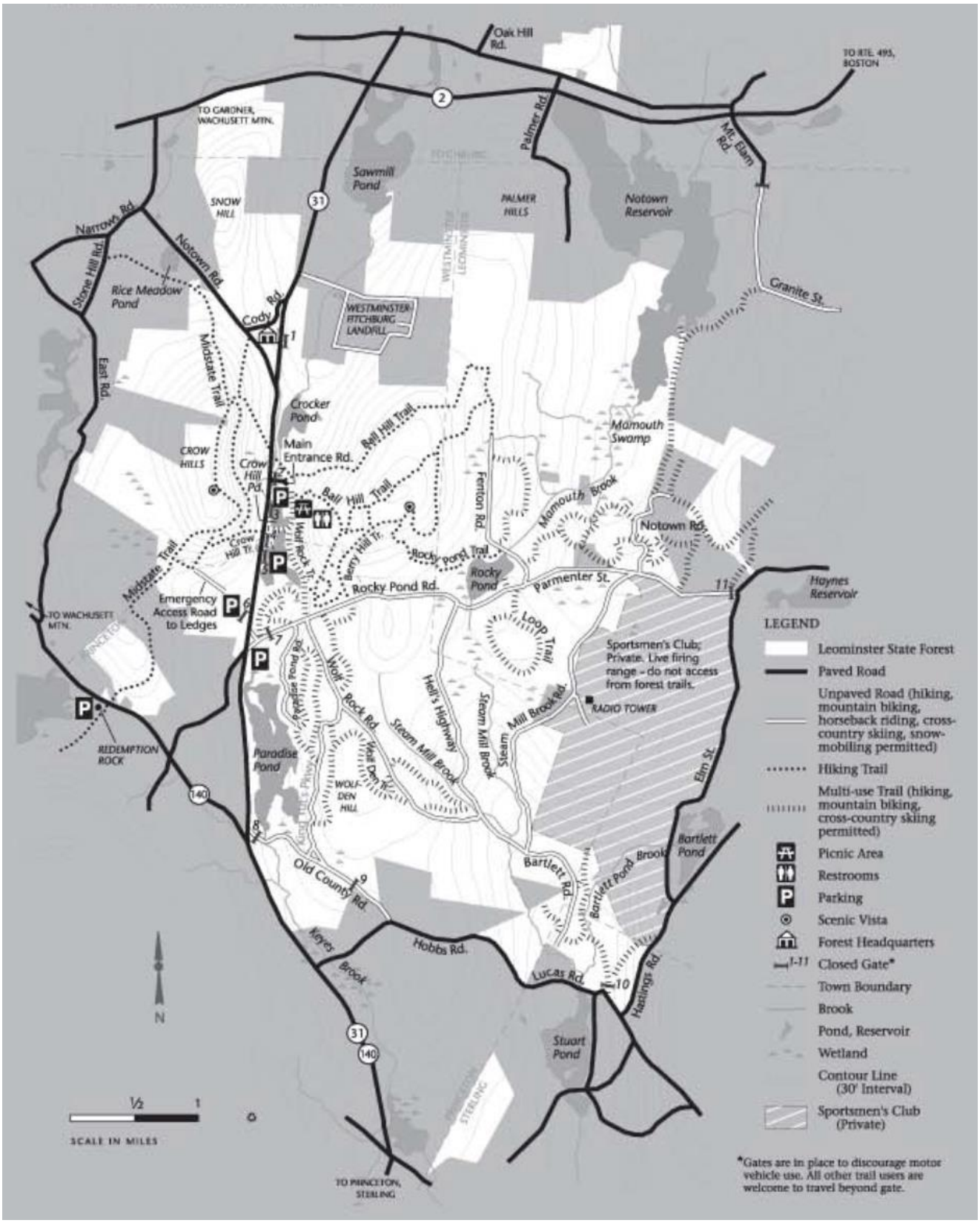


Figure 5.5: Leominster State Forest Source: Mappery.com

c) Fitchburg Parks:

Moran Playground: This 15 acre site in west Fitchburg is primarily undeveloped and forested. A former softball field near the entrance to the park off Ashburnham Street is now used as a soccer field by local soccer organizations.

Crocker Playground: Crocker Playground is a recently renovated neighborhood park located on Westminster Street at the intersection of Wachusett Street in west Fitchburg near Waites Corner. Crocker Park features the David M. Whitney basketball court, a modern playground structures, a new pavilion and picnic area, a water spray area, and perimeter walking path.

Parkhill Park: This park is located in the Cleghorn neighborhood, and features a water spray park with bathhouse, a skateboard park, two play structures with swings, tennis courts, several "Babe Ruth" baseball fields, a basketball court, and a soccer-football field currently under development. It is bounded by Pratt Road, Beech Street, Franklin Road, and Causeway Street. Two parking areas are available, accessed off Pratt Road and Beech Street. In July of 2001, the renovations to Fitchburg's Parkhill Park were completed. The park received new playground equipment, drainage improvements to the baseball field and to the brook, and a new water spray park. The splash park is open every day from 11-6. The balance of the park, including the Ryan Joubert Memorial Skatepark, is open from dawn to dusk

Phillips Playground: This neighborhood park at the corner of Westminster Hill Road and Phillips Street in west Fitchburg has a play structure with swings and basketball court.

West Fitchburg Steamline Trail Park: This 4.15 acre park is located at 465 Westminster Street, and includes a parking lot and walking trail along the Nashua River and Flag Brook. This park is the first implementation of the City's plans to develop a network of trails along the Nashua River, connecting to trails in Leominster and Westminster. The Steamline Trail is discussed above. Adjacent to the Steamline Park is the now-inactive West Fitchburg Steam Plant, the source of the Steamline Trail Park's name. Plans are currently underway to restore portions of the Steam Plan and convert it to a "Regional Energy Efficiency and Environmental Education Center." If accomplished, the facility would become another attraction in the vicinity of the Wachusett Station which could thematically tie-in with parks and recreation facilities already located in the area.

Oak Hill Country Club: Oak Hill Country Club, encompassing approximately 311 acres, is a private, member owned club, located in Fitchburg. The Club was established in 1921 and provides an eighteen hole golf course, dining facilities, function rooms, tennis and swimming facilities. Membership is by invitation only.

Nashua River Riverfront Property: With the abundance of historic mills, bridges, and walls along the Nashua River, and its close proximity to densely developed areas, the Nashua has the potential to become a significant asset to the city's economy and the quality of life for its residents. Fitchburg recently developed a riverfront park located along a section of the river adjacent to downtown on a former Brownfields site. In addition, the city developed the Steamline Trail Park in West Fitchburg along the Nashua River and Flagg Brook, described above. These two, with a small, inaccessible Central Nashua River conservation property, constitute the full extent of riverside land currently protected. A trail system linking these features has been proposed as the Twin City Rail Trail. It would run along the river and the abandoned CSX Railroad line between the downtowns of Fitchburg and Leominster. Further conversion of riverfront property for conservation and recreational purposes, or sensitive commercial and residential development, will allow Fitchburg to take advantage of this unique resource.

d) Westminster Parks:

Crocker Pond (town owned) is located off South Ashburnham Road through access over a bridge crossing the Whitman River. The town is working on developing an access through the TRW facility along the old layout of Depot Road. The site contains 101 acres and has a sandy swimming beach and an existing trail network. The pond can be used for swimming, fishing, picnicking, ice skating and non-motorized boating. The land can be used for hiking and cross-country skiing. There is also the potential to develop a portion of the site for playing fields. Crocker Pond is open from Memorial Day weekend until Columbus Day weekend. Stickers are issued out of the Town Clerk's Office

beginning in May of each year. To obtain a Crocker Pond permit sticker you must be a resident of the Town of Westminster with a verifiable address per the Westminster Town Census and you must present a valid license and vehicle registration for each vehicle indicating Westminster address. Crocker Pond was formerly known as the Brooks Mill Sportsmen's Club. The club was open to the employees of the James River Paper Company in Fitchburg

Woodside Cemetery is a 21-acre parcel off Narrows Road and abutting Hager Park. It is a significant historic & cultural resource as well as valuable open space. Over 350 gravestones here predating 1830 are registered with the Massachusetts Historical Society. In addition, a Hearse House from the mid 1800's has been relocated to the site. Only two such structures outside this one are known to exist in New England.

e) Important Recreational Facilities Outside of Wachusett Corridor:

Wachusett Mountain State Reservation (Westminster and Princeton): Although outside of the specific Wachusett Corridor study area, another significant recreational resource in close proximity to the Corridor is the Wachusett Mountain State Reservation. The Reservation is State owned and lies within the southern tip of Westminster off Route 140 and in the neighboring town of Princeton. It contains 2,250 acres (706 acres in Westminster), many of which are well developed for hiking and nature appreciation. Additional amenities on the site include a summit lookout with automobile and chairlift access, numerous picnic areas, an information center and sanitary and parking facilities.

Wachusett Mountain Ski Resort (Princeton): The Wachusett Mountain Ski Resort, operated on land leased from the Wachusett Mountain State Reservation has 22 trails serviced by 7 ski-lifts, including 3 high-speed chairlifts and 3 children-friendly magic carpet lifts and also has 1 Triple Chairlift. Wachusett Mountain has 100% snow-making capacity. Additionally, Wachusett Mountain has night-skiing on most of its trails.

f) Protected and Unprotected Open Space:

As indicated previously on Figure 2, there are a number of parcels of "protected" and "unprotected" open space within the Wachusett Corridor. Unprotected open space is unprotected by any legal or functional means. It is usually privately owned and can be sold without restriction at any time for another use (e.g. scout camps, private golf course, and private woodland). Protected open space includes lands within the Leominster State Forest which are protected by virtue of their classification as "State Forest" and other lands which are protected under Chapter 61 under the General Laws of Massachusetts. Chapter 61 is a voluntary current use program designed by the Massachusetts Legislature to tax real property at its timber resources value rather than its "highest and best use" development value. Landowners who enroll their land in the program receive property tax reductions in exchange for a lien on the property. The lien requires that enrolled land remain in undeveloped state and be managed for forest resources extraction under a forest management plan approved by the state, effectively maintaining the land as open space. The lien also provides the municipal government of the town in which the property is located a right of first refusal should the landowner put the land up for sale while it is enrolled in the program. Landowners who develop their land while enrolled in the program or for a period of time after withdrawing from the program may be required to pay penalties.

There are three programs under Chapter 61:

- Chapter 61: Intended for landowners interested in long-term, active forest management. The value of the property is based on the land's ability to grow timber.
- Chapter 61A: Intended for landowners engaged in agricultural or horticultural use. Assessment is based on the property's ability to produce agricultural or horticultural products.
- Chapter 61B: Intended for landowners interested in maintaining the land in substantially natural, wild or open condition. Assessment of the forestland under Chapter 61B is 25 percent of the current assessed values of the land. In this category, there must be at least 5 contiguous acres of property to qualify.

As assessed by MRPC GIS, there are currently 1584.2 acres of property within the Wachusett Corridor which are classified as Chapter 61 lands (1367.8 acres in Fitchburg and 216.3 acres in Westminster).

III. Sensitive Environmental Resources

a) BioMap2

In 2012, the MA Department of Fish and Game completed an update of the State's critical habitat areas as part of its BioMap2 initiative. BioMap2 is designed to guide strategic biodiversity conservation in Massachusetts over the next decade by focusing land protection and stewardship on the areas that are most critical for ensuring the long-term persistence of rare and other native species and their habitats, exemplary natural communities, and a diversity of ecosystems. BioMap2 is also designed to include the habitats and species of conservation concern identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan. The first BioMap initiative was completed back in 2001. The BioMap program is administered by the Department's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The program maps two types of habitat: Core Habitats (areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and species of conservation concern) and Critical Natural Landscapes (large contiguous blocks of land that are minimally impacted by development).

Core Habitat includes:

- Habitats for rare, vulnerable, or uncommon mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, fish, invertebrate, and plant species
- Priority Natural Communities
- High quality wetland, vernal pool, aquatic, and coastal habitats
- Intact forest ecosystems

Based on GIS mapping there are 1762.316 acres of BioMap2 core habitat area within the Wachusett Corridor Area, consisting of three subareas. This comprises 14.02% of the land area of the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Study area. These areas are shown in Figure 5.6.

The Core Habitat area around the Leominster State Forest and Leominster Watershed Area is identified as BioMap Core 2339. This Core represents a Forest Core, Aquatic Core, Wetlands Core and a Species of Conservation Concern for the Common Loon. The individual Town BioMap2 Report describes this area as "A 3,263-acre Core Habitat featuring a Forest Core, Wetlands Core, Aquatic Core, and a Species of Conservation Concern" (note that 1758.632, about half of the Core Habitat is located within the Corridor Area). Forest Cores are the best examples of large, intact forests that are least impacted by roads and development. Forest Cores support many bird species sensitive to the impacts of roads and development and help maintain ecological processes found only in unfragmented forest patches. This area is part of an important cluster of Forest Cores, which are only partially protected. Most of this acreage is in Leominster with only 18 acres in Fitchburg.

Core 2387 is located around Coggshall Park in Fitchburg and consists of a 391- acre Core Habitat featuring a Species of Conservation Concern. Sharp-shinned Hawks nest in mixed woodlands and coniferous forests, often with nearby open area. They are sensitive to disturbance around the nest, but they do occasionally nest near human development.

Core 2463 is around Phillips Brook on the Fitchburg / Westminster town line and is a 37-acre Core Habitat featuring Aquatic Core and Species of Conservation concern. Aquatic Cores are intact river corridors within which important physical and ecological processes of the river or stream occur. They delineate integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic Species of Conservation Concern. Species found in Phillips Brook include Creepers and Spring Salamanders. Creepers are freshwater mussels that inhabit low-gradient reaches of small to large rivers with sand or gravel substrates. Cool to warm water with diverse fish assemblages best support Creepers. Spring Salamander adults inhabits clean, cold, high-gradient brooks and headwater seeps in forest habitat, usually at elevation greater than 100m. Larvae are entirely aquatic and largely nocturnal, spending daylight hours buried below the streambed or hidden under stones. Adults are semi-aquatic and spend most of their time under objects along the brooks, springs and seeps; however, they will venture into upland forest during rainy weather.

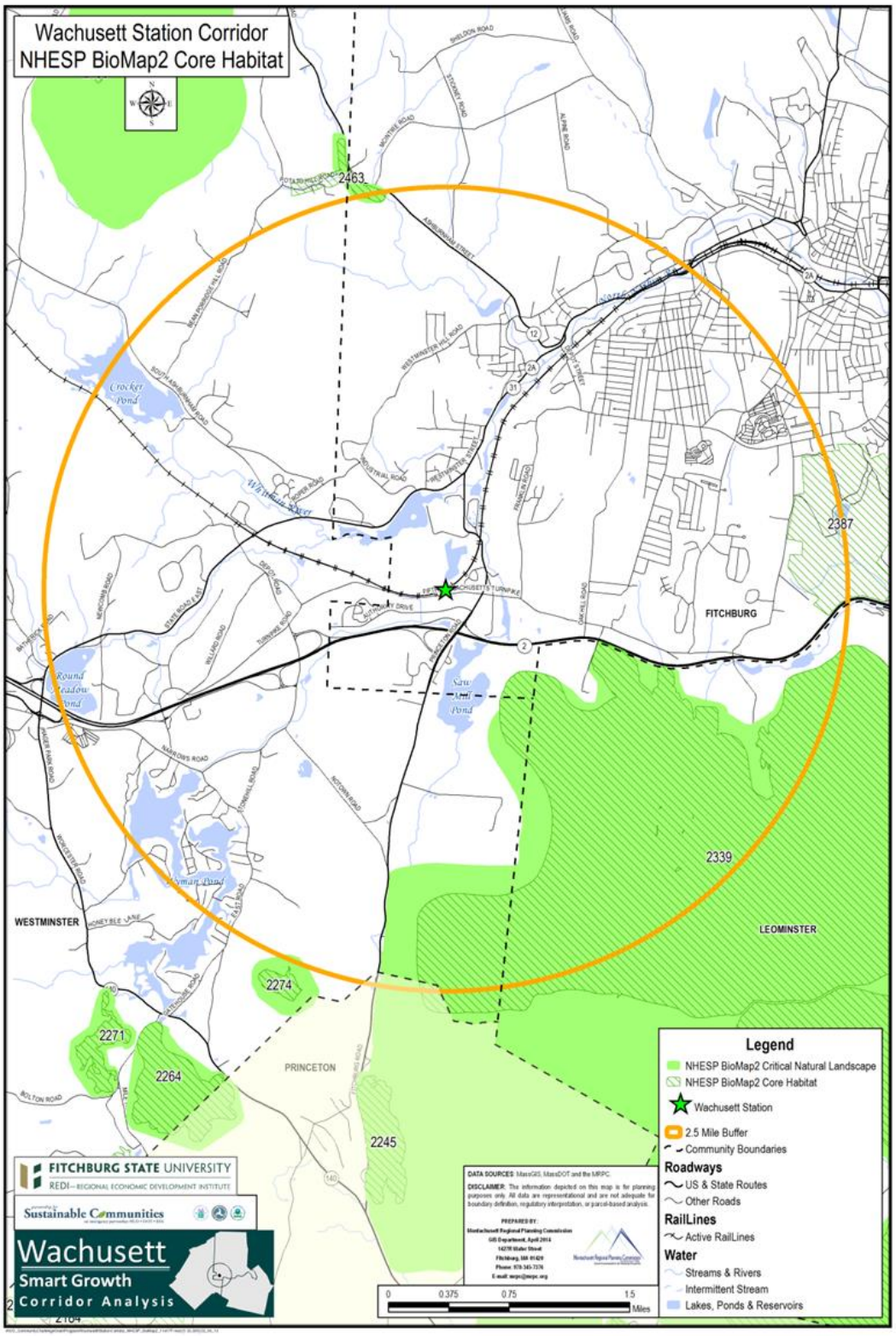


Figure 5.6: BioMap2 Areas

b) Priority Preservation Areas

To assess the local Priority Preservation Areas for MRPC's 2011 Montachusett Regional Priorities Framework Plan, MRPC reached out to the local municipalities through letters and other correspondence to receive community input regarding Priority Preservation areas. If MRPC received no response from these communities, priority areas from EO 418 Community Development Plans from 2004, Master Plans or Open Space Plans were used to complete the assessment. Those areas considered Priority Preservation Areas which are located in the Wachusett Corridor area within Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster are cited below:

c) Fitchburg

From review of EO 418 Community Development Plan:

1. The lands designated as Outstanding Resource Waters due to their value to the Fitchburg water supplies are of high protection priority. The City defined the entire watershed as a Watershed Protection Overlay District in its Zoning Bylaw. The Fitchburg Water Department, recognizing the value of these lands for protection of its water supplies, has aggressively pursued acquiring these areas. Remaining areas within the Watershed Overlay District are an important priority for protection. Areas nearest the tributary streams should be the first priority, due to their value for wildlife habitat and water qualify. Areas that provide connections between existing protected open space and watershed landholdings should be the next priority. Selected private parcels within the Watershed Protection Overlay Districts (identified on Fitchburg's ID Housing, Economic Development & Open Space Areas Map) have been identified by the City.
2. Within the Watershed Protection Overlay District in South Fitchburg are tributaries that feed the NoTown Reservoir in Leominster. These areas contain a region that is identified as priority habitat for State-protected Rare Species and Estimated Habitat for Rare Wildlife. This region overlaps the 100-meter riparian corridor identified in the Massachusetts Resource Identification Project (MRIP) as a priority for protection. This portion of the watershed should be a focus for protection efforts, especially since the Rollstone Road area now has subdivision projects under construction.
3. The City's Master Plan identified permanently protecting city-owned parcels next to Moran Park as a priority.
4. Open space, rural landscapes, and wildlife habitats in West Fitchburg are a protection priority while retaining accessibility for current and future residents. New subdivisions should employ Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) standards.
5. Nashua River and its banks are a protection priority that must be coordinated with the City's revitalization goals. The River also offers potential as the "jewel in the crown" of revitalization efforts. Plans for connecting a pedestrian and bicycle path linking Fitchburg and Leominster are coupled with establishing a greenway corridor and riverwalk, connecting a series of parks along the banks of the Nashua River. River advocates should work closely with the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority and the Planning Department to ensure that their efforts are mutually beneficial.
6. Phillips Brook, which flows besides Route 12 through Westminster into West Fitchburg to its confluence with the North Branch Nashua River, should be an immediate priority for protection. Zoned for residential use, the area is one of the most sensitive places in the City and among the least protected. It represents a Priority Habitat for Rare Species, has potential to flood, and it has a medium yield aquifer.

d) Leominster

From review of EO 418 Community Development Plan and Open Space Plan:

1. Participants recommended a trail system linking protected city-owned lands at North Monoosnoc Hill and Mount Elam Road with the Mid-State Trail via a trail connecting over South Monoosnoc Hill along the Notown Reservoir south to Parmenter Street and Rocky Pond. This proposal trail system would establish a loop with the existing Monoosnoc Ridge Trail.

2. The Open Space and Recreation Action Plan included a recommendation for a buffer of Fall Brook, the North Nashua River, Monoosnoc Brook and Reservoir Brook as greenways. A hiking trail to follow Fall Brook, the North Nashua and Monoosnoc Brook, closing a large loop connecting each terminus of the Monoosnoc Ridge Trail was also recommended. This proposal was supported by participants of the Public Forum. See Updated OS Plan for further details.

e) Westminster

None of the Priority Preservation Areas identified by the Town of Westminster are within the Wachusett Corridor.

Prime Agricultural Soils (from MRPC Montachusett Regional Strategic Framework Plan)

As shown previously in Table 1, there are 181.76 acres within the Wachusett Corridor which are currently in active agricultural use. However, as classified by MassGIS, additional acreage within the Corridor is considered potentially suitable for agricultural use. Figure 7 presents a GIS Map of Prime Agricultural Soils within the Wachusett Corridor. Given the importance of local and regional food security, economic opportunities provided by working landscapes and environmental benefits of locally/regionally grown foods (e.g. reduced energy usage with decreased transportation of food from outside the Region) lands that are identified as Prime Agricultural Soils have been identified as Regional Priority Preservation Areas.

The different types of Prime Agricultural Soils are classified as follows:

- Prime Farmland – Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses (the land could be cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other land, but not urban built-up land or water.
- Farmland of Statewide Importance – This is land, in addition to prime and unique farmlands, that is of statewide importance for the production of food, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops, as determined by the appropriate state agency or agencies. Generally, these include lands that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.
- Farmland of Unique Importance – Land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops. Examples of such crops are citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, fruit, vegetables.

Based on the GIS analysis, existing and potential farmland acreage within the Wachusett Corridor, shown in Figure 5.7, is classified as follows:

Prime farmland:	505.8 acres
Farmland of statewide importance:	2037.5 acres
Farmland of unique importance:	232.8 acres
TOTAL:	2776.1 acres

22.09% of all lands within the Wachusett Corridor are incorporated within locations of Prime Agricultural soils.

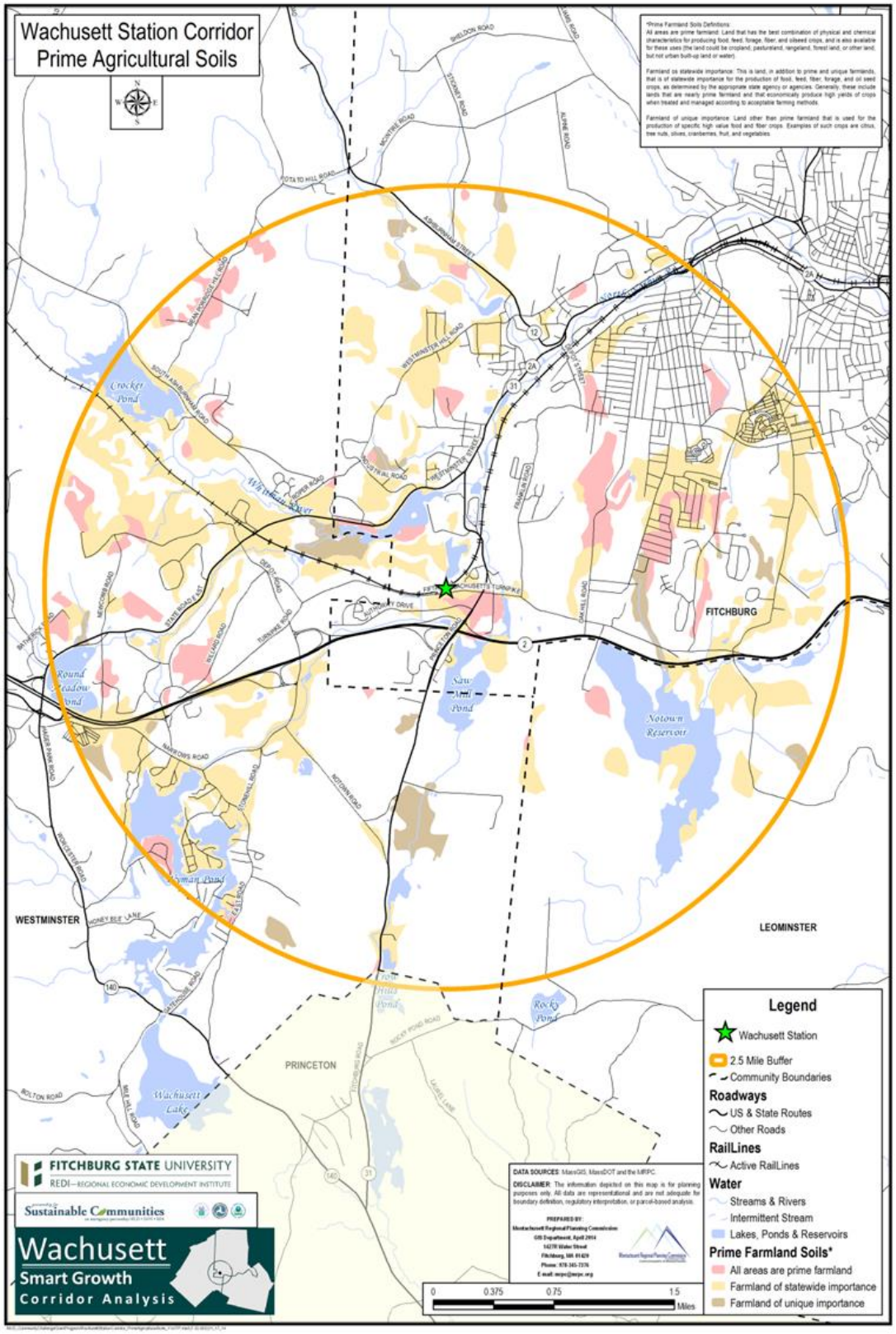


Figure 5.7: Prime Agricultural Soils

IV. Community Open Space Plans

Each of the Wachusett Corridor communities have prepared community open space plans to document available resources and identify actions to preserve open space and recreational areas. Each of these plans was recently updated and is currently going through an approval process. Therefore information provided in the following discussion should be considered current but "draft" and subject to revision pending final approval of the individual plans. Each of these draft plans was reviewed and taken into consideration in developing recommendations for the Wachusett Corridor.

a) Westminster

The purpose of Westminster's draft 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan is "to identify the most important parcels of land to preserve; and to use land acquisition in concert with other land preservation techniques to meet the Town's open space goals. The primary open space goals for the next seven years are to use traditional and innovative techniques for protecting additional open space, keeping pace with development."

Selected goals and strategies of the Plan with particular relevance to preserving open space and enhancing recreational resources in the Wachusett Corridor are as follow:

- ***Encourage a "working landscape" for Westminster***. This can be accomplished by ensuring that impediments to open space land uses such as agriculture/aquaculture, silviculture, and recreation are avoided. Further, the Town should strive to promote these land uses as a means of open space protection. Objectives to accomplish this goal include:
    - Protect those properties the Town has identified for preservation through Agricultural Preservation Restrictions and Conservation Restrictions.
    - Promote residential, commercial and industrial infill within existing developed areas to limit development in other areas thereby protecting rural character.
- ***Protect and preserve the natural and cultural resources that are vital to the Town's rural character.*** Based on the results of a citizen survey and forums conducted on behalf of the Town's Master Plan update project, Westminster citizens value the Town's rural character very highly. Preserving natural landscapes and cultural resources are critical components of the Town's rural character.
- ***Enhance recreational opportunities in Town and to keep pace with the growing population***. The Westminster Parks and Recreation Commission has identified several needs for the planning horizon of this document (7 years), including new space for athletic fields, and a children's playground in the Town Center. Objectives to accomplish this goal include:
    - Identify opportunities to develop a multi-use trail that will link major open space parcels, neighborhoods and schools.
    - Assist in the development and rerouting of the Midstate Trail in Westminster.
    - Secure protective easements on those portions of the Midstate Trail that occur on private property.
    - Create recreation amenities (biking-hiking-equestrian trails, camping sites and picnic sites) on those conservation properties that are suitable for such uses.
    - Work with the City of Fitchburg to allow public access of water bodies (Meetinghouse Pond, Mare Meadow Pond and Wachusett Reservoir) for passive recreation such as kayaking, canoeing and fishing.
    - Properly maintain our existing recreation facilities and secure additional parking for the ball-fields on South Street.
    - Investigate opportunities to create a trail network for snow-mobiles that could also be used for more passive recreation uses such as horseback riding and cross-country skiing.
- ***Identify and prioritize lands for acquisition.*** With almost 30% of the Town's total land area under permanent protection, Westminster has

protected the majority of its critical environmental resources. The Town is reluctant to exercise its right-of-first-refusal and purchase additional Chapter lands unless they achieve multiple open space/recreation goals described in their Open Space Plan. The more open space/recreation priorities a parcel meets, the more likely the Town will consider acquisition. One of the goals for this Plan is that the Town continues to identify and prioritize lands for acquisition based on the "multiple goods" strategy described in their Open Space Plan. Objectives to accomplish this goal include:

- Support the Midstate Trail Open Space Committee in the identification of priority land acquisition parcels along or abutting the Midstate Trail.
- Work toward a town-wide greenway that protects key wetlands, streams, and rivers.
- Continue to annually allocate funds for the purchase of open space and recreation areas.

- ***Advertise and raise awareness of Westminster's open space and recreation resources.*** The Economic Development chapter of the Westminster Master Plan has identified eco-tourism as one component of the Town's future economic development strategy. Towards that end, it will be important for the Town to advertise and raise awareness of its open space and recreation resources.
  - Develop a Town-wide signage program for open space and recreation areas.
  - Develop a brochure on Westminster's recreation opportunities and open space parcels. Put information on the Town's website.
  - Create maps and trail guides for those Town conservation areas that are suitable for public access.

b) Fitchburg

The City of Fitchburg's draft 2013-2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan states its overall goal as follows:

> "Fitchburg is a community with significant public open space and recreational resources. Protecting, maintaining, updating and utilizing these resources appropriately is essential to the city's efforts to provide a good quality of life for current and future residents, attract and retain businesses and promote the health of the environment and the community."

To accomplish this, the draft plan includes the following selected goals and objectives which are relevant to the Wachusett Corridor:

- Goal: Develop and Maintain a safe and sought after park system in Fitchburg that provide a variety of recreational activities for all residents.
  - Maintain existing playgrounds and open space areas.
  - Upgrade facilities to current standards as funds allow.
  - Continue recreational opportunities at city parks for individuals of all abilities and ages.
- Goal: Provide walking and biking paths for recreation and commuting.
  - Maintain and improve sidewalks and walking paths in developed areas, including accessibility improvements.
  - Finalize Fitchburg's Complete Streets Resolution
  - Install sidewalks and bike lanes where they do not exist, particularly those areas that access schools, parks, trails and shopping clusters and design thoughtful connections between highly used areas.
  - Keep the map of citywide walking trails in Fitchburg updated and create good "take away" trail maps for trail users.
  - Complete the Steamline Trail in West Fitchburg for walking and bicycling.
- Goal: Provide better access to recreational opportunities.
  - Improve marketing to increase awareness of Fitchburg's park and open space system.
  - Improve marketing of organized recreational and cultural opportunities provided at Fitchburg parks and open space.
  - Improve public transportation to city park system.

  - Improve signage to and within city parks.
- Goal: Protect and promote Fitchburg's watershed.
  - Continue to improve access to and awareness of the Nashua River and other water bodies as city assets.
- Goal: Develop and maintain partnerships among the city and its schools, other community organizations and residents by encouraging public-private ventures.
  - Continue to work with groups such as the Montachusett Public Health Network, Montachusett Regional Trail Coalition, North County Land Trust, Mt. Grace Land Trust and the Mass. Audubon Society to protect open space and develop walking trails.
  - Continue partnerships with agencies such as the Montachusett Opportunity Council, Inc. to support efforts like Fun 'n FITchburg whose efforts help create a safe and sought after park system in Fitchburg.
- Goal: Protect, promote, preserve open space and wildlife habitat.
  - Properly maintain city owned forested areas.
  - Implement or enforce regulations to limit sprawl.
  - Work with local, regional and state organizations to preserve open space and wildlife habitat.
  - Continue and expand environmental programming in parks and trails.

c) Leominster

The City of Leominster is currently updating their Open Space and Recreation Plan. The draft Leominster Open Space and Recreation Plan 2013-2020 presents the following community vision for open space and recreation within the City:

> "Leominster is an active community where all its children and adults can find a broad range of opportunities to recreate and where the natural environment is appreciated and cared for by all residents. This Vision begins with a commitment by our City's leaders to plan for and promote more active and healthy lifestyles for all of our residents and a commitment to providing leadership, direction and passion in the stewardship of our natural resources and to sustain and enhance their value to the community."

To achieve this vision, the draft plan includes the following selected goals and objectives which are relevant to the Wachusett Corridor:

- Goal: Make our recreational areas more attractive and accessible to encourage increased use by local residents.
  - Address the accessibility issues at all recreation sites and on our trails within the City.
  - Explore the siting and construction of one or more dog parks within the City.
  - Create a signage program that brings consistency, accuracy, style and usefulness to signage at our parks, on our trails and on our recreation lands.
- Goal: Increase the range of recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities within the City.
  - Develop a blue trail (a water trail) on the North Nashua River.
- Goal: Expand and enhance the trail network within the City of Leominster.
  - Explore completion of the greater Monoosnoc Trail loop around the City tying the various trails together within the City into a comprehensive network.
  - Complete the Monoosnoc Brook Trail so it connects from Pierce Pond to the North Nashua River.
  - Continue efforts to repair, re-route, re-construct trails and fire roads on the watershed lands within the City.
  - Develop a trail vision for the City with the help of the Leominster trail stewards.
  - Extend the existing trail network with additions in the Sholan Farms area and the north Monoosnoc Hills region.
  - Continue capacity building work with the Leominster trail stewards to enable

them to develop and maintain the City's trail network.

- Goal: Make Leominster a recreational destination within the state
    - Explore development of a collaborative relationship with the Great Wolf Resorts to make trail connections from the resort to the Leominster Trail Network around Notown Reservoir
    - Make trail connections to other communities.
    - Explore the creation of a mountain bike park using lands from Leominster State Forest, the Leominster watershed lands and other protected open space to develop a formal mountain bike park. Explore building a trail connection from the new West Fitchburg train station to open space lands south of Route 2 in Leominster and Fitchburg.
- Goal: Take a more pro-active stance with regard to the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles.
    - Explore what it would take to make Leominster more "walkable" and "bikeable".
- Goal: Acquire key parcels of land to enhance our parks, open space inventory and watershed lands.
    - Acquire key watershed parcels especially around Notown Reservoir and the Jungle Road well fields.
    - Explore the addition of open space parcels currently owned by the Leominster Land Trust to the City's holdings.

V. Open Space Preservation

As is the case nearly anywhere, there is a need to balance a variety of land uses within the Wachusett Corridor to support a healthy, diverse, and economically prosperous community. Given the finite nature of real estate, there are frequently conflicting demands placed on limited available resources which often strain the ability of a community to preserve its open space. This can be particularly difficult in an area such as the Wachusett Corridor which is likely to experience a variety of development pressures resulting from the increase in local activity resulting from the development of the Wachusett Station. As discussed in the preceding sections of this Plan, the communities of Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster have all developed plans to identify open space priorities. Yet it is a significant challenge for these communities to obtain the resources necessary to achieve these priorities and to acquire and/or preserve open space. However, there are a number of tools which are available to Massachusetts communities to help them in their efforts to preserve and/or acquire open space, some of which may be appropriate for the Wachusett Corridor. In all cases, further investigation into these opportunities is necessary to identify specific needs and the most appropriate program(s) to address those needs.

Some of the primary programs for consideration include the following:

1. ***Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)*** – TDR is a regulatory strategy that employs private market forces to protect open space and target new development to appropriate locations. First, open space is permanently protected for water supply, agricultural, habitat, recreational, or other purposes via the transfer of some or all of the development that would otherwise have occurred in these sensitive places to more suitable locations. Second, other locations, such as city and town centers or vacant and underutilized properties, become more vibrant and successful as the development potential from the protected resource areas is transferred to them. In essence, development rights are "transferred" from one district (the "sending district") to another (the "receiving district"). Communities using TDR are generally shifting development densities within the community to achieve both open space and economic goals without changing their overall development potential. TDR needs to be incorporated into the local community zoning bylaws to be applied.
2. ***Chapter 61*** – Under Massachusetts General Law "Chapter 61," landowners can voluntarily

agree to keep land in forestry, agriculture, or open space and recreational use for a specified period of time in exchange for a reduction in local property taxes. As discussed above, there are already a number of Chapter 61 properties in the Wachusett Corridor. By obtaining property tax relief, landowners are able to continue to hold and use land for open space purposes, rather than development. In exchange, municipalities receive a right of first refusal to purchase the land at fair-market value if it faces the prospect of being converted to another use during the enrollment period. There are three programs under Chapter 61 – Chapter 61 for forestry lands, Chapter 61A for agricultural lands, and Chapter 61B for open space and recreational lands. Each program has unique requirements relevant to minimum acreage (generally 5 to 10 acres), specific property tax savings, and other provisions.

3. ***Community Preservation Act (CPA)*** – CPA is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA also helps strengthen the state and local economies by expanding housing opportunities and construction jobs for the Commonwealth's workforce, and by supporting the tourism industry through preservation of the Commonwealth's historic and natural resources. CPA allows Massachusetts communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation. Municipalities must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. Community preservation monies are raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge of not more than 3 percent of the tax levy against real property. The state supplements these local funds with matching funds although the amount of the match has decreased in recent years. The legislative body (town meeting or city council) determines how the money will be spent. The only stipulation is that, each year, at least 10 percent must be set aside for housing, 10 percent for historic preservation, and 10 percent for open space. The remaining 70 percent can be spent on any of those needs or on recreation needs. Funds can also be reserved for future use but all funds must be spent locally.
4. ***State Funding for Acquisition of Conservation and Recreation Land*** – The Division of Conservation Services (DCS) in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs offers a variety of grant programs to municipalities for the acquisition of conservation and recreation land, as well as the development and renovation of parks:
   - ***Our Common Backyards Program*** – The Our Common Backyards Grant Program is a new grant program aimed at building a new playground or spray park in each of the Commonwealth's 54 cities. The program will help cities create or renovate parks in the neighborhoods that need them most.
   - ***Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Fund*** – The Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund (P.L. 88-578) provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development and renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas. Municipalities, special districts and state agencies are eligible to apply. Nearly 4000 acres have been acquired and hundreds of parks renovated using the $95.6 million that Massachusetts has received from the state side portion of the federal program since 1965. DCS administers the state side Land & Water Conservation Fund program in Massachusetts. Access by the general public is required.
   - ***Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program*** – The LAND Program (formerly the Self-Help Program) was established in 1961 to assist municipal conservation commissions acquiring land for natural resource and passive outdoor recreation purposes. Lands acquired may include wildlife, habitat, trails, unique natural, historic or cultural resources, water resources, forest, and farm land. Compatible passive outdoor recreational uses such as hiking, fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, bird

observation and the like are encouraged. Access by the general public is required.

- ***Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program*** – The PARC Program (formerly the Urban Self-Help Program) was established in 1977 to assist cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. Any town with a population of 35,000 or more year-round residents, or any city regardless of size, that has an authorized park /recreation commission is eligible to participate in the program. Communities that do not meet the population criteria listed above may still qualify under the "small town," "regional," or "statewide" project provisions of the program.
- ***Conservation Partnership Grant*** – The Conservation Partnership Grants provide funding to assist non-public, not-for-profit corporations in acquiring interests in lands suitable for conservation or recreation purposes.

VI. Goal, Objectives, and Strategies for the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan

The following goal, objectives, and strategies are based on a review of available data, current land use, identification of potential open space and resource enhancements, and opportunities to improve open space and recreational resources in the corridor. This should be considered a starting point in the implementation process, which will be highly dependent upon the ability of the Region to enlist the appropriate partners to follow through on specific strategies.

a) Wachusett Corridor Open Space and Recreation Goal:

Support the use, preservation, and enhancement of open space and recreation resources in the Wachusett Corridor in coordination with the establishment of the Wachusett Station and the extension of commuter rail service on the Fitchburg Branch of the MBTA Commuter Rail network.

b) Wachusett Corridor Open Space and Recreation Objectives:

1. ***Preservation of Open Space and Recreational Resources:*** Protect and conserve open space, sensitive environmental resources, and recreational facilities and resources to enhance the quality of life for area residents and visitors.
2. ***Access to Open Space and Recreational Resources***: Facilitate improved access to open space and recreational resources within and adjacent to the Wachusett Corridor. Particular emphasis should be on enhancing access for lower income populations.
3. ***Access to Wachusett Station:*** Maintain and expand the regional trail network and facilitate connections to improve access to and from Wachusett Station for non-motorized transportation modes, specifically pedestrian and bicycle access.
4. ***Public Information about Regional Open Space and Recreational Resources:*** Increase public awareness of the Region's open space and recreation assets to potential visitors from within and outside of the Region.

c) Recommended Strategies:

1. ***Establish a network of sidewalks and paths to allow safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the Wachusett Station and connections to adjacent residential and commercial areas.*** Safe access by pedestrians and bicyclists necessitates a clearly defined network of sidewalks and paths that provide direct routing, safe crossings and are protected from vehicular traffic. Given available right-of-way and location of high volume roadways within the corridor, establishment of this network will require further analysis to identify optimal alignments and configurations.
2. ***Provide public transit/shuttle service between Wachusett Station and nearby recreation areas.*** Examine the operating schedule of train service and enhance the schedule as appropriate to accommodate use by recreational travelers to the region. This will require coordination with MART and the MBTA to provide adequate service and schedule

coverage to accommodate the needs of recreational travelers. These travelers would presumably have different scheduling needs than work commute travelers which would likely require increased service coverage on weekends.

3. ***Provide safe and secure bicycle parking facilities at Wachusett Station and other primary bicycle destinations within the Wachusett Corridor.*** To fully accommodate bicycle utilization as a viable transportation mode within the corridor, safe and secure bicycle parking must be available at primary activity centers. This could include bicycle racks and/or lockers, depending upon the site. In the case of bike lockers, equipment could be partially or fully financed through rental fees.
4. ***Allow/promote bikes on all modes of public transportation, including buses, shuttles, and trains.*** Restrictions on bicycles on public transportation services in the corridor could potentially impede the use of bicycles as a viable mode of transportation. Efforts should be made to identify restrictions and find means to accommodate bicycle access that does not create a nuisance or safety hazard for transit operators or passengers.
5. ***Define and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to Steamline and Burma Road Trails: Conduct a trail corridor study to facilitate access to the trail from Wachusett Station.*** In conjunction with Strategy #1 above, these two trails provide the greatest opportunity for access to the station from Fitchburg's residential community to the north. Efforts should be made to identify feasible connections and trail improvements to establish a functional and safe means of pedestrian access.
6. ***Define and improve pedestrian connections to Midstate Trail:*** Conduct a trail corridor study to facilitate access to the trail from Wachusett Station. Similar to Strategy #5, efforts should be made to identify feasible connections and trail improvements to enable access to the Midstate Trail, a potentially desirable route which could be utilized by both day- and overnight-hikers. Provide directional signage from the new station to the Midstate Trail via Turnpike Road/ Tuckerman Lane to direct foot-traffic.
7. ***Explore opportunities to establish a mountain bike destination within or in proximity to Leominster State Forest that provides coordinated access for cyclists including allowance for bikes on trains and connecting trails between Wachusett Station and Leominster State Forest***. Key implementation steps could include the following actions:
    - **a.** Coordination/collaboration with MBTA, MassDOT, DCR, EOEEA, and City of Leominster
    - **b.** Design assistance from New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA)
    - **c.** Identification of Route 2 crossing options (overpass or underpass) which would be accessible to bicyclists and hikers. Would require collaboration with MassDOT, City of Leominster, and possibly DCR.
    - **d.** Other considerations include preservation of open space and recreation areas in vicinity of Notown Reservoir, improvements to Leominster State Forest trail network, coordination with local hospitality and tourist bureaus, possibly tie-in with new Great Wolf resort, and opportunities to provide bike rental or bike sharing services.
8. ***Assist the Wachusett Corridor communities in the identification of appropriate properties for preservation and identify appropriate tools and/or funding programs to support their efforts. Provide assistance as appropriate to pursue these programs***. This could be accomplished in conjunction with the updating of the Open Space Plans of the three Wachusett municipalities.
9. ***Create and market a "brand" to publicize and promote recreation opportunities in the Wachusett Corridor.*** Establish name recognition for the Wachusett Corridor and a profile to identify the area and promote its resources. Include a logo, trail and landmark maps, a website, publicity campaigns, and

coordination/tie-ins with other environmental and outdoor recreation organizations such as the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), the Nashua River Watershed Association, the Sierra Club, Nashoba Valley Peddlers, and the New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA).

10. ***Collaborate with commercial recreational enterprises within the Region including Great Wolf and Wachusett Mountain to promote their facilities and provide coordinated access and possible marketing strategies.*** This should be pursued in conjunction with the "branding" of the area and could produce synergistic benefits for all entities involved.
11. ***Assure that all facilities developed under this plan or in association with the development of the new station and rail service are constructed and maintained to preserve sensitive environmental resources.*** This includes meeting appropriate "Green" construction and development standards (e.g., Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design or LEED standards), and assuring that construction is performed in accordance with local, state, and Federal environmental regulations and policies.

Section VI: Services and Facilities Element

I. Introduction

The following section describes community services and facilities which are either located within the Wachusett Corridor or are available to the residents of the corridor as well as services and facilities which may be lacking. For the purpose of this facilities and services analysis, the focus is on project impacts within the defined Wachusett Corridor study area. However, some data used in the analysis is not available at the study area level. In those cases, data may be reported at the community level. Many of the services and facilities which serve the Wachusett Corridor and are described in this section are identified in Figure 6.1.

II. Services and Facilities

a) Schools

There are a total of eight educational facilities for children in preschool through high school within the study area. This does not include schools outside the study area which children who live in the study area may attend. In 2000, 32% of the population within the study area was between the ages of 0 and 19. 26% of those children were between the ages of 5 and 19 (2000 Census Summary, ESRI BAO). In 2010, 26% of the population within the study is made up of children ages 0-19. 19% of those children are between the ages of 5 and 19 (2010 Census Profile, ESRI BAO). Based on this data, between 2000 and 2010, there has been a decline in the amount of school age children within the study area which suggests that the schools are not facing increasing enrollment and therefore should not have capacity constraints.

b) Community Centers and Services

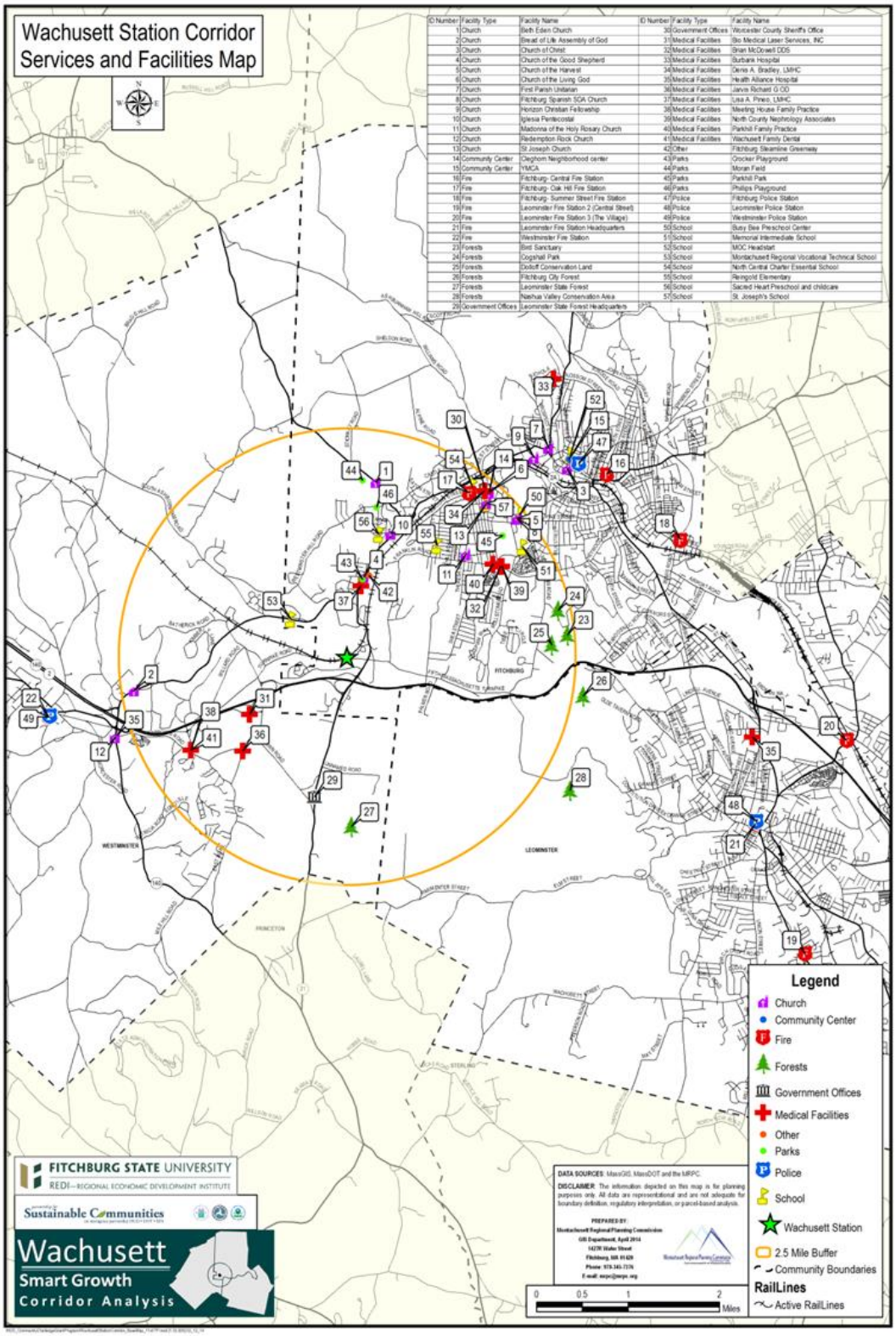
There are four prominent community centers that help people in various ways within the study area. The Cleghorn Neighborhood center is located within the study area on Fairmount St. and provides providing bilingual and bicultural activities and events. Programs include: Youth Development, Free Continuing Education for Adults, Family Services, resident led Neighborhood Revitalization, and Civic Engagement . There is also a YMCA on Wallace Ave. in Fitchburg which provides after school activities for youth throughout Fitchburg as well as spaces for physical activity. Amenities include: Indoor pool, wellness center, gymnasium, two group exercise studios, racquetball court, family locker room, and steam and sauna rooms in designated locker areas. Community services provided by the YMCA include Childcare, Education and Leadership, Swim, Sports, & Play, Camp, Family Time, Health & Fitness, Sports & Recreation, and Social Responsibility Programs .

LUK is another non-profit organization that provides services to the community, including counseling, prevention and advising support as well as youth services such as one-on-one youth mentoring and a site based program where children can go after school for various activities . LUK also provides Prevention, Counseling, Placement, and Support Services. The main office is located at 545 Westminster St, Fitchburg. LUK also operates a behavioral health clinic at 99 Day Street, Fitchburg.

The Montachusett Opportunity Council (MOC) provides a variety of services, including:

- Nutrition and Wellness: Community Health Education, Youth Development, CARE Services, Safe and Healthy Environment, WIC, and Elder Nutrition programs
- Childcare and head start: Head start, Family Child Care Homes, Toddler programs, School Age Program, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Program
- Housing and Community Services: Energy and Environmental Services, Housing and Emergency Services, Financial Education/ Asset Development, Youth Services, and Fitchburg Family Connections Coalition

The Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, LUK, and MOC all cater to low income households and other disadvantaged populations in the community.



ID Number	Facility Type	Facility Name	ID Number	Facility Type	Facility Name
1	Church	Beth Eden Church	30	Government Offices	Worcester County Sheriff's Office
2	Church	Bread of Life Assembly of God	31	Medical Facilities	Bio Medical Laser Services, INC
3	Church	Church of Christ	32	Medical Facilities	Brian McDowell DDS
4	Church	Church of the Good Shepherd	33	Medical Facilities	Burbank Hospital
5	Church	Church of the Harvest	34	Medical Facilities	Denis A. Bradley, LMHC
6	Church	Church of the Living God	35	Medical Facilities	Health Alliance Hospital
7	Church	First Parish Unitarian	36	Medical Facilities	Jarvis Richard G OD
8	Church	Fitchburg Spanish SDA Church	37	Medical Facilities	Lisa A. Pineo, LMHC
9	Church	Horizon Christian Fellowship	38	Medical Facilities	Meeting House Family Practice
10	Church	Iglesia Pentecostal	39	Medical Facilities	North County Nephrology Associates
11	Church	Madonna of the Holy Rosary Church	40	Medical Facilities	Parkhill Family Practice
12	Church	Redemption Rock Church	41	Medical Facilities	Wachusett Family Dental
13	Church	St Joseph Church	42	Other	Fitchburg Steamline Greenway
14	Community Center	Cleghorn Neighborhood center	43	Parks	Crocker Playground
15	Community Center	YMCA	44	Parks	Moran Field
16	Fire	Fitchburg- Central Fire Station	45	Parks	Parkhill Park
17	Fire	Fitchburg- Oak Hill Fire Station	46	Parks	Philips Playground
18	Fire	Fitchburg- Summer Street Fire Station	47	Police	Fitchburg Police Station
19	Fire	Leominster Fire Station 2 (Central Street)	48	Police	Leominster Police Station
20	Fire	Leominster Fire Station 3 (The Village)	49	Police	Westminster Police Station
21	Fire	Leominster Fire Station Headquarters	50	School	Busy Bee Preschool Center
22	Fire	Westminster Fire Station	51	School	Memorial Intermediate School
23	Forests	Bird Sanctuary	52	School	MOC Headstart
24	Forests	Cogshall Park	53	School	Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School
25	Forests	Doloff Conservation Land	54	School	North Central Charter Essential School
26	Forests	Fitchburg City Forest	55	School	Reingold Elementary
27	Forests	Leominster State Forest	56	School	Sacred Heart Preschool and childcare
28	Forests	Nashua Valley Conservation Area	57	School	St. Joseph's School
29	Government Offices	Leominster State Forest Headquarters			

Figure 6.1: Services and Facilities Serving the Wachusett Corridor

c) Religious Facilities

There are approximately ten Christian churches within the study area. There are also four churches close to but outside the study area where people from inside the study area may go to worship. There is also a Buddhist temple located outside of the study area in Fitchburg at 159 Richardson Rd Fitchburg, MA 01420. There are no Jewish synagogues located within the study area although there is a synagogue in Fitchburg, Congregation Agudas Achim, on Boutelle St. and in Leominster, Congregation Agudat Achim, located on Washington St.

d) Medical Facilities

There are no hospitals within the Study Area however there are hospitals nearby which serve the overall region including Burbank Hospital in Fitchburg and the Health Alliance Hospital in Leominster. Within the study area there are also two dental offices, an eye doctor, two family practices, two psychotherapists, an office for laser vision services as well as a nephrology office.

e) Government Offices

There are two government offices within the study area: the Leominster State Forest headquarters and the Worcester County Sheriff's office. Other municipal and state government offices are located outside of the study area.

f) Parks and Recreational Facilities

There are numerous locations in the study area for outdoor activities. These include:

- Parks
  - Crocker Playground
  - Philips Playground
  - Moran Field
  - Parkhill Park
- Forests
  - Leominster State Forest
  - Fitchburg City Forest
  - Nashua Valley Conservation Area
  - Dolloff Conservation Land
  - Bird Sanctuary
  - Cogshall Park
- Hiking Trails
  - Fitchburg Steamline Greenway

Further information on these parks and recreational facilities is provided in the Open Space and Recreation element of this Smart Growth Plan.

g) Emergency Services

Police

The Westminster Town Police Department is located at 7 South St in Westminster. The chief is Salvatore Abert who leads a total of 13 full time police officers. The Fitchburg Police Department is located at 20 Elm St. The chief is Robert DeMoura who leads 73 sworn officers and 5 non-sworn personnel. The Leominster Police Department is located at 29 Church Street in Leominster. Robert Healey is the chief of police for Leominster. There is also Massachusetts State Police presence in the study area.

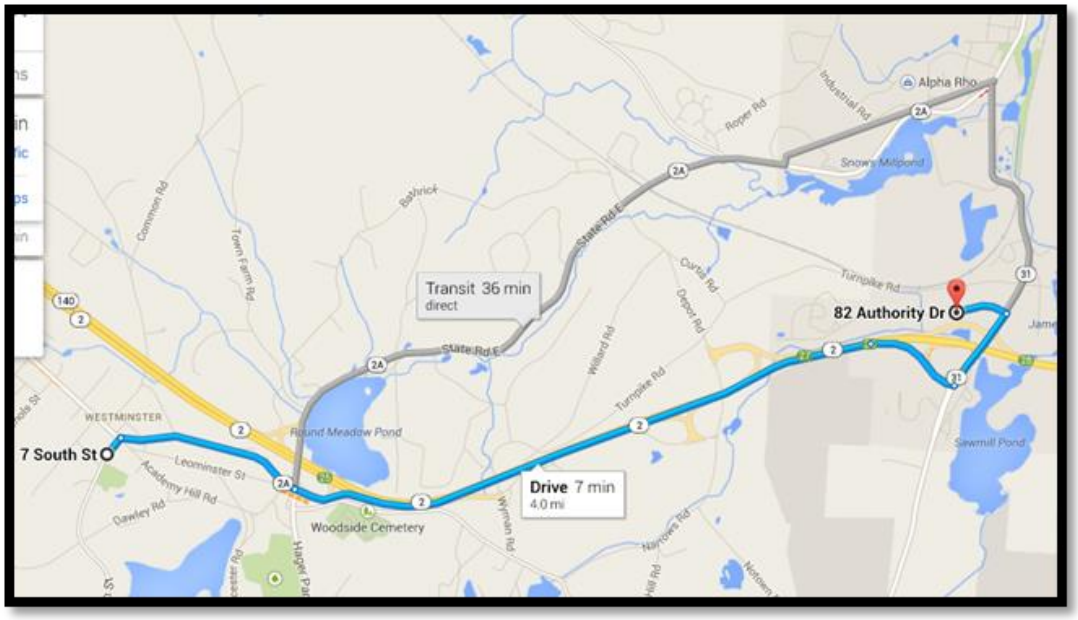
Fire

The Westminster Fire Department is led by Acting Chief Kevin Nivola. The station is located at 7 South St in Westminster. The fire department and EMS personnel include:

- 6 fulltime fire fighters
- 15 on call fire fighters
  - Shortage of fully trained on call fire fighters is a problem
- 6 Per-Diem fire fighters
  - Do not live in Westminster

Equipment includes:

- Rescue Truck
- Ambulance
- 4 Engine Trucks
- 1 Tower Truck
- 3 vehicles
- Radio equipment & Breathing Apparatus

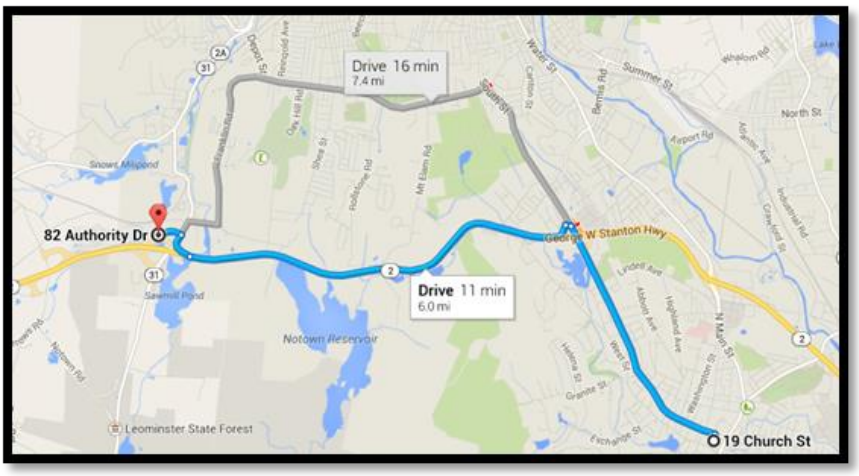


The expected drive time from the Westminster fire station to the Wachusett Station is 7 minutes, not accounting for changes in traffic.

The Leominster Fire Department is located at 19 Church Street in Leominster with stations at 598 Central St and at the intersection of Main St and Hamilton. There are a total of 80 personnel.

Equipment includes:

- 8 Engine Trucks
- 2 Ladder Trucks
- 1 Heavy Rescue
- 3 Ambulances
- 1 Bucket Truck
- 8 Vehicles
- 1 Trailer

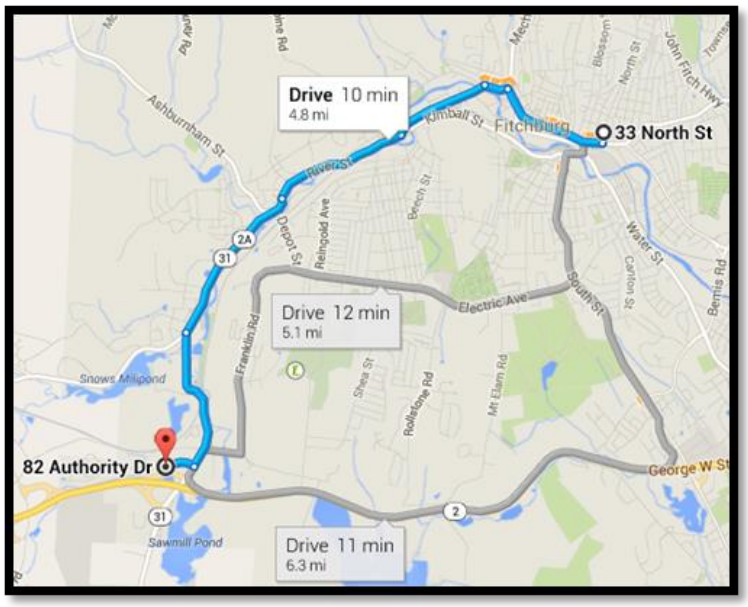


The expected drive time from the Church St fire station to the Wachusett Station is 11 minutes, not accounting for changes in traffic.

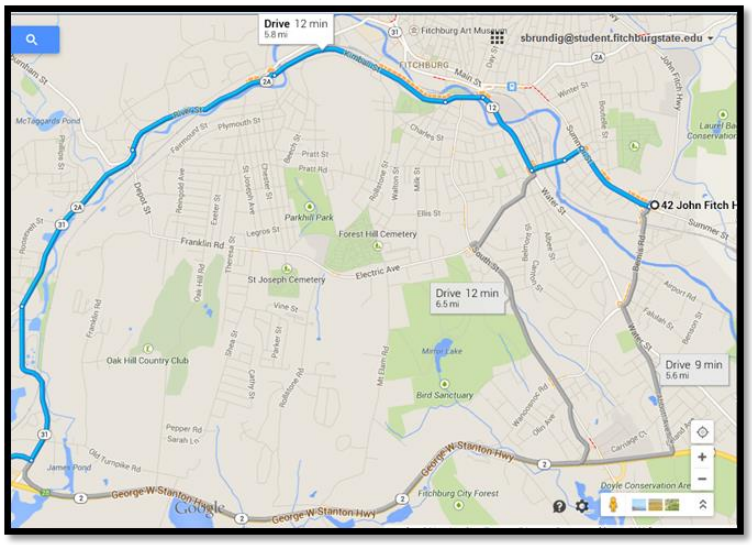
The Fitchburg Fire Department is led by Kevin Roy. Headquarters are located at 33 North St with other stations being located on Summer St and Fairmount St. There are a total of 76 personnel.

Equipment includes:

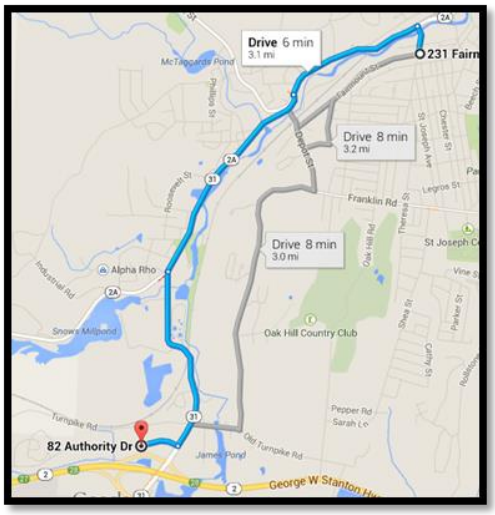
- 7 Engine Trucks
- 2 Tower Trucks
- 1 Ambulance
- 12 other vehicles
- 1 trailer
- 1 boat



The expected drive time from the North Street fire station to the Wachusett Station is 10 minutes, not accounting for changes in traffic.



The expected drive time from the Summer St fire station to the Wachusett Station is 12 minutes, not accounting for changes in traffic.



The expected drive time from the Fairmount St fire station to the Wachusett Station is 6 minutes, not accounting for changes in traffic. This station appears to be the closest in terms of drive time to the center of the Wachusett Corridor.

e) Water

Locations in Westminster get their water from the City of Fitchburg. The City of Leominster allows locations outside the city to connect to the Leominster water system (but at a higher cost) although the portion of Leominster within the Wachusett Corridor is served by private wells. The city of Fitchburg provides city water to local properties.

f) Sewer

Westminster has a municipal sewer system which has been expanded over the past decade. However there is a need for further expansion if the community is to grow. Capacity at the Whitman River Pump Station is one of the biggest issues going forward with business and residential growth in Westminster . There are plans for expansion however funding is an issue. Fitchburg processes up to 320,000 Gallons/Day of Westminster sewer discharge. This has increased by 46% between 2000 and 2011. New lots cannot connect to the Westminster sewage line due to a moratorium put in place in 2003 after the Whitman River Pumping Station started to exceed its capacity during peak flow times. There is also an issue with infiltration/inflow (I/I) in the system. I/I is a dilution of sewage being treated and lowers the efficiency of sewage treatment plants. The system's rate of I/I is currently 40% which increases costs at the Whitman River Pumping Station and the cost of having sewage treated by Fitchburg plants. It also prohibits new developments from connecting to the sewer system.

Fitchburg has municipal wastewater treatment facilities to treat residential, commercial, and industrial wastewater. The system also provides treatment capacity to Lunenburg and Westminster. The portion of Leominster in the Wachusett Corridor uses septic treatment for waste water.

g) Public Transit

There is public transportation available through MART including a fixed route system and a demand-response system (Dial-a-MART). The Transportation Element provides further information regarding public transit service in the corridor.

h) Other Community Services

The Twin Cities Community Development Corporation (CDC) promotes neighborhood leadership and civic engagement, affordable housing development, homeownership and small business development. Their committees include Real Estate Development, Economic Development, Personnel and Finance, Resource Development, and Neighborhood Revitalization. Their mission and vision is as follows:

> "The Twin Cities Community Development Corporation (CDC) is a membership organization led by the diverse resident and business communities of Fitchburg and Leominster. We invest in and organize the residents of these cities to help build assets such as quality housing, good jobs, strong businesses and effective leaders. We envision healthy neighborhoods where residents choose to live, work, and invest, thereby forming a powerful, unified community."

Table 6.1: Municipal Property Tax Rates

Municipality	Average Single Family Value	Average Single Family Tax Bill
Fitchburg	$155,241	$3,078
Leominster	$209,709	$3,961
Westminster	$229,939	$4,364

III. Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster Property Taxes

As shown in Table 6.1, Fitchburg taxes Residential, Commercial, and Industrial properties at different rates Leominster and Westminster taxes property at a single rate. The Residential Tax Rate in Fitchburg is almost a $1 more than Leominster and Westminster. This higher rate is possibly due to the lower Average Single Family Home Value (Table 6.2). Regardless, Fitchburg has a lower Average Single Family Tax Bill than Leominster and Westminster (Table 6.1). It is noted that the commercial tax rate for Fitchburg is substantially higher than either Leominster or Westminster and could be a potential impediment to new commercial development in the community.

Table 6.2: Average Property Value and Tax Bill

Municipality	Tax Rates			
	Residential	**Commercial**	**Industrial**	**Personal Property**
Fitchburg	$19.83	$26.32	$26.32	$26.32
Leominster	$18.89	$18.89	$18.89	$18.89
Westminster	$18.98	$18.98	$18.98	$18.98

IV. Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations

a) Goals:

The overall goal for Services and Facilities in the Wachusett Corridor is:

- To provide excellent, cost effective, accessible facilities, services, and programs reflecting values respectful of our ages and our diversity, which, through collaboration, contribute to a high quality safe, civil, healthy, and sustainable community.

b) Objectives:

- Deliver high quality education from pre-school through grade 12.
- Provide high quality facilities, services, and programs that serve the needs of all the people in and around the Wachusett Corridor.
- Maintain and enhance municipal infrastructure and facilities in the Wachusett Corridor.
- Anticipate, plan and budget for any large projects in response to any projected growing demand on municipal services in the Wachusett Corridor.
- Promote environmentally sound practices in services and facilities in the Wachusett Corridor.
- Continue to deliver high quality public safety services in the Wachusett Corridor.

c) Recommendations:

1. Regionalization of Services and Consolidation: Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster should explore any regionalization opportunities with each other and neighboring towns that have the potential to reduce operating costs. One resource that could support these efforts would be MRPC's District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program. The DLTA program, funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, enables MRPC staff to provide technical assistance at no cost to its 22 communities to encourage municipalities to work together to achieve and/or enhance cost-effective service delivery. Examples of recent eligible DLTA projects categorized as municipal partnerships included but were not limited to:

   - Shared services (e.g., regional lockup, regional 911 centers, other public safety and emergency response responsibilities, information technology/data management, school district/regional school district analysis, shared professional and administrative services, agreements to operate shared waste disposal/recycling facilities/programs);
   - Collective purchasing (if such purchasing cannot be otherwise accomplished using statewide contracts or can be achieved regionally for less than the state contract price, or items proposed for purchase are specific to municipal and/or school district agreements); and
   - Cost saving measures that benefit more than one municipality.

   It should be noted that DLTA funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is not guaranteed each year, and applications must be discussed in a public meeting and signed by the Mayor or Chair of the Board of Selectmen.

2. Establish a Wachusett Corridor Implementation Committee: The Corridor group should establish an Implementation Committee which can facilitate implementation of Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan's recommendations. It was suggested that a subcommittee could be created under MRPC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee. This Committee could also periodically brief the Board of Selectmen of Leominster, Fitchburg, and Westminster on the Plan's progress, on a quarterly basis or twice a year. Responsible Municipal Entities would be the Planning Board in consultation with the City

Councils, Boards of Selectmen and Master Plan Committees.

3. Water/Sewer System Expansion Policy to Promote Business and Enhance the Tax Base: The Committee should encourage commercial and industrial in appropriate locations to enhance the tax base of the Wachusett Corridor communities. Ways to accomplish this are discussed and recommended in the Economic Development Element of the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis. Importantly, in terms of municipal services, it should be recognized that the presence of infrastructure such as municipal water/sewer often dictates where development can take place in a community and how intensive that development is. Westminster is unable at this time to accommodate an increase in business activity and their resulting wastewater needs. Fitchburg is already processing sewage from other towns, including Westminster, and capacity for growth has to be determined.
4. Without adequate support systems in place in good locations for business, it will be difficult for the Corridor, especially the Westminster portion, to compete for new commercial and industrial enterprises seeking a home in North Central Massachusetts. Moreover, it will be increasingly difficult to retain existing businesses in the town if roads, water and sewer lines, emergency services, and technology services are not improved and maintained properly. Therefore, it is recommended that the Committee establish a concise plan for infrastructure improvements that sets as a priority, the provision of services to key economic development sites in the community. This Infrastructure Plan should be incorporated into the Capital Improvements Planning process so that important projects are considered well in advance of their necessity and so that appropriate and adequate sources of funding are sought to help pay for these projects. It should have a prioritization schedule and a corresponding development schedule and upgrades and expansions should be targeted to those areas planned for future development.
5. Water/Sewer System Expansion Policy to Promote Business and Enhance the Tax Base: The Committee should encourage commercial and industrial in appropriate locations to enhance the tax base of the Wachusett Corridor communities. Ways to accomplish this are discussed and recommended in the Economic Development Element of the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis. Importantly, in terms of municipal services, it should be recognized that the presence of infrastructure such as municipal water/sewer often dictates where development can take place in a community and how intensive that development is. Westminster is unable at this time to accommodate an increase in business activity and their resulting wastewater needs. Fitchburg is already processing sewage from other towns, including Westminster, and capacity for growth has to be determined.

Without adequate support systems in place in good locations for business, it will be difficult for the Corridor, especially the Westminster portion, to compete for new commercial and industrial enterprises seeking a home in North Central Massachusetts. Moreover, it will be increasingly difficult to retain existing businesses in the town if roads, water and sewer lines, emergency services, and technology services are not improved and maintained properly. Therefore, it is recommended that the Committee establish a concise plan for infrastructure improvements that sets as a priority, the provision of services to key economic development sites in the community. This Infrastructure Plan should be incorporated into the Capital Improvements Planning process so that important projects are considered well in advance of their necessity and so that appropriate and adequate sources of funding are sought to help pay for these projects. It should have a prioritization schedule and a corresponding development schedule and upgrades and expansions should be targeted to those areas planned for future development.

6. Continue Efforts to Coordinate Municipal and Community Services to the Benefit of Corridor Residents: The Committee should create

opportunities for residents in the Wachusett Corridor to provide feedback to municipal officials by occasionally polling them on their preferences. This attempt to create two-way communication between citizens and municipal government could also include a combination of tools, including: periodic newsletters, voluntary e-mail notification, announcements at public meetings and events, signage in prominent public places, an annual Corridor Meeting mailer, opinion surveys (both paper and digital), open houses, public forums and other opportunities for two-way communication not yet considered. The Responsible Municipal Entities include the City Councils and Boards of Selectmen in conjunction with all of the municipal departments and boards/commissions/committees that serve the Corridor.

7. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the Wachusett Corridor and Implement the Process: The city of Fitchburg has a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that was adopted in 1998 and will soon need to be updated. Westminster is currently updating their Master Plan which will also include a CIP. Leominster maintains a Five Year Capital Asset Departmental Request list that is updated annually. A CIP is an on-going capital expenditure plan that identifies upcoming capital needs, schedules their purchase, and outlines how they will be purchased. Such plans usually look six-to-ten years down the road in terms of identifying capital needs. A capital need is a tangible item (equipment, building, etc.) that is above and beyond a municipal department's regular operating budget. A CIP can have the following benefits:
   - Facilitate the coordination between capital needs and departmental operating budgets.
   - Enhance the community's credit rating, control of its tax rate and avoid sudden fluctuations in its debt service requirements.
   - Identify the most economical means of financing capital projects.
   - Increase opportunities for obtaining federal and state aid.
   - Focus attention on community objectives and the Town's fiscal capacity.
   - Keep the public informed about future community needs and projects.
   - Coordinate the activities of municipal departments so as to reduce duplication of services and share equipment where possible.

A CIP could be developed for the Wachusett Corridor to focus on the specific capital needs within the corridor. Elements of this CIP relevant to the individual corridor communities could then be incorporated into their respective CIPs. The Wachusett Corridor Implementation Committee described above could take the lead in developing this CIP. This could include the following steps:

- Preparing an Inventory of Existing Facilities. This will involve preparing an inventory of all municipally-owned properties and assets, including all buildings and equipment. The inventory should include documentation on the need for renewal, replacement, expansion or retirement of all physical assets. The inventory should also include information on the year each facility was built or acquired, the date of last improvement, its current condition and scheduled date for rebuilding, replacement or expansion.
- Determining the status of previously approved projects: The involves identifying projects that are underway or about to get started and determine whether additional funds are needed and the amount of unspent funds available from completed or discontinued projects.
- Assessing the Municipality's Financial Capacity: Analyze the community's ability to afford major expenditures by examining recent and anticipated trends in revenues, expenditures, debt and unfunded liabilities such as pension costs.
- Soliciting, Compiling and Evaluating Project Requests: The Implementation Committee should solicit departmental recommendations for eligible projects. Each department would submit its request that would include a clear

statement of need for identified projects, the project costs, their net effect on the department's operating budget and an implementation schedule.

- Establishing a Priority Listing of Capital Projects. The Implementation Committee ranks the priority of each proposed capital project. This is often the most difficult aspect of a CIP effort. Many communities make use of numerical scoring sheets. Whether or not a scoring sheet is used, the Implementation Committee should review each project utilizing a consistent set of criteria and evaluate each project in relation to other proposed projects to determine their relative importance.
- Developing a Financing Plan: Based on the adopted debt and CIP policies and the assessment of the financial capacity (see third bullet above), the Committee should recommend the method of financing for each project. Such financing can be through long-term methods (bonds, grants and loans, setting money aside in a stabilization fund, debt exclusion, etc.) or short-term methods (appropriation of current revenue, capital outlay expenditure approvals, bond anticipation notes, etc.).
- When the CIP is updated, the Implementation Committee could report to the City Councils and Boards of Selectmen for review and adoption. The report should include a summary of recommendations for the upcoming year's capital budget and the following years' Capital Program, as well as its analysis of fiscal capacity.
- Monitoring Approved Projects: The Implementation Committee should monitor the efforts of all departments to put in place the capital projects approved in the CIP and periodically report back to the City Councils and Boards of Selectmen. The monitoring reports should include changes in the targeted completion dates, identify serious problems and document the financial status of each project.

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Section VII: Land Use Element

I. Existing Land Use

a) Overview

The land examined in this plan covers approximately 12,566 acres (19.6 square miles) within the circle designating the corridor with the new Wachusett Station in Fitchburg as the center. The radius of the circle is 2.5 miles. This distance was chosen because it is an easily bikeable distance from the proposed Wachusett Station and is consistent with a fundamental "smart growth" principle of supporting a variety of transportation choices.

(Further discussion of "smart growth" principles is presented in Section II.)

The area around the Wachusett Station is already part of an established urban community with a population of 40,318 and an efficient infrastructure capable of supporting further development and revitalization of the area. Most of this population lives in Fitchburg but there is also residential development in the Westminster and, to a lesser extent, the Leominster portions of the corridor. Existing development in the corridor includes a variety of industrial uses, concentrated in Fitchburg's 2/31 Business Park and an adjacent area in Westminster, along with additional but mostly underutilized mill space along the Nashua River and Route 31, and a densely developed residential community, the Cleghorn neighborhood, northeast of the station site in Fitchburg. Establishment of the new Wachusett Station and extension of commuter rail service to the Wachusett Corridor has the potential to act as a catalyst for change and growth within the immediate area. Adoption of smart growth principles will assure that new development provides substantive benefits to the region and positively impacts the quality of life of the surrounding community.

b) Quantitative Assessment

The existing land use within the corridor as calculated through MRPC GIS is shown in Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1. As indicated in the Table, the vast majority of land use within the corridor, 8,017 acres or 63.8 percent of total area, is classified as Forest. While much of this forested land is within the Leominster State Forest, there is also substantial forested land outside of the State Forest. Within the three Wachusett communities, Forest is the dominant land use for all three. Although a substantially smaller share of total acreage, other primary land uses are Water (5.4%), High Density Residential (4.5%), and Low Density Residential (4.1). Most of the High Density Residential acreage is within Fitchburg while most of the Low Density Residential is within Westminster. It is interesting to note, given the industrial history of the corridor, that only 1.9 percent of the corridor's acreage is classified as Industrial, with the majority of that acreage located in Fitchburg. Also, as indicated in the table, nearly 99 percent of Leominster's land use is shown to be undeveloped and is classified as Forest, Forested Wetland, Non-Forested Wetland, Powerline/Utility, or Water. There is also a small portion of Princeton (17.2 acres) within the corridor that is classified as Forest, Water, or Water-Based Recreation.

Table 7.1: Existing Land Use

	Acres within Wachusett Corridor				% of Area within Wachusett Corridor			
Land Use Description	**Entire Corridor**	**Fitchburg**	**Leominster**	**Westminster**	**Entire Corridor**	**Fitchburg**	**Leominster**	**Westminster**
Brushland/Successional	13.7	11.3		2.5	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Cemetery	66.9	56.8		10.1	0.5%	1.1%	0.0%	0.2%
Commercial	112.1	81.0		31.2	0.9%	1.6%	0.0%	0.6%
Cropland	119.7	30.6		89.1	1.0%	0.6%	0.0%	1.6%
Forest	8017.1	2689.4	1444.7	3869.0	63.8%	52.6%	76.3%	69.8%
Forested Wetland	328.5	77.4	109.7	141.4	2.6%	1.5%	5.8%	2.6%
Golf Course	109.1	108.1		1.0	0.9%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
High Density Residential	568.0	559.5		8.5	4.5%	10.9%	0.0%	0.2%
Industrial	242.0	197.2	2.6	42.2	1.9%	3.9%	0.1%	0.8%
Junkyard	5.7		5.7		0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Low Density Residential	516.5	230.2	5.5	280.8	4.1%	4.5%	0.3%	5.1%
Medium Density Residential	174.0	120.8		53.1	1.4%	2.4%	0.0%	1.0%
Mining	78.8	13.6		65.2	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	1.2%
Multi-Family Residential	302.5	281.9		20.7	2.4%	5.5%	0.0%	0.4%
Non-Forested Wetland	149.9	38.7	23.3	87.8	1.2%	0.8%	1.2%	1.6%
Open Land	213.7	61.7	1.5	150.6	1.7%	1.2%	0.1%	2.7%
Participation Recreation	60.1	32.1		28.0	0.5%	0.6%	0.0%	0.5%

Table1 7.2: Existing Land Use (continued)

	Acres within Wachusett Corridor				% of Area within Wachusett Corridor			
Pasture	48.3	29.2	2.8	16.3	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%	0.3%
Powerline/Utility	204.0	127.3	35.5	41.2	1.6%	2.5%	1.9%	0.7%
Transitional	116.1	48.0		68.2	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	1.2%
Transportation	146.8	79.5		67.2	1.2%	1.6%	0.0%	1.2%
Urban Public/Institutional	70.4	65.7	2.8	1.8	0.6%	1.3%	0.1%	0.0%
Very Low Density Residential	107.9	32.3	5.5	70.1	0.9%	0.6%	0.3%	1.3%
Waste Disposal	105.9	27.1	0.2	78.6	0.8%	0.5%	0.0%	1.4%
Water	683.2	116.3	254.1	310.6	5.4%	2.3%	13.4%	5.6%
Water-Based Recreation	5.4			4.2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Total[3]	12566.4	5115.8	1893.9	5539.5	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[3] Note: There is approximately 17.2 acres of land within the Wachusett Corridor that are within the Town of Princeton. This includes 13.9 acres of Forest, 2.1 acres of Water, and 1.2 acres of Water-Based Recreation acreage that are not shown in this table within the community breakdowns.

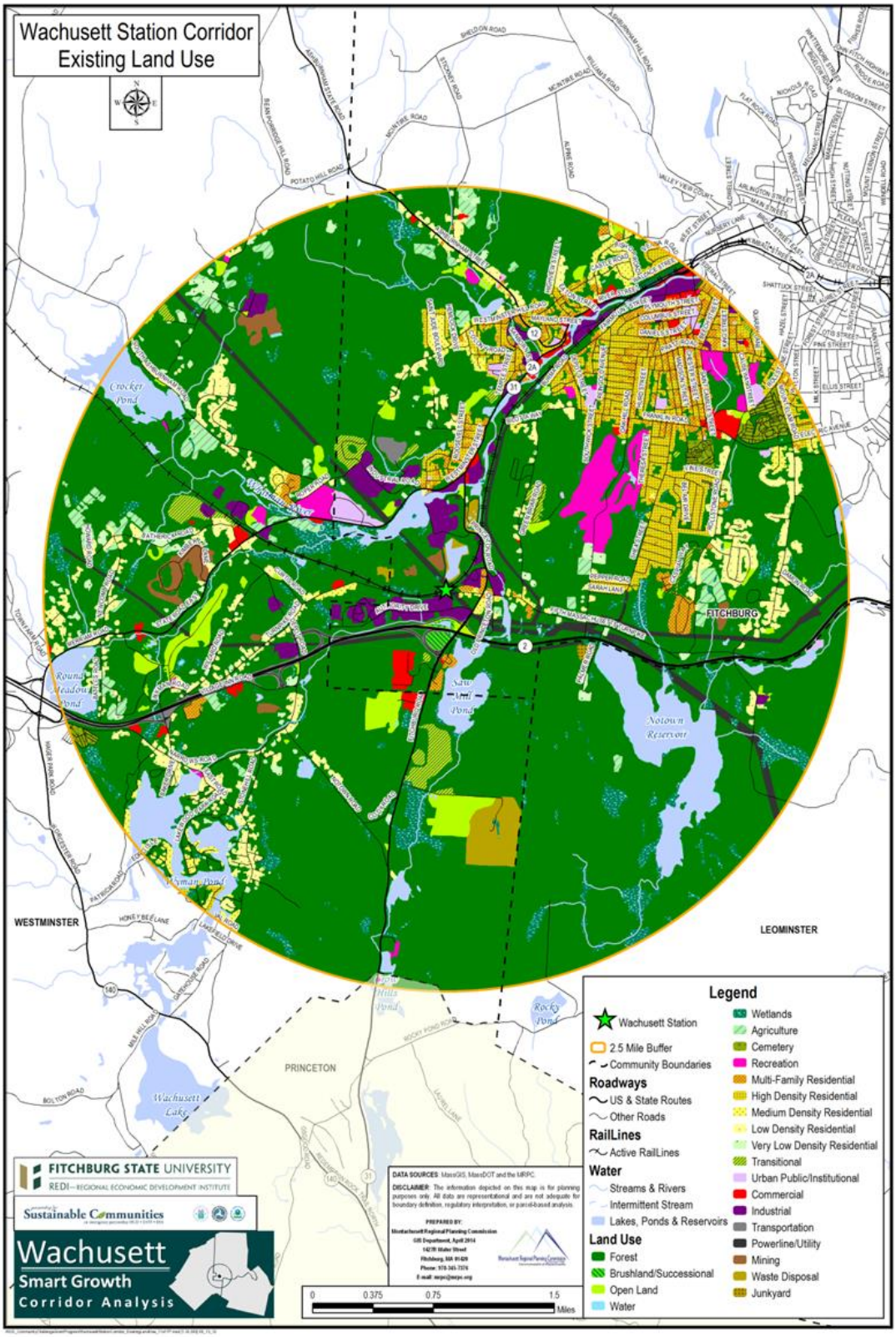

Figure 7.1: Existing Land Use in Wachusett Corridor

II. Smart Growth/Sustainable Development Concepts

According to the Wachusett Extension Environmental Assessment, prepared during the planning phase of the Wachusett Station project:

> "Many areas in the Montachusett region are difficult to access due to limited transportation options, artificially capping the region's growth potential. Workers seeking affordable housing options west of Fitchburg face a difficult commute to work outside of the region. This condition has an adverse economic effect on employers in metropolitan Boston as well, by limiting their potential labor market due to the distance and the associated excessive commute times caused by an inadequate transportation system. Limited travel options adversely affect the Montachusett region; despite the region's relatively affordable housing market, compared to other regions with better transportation alternatives, the Montachusett region is not able to compete economically, and will not be able to until its transportation constraints are resolved. Finally, the lack of "reverse commute" options hinders access for potential workers along the corridor to access employment centers in the region, and limits economic development in the 231 Industrial Park and other underutilized commercial and industrial space in the City of Fitchburg and neighboring municipalities."

Clearly, the new Wachusett Station and extension of commuter rail service has regional implications for transportation, housing, economic development, and overall quality of life throughout North Central Massachusetts. Each of these are issues addressed by "Smart Growth," by supporting the environment, the economy, and the community through an approach to development that is based on interconnections between environmental protection, social equity, public health, and economic sustainability.

According to the Smart Growth Network, a coalition of organizations and agencies including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the American Planning Association, the Urban Land Institute, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, among others, the principles of "smart growth" are:

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

The Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Planning process has incorporated these principles throughout its planning process and embodies these principles in the recommended strategies addressing the various components of the overall Corridor plan.

According to the Smart Growth Network, "when communities choose smart growth strategies, they can create new neighborhoods and maintain existing ones that are attractive, convenient, safe, and healthy. They can foster design that encourages social, civic, and physical activity. They can protect the environment while stimulating economic growth. Most of all, they can create more choices for residents, workers, visitors, children, families, single people, and older adults – choices in where to live, how to get around, and how to interact with the people around them." The establishment of the Wachusett Station and its supportive services can act as a catalyst to transform the surrounding community consistent with smart growth principles, providing a variety of benefits to the overall region.

III. Current Development

a) Attributes of the Corridor

As discussed above, the new Wachusett Station will be located within the existing 231 Industrial Park in Fitchburg and the new layover facility will be located in the Westminster Business Park. The 231 Industrial Park is an older industrial park containing a number of industrial and warehouse facilities which, to a large extent, are or were related to paper production. Most properties are occupied and are currently in operation although a large block of land, formerly owned by ChemDesign and consisting of 10 buildings, is currently vacant. The Westminster Business Park is largely undeveloped at this time although it is being actively marketed. In general, much of the industrial development in the corridor is dated with little new industrial development in the area since the early 1990's despite some turnover. On the other hand, as discussed below, there has been substantial residential development in the corridor in the past 10 years. In Fitchburg, this new development includes a new subdivision on Bilota Way east of Westminster Street, a single-family subdivision on Roosevelt Street, and condominiums on Greenbrier Road and Revolution Drive. In Westminster, new residential development includes single-family homes on Kimberly Lane and a new 55+ adult community, the Village at Old Mill, on Old Mill Circle.

Despite this residential growth, there is a lack of supporting commercial development within the corridor to serve both current residents of the area and commuters who would utilize Wachusett Station. As a result, most purchases of goods and services by area residents occur outside of the corridor. As of January 2011, in the area within the 2.5 mile radius around the Wachusett Station there are a total of 698,031 square feet of vacant commercial space for sale or for lease . Out of this total, there are 136,000 square feet of vacant mill buildings. These vacant buildings demonstrate that there is infrastructure already in place but that the area is in need of revitalization. The addition of the commuter rail station will help enhance the area by establishing an activity center that will bring people into the area and provide greater choices for efficient and sustainable transportation to serve local and regional travel needs. However, there is a need for convenient commercial and retail services to be available for these commuters and potential new residents within the corridor to minimize their need to seek these services elsewhere, resulting in excess travel and wasted time.

b) Residential Building Trends

As indicated in the Housing Element of this plan and the Table 7.2 below, the housing stock within the Wachusett Corridor grew significantly over the last decade (16.55%), significantly outpacing the growth in population (7.7%) with most growth probably taking place from the years 2000 up until 2007 when the national recession began. The housing stock within the study area and all of its segments (Fitchburg in particular) grew more than all three communities in their entirety and at a rate greater than the overall Montachusett Region average of 9%. It should be noted that during this time span housing unit growth also outpaced population growth in all three communities in their entirety. However, it should also be noted that this trend may have reversed in the past few years: According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 2010 U.S. Census, 2008-2012 American Community Survey, the average household size decreased in Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster from 2000 to 2010 but INCREASED from 2010 to 2012.

Table 7.2: Study Area and Study Area Community Housing Unit Growth

	Wachusett Corridor				Entire Community		
Year	Full Study Area	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster	Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
2000	5298	4473	10	815	16001	16974	2694
2010	6175	5246	11	918	17117	17873	2960
% Growth 2000 to 2010	16.55%	17.28%	10%	12.64%	6.97%	5.30%	9.87%

Source: U.S. Census

c) Build-out Analysis and Development Potential

Environmental data is a key component to the development potential analysis. Certain environmental elements are considered inappropriate for development and can be either defined as "Absolute Constraints" or "Partial Constraints" for the purposes of the development potential analysis. Absolute constraints are defined as water (as coded by Land Use data), 100 Foot DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) RPA (River Protection Act) Buffers, Slopes >26%, and Permanently Protected Open Space. Partial Constraints are defined as FEMA Flood Zones 100 and 500 year as well as DEP Wetlands. Absolute constraints are completely unsuitable for development, while partial constraints could be developed if pursued in an appropriate manner.

Once the constraints have been determined and defined, the next step is to identify lands that have already been developed. Based on MassGIS Land Use data the categories that are included in "Developed Lands" are participation, spectator, and water recreation, residential, commercial, industrial, transportation, waste disposal, power lines, cemeteries, and urban public/institutional.

The final category that is determined is "Future Developable Lands". In order to determine what has potential for development GIS tools are utilized and involve combining all of the constraints and currently developed lands. The result produced is a new coverage indicating lands that are developable based on areas that do not have any development or constraint.

The development potential map shown as Figure 7.2 depicts all of these data categories (Absolute Constraints, Partial Constraints, Developed Lands, and Future Developable Lands) and provides information for local officials to identify the location and current zoning of future developable lands. GIS tools offer additional useful information by calculating the acreage for each category (Absolute Constraints, Partial Constraints, Developed Lands, and Future Developable Lands) by zoning district. The data provided by the GIS phase of the analysis is then given to the planner who further investigates the future developable lands within the given zoning districts.

Table 7.3: LEOMINSTER - Environmental and Development Characteristics by Zoning District within the Leominster Land Area of the Wachusett Corridor Study

Zoning District	Undevelopable Acres (Absolute Constraints)	Developed Acres	Developable Acres with Partial Constraints
Rural Residence/Agricultural	1704.76	52.15	884.17
Sub-Total All Residential District	**1704.76**	**52.15**	**884.17**
Percent	**64.55%**	**1.97%**	**33.48%**
SUBTOTAL ALL ZONING DISTRICTS	**1704.76**	**52.15**	**884.17**
PERCENT	**64.55%**	**1.97%**	**33.48%**

As shown in Table 7.3 above, all land in the City of Leominster Wachusett Corridor Study Area is zoned Rural Residence/Agricultural. 1,704.76 acres are undevelopable or categorized as being absolutely constrained, a little more than 52 acres has already been developed, and 884.17 acres is developable with partial constraints – however, it should be noted that according to GIS calculations but not included in Table 1, developable acres without partial constraints is less than half that number (438.66 acres).

Table 7.4: WESTMINSTER - Environmental and Development Characteristics by Zoning District within the Westminster Land Area of the Wachusett Corridor Study

Zoning District	Undevelopable Acres (Absolute Constraints)	Developed Acres	Developable Acres with Partial Constraints
Commercial -1 Map Label 1	23.59	58.74	201.67
Commercial - 11 Map Label 1	.01	7.34	2.12
Sub-Total All Commercial District	**23.6**	**66.08**	**203.79**
Percent	**8.04%**	**22.52%**	**69.44%**
Industrial - 1 Map Label 2	63.14	55	487.39
Industrial – 1 Map Label 3	0	4.02	13.58
Industrial - 11 Map Label 1	33.73	9.12	166.40
Sub-Total All Industrial District	**96.87**	**68.14**	**667.37**
Percent	**11.63%**	**8.19%**	**80.18%**
Residential – 1 Map Label 1	458.78	343.15	1505.93
Residential - 11 Map Label 1	264.04	184.56	1019.21
Residential – 11 Label 2	992.13	79.77	204.57
Sub-Total All Residential District	**1714.95**	**607.48**	**2729.71**
Percent	**33.95%**	**12.02%**	**54.03%**
SUBTOTAL ALL ZONING DISTRICTS	**1835.42**	**741.7**	**3600.87**
PERCENT	**29.71%**	**12.0%**	**58.29%**

Table 7.4 above indicates that, in its entirety, about 58.29% of land in the Westminster Wachusett Corridor Study Area is available for residential, commercial and industrial development; about 29.71% is undevelopable (absolute constraints) and 12% is already developed. Most of the developable land is within the residential districts - the R-1 District has the most developable land with partial constraints at 1,505.93 acres followed by the R – 11 district Map Label 1 (1019.21 acres with partial constraints) and the R - 11 District Map Label 2 (204.57 acres with partial constraints) for a total of 2,729.71 acres with partial constraints – or, according to GIS calculations but not part of Table 4), about 2,200.82 acres without partial constraints.

About 11.63% of both Industrial Districts combined is undevelopable (absolute constraints), 8.19% or 68.14 acres has been developed, and 80.18% (667.37 acres) is developable with partial constraints. Largest tracks of developable land with partial constraints in the Industrial Districts include Industrial – 1 Map Label 2 (487.39 acres), Industrial – 11 Map Label 1 (166.40 acres), followed much further behind by Industrial – 1 Map Label 3 (13.58 acres). In terms of commercially zoned land, developable land with partial constraints in Commercial – 1 Map Label 1 is 201.67 acres (184.6 without partial constraints) followed by Commercial 11 Map Label 1 at 2.12 acres.

Table 7.5 on the following page indicates that, in its entirety, about 55.81% of land in the Fitchburg Wachusett Corridor Study Area is available for residential, commercial and industrial development; about 12.77% is undevelopable (absolute constraints) and 31.42% is already developed. Similar to Westminster, most of the developable land is within the residential districts - the Rural Residence Zoning District has by far the most developable land with partial constraints at 1,614.29 acres followed much further behind by Residence A-1 (425.28 acres with partial constraints), the Residence A- 2 District (367.16 acres with partial constraints), the Residence B District (41.27 acres with partial constraints), and finally the Residence C District at 2.26 acres for a total of 2450.26 acres with partial constraints (or, according to GIS calculations but not included in Table 5, about 2,245.49 acres without partial constraints).

About 289.98 acres of both Industrial Districts combined is undevelopable (absolute constraints), 21.13% or 221.49 acres has been developed, and 51.19% (536.49 acres) is developable with partial constraints – or, according to GIS calculations not included in Table 5, about 315.2 acres without partial constraints. The industrial zoning district with the most developable land with partial constraints is Industrial – Map Label 1 (333.98 acres) followed further behind by Limited Industrial map labels 1, 2, and 3 (67.91 acres, 55.63 acres, and 79.26 acres respectively). In terms of commercially zoned land, developable land with partial constraints totals 21.37 acres with 55.2 acres already developed, and 9.4 acres undevelopable (absolute constraints).

Table 7.5: FITCHBURG - Environmental and Development Characteristics by Zoning District within the Fitchburg portion of the Wachusett Corridor Study Area

Source: MRPC Environmental and Development Characteristics Analysis for the Wachusett Corridor, Fall 2013.

Zoning District	Undevelopable Acres (Absolute Constraints)	Developed Acres	Developable Acres with Partial Constraints
Central Business District Map Label 1	0.12	15.61	1.68
Neighborhood Business District Map Label 1	0.01	17.12	3.81
Neighborhood Business District Map Label 2	4.07	15.9	7.57
Commercial & Automotive – Map Label 1	5.20	6.65	8.31
Sub-Total All Commercial District	**9.4**	**55.28**	**21.37**
Percent	**10.92%**	**64.24%**	**24.84%**
Industrial Label 1	172.93	252.51	333.98
Limited Industrial – Map Label 1	20.57	76.81	67.91
Limited Industrial – Map Label 2	73.0	39.93	55.63
Limited Industrial – Map Label 3	23.48	50.21	79.26
Sub-Total All Industrial District	**289.98**	**221.49**	**536.49**
Percent	**27.67%**	**21.13%**	**51.19%**
Residence A-1 – Map Label 1	19.87	328.36	279.92
Residence A-1 – Map Label 2	2.7	0.83	45.91
Residence A-1 – Map Label 3	41.8	19.30	95.90
Residence A-1 – Map Label 4		26.96	3.55
Residence A – 2 Map Label 1		3.75	2.17
Residence A – 2 Map Label 2	7.25	90.7	69.29
Residence A – 2 Map Label 3	5.48	67.11	95.70
Residence A – 2 Map Label 4	123.82	358.36	200.00
Residence B – Map Label 1	0.34	103.63	8.72
Residence B – Map Label 2		31.15	4.14
Residence B – Map Label 3	0.0	10.94	3.50
Residence B – Map Label 4	10.45	66.46	18.40
Residence B – Map Label 5		33.72	6.51
Residence C – Map Label 1	0.06	87.89	2.26
Rural Residence – Map Label 1	1.36	51.24	561.53
Rural Residence – Map Label 2	66.54	61.55	190.01
Rural Residence – Map Label 3	43.81	59.09	738.44
Rural Residence – Map Label 4	65.52	15.73	124.31
Sub-Total All Residential District	**389.0**	**1416.77**	**2450.26**
Percent	**9.14%**	**33.29%**	**57.57%**
SUBTOTAL ALL ZONING DISTRICTS	**688.38**	**1693.54**	**3008.12**
PERCENT	**12.77%**	**31.42%**	**55.81%**

Table 7.6: WACHUSETT CORRIDOR - Environmental and Development Characteristics by Zoning District within the Wachusett Corridor Study Area

Zoning District	Undevelopable Acres (Absolute Constraints)	Developed Acres	Developable Acres with Partial Constraints
Sub-Total All Fitchburg Commercial District	9.4	55.28	21.37
Sub-Total All Leominster Commercial District	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sub-Total All Westminster Commercial District	23.6	66.08	203.79
Sub-Total Wachusett Corridor Land Zoned Commercial	**33.0**	**121.36**	**225.16**
Percent	**8.69%**	**31.98%**	**59.33%**
Sub-Total All Fitchburg Industrial District	289.98	221.49	536.49
Sub-Total All Leominster Industrial District	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sub-Total All Westminster Industrial District	96.87	68.14	667.37
Sub-Total Wachusett Corridor Land Zoned Industrial	**386.85**	**285.61**	**1190.28**
Percent	**20.77%**	**15.33%**	**63.9%**
Sub-Total All Fitchburg Residential District	389.0	1416.77	2450.26
Sub-Total All Leominster Residential District	1704.76	52.15	884.17
Sub-Total Wachusett Corridor Land Zoned Residential	3808.71	2076.40	6064.14
Percent	**31.87%**	**17.38%**	**50.75%**
TOTAL ALL WACHUSETT CORRIDOR ZONING DISTRICTS	**4232.5**	**2483.38**	**7485.29**
PERCENT	**29.8%**	**17.5%**	**52.7%**

Source: MRPC Environmental and Development Characteristics Analysis for the Wachusett Corridor, Fall 2013.

Table 7.6 and the Development Potential Map shown as Figure 7.2 indicates that, in its entirety, about 52.7% of the Wachusett Corridor area is available for residential, commercial and or industrial development; about 29.8% is undevelopable (absolute constraints) and 17.5% is already developed. The vast majority of developable land is within the residential districts (about 6,064 developable acres with partial constraints). About 20.8% of the Industrial Districts within the Wachusett Corridor is undevelopable, 15.33% or 285.61 acres has been developed, and 63.9% (1190.28 acres) is developable (with partial constraints). There is about 225.16 acres of developable land in commercial districts (with partial constraints) in the corridor. About 121.36 acres has been developed, and 33 acres is not developable (absolute constraints).

Besides having ample developable land for residential development, the amount of developable land when looking at the non-residential and mixed use districts in their entirety is about 1,415.44 acres (with partial constraints), much more than that occupied by existing development (406.97 acres) and considerably more than undevelopable acres with absolute constraints (419.85 acres), so there does seem to be some land, if used efficiently, that could be utilized to promote economic development. It is important that appropriate design guidelines are in place to retain community character along with adequate performance standards to protect the environment and apply smart growth principles.

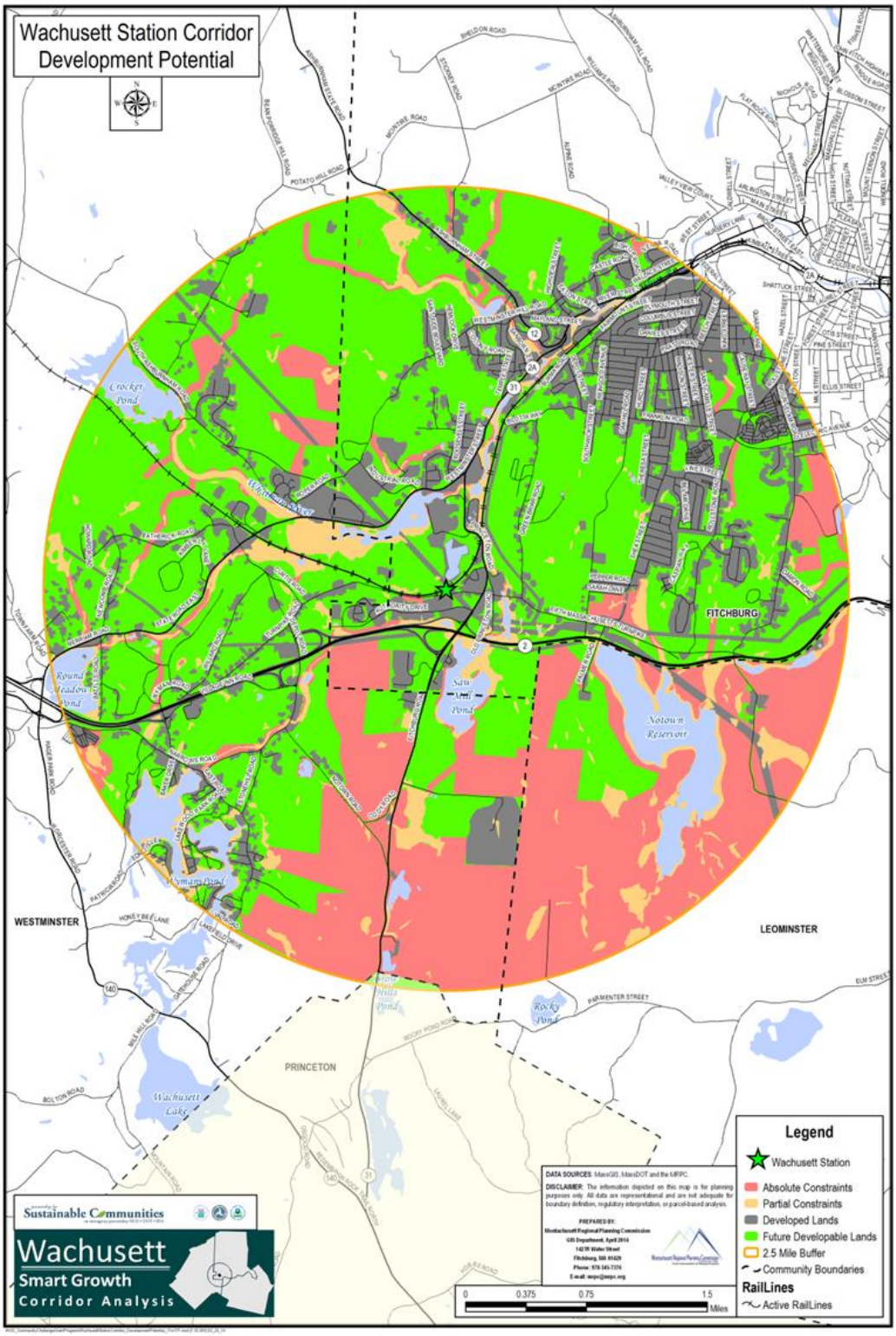

Figure 7.2: Development Potential in Wachusett Corridor

IV. Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Relevant to current and future land use in the Wachusett Corridor is the availability of water and sewers to accommodate potential future development. According to the City of Fitchburg website , Fitchburg obtains its drinking water from numerous surface water reservoirs. One primary series is located in the northern section of the City and consists of the Falulah, Lovell, and Ashby Reservoirs. Another series is located south of the City, including the neighboring town of Westminster, and consists of Wachusett Lake, Bickford Reservoir, Mare Meadow Reservoir, and Meetinghouse Pond. Additional reservoirs (Scott Reservoir and Overlook Reservoir) have served other areas of the City. To cost effectively treat the existing surface water supplies, the City contracted with Earth Tech for the design of two independent treatment facilities – the Regional Water Filtration Facility near Meetinghouse Pond and the Falulah Water Filtration Facility located near Falulah/Lovell Reservoir. Designed to meet all the drinking water demands of the City, the Falulah Water Filtration Facility processes 6 million gallons per day (mgd) while the Regional Water Filtration Facility processes 12 mgd, with potential expansion to 15 mgd in the future.

The portion of Leominster within the Wachusett Corridor has experienced limited development and is largely within the Leominster State Forest. There is no municipal water or sewer infrastructure located in this area and existing development is dependent on private wells and septic.

In Westminster, the primary means of dealing with wastewater is through on-site septic storage for the majority of the town. The remaining 19 percent (January 2005) is tied to the waste system to Fitchburg. Westminster does not have its own treatment facility and shares water and sewage resources with Fitchburg. In 1998, the Town of Westminster reached an agreement with the City of Fitchburg to siphon off water supply from the vast Fitchburg network, which includes seven reservoirs and two water treatment facilities. Westminster sends its wastewater to Fitchburg for treatment through the Whitman River Pump Station. As of 2000, Westminster was able to discharge 320,000 gallons per day of "normal strength wastewater," with provisions for an overflow of 250,000 gallons per day of overflow. Until recently the system has been highly beneficial to both Fitchburg and Westminster, but with the introduction of the Wachusett station, and the potential for new industrial development within the Corridor, Westminster is finding its sewer capacity to be inadequate to accommodate further growth.

Figure 7.3 illustrates existing water and sewer lines within the Wachusett Corridor. Note that water lines within the City of Fitchburg are not shown due to apparent problems with the accuracy of the City's available mapping.

a) Wastewater Issues in Westminster

The town of Westminster's Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, in July 2007, stated:

> Simply put, the lack of capacity at the Whitman River Pump Station is THE single biggest impediment to economic development in Westminster. Without a substantial upgrade of the pump station, new buildings in the Town Center cannot tie into the municipal sewer system and existing buildings cannot expand if they will generate additional wastewater. Thus, the capacity issue hinders all types of development in Town Center (commercial and residential). Without an upgrade of the pump station or other means of increasing the capacity of the sewer system … new development cannot take place in the Town Center and the heart of Westminster will be left to stagnate. Additionally, the sewer system cannot accommodate additional sewer flow from new or expanded industrial or commercial buildings in the Town's two largest 43D Priority Development sites… The Westminster Business Park Priority Development site consists of plans for the eventual construction of 1.57 million square feet of new industrial floor space on 312 acres of land. While the Town is committed to hosting new economic development in the Town Center and its two largest Priority Development Sites, new development at these locations is at a standstill until the Whitman River Pump Station is upgraded. The Town should continue to search out grant/loan

opportunities that will fund the sewer upgrade project (such as the MassWorks infrastructure grant program and the Rural Development infrastructure loan/grant program) and continue to press its case to our legislative delegation and State funding entities.

To remedy the situation the Town needs to pursue one or more of the following options: 1) the capacity of the pump station must be upgraded; 2) a second pump station is needed to increase the overall capacity of the line; or 3) Westminster must install its own water treatment station. One option discussed in the past involved regionalizing wastewater treatment with the Town of Ashburnham, which is in a similar situation as Westminster but utilizes the City of Gardner's wastewater treatment facilities. A regional plant would allow Westminster and Ashburnham to build higher capacity networks, and relieve stresses on the Gardner and Fitchburg systems. Westminster does not have the land available to build a plant due to DEP restrictions on land use, so a proposed plant in Ashburnham would be a potentially feasible joint venture for the communities to ensure their future. However further investigation of this approach found it to be cost prohibitive.

According to Westminster Economic Development Committee (EDC) meeting minutes for February 12, 2014, the Westminster DPW now has plans to remove the Whitman River Pump station and replace it with a three barrel siphon under the Whitman River. This will have the effect of allowing the town to follow through with its Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, and potentially accommodate up to 50 years of new development. This would also eliminate the need for a second pump station or upgrading the existing pump infrastructure. Furthermore, this allows for the increase in the diameter of the existing gravity sewer system into the Fitchburg plants. However, this plan does come with a potential $4.9 million price tag.

To fund this plan, the Westminster DPW plans to go to a future town meeting to seek the Town's approval to apply for a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) infrastructure grant/loan package. The grant would fund approximately 30% of the project, and a 40-year loan could cover the remainder. USDA assistance would not preclude the Town from seeking funding from MassWorks as well, assuming that the plans are ready and fully permitted by the time of the next MassWorks grant round in August, 2014.

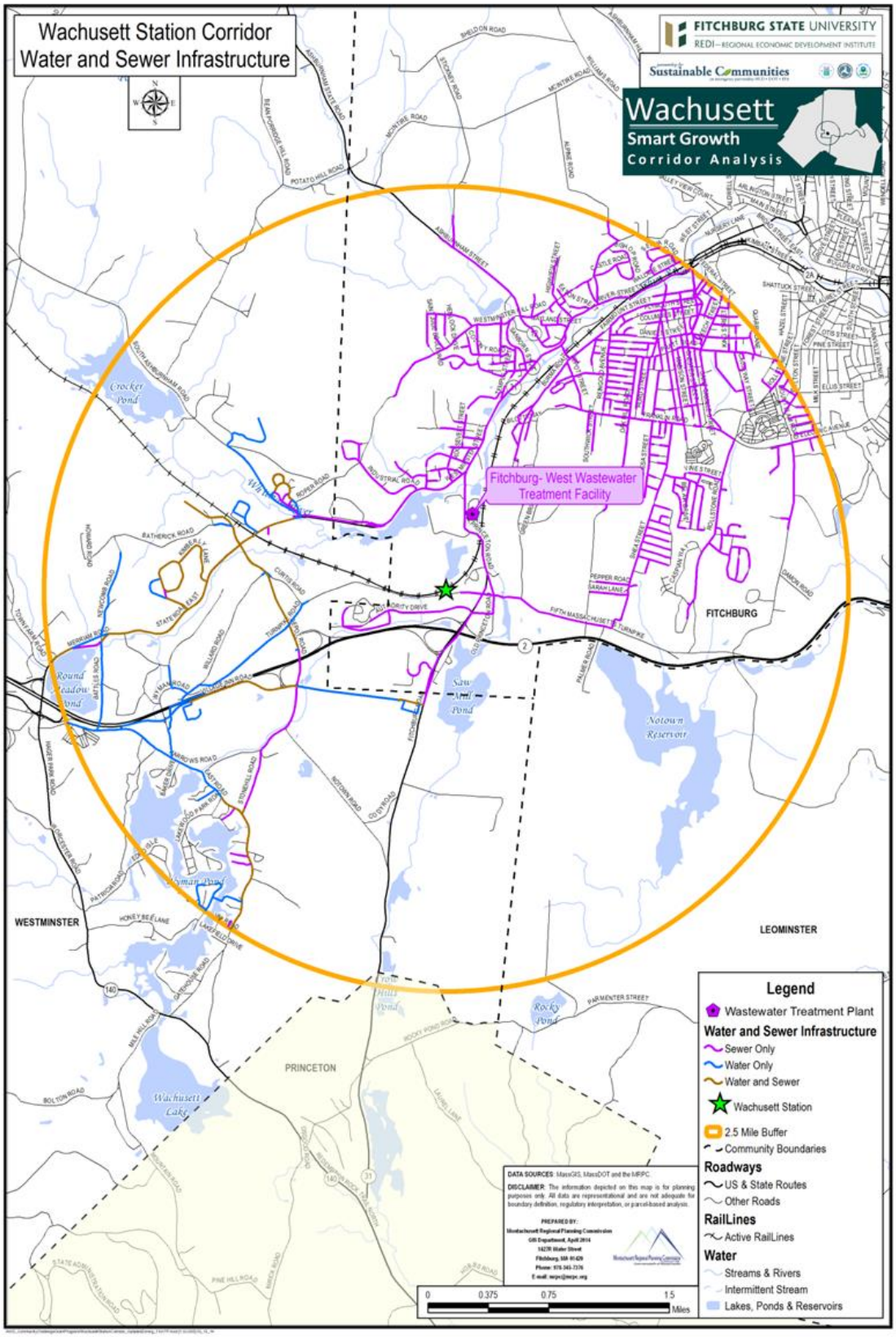

Figure 7.3: Water and Sewer Infrastructure

V. Zoning Districts/Current Zoning Overview

Figure 7.4 (at the end of this section) illustrates existing zoning districts for each of the three communities in the Wachusett Corridor. Table 7.7, below, provides a summary matrix showing the zoning district classifications that are currently within each community. Note that in the City of Fitchburg, certain "Overlay" districts allow for uses in areas with other underlying use and dimensional specifications.

Table 7.7: Zoning/Overlay Districts with in Wachusett Corridor

Fitchburg	Leominster	Westminster
Light Industrial (LI)	Rural Residence & Agriculture (RR)	Residential -II
Industrial (I)	Water Supply Protection District (WSP)	Industrial - I
Residential (RR) & (RB)		Industrial -II
Mill Conversion Overlay District (MCOD)		
Priority Development Site Overlay District (PDS)		

In Table 7.8, 7.9, and 7.10 various use categories were selected from each community's tables of use regulations that generally correlate with Smart Growth Principles to show if this type of development is currently allowed, prohibited or regulated by special permit within each of the Wachusett communities. Current dimensional standards are shown for reference and comparison in Table 7.11.

Table 7.8: Wachusett Corridor Uses that Correlate with Smart Growth Principles City of Fitchburg

Uses	Zoning/Overlay Districts					
	LI	**I**	**RR**	**RB**	**MCOD**	**PDS**
Multi-Family	N	N	N	SP	SP	SP
Retail Sales	N	N	N	SP	SP	SP
Restaurant	SP	SP	N	SP	SP	SP
Industrial (Manufacturing)	Y	Y	N	N	N	SP
Mixed Use on a Lot	N	N	N	N	SP	SP
Mixed Use w/in a building	N	N	N	N	SP	SP
Open Space Preservation	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP

Table 7.9: Town of Leominster

Uses	Zoning/Overlay Districts
	Residential (RR)
Multi-Family	N
Retail Sales	N
Restaurant	N
Industrial (Manufacturing)	N
Mixed Use on a Lot	N
Mixed Use w/in a building	N
Open Space Preservation	SP

Table 7.10: Town of Westminster

Uses	Zoning/Overlay Districts		
	Residential -II	**Industrial - I**	**Industrial -II**
Multi-Family	N	N	N
Retail Sales	N	Y	Y
Restaurant	N	SP	SP
Industrial (Manufacturing)	N	Y	Y
Mixed Use on a Lot	N	N	N
Mixed Use w/in a building	N	N	N
Open Space Preservation	SP	SP	SP

Table 7.11: Dimensional Standards

Districts	Lot Area	Frontage	Lot Width	Front Setback	Side Setback	Rear Setback	Height
City of Fitchburg							
LI	65,000 w/out sewer 43,560	20	20	50	50	50	75
I	65,000 w/out sewer NONE	20	20	20	25	20	75
RR	65,000 w/out sewer 30,000	175	50	40	25	50	36
RB	65,000 w/out sewer 10,000	80	50	25	15	30	40
City of Leominster							
Residential (RR) Not Sewered	43,560	175	130	30	20	40	30
Town of Westminster							
Residential -II	60,000	175	N/A	30	15	20	35
Industrial - I	40,000	200	N/A	80	30	50	50
Industrial -II	40,000	200	N/A	80	30	50	50

a) City of Fitchburg Zoning Overview

With commuter rail service soon to be initiated to Wachusett Station, the City of Fitchburg has an opportunity to facilitate the establishment of a dynamic place to live, shop, work, and play in the Wachusett Corridor. However, current zoning within this area of Fitchburg could be a limiting factor. Table 2 shows a handful of uses that correlate with the Smart Growth Principles for districts located within the corridor. Most of these uses are not allowed or are allowed only by special permit. It is important to understand that these zoning restrictions would be a deterrent to potential developers or small business start-ups which may be attracted to the area. Another aspect to consider is the dimensional standards for the area. To create a more walkable environment the City may want to consider standards that mimic those of other commercial districts within the City, allowing for smaller lots with reduced setback from the street. To overcome these limiting factors the City of Fitchburg should consider conducting an extensive Zoning Study to see how the area's zoning could be adjusted to foster redevelopment efforts. As past public meetings and forums have indicated, there is a lack of small retail and restaurants within walking distance of residential areas within the community. As shown in the use table, these uses are either prohibited in certain districts within the corridor or require a special permit. Enabling a mix of these uses and reducing the need for motorized transportation for their access is supportive of Smart Growth. Changes in allowable uses, dimensional standards, and design guidelines can be considered for the Fitchburg portion of the corridor would enable this kind of new development and provide the ability to change the character of the area to better serve area residents and commuters who will be drawn to Wachusett Station.

b) City of Leominster Zoning Overview

The portion of Leominster within the Corridor is primarily zoned residential with a Water Supply Overlay. The preservation of Open Space is a key Smart Growth principle to be considered for this area. All three communities located in the corridor have adopted some sort of Open Space Preservation Bylaw such as cluster development. This is a good first step in preserving open space although all three communities require that a special permit must be acquired for this use. The three communities may want to consider a less cumbersome method such as site plan review or review done through their Subdivision Control Law, which could provide an incentive to attract developers to this method of development. Further, Leominster may want to expand the provision to include "Approval Not Required (ANR) as well, as Fitchburg has done, to target more potential developments.

Another zoning provision the City may want to consider is a Transfer of Development Right (TDR) Bylaw. TDR is described on the State's website as follows:

> TDR is a regulatory strategy that harnesses private market forces to accomplish two smart growth objectives. First, open space is permanently protected for water supply, agricultural, habitat, recreational, or other purposes via the transfer of some or all of the development that would otherwise have occurred in these sensitive places to more suitable locations. Second, other locations, such as city and town centers or vacant and underutilized properties, become more vibrant and successful as the development potential from the protected resource areas is transferred to them. In essence, development rights are "transferred" from one district (the "sending district") to another (the "receiving district"). Communities using TDR are generally shifting development densities within the community to achieve both open space and economic goals without changing their overall development potential. While less common, TDR can also be used for preservation of historic resources.

c) Town of Westminster Zoning Overview

The area of Westminster within the corridor in proximity to the Wachusett Station is not nearly as walkable as the portion of the corridor located in Fitchburg. This area of Westminster is primarily zoned for Industrial and Residential. As shown in Table 8, the Industrial designated districts do allow for retail sales and restaurants which do correlate with the findings from public forums that there is an unmet need in the corridor for such amenities. However, Westminster could further adjust the area's zoning to meet

upcoming needs of the Wachusett Station and the Great Wolf Resort. This area in Westminster has close proximity to Route 2. Therefore, zoning for Highway Business may be a suitable option to consider, providing for such amenities for small commercial facilities such as restaurants, banks, gas stations, and other small establishments that are appropriate for a Highway Business District. The Industrial District can still exist just behind the commercial district to enable the Town to maintain some industrial uses within the area. Given impending changes to the area, it is recommended that the community take a close look at the uses, dimensional standards, and design standards in the vicinity of this new development.

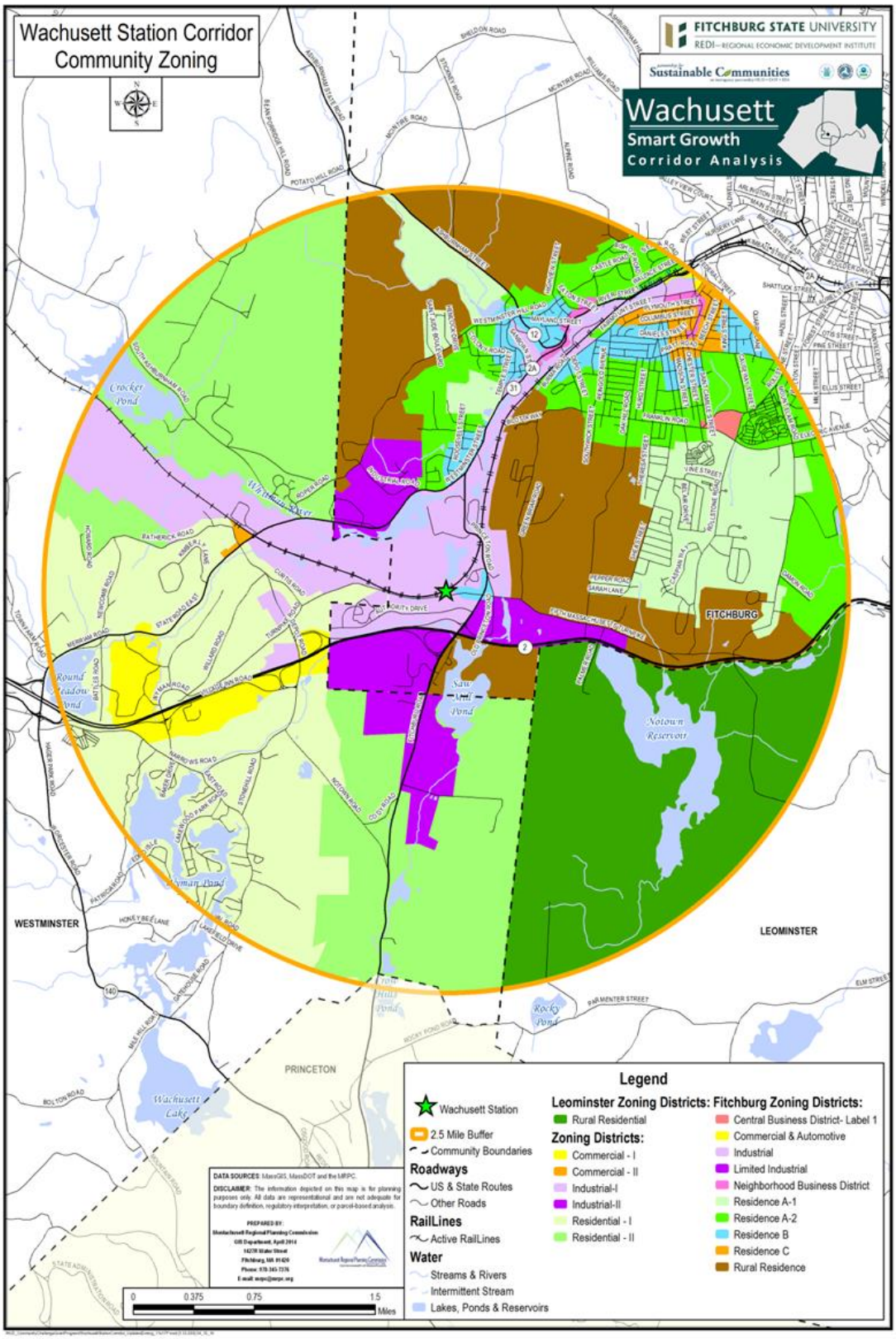

Figure 7.4: Current Wachusett Corridor Zoning

VI. Development Regulations

Apart from the zoning regulations which influence the nature of development, discussed above, there are a number of other regulations which need to be considered which could have a bearing on future land use and development in the Wachusett Corridor. Some of these regulations may provide incentives for development while others may impose restrictions.

Chapter 43D of the Massachusetts General Laws establishes an expedited local permitting program that offers communities a tool for targeted economic development. If a potential developer can expect to go through a smooth, efficient, and expedited permitting process, it can be an incentive to consider an area for development as opposed to an area which may have a more challenging development process. To initiate the Chapter 43D program, qualifying parcels must be identified by the community as a priority development site and have permission of the property owner to participate in the program. Participation in the program then requires that the community establish an expedited permitting process which can make the property more attractive to developers. The benefits of the program are threefold:

- It provides a transparent and efficient process for municipal permitting
- It guarantees local permitting decisions on priority development sites within 180 days
- It increases visibility of the participating community and the target development site(s)

In addition, benefits of 43D designation include priority consideration for MassWorks Infrastructure Program grants and online marketing of the site including promotion of a pro-business regulatory climate for the site.

There are current three 43D sites within the Wachusett Corridor, each in close proximity to the Wachusett Station site. One site is in Fitchburg and two are in Westminster:

- Route 31/Princeton Road (north of Route 2), Fitchburg
- Westminster Business Park, Westminster
- Route 31/Fitchburg Road (south of Route 2), Westminster

As discussed in the Open Space and Recreation element of this plan, ***Chapter 61 of the Massachusetts General Laws*** is a voluntary current use program designed by the Massachusetts Legislature to tax real property at its timber resources value rather than its "highest and best use" development value. Landowners who enroll their land in the program receive property tax reductions in exchange for a lien on the property. The lien requires that enrolled land remain in undeveloped state and be managed for forest resources extraction under a forest management plan approved by the state, effectively maintaining the land as open space. Therefore Chapter 61 provides an incentive to keep land as undeveloped as opposed to promoting new development. The lien also provides the municipal government of the town in which the property is located a right of first refusal should the landowner put the land up for sale while it is enrolled in the program. Landowners who develop their land while enrolled in the program or for a period of time after withdrawing from the program may be required to pay penalties.

There are three programs under Chapter 61:

- ***Chapter 61***: Intended for landowners interested in long-term, active forest management. The value of the property is based on the land's ability to grow timber.
- ***Chapter 61A***: Intended for landowners engaged in agricultural or horticultural use. Assessment is based on the property's ability to produce agricultural or horticultural products.
- ***Chapter 61B***: Intended for landowners interested in maintaining the land in substantially natural, wild or open condition. Assessment of the forestland under Chapter 61B is 25 percent of the current assessed values of the land. In this category, there must be at least 5 contiguous acres of property to qualify.

As assessed by MRPC GIS, there are currently 1584.2 acres of property within the Wachusett Corridor which are classified as Chapter 61 lands (1367.8 acres in Fitchburg and 216.3 acres in Westminster).

Another tool that could be considered to preserve open space within the corridor is ***Transfer of Development Rights*** (TDR), which is discussed in the preceding section.

VII. City/Town Goals and Objectives

As part of the process of identifying goals and objects for land use in the Wachusett Corridor, a review of municipal plans was conducted to identify the specific community-wide land use goals of each of the three Wachusett Communities. As noted below, some of these plans were adopted before planning for the Wachusett Station was undertaken and, as such, do not account for the project's impact on the surrounding community. Nevertheless, the community plans do reflect overall land use goals and objectives which remain in effect and therefore should be taken into consideration in the identification of land use goals and objectives relevant to the Wachusett Corridor.

The City of Fitchburg documents its land use goals and objectives in its Vision2020 Comprehensive Master Plan which was adopted in 1998. Fitchburg's overall Citywide goal for land use is:

> "Promote land uses which maintain and enhance the essential historic and neighborhood character of the City of Fitchburg, particularly the strong downtown and neighborhood centers, stable residential neighborhoods, watershed lands, woodlots and other important open spaces. This includes new construction and historic preservation and adaptive reuse of buildings and sites that complements Fitchburg's historic patterns and natural landscape and creation of new economic development opportunities that "fit" Fitchburg."

Fitchburg's Vision2020 objectives to accomplish this goal which have relevance to the Wachusett Corridor and reflect Smart Growth principles are:

- Identify, manage and protect significant environmental resources using imaginative, cost effective, equitable and multi-sector approaches.
- Accommodate new housing stock in areas of the city where site character, access and infrastructure can accommodate such uses while preserving natural resources.
- Identify infill opportunities in the city to improve commercial/neighborhood centers.
- Provide options for land resource management including mixed-use developments and open space preservation

Fitchburg's Vision 2020 Master Plan also states a land use goal specific to City Character which is also relevant to Smart Growth in the Wachusett Corridor:

> Maintain and enhance the existing character of the City of Fitchburg. Protect existing land uses, historic structures, landscapes and environmental features which define this character. Promote carefully planned new construction that adds to the existing character of the City.

Fitchburg's Vision2020 objectives to accomplish this City Character goal which have relevance to the Wachusett Corridor and reflect Smart Growth principles are:

- Tailor innovative techniques for implementing the land use policies of the master plan to preserve the visual character of Fitchburg and preserve its key cultural resources while accommodating the growth of economic land uses.
- Promote economic development that is visually compatible with the residential character of the neighborhoods.
- Provide community decision-makers with innovative zoning and site planning tools that facilitate economic use of key parcels while maintaining the essential character of the community.
- Agriculture, identified as active farmlands, prime and significant agricultural soils and agribusiness, and important large tracts of forest lands should be preserved using creative land management opportunities available under state enabling legislation related to transfer and purchase of development rights, incentive zoning and agricultural real estate tax benefits.

- Preserve the city's key resources based on the development and use of an inventory and analysis of the physical and cultural features of the town.
- Implement a coordinated, comprehensive plan of development and conservation to achieve a vibrant 21st Century city with a mutually supportive balance of land uses – neighborhoods, business, civic facilities, natural and cultural resources.
- Ensure that new development is designed in a manner which is safe, visually appealing, and environmentally sound.

The City of Leominster does not have a Master Plan but adopted a Community Development Plan in 2004. This plan identifies a number of economic development goals for the community. Goals which have relevance to the Wachusett Corridor are:

- Promote regional cooperation in housing, transportation and boundary development issues.
- Encourage businesses that are compatible with adjacent land uses and resource protection concerns.
- Encourage the development of and help to promote tourism in the community (eco-tourism, agri-tourism and historic tourism). The presence of recreational amenities, farms and historic buildings and old homes is important to the tourism industry.
- Create and consistently implement and fund a capital improvements program to maintain existing infrastructure in order to facilitate business development, enable the workforce to access local commercial and industrial businesses and facilitate the delivery of raw materials and shipment of finished goods.
- Encourage the development of housing appropriate and affordable for the workforce needed by the businesses in the community.
- Promote development that is consistent with the Sustainable Development Principles promulgated by the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development. In addition, promote compact development, expand housing opportunities, reutilize brownfields and abandoned buildings, plan for livable communities, promote livable communities, advance sound water policy, preserve working natural landscapes and promote sustainable development via other actions.

The Town of Westminster is currently going through an update of the community's Master Plan. A draft of the community's Existing and Future Land Use chapter, dated March 20, 2014, cites the following Land Use Goals, which are highly relevant to land use in the Wachusett Corridor:

- Westminster desires a walkable thriving New England-style village center that provides service-shopping-dining opportunities for residents and visitors alike;
- Commercial & Industrial districts that support existing businesses and industries while attracting new economic enterprises that will provide tax revenue for the Town and living wage jobs for the residents of Westminster and the region;
- A rural countryside that preserves the Town's working landscapes and scenic vistas; and
- Updated Zoning Bylaws, regulations and permitting systems that accomplish the above.

Westminster's objectives to accomplish these goals direct relevance to land use in the Wachusett Corridor are reflective of Smart Growth principles, including the following:

- Enact zoning tools that will create a vibrant and lively village center containing a mixture of residences, businesses, service providers, municipal offices and institutional uses.
- Ensure that new growth does not outstrip the Town's ability to provide quality municipal services to its residents.
- Recognize farming as an integral part of Westminster's economy and rural character, and work towards preserving the long-term viability of the Town's agricultural resources.
- Ensure that development on and near agricultural lands is sensitive to the value of the agricultural resource.
- Encourage development that provides work, live and play opportunities for residents of all income levels.

- Welcome new development that can integrate itself into the fabric of the Town and reflect Westminster's community character.
- Welcome new development that can help the Town address and achieve its municipal and infrastructure needs.

VII. Recommended Goals/Objectives/Strategies

Based on a review of current conditions, the goals and objectives of the three Wachusett Communities, and the issues and concerns of the Corridor's ethnic communities, the following goal, objectives, and strategies were identified to guide future land use, consistent with Smart Growth principles, within the Wachusett Corridor:

a) Goal:

To foster the future growth and development of the Wachusett Corridor consistent with Smart Growth principles and the plans and objectives of the Wachusett Corridor communities.

b) Objectives:

The objectives of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan are consistent with Smart Growth Principles and the plans and objectives of the Wachusett Corridor communities. These principles are:

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

c) Strategies:

1. Pursue the Preservation of Open Space within the Wachusett Corridor – Open space and natural areas provide recreational opportunities, habitat for plants and animals, and critical environmental areas such as wetlands. These areas are also components of economic development opportunities for the Wachusett Corridor as discussed in the Economic Development Element of this plan. The preservation of open space and the enhancement of open space and recreational resources in the Wachusett Corridor should be facilitated, consistent with the Open Space Plans of the three Wachusett Corridor communities. This would include identification and inventory of open space resources and identification and application of appropriate tools such as Chapter 61, Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), and open space zoning to preserve these resources. Opportunities to acquire land for open space/conservation should also be considered, particularly in Leominster. Leominster has previously obtained grants through the Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Program to purchase open space within the community. Another option to consider would be participation in the state's Community Preservation Act (CPA) program (discussed in the Housing Element of this plan).
2. Provide Improved Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Wachusett Station – Fundamental to the principles of Smart Growth is the establishment of a walkable neighborhood. It is essential that safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connections be made between Wachusett Station and the surrounding community as discussed in the Transportation and Open Space/Recreation elements of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan. These mobility improvements can also provide benefits for land use and development in the surrounding area by reducing reliance on the use of single-occupant automobiles and reducing demand for vehicular parking to serve local development.
3. Create More Housing Choices -- Consistent with the Housing Element of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan, new housing providing a

diverse mix of housing options (including single-family homes and apartments, condominiums, affordable units) should be developed to allow people with different housing needs to live in the same neighborhoods and allow residents to remain in the same neighborhood if their housing needs change. Higher densities of housing should be permitted in proximity to the new station which will facilitate greater utilization of transit services and reduced dependency on single-occupant vehicles. Tools to facilitate the development of new housing in the corridor are discussed in the Housing Element of this plan.

4. Facilitate Smart Growth Zoning Through a Smart Growth Overlay District – To support Smart Growth principles in the Wachusett Corridor, area zoning should be modified to support a mix of land uses that promote economic development, enhances the quality of life, and preserves open space resources. This could be facilitated through the application of a Smart Growth Overlay District for the Wachusett Corridor that provides for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in the vicinity of the new Wachusett Station and a mix of land uses in the surrounding community. Given that the Wachusett Corridor covers three separate municipalities with difference development characteristics, the zoning characteristics of this overlay will differ between each community. Elements of this zoning could include increased opportunity for commercial development to serve area residents and commuters and for higher densities of housing in proximity to the new station, including multi-family housing as recommended in the Housing Element of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan. All development would be limited in scale to conform to the standards of the surrounding community and could be controlled through maximum size limits and design standards.

Section VIII: Implementation Plan

I. Introduction

The Implementation Plan of the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan summarizes the specific strategies contained in each element of the plan along with their schedule and initial assignment of implementation responsibilities. As discussed in the Introduction/Executive Summary, the responsibility for facilitating the implementation of the Plan will belong to the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will be established through a Memorandum of Understanding endorsed by the three Wachusett Corridor Communities. This Steering Committee will be responsible for managing the Plan's implementation and making any necessary adjustments or modifications to the Implementation Plan as implementation activities proceed. Certain key entities will participate and lead the Steering Committee but other entities will have an opportunity to participate as appropriate, depending on specific activities or strategies.

The following pages of this section present an Implementation Matrix that identifies the specific strategies contained in each element of the Plan. A key to the abbreviations and timeframes shown in the Matrix are shown below. The "X"'s shown in the boxes represent ***suggested*** lead entities and timeframes. The Steering Committee, once it is established and operational, should review these suggestions and modify as appropriate depending on priorities and feasibility.

Table 8.1: Responsible Entities for Implementation

Responsible Entities	Abbreviation
Wachusett Corridor Steering Committee	WCSC
Mayor of Fitchburg	FM
Mayor of Leominster	LM
Westminster Board of Selectmen	WBS
Fitchburg Planning Board	FPB
Leominster Planning Board	LPB
Westminster Planning Board	WPB
Fitchburg Conservation Commission	FCC
Leominster Conservation Commission	LCC
Westminster Conservation Commission	WCC

Table 8.2: Implementation Timeframe

Timeframe	Implementation Period
Short-Term	Within first year
Mid-Term	Within 2 to 4 years
Long-Term	5 Years or longer
Ongoing	Every year

II. Implementation Matrix

Land Use	Responsible Entity:										Timeframe:			
Recommendations:	WCSC	FM	LM	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
LU1: Establish a Wachusett Corridor Memorandum of Understanding among the Three Wachusett Corridor Communities	X	X	X	X							X			
LU2: Establish a Wachusett Corridor Steering Committee	X										X			
LU3: Pursue the Preservation of Open Space within the Wachusett Corridor								X	X	X				X
LU4: Provide Improved Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Wachusett Station	X				X	X	X							X
LU5: Create More Housing Choices	X				X	X	X							X
LU6: Facilitate Smart Growth Zoning Through a Smart Growth Overlay District					X						X			

Open Space/Recreation	Responsible Entity:										Timeframe:			
Recommendations:	WCSC	FCC	LCC	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
OS1: Establish a network of sidewalks and paths to allow safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the Wachusett Station and connections to adjacent residential and commercial areas	X				X	X	X							X
OS2: Provide public transit/shuttle service between Wachusett Station and nearby recreation areas. Examine the operating schedule of train service and enhance the schedule as appropriate to accommodate use by recreational travelers to the region.	X										X	X		
OS3: Provide safe and secure bicycle parking facilities at Wachusett Station and other primary bicycle destinations within the Wachusett Corridor		X	X	X							X			
OS4: Allow/promote bikes on all modes of public transportation, including buses, shuttles, and trains	X													X
OS5: Define and improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to Steamline and Burma Road Trails: Conduct a trail corridor study to facilitate access to the trail from Wachusett Station	X				X						X	X		

Open Space/Recreation (cont.)	Responsible Entity:										Timeframe:			
Recommendations:	WCSC	FCC	LCC	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
OS6: Define and improve pedestrian connections to Midstate Trail: Conduct a trail corridor study to facilitate access to the trail from Wachusett Station	X						X				X			
OS7: Explore opportunities to establish a mountain bike destination within or in proximity to Leominster State Forest that provides coordinated access for cyclists including allowance for bikes on trains and connecting trails between Wachusett Station and Leominster State Forest	X												X	
OS8: Assist the Wachusett Corridor communities in the identification of appropriate properties for preservation and identify appropriate tools and/or funding programs to support their efforts. Provide assistance as appropriate to pursue these programs	X							X	X	X				X

Open Space/Recreation (cont.)	Responsible Entity:											Timeframe:			
Recommendations:	WCSC	FCC	LCC	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC		Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
OS9: Create and market a "brand" to publicize and promote recreation opportunities in the Wachusett Corridor	X												X		
OS10: Collaborate with commercial recreational enterprises within the Region including Great Wolf and Wachusett Mountain to promote their facilities and provide coordinated access and possible marketing strategies	X														X
OS11: Assure that all facilities developed under this plan or in association with the development of the new station and rail service are constructed and maintained to preserve sensitive environmental resources	X							X	X	X					X

Economic Development	Responsible Entity:										Timeframe:			
Recommendations:	WCSC	FM	LM	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
ED1: Establish a collaboration mechanism among the three Wachusett communities	X	X	X	X							X			
ED2: Survey Existing Businesses in the Corridor	X				X	X	X					X		
ED3: Conduct a Comprehensive Site Evaluation and Establish a Computerized Database of Properties	X				X	X	X					X		
ED4: Identify Opportunities for Renovation/Reuse of Existing Properties and Proactively Work to Foster Redevelopment of "Brownfields"	X				X		X							X
ED5: Identify Needs and Secure Funding for Infrastructure Improvements	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							X
ED6: Work with Local Educational Institutions to Train the Future Employees of the Wachusett Corridor	X													X
ED7: Identify Opportunities for Increased Recreational and Eco-Tourism	X				X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
ED8: Explore Funding Opportunities for Economic Development	X													X
ED9: Market the Region	X	X	X	X										X

Transportation/Circulation	Responsible Entity:										Timeframe:			
Recommendations:	WCSC	FM	LM	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
T1: Undertake a Public and Comprehensive Transportation/Circulation (CTC) Study of the Corridor and a smaller CTC Study for a pilot project of a location within the Corridor.	X				X	X	X				X	X		
T2: Seek the development of off-road multi-use trail networks to add bike and pedestrian linkages to origins and destinations which includes Wachusett Station	X				X	X	X							X
T3: Apply Complete Street Concepts for the Corridor for all future road projects whether they are funded through the MMPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or through other funding sources.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X			X
T4: Work with MassDOT District 3 to seek safety improvements at the Route 2 Priority Roadway Safety Improvement Locations in the Corridor		X	X	X	X	X	X					X		
T5: Seek the development of a pilot project, or projects, which can work to build support locally by demonstrating the improved operation of the roadway and improved access to a location. The ability to point to a successful project will help to overcome doubt and skepticism.	X				X	X	X				X	X		
T6: Ensure that the proposed transportation system within the Corridor will meet the goals, objectives and recommendations of the Plan by establishing partnerships with key state and regional agencies	X													X

Facilities/Institutional	Responsible Entity:										Timeframe:			
Facilities/Institutional	WCSC	FM	LM	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
FI1: Regionalization of Services and Consolidation	X	X	X	X							X			X
FI2: Establish a Wachusett Corridor Implementation Committee	X										X			
FI3: Water/Sewer System Expansion Policy to Promote Business and Enhance the Tax Base		X	X	X	X	X	X							X
FI4: Continue Efforts to Coordinate Municipal and Community Services to the Benefit of Corridor Residents		X	X	X										X
FI5: Develop a Capital Improvement Plan for the Wachusett Corridor and Implement the Process		X	X	X									X	

Housing	Responsible Entity:										Timeframe:			
Recommendations:	WCSC	FM	LM	WBS	FPB	LPB	WPB	FCC	LCC	WCC	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term	Ongoing
H1: Consider the Possibility of Mixed Use Development Overlay Ordinance in Appropriate area(s) in the Fitchburg area of the Wachusett Corridor.					X						X			
H2: Consider Allowing Open Space Residential Development (or Cluster Development) by Right.					X		X					X		
H3: Consider the Community Preservation Act as a Smart Growth Tool that Could Promote Housing.		X	X	X	X	X	X					X		
H4: Westminster should continue to Implement its Housing Production Plan (HPP)/Housing Master Plan Element and Fitchburg and Leominster Should Consider Creating an HPP.					X	X	X				X	X		
H5: Education and Outreach Efforts and Partnerships	X				X									X
H6: Comply with Chapter 40B.					X	X	X							X
H7: Explore preparation of a Priority Development Fund (PDF) Planning Assistance grant application to Mass. DHCD for Implementation of this Housing Element.					X	X	X					X		

Appendix A: Steering Committee Membership

Wachusett SmartGrowth Steering Committee Mailing List

Al Futterman, Nashua River Watershed Coalition
Bob Maki, Westminster Conservation Commission
Dan Nigrosh, Can Am Machinery
Joana Dos Santos, Cleghorn Neighborhood Council
Nancy Maynard, Great Wolf Lodge
Mayor Dean Mazzarella, Leominster
Mayor Lisa Wong, Fitchburg
Lisa Vallee, Leominster Economic Development
S. Curry, Fitchburg Board of Health
Mike O'Hara, Fitchburg Conservation Commission
Kerry O'Brien, Gardner News
Nate Larose, Fitchburg Mayor's Office
Gary Sicard, Area Resident
Michael DiPietro, Fitchburg Planning Board
Ryan McNutt, Fitchburg Housing Department
Neal Andersen, Wachusett Greenways
Kate Griffin-Brooks, Leominster Planning
Larry Cassassa, Fitchburg
Lenny Laakso, Fitchburg DPW
Joanne DiNardo, Leominster Conservation Commission
C. Knuth, Leominster Board of Health
Marc Doahn, Twin Cities CDC
Deb Cary, MassAudobon Society
Mike Fortin, Westminster Planning Board
Ken Pearson, Monty Tech
Dick O'Brien, Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition
John Harden, North Central MA Chamber of Commerce
Janet Morrison, North County Land Trust
Paula Caron, Fitchburg Planning Board
Josh Spero, Fitchuburg State REDI
Matt Gordon, Fitchburg State REDI
Brian Cline, Area Resident
Rick Tenney, Cleghorn Oil
Ryan Roy, Cleghorn Oil
Alena Melanson, Sentinel and Enterprise
Shyla Matthews, MassDevelopment
St. Jospehs Church, Fitchburg
Stephen Wallace, Westminster Planner
Ted Fiffy, MART
Mohammed Khan, MART
R. Baker, Terra Therm Incorporated
Adrian Ford, Three Pyramids

Tom Cleveland, Omnova Solutions
David Outman, Trustees of Reservations
David Munoz, Twin Cities CDC
Wachusett Brewery
David Pogoreic, Westminster Business Park
Karen Murphy, Westminster Town Coordinator
Senator Jennifer Flanagan
Westminster Town Clerk
Fitchburg City Clerk
Leominster City Clerk
Representative Jonathan Zlotnick
Represenative Stephen DiNatale
Representative Dennis Rosa

Appendix B: Kickoff Meeting

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

www.mrpc.org
(978)345-7376

Press Conference

To Announce Federal Funding from
The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
Community Challenge Grant Program for a

Background: *MRPC was awarded $129,500 by HUD's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.*

Date and Time: Friday**,** March 16th, 2012 9:45 a.m.
Location: CAN-AM Machinery, Inc. 44 Old Princeton Road, Fitchburg MA, 01420

Agenda

9:45- 10:00 A.M. Welcome: Victor Koivumaki, MRPC Chairman
Dan Nigrosh, President and CEO of Can-Am Machinery

Speakers

10:00 Mayor Lisa Wong, City of Fitchburg
10:05 Mayor Dean Mazzarella, City of Leominster
10:10 Laila Michaud, Chair, Board of Selectmen, Westminster
10:15 State Representative Stephen DiNatale
10:20 Kristin Woods**,** Representing Congressmen John Olver

10:25 **Project Overview:**
John Hume, MRPC Director of Planning & Development
Jeff Anderson, MRPC Planning Consultant
10:40 Questions and Answers
10:50 Conclusion: Glenn Eaton, MRPC Executive Director
C: City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law

Please RSVP by March 13th via: Janderson@mrpc.org

MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ANNOUNCES THE START OF THE WACHUSETT SMART GROWTH CORRIDOR ANALYSIS INVOLVING AREAS IN FITCHBURG, LEOMINSTER AND WESTMINSTER

Fitchburg, MA—On March 16th, 2012 at 9:45 AM, MRPC is hosting a kick-off event to mark the beginning of the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis. The event will be located at the CAN-AM Machinery Inc. at 44 Old Princeton Road in West Fitchburg. Anyone with an interest in this smart growth community project including local and state officials, residents, businesses and others are highly encouraged to attend! Please RSVP Jeff Anderson by March 13th at janderson@mrpc.org.

In November of 2011, MRPC received a $129,500 Community Challenge grant from the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to fund the development and completion of the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis. The plan will study the area surrounding the proposed Wachusett passenger rail station as well as engage the local community and examine various elements within the rail corridor, including transportation, land use, housing, economic development, open space/recreation and facilities/institution planning.

Speakers at the March 16th public event include Mayor Wong (Fitchburg), Mayor Mazzarella (Leominster), Laila Michaud (Chair, Westminster Board of Selectmen), State Representative Stephen Dinatale, and Kristin Woods (representing Congressman Olver). Representing MRPC, John Hume (Planning and Development Director) and Jeff Anderson will provide a power point presentation to explain the planning project to attendees, which could be viewed simply as a community Master Plan for the area. MRPC Executive Director Glenn Eaton will conclude by explaining the next steps that will be taken, the first of which will be a Visioning/Charrette session open to the general public most likely held sometime in June.

Some Key tasks of the plan which will proceed over a 36-month period include:

- Public Outreach Events - a Visioning Charrette, Focus Group Meetings (conducted in Spanish, Hmong, and Vietnamese), translation of outreach documents into Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese (ethnic groups residing in Fitchburg), and a webpage with information about the plan. A Steering Committee will also be formed to provide project oversight and input. All Steering Committee meetings will be open to the public.
- The development of a Transportation Element accompanied by maps that examines road, bus/trolley, bike and pedestrian modes and linkages with an emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian paths and their design as well as bus and trolley planning.
- A Land Use Element that looks at zoning across municipal boundaries (Fitchburg, Leominster and Westminster, MA) within the corridor area. Recommendations will be made to promote sustainability.
- A Housing Element to analyze current housing demand, affordability and make recommendations based on needs.
- Creating an Economic Development Element that contains a market analysis of the area directly surrounding the Wachusett Station to identify retail and commercial business opportunities.
- An Open Space/ Recreation Element to examine and map open space greenways and recreation across municipal jurisdictions within the corridor area as well as plan for urban green space on the Fitchburg side of the corridor. Active greenway space has the potential to be used for bicycle/pedestrian paths that could connect to the proposed Wachusett Station.
- A Facilities/ Institutional Element that depicts and maps the location of schools, community centers, places of worship, hospital and medical health clinics and governmental services. It is important to identify services that are offered within biking/walking distance from the proposed Wachusett Station.
- Policy Recommendations and Implementation Plans with timetables regarding each of the elements.

“Regional outcomes to be identified through the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor analysis are incredibly significant,” says Glenn Eaton, Executive Director of MRPC. “The new Wachusett Station will impact Fitchburg, Leominster, Westminster and the entire Montachusett Region. Part of why MRPC exists is to create plans that cross local boundaries and can positively impact municipalities on the Regional level. This project exemplifies MRPC’s purpose and overall regional goals. It’s just that simple,”

“Smart development is always the goal in Fitchburg,” says Mayor Lisa Wong. “With the upcoming extension of the commuter rail into West Fitchburg this study is an amazing opportunity to plan for future growth that best serves the residents and businesses of Fitchburg.”

“I applaud the MRPC for recognizing the enormous economic development opportunities that Wachusett Station can bring and their efforts to plan accordingly” says Congressman John Olver. “If planned properly, west Fitchburg is poised to experience significant redevelopment which should act as an economic engine for the area.”

Once again, anyone with an interest in the community smart growth plan is highly encouraged to attend!!! Please RSVP Jeff Anderson by March 13th at janderson@mrpc.org.

Appendix C: Public Forum

Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis

Public Forum

THURSDAY, JUNE 14TH AT 5 PM

Coco-Key Water Resort Hotel & Convention Center

150 Royal Plaza Drive
Fitchburg, MA 04120

AGENDA

I. **5:00 PM – Introductions and Overview**

A. **Welcome:** **Coco-Key, Representative**
Mayor Wong, Fitchburg

B. **Goals of the Public Forum: Glenn Eaton, Executive Director, MRPC.**

C. **Some Background Info and Stats: Eric R. Smith, AICP, Principal Planner, MRPC.**

D. **Process of the Evening: Glenn Eaton**

II. **5:30 PM - The Public Forum**

A. **5:30 PM to 6:45 PM Break Out Sessions**

B. **6:45 PM to 7:00 PM – BREAK – Get Refreshments and Return to Seats.**

C. **7:00 PM to 7:45 PM - Break Out Group Presentations.**

IV. **7:45 - Next Steps**

V. **8:00 PM – Adjournment**

Please RSVP on or before June 8, 2012 via sbrow@mrpc.org

C: City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law

Notes typed at the forum:
-Summary of public feedback
-What we missed tonight
-Conversation with Mohammed Khan

June 14th, 2012

Summary of Feedback

Group A:
Housing: reasonable cost, that will attract young people
Transportation: What is being done to connect downtown Fitchburg to Wachusett Station. We will also be interested in Bike paths, walking paths, potentially using Burma Road, having access to walking trails is good, but connecting to all forms of transportation is important
Open Space: Cooperative Collaborative effort between towns/ communities– Active recreation space/ tennis courts, family areas, neighborhood level recreation space.

Group B- Housing: Post-children housing, smart growth. Clustering residential developments to preserve open space:

Transportation- Bike paths should take advantage of train station, access to I. state forest, rail trails. The area will be more usable if connected, by bike and pedestrian routes

Open Space- Redevelopment projects will preserve open space- greenspace- making sure we have proper development along roadways, that include green spaces for pedestrian safety.

Improvement of railroad bridge- one of the most major cluster of problems in the entire area. **Estimate: 40+ accidents due to the bridge????**

Group C:
Existing zoning- take a look a changing some zoning? We want as much industrial owned land to stay industrial—near the highway. Zoning came in after the buildings were there. Residential development does not lessen the tax burden?

Facilities: More information needed– maybe break the radius down into smaller concentric circles, focus on a neighborhood level.

Leominster- open space—nice resource for everyone.

Because something is zoning a way now…doesn't mean it has to stay that way– We should make amendments based on the greater good.

Group D:

Econ Dev.- Need for commuter based development- gas station coffee shops banks, kiosk at the station to promote busi. In the area.

Facilities: Pedestrian/ bike traffic- unsafe conditions/ lack of sidewalks is dangerous and hinders pedestrian/bicycle uses.
Connecting the rail trails would be a plus– there are certain obstacles in place. Need to work with railroads to make that rail trail happen. It could like the rail trail to Leom. State frst.

Land-use- residential and industrial does not mix.- must have a compatible balance.

What did we miss tonight?

- What will the trains impact have on the surrounding communities?
- Sound and visual mitigation measures– What are they?
- Are we missing the unique features? How can we call them out? **Eco-Urban** is a major theme in this region and is significantly unique. We should include this characteristic.
- Regional Trails vision—open space assets– This train station development can impact a much larger area than the 2.5 mile radius. We shouldn't lose sight of that. If we create the right rec. vision here, it will have benefit to our communities, our economy, etc.. There is marketability here. It can greatly help to define our Region for years to come.
- Gardner lost their Train service over a decade ago. Athol has lost their train service too. This project will help that.
- The train stations affect on Athol will not be necessarily as great on economic development as other factors? We really need to some studies!!!!
- MORE MARKET DATA!? MORE HOUSING DEMAND STATS!? This will help us to greater understand the station's impact on econ. Dev.
- Station reps an opportunity to draw people into the region, and we would like to capitalize on that. It is probably a ½ mile around the train station: mixed use--- complete streets design- ped. Bikes– cars– share the road.--- and who is going to be using the station?
- Residential and Industrial does not mix--- but we should find a compatible mix?
- Industrial provides tax revenue and– jobs---- Residential development does not pay---should put industry next to the highway?
- This may be a good way to attract younger professionals---might be a great place to get started for young prof. who work in Boston and it is expensive to live there. Might be good to try to attract-
- Need to find that balance! Between industrial and compatibility and highway business.
- Ridership from Boston into the Region?
- Looking at this radius the full 2.5 miles and beyond—for attraction

- Infrastructure- Fitchburg has plenty of water– is the water located appropriately– water—sewer capacity in place—electircal infrastructure in place?

- Improvements for existing housing—capacity to upgrade and improve existing housing stock– houses are old—
- Housing—neighborhood stabilization? Money is spent on old houses--housing stock is old—Is this affecting our neighborhoods? Is there a better way to address our housing stock?
- Lets be creative in how we handle this? Take a look at some other models.
- Fitchburg has an excellent opportunity to highlight its industrial heritage- through redevelopment projects (mixed use) that could be housing. Diversification

- Zip Cars? To access the rec opportunities–

A conversation with Mo

- We are spending to much time commuting from Fitchburg to Boston– Commute time should be faster—60 minutes– that was a primary reason for this commuter extension project. 60 Minutes travel time is comparable to other major cities. In addition, the human life 8 hours is needed for sleep- other 16 hours- 8 hours for work- other 8 hours is the socialization time–*if we spend all of our personal time commuting- it takes away from our quality of life.* This Wachusett Station: 50-60 Million dollar improvement to bring this station project here.
- 300 car parking lot- geared toward bringing people here from Boston– Reverse commute. There are jobs that are trying to connect with the Boston area universities-
- Recreation—huge resource- Wachusett Mountain. Historical Assets—trail system– why don't people come here? How can we get people to see this region for what it is? This station will help to do just that.
- There is still planning to do here– this is a big project.

The station itself will be a shelter- with Handicapped access platform to get onto the train.
This project is taking time- we are now purchasing properties to create the station and layover facility- Hoping to buy the land at the end of the month-
Currently 60% design complete–
Track improvements will extend all the way beyond W. Station 2 miles west to the layover station.

~60 MPH-

Fitchburg- Boston- 79 MPH max– They can go this fast now. From Fitch-Wachusett- ~ 60 mph?

Is the bus line—transit going to be accessible to the Boston- Fitch traveling--recreation opportunities in the Region?

Mountain-Ski access-

Demand Oriented Shuttle services--

Zip Cars–We will look into that

telegram.com

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Article published Jun 15, 2012

Extension of Fitchburg rail line examined

Wachusett commuter extension project

By Paula J. Owen TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

FITCHBURG — State and local officials, residents, business owners and community leaders came together last night to help plan for growth within 2.5 miles of the Wachusett commuter rail extension project.

The roundtable session held at the Coco-Keys Resort Hotel and Conference Center was open to the public. The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hosted the event. The agency is seeking input on plans for use of the land surrounding the proposed station off Authority Drive.

The MRPC received a $129,500 federal grant in November to complete the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis for the communities of Fitchburg, Leominster and Westminster. Community involvement and input are necessary components.

Glenn Eaton, executive director of the MRPC, broke attendees into four groups to discuss key elements within the corridor, including transportation, land use, housing, economic development, open space and recreation, and facilities and institution planning.

One priority emerging from the groups was the development of affordable housing, but there was disagreement on who that housing should be geared for — the generation whose children are grown, or younger people and families. Additionally, some disagreed on the type of zoning that should surround the area.

Also of importance was conservation of open space, the creation of bicycling and walking trails, and connecting the station to downtown Fitchburg, Mount Wachusett, Leominster State Forest and the Mid-State Trail.

City Councilor Joel Kaddy said his group saw a need for commuter-based development such as gas stations, coffee shops and supermarkets.

"On the city side, we want people to come to the city and spend money," Mr. Kaddy said. "It will help Fitchburg."

Additionally, he and others said they were concerned about the unsafe railroad bridge off Princeton Road and the safety of Princeton Road itself, including the lack of sidewalks on the road and the speed limit.

Charles A. Caron, chairman of the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority, said he was concerned about noise from the trains affecting residents.

"Sound will travel," he said. "It is on the top of a hill."

Brian L. Cline, a small-business owner from Sterling, said he didn't feel enough consideration was given to the unique features of the area. He described the area around the proposed station as a dense metropolis with significant open space surrounding it.

"Those features are very rare and unique in our world," Mr. Cline said.

Though some felt it was difficult to focus on such a large area and that more data on demographics was needed, others could see an impact beyond 2.5 miles. Richard O'Brien of the Trustees of Reservations in Leominster said development around the station could affect a much larger area.

"We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that if we create the right recreational vision it can be a tremendous benefit to the community, quality of life and to our economy," Mr. O'Brien said. "We need to think beyond the boundaries and try to

create that vision that will guide us beyond what have here ... it will change the character of our economy here for generations to come."

Appendix D: Ethnic Focus Groups

HMONG FOCUS GROUP

Nyoua Yang

MARKETING METHOD

- Post flyers that the Asian Markets and Market Basket
- Went to United Hmong of MA's boarding meeting and Annual meeting to present the meeting

FITCHBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY

The meeting was hold at the Fitchburg Public Library. The question and answer were done as a group. Due to the languages diversity we had I had to present the question in English and Hmong. I coordinated the map with the question that was asked. I explain the map and its purposes.

QUESTION 1

Housing: are there any existing housing needs within the study area? And do you see any forecasted needs in terms of the development, preservation, improvement, affordability and types of housing such as Condominiums, apartment buildings, single family homes, elderly housing, and housing units above ground floor retail commercial space.

RESPONSE

- There is enough housing. The rent price right now is good. The bad side would be rent will go up because of these new developments. Currently the good out weights the bad. We are worry about the trees that will be cutting down to make these housing happen. The job lost to the new people who are moving in.

QUESTION 2

Transportation: What vehicle and pedestrian circulation improvements or changes should be made in the project area, if any (i.e. roads, signs, sidewalks, walking/biking path, intra-city transit service options, traffic calming techniques, etc?)

RESPONSE

The road to enter the train station should not be an exit off of the highway/main road. This will help with less traffic for people on the highway. Signage should be clear and in Hmong for the people who do not speak English. Regarding sidewalks, biking paths, intra-city transit services, we agree to have these transportation options.

QUESTION 3

Open space/recreation: identify any significant recreational and open space areas within the project radius and state their importance. Are there any additional open space/recreation need that aren't being met or will not be met in the future and do you see any opportunities for pedestrian/trail connections to the new Wachusett Station, downtown Fitchburg or existing open space?

RESPONSE

We just want to protect the forest. Don't want a lot of development to happen. We don't see or know of any open space to be use. Some of the activities that are currently happening are hunting, hiking, fishing, picnicking, etc. Our children still need to enjoy nature.

QUESTION 4

Economic development: in terms of economic development (jobs, retail, office, business) what opportunities do you see that would complement/reinvigorate existing business uses including the re-use of any brownfields sites and vacant/underutilized property; the needs of the new "green" economy; and, the promotion and the support of small businesses?

RESPONSE

The businesses opportunities that we see that would complement are small businesses, non-factories or for green factories, mall/retails. Due to the fact that people will be moving into this area, more small retail business or mall would help the economy in this area. Other than this would be housing projects. Due to supply and demand more houses or apartment would need to be built.

QUESTION 5

The businesses opportunities that we see that would complement are small businesses, non-factories or for green factories, mall/retails. Due to the fact that people will be moving into this area, more small retail business or mall would help the economy in this area. Other than this would be housing projects. Due to supply and demand more houses or apartment would need to be built.

RESPONSE

Schools and hospitals is the main concern for us. Due to the fact that more children will be attending school the amount of school that we have right now would not support the number of students that will be attending in the future. Our children's education will be at risk.

The only hospital we have here in the project area is Leominster hospital. It is already busy as is. We have to wait hours before being seen in the ER. Our concern is that the wait will be even longer and they will not be able to service the new population. We would like more hospital if the demand is there. Also it will create more jobs for the community.

Other than that we also see that a tourist station for attraction would be a good idea, due to the forest we have here. It will protect the forest and generate income at the same time.

QUESTION 6

Land use: taking a look at the existing zoning across municipal boundaries (see attached map and displayed map), identify any issues/opportunities for the project area. Also, would you support mixed use development (i.e. retails, office, medical office and condominiums and townhomes often with the residential above or integrated with the commercial) within the study/project area and in particular in close proximity to the Wachusett Station location?

RESPONSE

Yes, we do support the idea of mix development. Some of the issues we see are: how's the station going to get the money to maintain it? Is the parking free or is there a fee? Beside this we don't see any other issues that have not been suggested already.

Thank you!

The Hmong focus group meeting for the new Wachusett Station was held in the Fitchburg Public Library on October 27th. I introduced the project area and the main reason for the meeting. We worked on the questions as one whole group. Each of these questions was asked in Hmong and in English due to the languages diversity we had. Each question was followed by an explanation of a map. The ideas and concerns that the participants had were recorded on paper and on an mp3.

To market for this meeting, I went to United Hmong of MA's annual meeting and Board meeting and announce the meeting and its details. I also handed out flyers there. Flyers were being posted at the local Asian markets and Market Basket.

The questions for the focus group meeting were as followed:

1. Housing: are there any existing housing needs within the study area? And do you see any forecasted needs in terms of the development, preservation, improvement, affordability and types of housing such as Condominiums, apartment buildings, single family homes, elderly housing, and housing units above ground floor retail commercial space.
   Response:

   There is enough housing. The rent price right now is good. The bad side would be rent will go up because of these new developments. Currently the good out weights the bad. We are worry about the trees that will be cutting down to make these housing happen. The job lost to the new people who are moving in.

2. Transportation: What vehicle and pedestrian circulation improvements or changes should be made in the project area, if any (i.e. roads, signs, sidewalks, walking/biking path, intra-city transit service options, traffic calming techniques, etc?)

   Response:
   The road to enter the train station should not be an exit off of the highway/main road. This will help with less traffic for people on the highway. Signage should be clear and in Hmong for the people who do not speak English. Regarding sidewalks, biking paths, intra-city transit services, we agree to have these transportation options.

3. Open space/recreation: identify any significant recreational and open space areas within the project radius and state their importance. Are there any additional open space/recreation need that aren't being met or will not be met in the future and do you see any opportunities for pedestrian/trail connections to the new Wachusett Station, downtown Fitchburg or existing open space?
   Response:

   We just want to protect the forest. Don't want a lot of development to happen. We don't see or know of any open space to be use. Some of the activities that are currently happening are hunting, hiking, fishing, picnicking, etc. Our children still need to enjoy nature.

   Economic development: in terms of economic development (jobs, retail, office, business) what opportunities do you see that would complement/reinvigorate existing business uses including the re-use of any brownfields sites and vacant/underutilized property; the needs of the new "green" economy; and, the promotion and the support of small businesses?

Response:
The businesses opportunities that we see that would complement are small businesses, non-factories or for green factories, mall/retails. Due to the fact that people will be moving into this area, more small retail business or mall would help the economy in this area. Other than this would be housing projects. Due to supply and demand more houses or apartment would need to be built.

4. Facilities/institutional: identify services that are offered within walking/biking distance from the new Wachusett Station (schools, places of worship, government services, etc). Do you see any current and/or future needs that are not being met?
Response:

Schools and hospitals is the main concern for us. Due to the fact that more children will be attending school the amount of school that we have right now would not support the number of students that will be attending in the future. Our children's education will be at risk.

The only hospital we have here in the project area is Leominster hospital. It is already busy as is. We have to wait hours before being seen in the ER. Our concern is that the wait will be even longer and they will not be able to service the new population. We would like more hospital if the demand is there. Also it will create more jobs for the community.

Other than that we also see that a tourist station for attraction would be a good idea, due to the forest we have here. It will protect the forest and generate income at the same time.

6. Land use: taking a look at the existing zoning across municipal boundaries (see attached map and displayed map), identify any issues/opportunities for the project area. Also, would you support mixed use development (i.e. retails, office, medical office and condominiums and townhomes often with the residential above or integrated with the commercial) within the study/project area and in particular in close proximity to the Wachusett Station location?

Response:

Yes, we do support the idea of mix development. Some of the issues we see are: how's the station going to get the money to maintain it? Is the parking free or is there a fee? Beside this we don't see any other issues that have not been suggested already.

At the end of the meeting the participants was asked if they have any questions or comments they would like to add or ask. No comment was made. We ended with the maps on display, so they can have a closer look.

*Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis

Latino Focus Group

Cleghorn Neighborhood Center

*The Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, being one of the main resources and support systems for Latinos conducted a focus group in Spanish to get community input about the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis

*The focus group was conducted in Spanish to assure that language was not a barrier to participants

*LATINO INPUT

* Focus group took place on October 2nd, 2012
* 10 people participated in the focus group
* Participants represented diverse Latino backgrounds and nationalities including Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Colombia
* Food was provided
* Gift cards were raffled
* The maps were the most efficient way to teach participants about the project and the impact it will have in their community
* Baby sitting was offered

*LOGISTICS

*Findings

What participants had to say...

* Better housing, since the existing housing is in poor condition and rents are very high
* More parking at rental housing
* Multiple housing apartments with gardens, parks and pet areas
* Housing with sports and recreation facilities
* Lower cost housing
* Affordable single family housing

*HOUSING

* Parking
* Improve and rebuild public roads
* Create and expand the existing lighting system
* Improve traffic signals for students and people
* More traffic signs, more traffic lights
* To use public transportation, this must be improved: schedules and guidance to the community as the current information system cannot be understood
* Internal transport to the station (Intra-city)
* Better marketing of transportation system: information campaign in favor of the population

*TRANSPORTATION

* Taxi Services at the station; more personalized taxi service
* Extended hours for public transportation
  * 7 days a week
  * Service until 11:00 on weekdays and weekends 12:00 am
* Adapt public transportation schedule based on seasonal changes: example, Summer, Autumn, Winter.
* Public transport system running every 30 minutes
* Coordinate the new station schedules with the current transportation system and taxis
* Widen road on the way to the station (Corridor)-i.e. bridge near the water plant (Very dangerous)

*TRANSPORTATION

* Need more green spaces
* Make better use of existing parks
  * Restrooms
  * Cafeterias
  * Attractions and activities
  * Amphitheatre
* Promote and better inform the community about existing activities in parks through:
  * Latino Channels,
  * Local Latino and non-Latino newspapers
  * supermarkets
  * Community support centers
* Create a website, (multi language) to reach the entire population and market through mentioned channels
* Shops:
  * Clothing
  * Hispanic Food
  * Cinemas
  * Sporting goods
  * Novelty
  * Youth Activity Center
* Leominster State Park with access to parking

*GREEN SPACE and CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN

* Rehabilitate existing plants and build new factories
* Attracting Investors
* Amphitheatre
* Garment factories, as there is no variety
* Bakeries and Pastry Shops
* Food Business (Variety)
* Clothes and Shoe Shops (Variety)
* Economic aid to developing small businesses (Self Enterprises)
* Business builder program (Education)
* Nightclub near the station

*ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

* Food stations (24 hours): i.e.: Denny's
* Medical service offices. Ex Orthopedists
* Create Immigration Office cervices
* Rehabilitate factories and turning them into housing and shelters, entertainment centers, entertainment centers for the elderly
* Rehabilitate factories and turn them into parking lots
* All of the above exposed will bring more
* To develop environmental economics they can develop electricity with windmills.
* Expansion of recycling systems

*ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

* Currently there are none offices for public services
* Bike lanes
* An office with Immigration services because people have to go to Lawrence
* Emergency Room clinic
* Animal treatment clinic for low-income people
* Schools for youth and adults
* Crafts Schools
* Hair Dresser Schools
* School of Fine Arts
* Office for worker rights
* Office for disabled people rights
* Zoo
* Illuminate the region

*INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES

* Reviving what we have and give a positive change
* Zoo
* Astronomy Centre
* Joining environmentalists and develop the land
* Bring Investors
* Campground / cabins

*LAND USE

*Hear from the youth population

*To connect the center of Fitchburg with the corridor you needed publicity

*Improve the image of Fitchburg city

*OTHER COMMENTS

*PARTICIPANTS IN THIS GROUP FEEL THAT THEY MADE HISTORY

Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Analysis

Latino Focus Group

Facilitated by: Joana Dos Santos and Mary Lou Montalvo

Cleghorn Neighborhood Center

Location: Cleghorn Neighborhood Center

18 Fairmount Street

Fitchburg, MA

October 2, 2012

5:00pm

- **Summary of Findings**

- **Introduction**: On October 2, 2012 at the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center was conducted a focus group with the Latino community in the regarding the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Analysis in Spanish. Miss Joana Dos Santos, CNC Executive Director gave a brief explanation about the purpose of this focus group, which is to gather the feelings and opinion regarding the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan among the Latino community in Fitchburg and surrounding communities that would be impacted and she showed a map where the corridor will be located. It was explained that the project will impact communities within two miles and a half in the vicinity of Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster. It was also explained that the train station in the corridor will connect between the Fitchburg station on Main St to nearby the Holiday Inn Hotel (Rt 2, exit 28) in Fitchburg and as a project our city and the towns around us. We had the participation of 10 community members from diverse backgrounds and nationalities including Uruguay, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, and Colombia among others. There was also diversity in age range, family and income size, transportation needs, and immigration status. Outreach to participants was done through the diverse programs at the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center (including adult education, afterschool programing, and information and referral services) and through other agencies. Flyers were distributed at key locations for Latinos including Latino stores, Laundromats, and through the Internet. Light refreshments and childcare were provided.
- We had the participation of 10 members of our community and the focus group were summarized with sections covering Housing, Transportation, Open Space / Recreation, Economic Development, Institutional Facilities and Land Use.
- Having the Wachusett Corridor, they want to know what the community wants to see happening with the rest of the land in the area. What resources can be developed to benefit the communities that will be impacted?
- **FOR THIS TO BE SUCCESSFUL**
- **<u>QUESTION #1</u>: HOUSING - What are the needs in relation to housing?**

- Better housing, since the existing ones are in poor condition and rents are very high
- More parking at rental housing
- Multiple housing apartments with gardens, parks and areas for pets
- Housing with Sports and Recreation
- Lower cost housing
- Affordable single family homes

- **<u>QUESTION #2</u>: TRANSPORTATION - Is it necessary to make changes in the transportation system including vehicles and pedestrians?**

- Parking in the Wachusett Train station and surrounding areas
- Improve and rebuild public roads
- Bikeway in Leominster State Park
- Create and expand the existing lighting system
- Improve traffic signals for students and people
- More traffic signs, more traffic lights
- To use public transportation, the system must be improved:
    - Schedules and guidance to the community as the current information system cannot be understood.

    - Transportation, 7 days a week
    - The transport system until 11:00 on weekdays and weekends 12:00 am
    - Extend the current schedule based on seasonal changes: i.e. summer, autumn, winter
    - Public transport system running every 30 minutes (currently it runs every one hour; waiting especially during winter can cost you your life.)
    -
- Internal transport to the station (Intra-city)
- Marketing campaign to promote public transportation
    - More information of transportation
        - Information showing population the benefits of using public transportation
        - Create a marketing campaign since the population is uninformed
- Taxi Services only to the station and to create a more personalized taxi service (no taxi service that picks up more than one person at the time)
- Coordinate the new station schedules with the current transportation system and taxis
- Widen road on the way to the station (Corridor): i.e. bridge near the water plant (very dangerous).
    -
    - **<u>QUESTION #3</u>: OPEN SPACE/RECREATION - You think we need more green spaces? How they can improve the connection between the Wachusett Corridor and Fitchburg?**
- We need more green spaces
- Make better use of existing parks
    - Restrooms
    - Cafeterias
    - Attractions and activities
    - Amphitheatre
- Promote and better inform the community about existing activities in parks through: Hispanic Channels, local newspapers, supermarkets, community support centers, flyers.
- Create a website, (multi language) to reach the entire population.
- Shops:
    - Clothing
    - Hispanic Food
    - Cinemas
    - Sporting goods
    - Novelty
- Leominster State Park with access to parking
    -
    - **<u>QUESTION #4</u>: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - How abandoned Industrial Parks can be use? What needs exist in the development of environmental economics? How can you promote and support small businesses?**
- Rehabilitate existing plants and build new factories
- Attracting Investors
- Amphitheatre
- Garment factories, as there is no variety
- Bakeries and Pastry Shops
- Food Business (Variety)
- Clothes and Shoe Shops (Variety)
- Economic aid to developing small businesses (Self Enterprises)
- Business builder program (Education)
- Nightclub near the station

- Food stations (24 hours): i.e.: Denny's
- Medical service offices: i.e.: Orthopedists
- Create Immigration Office cervices
- Rehabilitate factories and turning them into housing and shelters, entertainment centers, entertainment centers for the elderly
- Rehabilitate factories and turn them into parking lots
- All of the above exposed will bring more investors
- To develop environmental economics they can develop electricity with windmills
- Expansion of recycling systems
    -
    - **<u>QUESTION #5</u>: INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES - What public services nearby the Wachusett Corridor you can access walking or by bicycle and what others are needed?**
- Currently there are none offices for public services
- Bike lanes
- An office with Immigration services because people have to go to Lawrence
- Emergency Room clinic
- Animal treatment clinic for people with low income
- Schools for youth and adults
- Crafts Schools
- Hair Dresser Schools
- School of Fine Arts
- Office for worker's rights
- Office for disabled people rights
- Zoo
- Illuminate the region
    -
    - **<u>QUESTION #6</u>: LAND USE - Based on the map, what opportunities exists for this area?**
- Reviving what we have and give a positive change
- Zoo
- Astronomy Center
- Joining environmentalists and develop the land
- Bring Investors
- Campground / cabins
    -
    - **<u>OTHER COMMENTS</u>**
- Hear from the youth population
- To connect the center of Fitchburg with the corridor you needed publicity
- Improve the image of Fitchburg city
    -
    -
    - At the end pictures were taken and we thanked the group for all the valuable information shared. We raffled three gift cards of $ 25 each.
    -
    - **This group made history.**

- Attachments

•Flyer

ANALISIS DEL NUEVO CORREDOR WASHUSETT
GRUPO DE ENFOQUE

Para ayudar a dirigir el desarrollo de la Estación de Tren de Washusett queremos su opinión sobre el transporte, el espacio abierto y recreación, desarrollo económico, vivienda y participación de la comunidad, todo dentro de un radio de 2,5 millas alrededor de la futura estación de Tren de Wachusett.

¡Si participa en este grupo focal participara en un sorteo para ganarse premios gratis!

Cuando: 2 de octubre, 5:00 p.m.

Donde: Cleghorn Youth Center
40 Fairmont St
Fitchburg, MA 04120

Refrigerios y cuidado de niños disponible

partnership for Sustainable Communities
an interagency partnership HUD • DOT • EPA

wachusettcorridor.com

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis

Cleghorn NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

Para participar o mayor información comuníquese con Mary Lou Montalvo al 978-342-2069

•Pictures

•

•

VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK–WACHUSETT STATION PROJECT

15th Anniversary
U.S.-Vietnam Relations

TỔNG HỢP Ý KIẾN CƯ DÂN VỀ GA WACHUSETT

Outreach Process

- 2 month outreach process
- Met with the Vietnamese Monk community at Hua Lam Temple
- Magic Nails, Yogurt Restaurant, Local Markets, other businesses with Vietnamese people working
- Flyer distribution and aggressive phone call campaign to receive feedback

Focus Group

- Held November 1st, 2012
- Garden Room 530-7pm, Fitchburg Public Library
- Introduction, discussion, feedback with visual displays
- Attendees: Vietnamese female monks from Hua Lam Temple
- Positive discussion with broad perspective and feedback

CONTENT – MỤC LỤC

- Housing - Nhà ở
- Open spaces - Không gian mở
- Transportation - Giao thông đi lại
- Economic development - Phát triển kinh tế
- Land use - Sử dụng đất
- Other concerns - Các vấn đề khác

Housing - NHÀ Ở

- Additional residential options near Wachusett station - Nhà chung cư mới trong phạm vi ga Wachusett
- Affordable housing - Giá cả phải chăng, phù hợp với trình độ phát triển kinh tế

Transportation - GIAO THÔNG ĐI LẠI

- Limited lights - Đèn đường còn hạn chế
- Lack of sidewalks and bike trails - Thiếu đường cho người đi bộ và cho xe đạp
- Few bus routes connecting - Cần bổ sung thêm các tuyến xe buýt
- Cleaner streets - Tăng cường vệ sinh đường phố
- Repaint street signs - Làm mới vạch kẻ đường

Open Spaces - KHÔNG GIAN MỞ

- New schools - Mở thêm trường học mới
- Asian supermarket - Siêu thị châu Á
- Gyms - Nhà tập thể thao
- Playgrounds - Sân chơi cho thiếu nhi

Economic Development - PHÁT TRIỂN KINH TẾ

- Wachusett Station will bring about economic interests. - Ga Wachusett sẽ mang lại lợi ích kinh tế
- Effectively use of dilapidated properties - Sử dụng hiệu quả các tòa nhà bỏ hoang
- Prioritize protecting the environment - Ưu tiên bảo vệ môi trường

Other Concerns - CÁC VẤN ĐỀ KHÁC

- Increased amount of police - Tăng cường cảnh sát để đảm bảo an ninh
- Lower electricity price - Giá điện ở Fitchburg quá cao

Key Considerations

- An Early Train to Fitchburg for Vietnamese living closer to Boston coming to Fitchburg to work or visit
- Providing opportunity for economic growth for Vietnamese living within the project radius
- Promoting acceptance and equality for all citizens regardless of background

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

CẢM ƠN VÌ ĐÃ LẮNG NGHE!

Vietnamese Community Feedback Wachusett Station and MRPC

Meeting was held November 1st, 2012 to present information and receive feedback at the Fitchburg Public Library

The following will be a summary of main points and concerns moving forward

- Transportation Concerns: Currently there are limited sidewalks along the rt 31 route to the future Wachusett Station. These streets are narrow with trucks passing and limited lighting. There are few bus routes connecting as well. The Vietnamese community would like to address these safety and transportation concerns. Bike/ Walking trails would be appreciated in addition. Ascetically, the Vietnamese community would appreciate cleaner streets along this rt 31 area.

- Economic Development: The Vietnamese community agrees that there must be more economic development in the area. The Wachusett train station will certainly help bring more visitors and business interests to the area. One major focal point was to make an earlier train so people, especially business people and visitors to places such as the Hua Lam Temple could arrive to Fitchburg through public transit at a much earlier time. Some other points mentioned were more school in the area as well as an Asian market, gyms, playgrounds, activity areas, parks, etc.

- Housing and Residential Use: With the arrival of the new station, the Vietnamese community endorses additional affordable residential options. This will be a great way to bring people closer together through transportation and economic resources, it is important to provide cost effective housing to people of all income gaps.

- Misc Concerns: The Vietnamese community voices a need for an increased amount of police for safety and traffic in the immediate area. There was also a large concern over developing underdeveloped or dilapidated properties in the area. The economic development in the area is tied to the use of a progressive holistic approach.

Appendix E: Steering Committee Agenda

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

www.mrpc.org
(978)345-7376

MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members
and
Interested Stakeholders

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by HUD's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Date and Time: Thursday, May 17th, 2012 12:00 P.M.
Location: MRPC, 1427R Water Street, Fitchburg MA, 01420

Agenda

12:00 Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 **Welcome** & Review of Plan Elements and Project Goals
Jeff Anderson MRPC Consultant
John Hume, MRPC Planning and Development Director

12:25 **Steering Committee Overview**
-Planning the First Charrette and Hosting Bi-lingual Focus Groups

12:35 **Steering Committee Sub-groups and Meeting Schedule**
-Staying Involved and Providing Input

12:45 **Next Steps:** Questions and Answers

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by May 10th via: Janderson@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
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MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

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Date and Time: **Thursday, July 19th, 2012 11:45 A.M.**

Location: **CAN-AM Machinery, Inc. 44 Old Princeton Road, Fitchburg MA, 01420**

Agenda

11:45 AM Light Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 PM **Welcome:** Dan Nigrosh, President and CEO of Can-Am Machinery

12:20 PM **MRPC Staff**: Brief Project Status Report, Next Steps, and Today's Field Trip!

12:35 PM **Wachusett Corridor Field Trip**
MRPC cordially invites you to a field trip visiting local sites to be determined within the study area as they relate to: Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, Land Use, and Open Space and Recreation. Transportation provided – **RSVP soon! – Space is limited!**

The trip will conclude returning to the CAN-AM MACHINERY no later than 2:45 PM.

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by July 13th via: Jhume@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

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MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Date and Time: **Tuesday, September 18th, 2012 at 12:00 P.M.**

Location: **Leominster City Hall, 25 West Street, Room 10, Leominster, MA**

Agenda

12:00 PM Light Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 PM **Welcome:** Representative of the City of Leominster

12:20 PM **MRPC Staff**: Brief Project Status Report, Next Steps, and Today's Presentation!

12:25 PM **Transportation Data and the Wachusett Corridor**
Montachusett Regional Planning Commission staff members will present existing transportation data in the relation to the study area i.e. the existing roadway system, average daily traffic, pavement condition, roadway safety, bicycle and pedestrians, etc. Everyone will have an opportunity to provide public comment/input!

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by September 17th via: Jhume@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

www.mrpc.org
(978)345-7376

MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

This evening's meeting will feature highlights of Public Forum Input Received including Spanish/ Vietnamese/ Hmong Focus Group Workshops!

Date and Time: Thursday, November 15th, 2012 at 5:30 P.M.

Location: **Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Conference Room, 1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA**

Agenda

5:30 PM Light Dinner Provided by MRPC

5:45 PM **MRPC Staff**: Brief Project Status Report and Today's Presentations!

5:50 PM **Public Input Results/Presentations/Discussion/Q&A**
Public input on transportation, economic development, housing, open space and recreation, and land use is an important element of this project. To date, a June 14th Public Forum was held at Cocoa Keyes. MRPC also procured bilingual Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese language translators that just recently facilitated focus groups in the first language of each ethnic group. Brief presentations will be made on highlights of these Public Input events. Everyone will have an opportunity to ask questions/discuss!

- Glenn Eaton, Executive Director, MRPC: June 14th Public Forum
- Joana Dos Santos, Executive Director, Cleghorn Neighborhood Center: Spanish Focus Group Workshop.
- Mai Yang: Hmong Focus Group Workshop
- Jacob Daniels/Hoa Vu: Vietnamese Focus Group Workshop

6:45 PM Next Steps and Adjournment

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by November 13th via: Sbrow@mrpc.org

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MEETING NOTICE

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Date and Time: **Thursday, January 17th, 2013 at 12:00 P.M.**

Location: **Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Conference Room, 1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA**

Agenda

12:00 PM Light Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 PM **MRPC Staff**: Brief Project Status Report

12:20 PM **Roadway Safety Analysis**
The analysis presented by MRPC staff at this meeting per location will include number of crashes by year, crash severity, crash manner, and contributing factors such as warm versus cold months, road surface conditions, ambient light conditions and weather conditions.

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by January 15th via: Sbrow@mrpc.org

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MEETING NOTICE

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Date and Time: **Thursday, March 21st, 2013 at 12:00 P.M.**

Location: **Leominster City Hall, 25 West Street, Room 10, Leominster, MA**

Agenda

12:00 PM Light Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 PM **Open Space and Recreation within the Wachusett Corridor**
Come join us as MRPC staff presents a preliminary inventory of recreational and open space areas within the project radius and looks for public input as we begin to examine open space greenways and recreation across municipal jurisdictions within the corridor.

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by March 19th via: jhume@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

www.mrpc.org
(978)345-7376

MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

Wachusett
Smart Growth
Corridor Analysis

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Date and Time: **Thursday, June 20th, 2013 at 12:00 P.M.**

Location: **Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Conference Room, 1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA**

Agenda

12:00 PM Light Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 PM **MRPC Staff**: Brief Project Status Report

12:20 PM **Princeton Rd (Rt 31) at Railroad Bridge Improvement Alternatives**
- Crash History (MassDOT Crash Info)
- Concerns
- Improvement Alternatives
- Possible Uses for Existing Roadway Under Bridge

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by June 18th via: Jhume@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

www.mrpc.org
(978)345-7376

MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Date and Time: **Thursday, October 24th, 2013 at 12:00 P.M.**

Location: **Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Conference Room, 1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA**

Agenda

12:00 PM Light Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 PM **MRPC Staff**: Brief Project Status Report

12:20 PM **Wachusett Corridor Environmental and Development Characteristics by Zoning District:** MRPC staff presentation on environmental and development characteristics of all zoning districts in the study area including undevelopable acres, developed acres, and developable acres.

1:00 PM **Inventory of Demographic and Economic Indicators in the Wachusett Corridor:** MRPC staff presentation on demographic and economic indicators (i.e. population growth, income, poverty, largest employers, etc.).

1:30 PM Adjourn

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by October 22nd via: Jhume@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

www.mrpc.org
(978)345-7376

MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Date and Time: **Friday, December 20th, 2013 at 12:00 P.M.**

Location: **Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Conference Room, 1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA**

Agenda

12:00 PM Light Lunch Provided by MRPC

12:15 PM **MRPC Staff**: Brief Project Status Report

12:25 PM **Housing Assessment and Analysis:** MRPC staff presentation/ Steering Committee discussion on housing data in the Wachusett Corridor (i.e. population and housing unit growth, type of housing units, age of housing stock, etc.).

12:55 PM **Draft Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations:** MRPC staff presentation/Steering Committee discussion on goals, objectives, and recommendations to promote economic development in the Wachusett Corridor.

1:30 PM Adjourn

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by December 17th via: Jhume@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

www.mrpc.org
(978)345-7376

MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by HUD's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Date and Time: **Thursday, February 27, 2014 at 12pm**

Location: **CAN-AM Machinery, Inc. 44 Old Princeton Fitchburg MA, 01420**

Agenda

12:00 PM	Light Lunch Provided by Can-AM Machinery
12:10 PM	Welcome and Introductions
12:20 PM	MRPC Staff: Brief Project Status Report
12:25 PM	Draft Housing Goals/Objectives/Recommendations; Services and Facilities in the Corridor; thoughts and discussion on land use and zoning issues.

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

Please RSVP by February 25th via: Jhume@mrpc.org

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
1427R Water Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420

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(978)345-7376

MEETING NOTICE

For Steering Committee Members And Interested Stakeholders

Background: MRPC was awarded $129,500 by HUD's Community Challenge Grant Program for the development of a Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan. This grant will provide the communities of Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster with an opportunity to examine and plan for the continued improvement and development of the Wachusett Corridor including the linkage of various means of transportation and planning for future land use, housing, economic development, and open space and recreation opportunities in and around this area.

Date and Time: **Thursday, March 27, 2014 at 12pm**

Location: **CAN-AM Machinery, Inc. 44 Old Princeton Fitchburg MA, 01420**

Agenda

12:00 PM	Light Lunch Provided by Can-AM Machinery
12:10 PM	Welcome and Introductions
12:20 PM	MRPC Staff: Brief Project Status Report
12:25 PM	Presentation and Discussion on Draft Land Use Inventory/Analysis/ Goals/Objectives/Recommendations.

C: ***City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to the Open Meeting Law***

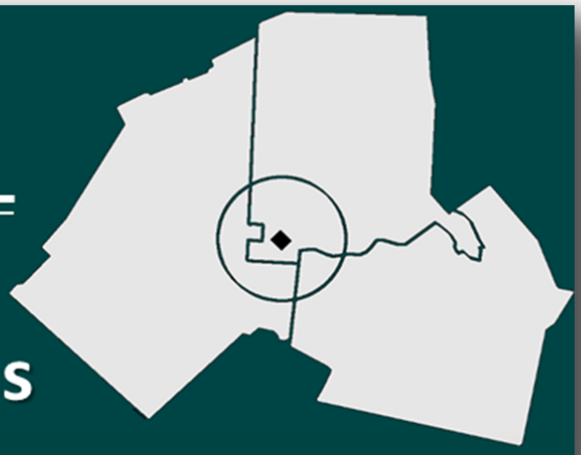
Please RSVP by March 25th via: Jhume@mrpc.org

Appendix F: Wachusett SMCA Work Plan

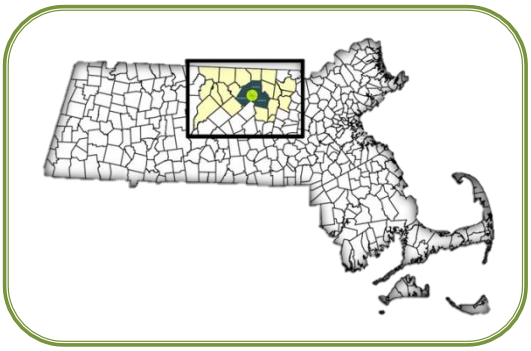
Wachusett

Smart Growth

Corridor Analysis



Community Engagement | Housing | Economic Development | Transportation/Circulation | Open Space | Recreation | Land Use



Work Plan

March 2012

Project Overview

Major Activities

Tasks

Timeframe

Outcomes

partnership for Sustainable Communities
an interagency partnership HUD • DOT • EPA

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this grant will be the development and completion of a Wachusett Station Smart Growth Corridor Plan. Wachusett Station is a planned passenger rail station on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail Line that will be situated at the intersection of Route 2 and Route 31 in the City of Fitchburg located in North Central Massachusetts. In February 2010, the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) was awarded $55.5 million from the US Department of Transportation (US DOT) in Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant funds to build the station. Wachusett Station is included in the study area for this plan. Construction of the station could begin early next year and completed about a year later.

This plan will study the surrounding area around the future station and engage the local community, including diverse cultural groups and underserved populations. The plan will examine various elements within this corridor area including transportation/circulation, land use, housing, economic development, open space/recreation and facilities/institutional planning. Various tasks will be conducted including; an analysis of previously completed plans, visioning/ charrettes, focus groups, drafting of plan elements, an implementation plan with smart growth zoning for the target area, and a wrap-up event. MRPC has gathered much support for this project from the three communities located within in the project area: Fitchburg, Leominster and Westminster. All three of these communities have committed in-kind services for the development of this plan. MRPC has also arranged for committed private sector, non-profits and neighborhood groups to oversee and steer the writing of the plan.

The corridor to be examined in this plan will cover approximately 12,566 acres and its boundaries will be a circle with the Wachusett Station as the center (see attached map). The radius of the circle is approximately 2.5 miles. This distance was chosen, because it is an easily bikeable distance from the Wachusett Station. This project has both regional and local significance as described below. As depicted in the attached map, the area covers parts of West Fitchburg, where the Wachusett Station will be located, North Leominster and East Westminster. MRPC GIS staff will create a parcel-based boundary map as part of the development of the plan.

Some Key tasks of the plan include:

- Public Outreach Events - a Visioning Charrette, Focus Group Meetings (conducted in the minority community's first language), translation of outreach documents into Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese (ethnic groups residing in Fitchburg), and a webpage with information about the plan. A Steering Committee will also be formed to provide project oversight and input. All Steering Committee meetings will be open to the public.
- The development of a Transportation Element accompanied by maps that examines road, bus/trolley, bike and pedestrian modes and linkages with an emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian paths and their design as well as bus and trolley planning.
- A Land Use Element that looks at zoning across municipal boundaries (Fitchburg, Leominster and Westminster, MA) within the corridor area. Recommendations will be made to promote sustainability.
- A Housing Element to analyze current housing demand, affordability and make recommendations based on needs.
- Creating an Economic Development Element that contains a market analysis of the area directly surrounding the Wachusett Station to identify retail and commercial business opportunities.

- An Open Space/ Recreation Element to examine and map open space greenways and recreation across municipal jurisdictions within the corridor area as well as plan for urban green space on the Fitchburg side of the corridor. Active greenway space has the potential to be used for bicycle/pedestrian paths that could connect to the future Wachusett Station.
- A Facilities/ Institutional Element that depicts and maps the location of schools, community centers, places of worship, hospital and medical health clinics and governmental services. It is important to identify services that are offered within biking/walking distance from the new Wachusett Station.
- Policy Recommendations and Implementation Plans with timetables regarding each of the elements.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The 2.5 mile radius for this study will represent data for the Cities of Leominster and Fitchburg, as well as the Town of Westminster. However, the highest population density existing in this target area resides in City of Fitchburg. Overall, Fitchburg's population is 21.6% Hispanic, 5.1% African America with a white population decreasing by 10% from 2000-2010 census. The percent of minority population in Fitchburg is higher than the state as a whole. Massachusetts minority population is 19.6% whereas Fitchburg's is 21.8%. Massachusetts has a lower percentage of Hispanic populations, 9.6%. It has the same Native American population percentage of.3%. Yet, Massachusetts has a higher percentage of African American and Asians, 6.6%, 5.3%, respectively.

According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the people who live in the block groups in the 2.5 mile area around Wachusett Station spend between 49% to 70% of their income on **housing** and **transportation** costs. The area is also plagued with high unemployment rates that continue to rise. In June 2010 the unemployment rate in Fitchburg stood at 11.4%. In July 2011, the unemployment rose to 11.6%, significantly higher than both the national (9.2%) and state (7.2%) rates during that time. Fitchburg's housing stock is old. Over half, 52.1%, of residential units were built prior to 1940. Currently, only 1.7% of Fitchburg residents use public transportation to get to work. Historically, the project area has been identified as an area for industrial growth, but now has nearly 700,000 square feet of industrial vacancy. Out of this total, there are 136,000 square feet of vacant mill buildings. These vacant buildings demonstrate that there is infrastructure already in place and that the area is in need of revitalization.

The poverty rate of all people in Fitchburg is 19.2% and the poverty rate in Massachusetts is 10.1%. The median household income is lower in Fitchburg than in the state, $47,369 and $64,496, respectively. With Fitchburg's problems of relatively low median household income rate, its high rising unemployment rate, its enormous amount of foreclosures and high rate of expenditures on transportation and housing costs, the city's population needs affordable housing, economic development to bring job opportunities and lower cost transportation options. The Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan will make recommendations to implement and address these essential needs in an effort to revitalize the project area and the city.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND FINAL PRODUCTS:

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) will serve as lead applicant for this project. The MRPC is a unit of regional government created under the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL Chapter 40B, Sections 1-8). The regional planning commission (agency) provides planning advisory services and technical assistance to its 22 member communities and Devens. Each municipality appoints a member and an alternate to the MRPC. The Board meets monthly and acts upon matters concerning regional planning, policy and budget. MRPC is also the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) servicing the Montachusett Region. MRPC's budget averages slightly more than one million dollars annually. We employ 16 staff; periodically consultants and interns are engaged as needed to accomplish projects. As the lead applicant, MRPC will be responsible for ensuring proper administration of all aspects of the project including but not limited to scheduling and facilitating/moderating meetings and Planning Visioning/Charrette Sessions; data research and analysis of information; developing recommendations; outreach; and drafting and distributing the final plan.

The level of support to implement the plan includes a partnership with all three communities (the City of Fitchburg, the City of Leominster and the Town of Westminster) located in the plan area, Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART), Regional Economic Development Institute (REDI) at Fitchburg State University (FSU), the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority (FRA), Cleghorn Neighborhood Center (a community group residing in the area of study), Three Pyramids Inc. (a non-profit organization working with the African- American Community) and Westminster Business Park (a private developer with property in the project area).

The two city Mayors and the Board of Selectmen chair have committed staff time and attendance at steering committee meetings during the three-year process of the plan creation and implementation. Additionally, the Fitchburg Planning Board has committed volunteer time to also be involved in the plan and in its first year of implementation to write smart growth zoning. MART, REDI, FRA, Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, Three Pyramids and Westminster Business Park have also committed attendance at meetings for the three-year process of the plan and the start of implementation. Furthermore, Cleghorn Neighborhood Center and Three Pyramids Inc. will provide outreach to the minority and underserved communities in the plan area. Cleghorn Neighborhood Center provides bilingual and bicultural programs for the Latino community in the Fitchburg area and Three Pyramids Inc. works with the African American Community. MRPC has garnered commitment from the local governments, local communities, educational institutions and non-profits to be a part of the two-year plan creation and the first year of implementation.

The Plan will include the following elements: i) transportation/circulation, ii) land use iii) housing, iv) economic development, v) open space/recreation and vi) facilities and institutions for the area within a 2.5 miles radius of the Wachusett Station. In the third year, MRPC will implement smart growth zoning. Overall, the approach to preparing this Regional Plan for Sustainable Development is broken into seven major tasks which will proceed over a 36-month period.

PROJECT TASKS, TIMEFRAME, RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES & DESIRED OUTCOMES

Task 1. Research, Collect, and Analyze Previously Completed Planning Documents. Form a Steering Committee and host the project's kick-off event.

Timeframe: January 15 - May 1, 2012

Description: Evaluate and incorporate planning that has been completed in each community (Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster) over the past decade that is applicable to the project area to determine the sustainability of that work and draw upon relevant goals, objectives, and recommendations that can be utilized as part of this project. Form a Steering Committee to oversee and provide input into the various elements of the study over the course of the project period. MRPC is conducting a well-publicized Press Conference on March 16, 2012 to announce the federal HUD grant award and provide an overview of the elements of the project. This press conference will allow MRPC to discuss the project to future Steering Committee participants.

Responsible Entity(s): MRPC will be responsible for forming the steering committee and analyzing the planning documents with assistance from local officials from each participating community and the Regional Economic Development Institute at Fitchburg State.

Outcome(s): increased participation and decision making of the local community including traditionally marginalized populations in developing and implementing this plan.

Task 2. Organize a Visioning/Planning Charrette

Timeframe: March 16 - June 2012

Description: Working with the Steering Committee formed through Task 1, MRPC will conduct a well-publicized Visioning/Planning Charrette to obtain substantial public input/guidance into the plan. It will establish a community vision with specific goals for each of the plan elements. MRPC will begin planning this Visioning/Planning Charrette after the March 16 press conference and host the event sometime in June. ***This charrette will be conducted in English however this information will be available for non-English speakers during task three's specific focus groups.***

Responsible Entity(s): MRPC will work with the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center, Three Pyramids, and other non-profit groups to include minority and underserved populations in the visioning/charrette process. MRPC has much experience conducting Visioning/Planning Charrettes and the Cleghorn Neighborhood Center has more than four decades of experience working with bilingual and multicultural communities in the Fitchburg community in a "grassroots" capacity. Three Pyramids has over forty years of experience working with the African American Community in the Region.

Outcome(s): Increased participation and decision making of the local community including traditionally marginalized populations in developing and implementing this plan. At least 5% of the entire minority population located within the Wachusett Station will participate.

Task 3. Conduct Focus Group Workshops in Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese:

Timeframe: June- October 2012

Description: MRPC will procure bilingual Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese speakers and writers to translate outreach materials and facilitate focus groups in the first language of each ethnic group. Once MRPC hires these bilingual speakers, they will be trained in facilitation by MRPC staff. Working with the Steering Committee, MRPC and the trained facilitator(s) will conduct a total of three focus groups; one each in Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese. The facilitator(s) will translate the input from these communities into English to be incorporated into the Plan. MRPC will outreach to the United Hmong of Massachusetts and the Hue Lam Meditation Temple (Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns) both located in Fitchburg to increase participation of the Hmong and Vietnamese ethnic groups in the various outreach and engagement activities. MRPC will utilize the support of Cleghorn Neighborhood Center to reach the Latino population.

Responsible Entity(s): MRPC, the Steering Committee, procured translators, local officials from each participating communities, community organizations, educational institutions and other non-profits, including Cleghorn Neighborhood Center and Three Pyramids.

Outcome (s): increased participation and decision making of the local community including traditionally marginalized populations in developing and implementing this plan. At least 5% of the minority population located within the Wachusett Station will participate.

Task 4. Elements of the Wachusett Station Smart Growth Corridor Plan:

Timeframe: September 2012- November 2013

Description: MRPC will work to develop a plan that will consist of the following specific functional elements with significant input from the previously formed Steering Committee – it should also be noted that Steering Committee meetings will be advertised and posted and will always be open to the general public. Anyone with an interest will be highly encouraged to attend and participate.

A. Housing: Identify and analyze existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. This element will identify policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens. **Output:** A housing assessment that includes all segments of the population and analyzes current housing demand, needs and affordability. Locations and appropriate densities for new housing that consider proximity to relevant considerations to insure sustainable development, including such factors as walking routes, and proximity of transit and bicycle routes will be recommended. Equity and fair housing considerations in location and density recommendations will be included. This element will also provide an identification of key sites for future housing development and/or mixed use development.

B. Transportation/Circulation: examine road, bus/trolley, bike and pedestrian modes and linkages with an emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian paths and their design as well as bus and trolley planning. Areas of additional analysis will include sustainable concepts of complete streets, intra-city transit service options, and traffic calming techniques to improve livability. **Output:** Report evaluating sustainability and projections of future needs with emphasis on non-

automotive transportation along with recommendations an implementation plan, and funding sources that can supplement train planning for the MBTA commuter passenger rail.

C. Land Use Element: Examine zoning across municipal boundaries (Fitchburg, Leominster and Westminster, MA) within the corridor area. Identify issues and opportunities for the study area based on the review of information gathered.
Output: Report that identifies how land-use regulations can be improved to complement the new station. This element will be supplemented by illustrative maps produced by MRPC's GIS Department. Alternative scenarios in the study area will be developed with respect to land use regulation and zoning. Recommendations will be made that include any revisions to zoning ordinance/bylaw to promote sustainability in direct relation to the short, medium and long term goals of the study area.

D. Economic Development Element: Inventory and analyze of existing economic conditions and make recommendations to catalyze economic growth. A market analysis of the area to identify retail and commercial business opportunities will be conducted utilizing ESRI Business Analyst online. Emphasis of this element will be placed on activities that reinvigorate existing commercial centers, including reuse of any possible brownfields sites and vacant/ underutilized property; promotion and support of small and microenterprise businesses; and meeting the needs of the new "green" economy.
Output: A report containing a broad spectrum of recommendations geared directly to the study area with an implementation plan designed to enhance economic development including a market analysis (ESRI Business Analyst) that projects future needs including green jobs and designated areas for "new" economic activity.

E. Open Space/Recreation Element: Inventory recreational and open space areas within the project radius. Examine open space greenways and recreation across municipal jurisdictions within the corridor including planning for urban green space on the Fitchburg side of the corridor. Active greenway space has the potential to be used for bicycle/pedestrian paths that could connect to the new Wachusett Station.
Output: A report with a set of recommendations, relevant maps produced by MRPC's GIS Dept., and an implementation plan that identifies policies and strategies for the protection and management of open space and recreation resources.

F. Facilities/ Institutional Element: Identify services that are offered within biking/walking distance from the new Wachusett Station. Inventory, map, and examine the location of schools, community centers, places of worship, hospital and medical health clinics and governmental services within the study area.
Output: A report that identifies and maps existing and forecasted needs for facilities and institutional services and will include recommendations and an implementation plan.

Responsible Entity(s): MRPC, the Steering Committee, procured translators, local officials from each participating communities, community organizations, educational institutions and other non-profits, including Cleghorn Neighborhood Center and Three Pyramids.

Task 5. Implementation Plan

Timeframe: November 2013- January 2013

Description: The implementation plan will define schedules and action plans necessary to achieve the objectives for each element of the plan. This section will also address who is responsible for plan implementation and will explore the legal, regulatory and educational

techniques to accomplish the plan recommendations. A review of the status of any pending State legislative actions regarding comprehensive land use reform to existing State Statues will be conducted as well.

Responsible Entity(s): MRPC, the Steering Committee, local officials from each participating communities, community organizations, educational institutions and other non-profits.

Outcome (s): A report with recommendations that provide clear-cut actions for municipalities and program participants to take to address the elements identified above.

Task 6. Wrap-Up Event on Final Plan:

Timeframe: April 2014- January 14, 2015

Description: MRPC will prepare for and conduct a Wrap-Up Event for the Final Plan. There will be discussions of collaborative outreach and education, all work completed, presentations by local government leaders, businesses from the private sector and MRPC Staff. Press releases will be submitted to local newspapers and the event will be advertised on cable television. Invitations will be forwarded to businesses, federal, state, and local politicians, educational institutions including Fitchburg State University, public organizations, community volunteers (especially people that provided input into the plan), minority communities and other regional planning agencies in New England who can use this plan as model for sustainability in their communities and regions. In short, invitations will be extended to anyone with interest in the project.

Responsible Entity(s): MRPC, the Steering Committee, local officials from each participating communities, community organizations, educational institutions and other non-profits.

Outcome (s): Wrap-up event, overview of program, unveiling of final plan.

7. Smart Growth Zoning Implementation:

Timeframe: January 2014- February 2015

Description: MRPC will work with the three local communities to provide technical planning assistance to write a smart growth zoning bylaw/ordinance that may include inclusionary zoning or a smart growth overlay district over the new Wachusett Station area across municipal boundaries. The implementation plan will determine which zoning work is the highest priority for economic development, and advantageous for sustainability. This top priority will be addressed by MRPC staff in conjunction with local officials, the Steering Committee and other stakeholders including the general public (once again, all meetings will be legally posted and open to the general public).

Responsible Entity(s): MRPC, the Steering Committee, local officials from each participating communities, community organizations, educational institutions and other non-profits.

Outcome (s): New zoning for three communities (Fitchburg, Leominster and Westminster that make the most of, and complement the new Wachusett Station). This zoning implementation will help to address the various elements in Task 4.

OUTREACH:

MRPC has built into the scope of work several outreach and participation activities for its communities, public agencies, residents (including minority and disadvantaged populations), and others to participate in the development of the Plan and express their views in a public setting. MRPC will reach out to the elderly, disabled, minority representative groups (Latino, Hmong, Vietnamese), and educational institutions including Fitchburg State University to ensure the engagement of a broad cross section of individuals from the participating communities. Besides holding Plan Committee Meetings (widely advertised and open to the public) every month throughout the duration of the Plan, there will be a widely advertised Public Visioning/Charrette that will take place as part of this project.

All public input concerning elements of the study including housing, land use, economic development, open space and recreation, facilities, and transportation will be sought, documented and incorporated into the final report. MRPC will make sure that there is substantial community outreach for this event. The event will be open to the general public; anyone with an interest in the Plan will be highly encouraged to attend including citizens, local officials, business owners and others. Outreach will include, but will not be limited to MRPC and participating community web-sites, flyers, cable television, press releases in local newspapers, and postings throughout the participating communities. Participants will be directly involved in activities to identify key issues to be addressed. The Visioning/Charrette event will start with introductory remarks, an outline of the process of the day, and breakout sessions into smaller discussion groups. This will be followed by the reconvening into the initial large group with presentations by group reporters where everyone will have an opportunity to be heard.

Additionally, MRPC will procure bilingual speakers and writers translate outreach materials in Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese and facilitate three focus groups. These focus groups will be conducted in the ethnic group's first language (Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese). The facilitator will translate the input from these communities into English to be put into the Plan. These focus groups will help ensure the full participation of underserved and marginalized communities.

All people who are interested in this project including all who attended the Charrette, focus groups and others that provided input will be invited to attend a **wrap-up event** that will discuss outreach and all work completed in the Final Plan thus informing the public of the final outcome of the Plan.

DETAILED OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES:

The Wachusett Station Smart Growth Corridor Plan will have a variety of outputs and outcomes. One of its outcomes will be increased participation and decision making of the local community including traditionally marginalized populations in developing and implementing this plan. The plan will include a charrette and focus group workshops with translators and translated outreach materials. Workshops will be conducted in Spanish, Hmong and Vietnamese to meaningfully engage limited English speakers, solicit their participation into the planning process, and provide input in the development of the Wachusett Station Smart Growth Plan. The Charrette and workshops will be publicized through press

releases sent to local newspapers and through outreach to minority populations by working with local non-profit organizations and neighborhood centers using translated outreach materials. This will ensure that the local community including traditionally marginalized populations will participate with the decision-making in developing the Wachusett Station Smart Growth Plan. The outcome will be that minority populations will have a say in the future plans of the area. General and minority attendance of the Charrette and focus groups will be reported and documented during the duration of the project with the desired outcome of at least 5% of the minority population from the Wachusett Station Area attending these events.

Another output of the plan will be the development of an ESRI Business Analyst market analysis and economic development strategies for the project area. The long-term outcome of the market analysis and economic strategies will lead to more employment in the project area, infill development, private sector investment and reuse of any vacant industrial and mill properties. According to the Foster Report, the project area has an industrial vacancy of 698,031 square feet. The desired outcome of this plan is to increase economic development by decreasing the industrial vacancy area by half in this area. This would change the mill vacancy rate in Fitchburg from 16.8% to 15.1% and the modern industrial vacancy rate from 17.7% to 16.7%. This outcome will be pursued and reported on during the period of the project.

This project will also provide zoning recommendations and, in the third year, smart growth zoning implementation for the project area in Fitchburg, Westminster and Leominster. These three communities have not planned for the land use implications of the new Wachusett Station. By engaging all three communities in the planning process, it will lead to zoning recommendations that are not greatly divergent along municipal boundaries. The implementation of these zoning recommendations will lead to land use that will take full advantage of the new Wachusett Station. It will allow for smart growth in the project area, which will supply housing and jobs in biking/walking distance from mass transit. The desired outcome of this project is to increase the mode people using public transportation within the new Wachusett Station Area. Currently, 1.7% of Fitchburg residents use public transportation to get to work. The desired outcome will be to double public transportation use to 3.4%. This outcome will be pursued and reported on during the period of the project.

Another output will be to develop a plan for bike/pedestrian paths that will connect residents within the project area to commercial and industrial uses and employment centers, recreation and mass transit. The long-term outcome will be the implementation of these bike/pedestrian paths which will supply residents in the project area with transportation alternatives to driving automobiles to retail, employment and services they need. This will allow residents to decrease car travel, spend less on transportation, consume less energy, reduce greenhouse gases and live a more active, healthy lifestyle. An additional output from this project will be to plan and make recommendations for active and passive open space and recreation across municipal boundaries. The long-term outcome will be the preservation of greenways that cross community boundaries. This will allow for a greater variety of wildlife to live in these open spaces by maintaining larger continuous areas of undisturbed land. Some of the open space can provide active recreation by providing bike/pedestrian paths that connect to other parts of the project area. Additionally, recommendations will be made and if implemented, will provide nature, open space and trees near residential areas with pocket parks in the urban core areas. The long-term outcomes will be a better quality of life for the residents of this area.

The output of the plan will supply recommendations to encourage needed affordable housing to be located with biking/walking distance of employment, retail, other needed services and mass transit. The

plan will also identify facility needs within the project area with recommended implementation of these facilities within biking/walking distance. If these recommendations are implemented, the outcome will be a supply of affordable housing within the project area that will be in walking/biking distance from jobs, needed residential services and mass transit.

Moreover, MRPC will also advance civil rights by supplying information about fair housing to partner members, at Charrettes and at Spanish, Vietnamese and Hmong Focus Groups. All materials will be translated into these groups' primary languages. This will empower the people involved in the Wachusett Station Smart Growth Corridor Study to know their rights which will promote housing-related opportunities that overcome the effects of past discrimination because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability and familial status.

To evaluate the success of the project, MRPC will collect data on a minimum of three outcomes: the minority attendance at the charrette and focus groups, vacancy rate of industrial buildings in the corridor area and the rate that residents in Fitchburg use public transportation. If the minority rate is high for attending the visioning meetings, the vacancy rate decreases and the use of public transportation increases, the project will be successful. This information will be obtained through sign-in sheets, the Foster Report and the U.S. Census, respectively. It will be documented and reported at steering committee meetings, on MRPC's website and in the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Plan.

Furthermore, State involvement in local land use decision making is not as significant in Massachusetts as in many other states with state controls over local land use decisions exercised only in certain selected areas. This local "home rule" condition is reinforced by the lack of effective counties in Massachusetts. The regional planning agencies (such as MRPC) are the closest entity to regional government but have, for the most part, advisory power only. This situation puts a premium on civic engagement and consensus building as the plan is developed. Training and experience of local officials and non-profit partners are also critical factors in assuring implementation of plan recommendations. Implementation is critical to capacity building and knowledge sharing and will allow local officials hands-on work to implement plan recommendations.

Appendix G: Inventory of Facilities and Institutions

Services and Facilities in the Wachusett Corridor

Schools

Pre-School

Sacred Heart Preschool and Childcare – 22 Cottage St, Fitchburg, MA 01420

The school is a religious private school with a capacity of 39 children between the ages of 0 and 7+.

Busy Bee Preschool Center – 3 Harugari St, Fitchburg, MA 01420

A preschool for children as young at 1 ½ and has a limited license to serve 7-9 year olds. It is fully licensed and accredited and provides meals to the children. Languages spoken in the facility include English, Spanish, Finnish, French, and Portuguese.

Headstart

Montachusett Opportunity Council – 133 Pritchard St, Fitchburg, MA 01420

A preschool and headstart program for eligible families

Primary

Reingold Elementary – 70 Reingold Ave, Fitchburg, MA 01420

Serves children from preschool to 4th grade and is one of seven elementary schools in the Fitchburg School District. It is a public school that serves 583 students. The student teacher ratio is 15:1 (the state average is 14:1).

St. Josephs School – 35 Columbus St, Fitchburg, MA 01420

A private Catholic school serving grades PreK through 8.

Memorial Intermediate School – 615 Rollstone St, Fitchburg, MA 01420

This is a public school that serves 689 students from grades 5 through 8. The student teacher ratio is 16:1.

Secondary

Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School – 1050 Westminster St, Fitchburg, MA 01420

This is a vocational school that serves 1400 students in grades 9 through 12. The student teacher ratio is 13:1.

North Central Charter Essential School – 1 Oak Hill Rd, Fitchburg, MA 01420

This is a charter school that serves 368 students from grades 7 through 12. The student teacher ratio is 11:1.

Community Centers

YMCA – 55 Wallace Avenue

Amenities: Indoor pool, wellness center, gymnasium, 2 group exercise studios, racquetball court, family locker room, steam and sauna rooms in designated locker areas.

Cleghorn Neighborhood Center – 2-18 Fairmount St

Works with children and families from the Cleghorn area, providing bilingual and bicultural activities and events. Programs include: Youth Development, Free Continuing Education for Adults, Family Services, Resident led Neighborhood Revitalization, and Civic Engagement.

Churches, Temples, Meditation Centers

Churches near the study area, but outside the 2.5 mile radius include:

Redemption Rock Church

3 Hager Park Rd, Westminster, MA

Church of Christ

569 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA

Episcopal Church

Horizon Christian Fellowship

356 Broad Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Non-denominational

First Parish Unitarian

923 Main Street (Upper Common)
Fitchburg, Massachusetts 01420

Unitarian

Churches within the study area include:

Church of the Good Shepherd

10 Wachusett St
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Episcopal

Bread of Life Assembly of God

22 State Rd E, Westminster, MA

Affiliated with the General Council of the Assemblies of God

Beth Eden Church

350 Ashburnham Street
Fitchburg, Massachusetts 01420

Baptist

St Joseph Church

49 Woodland St

Catholic

Iglesia Pentecostal

2 Vernon St

Pentecostal

West Fitchburg Methodist Church

Madonna of the Holy Rosary Church

118 Theresa St

Catholic

Church of the Harvest

179 Pratt St,

Non-denominational

Church of the Living God

18 Fairmount St

Non-denominational

Fitchburg Spanish SDA Church

179 Pratt Street, Fitchburg, MA
Seventh Day Adventists

Hospitals and Clinics

There are not hospitals within the study area

Hospitals near the study area, but outside the 2.5 mile radius include:

Burbank Hospital

Health Alliance Hospital

Doctors and other medical facilities inside the study area include:

Wachusett Family Dental

16 Wyman Rd, Westminster, MA

Meeting House Family Practice

16 Wyman Rd, Westminster, MA

Jarvis Richard G OD

14 Hanks Hill Rd, Westminster, MA

Bio Medical Laser Services, Inc.

23 Village Inn Rd, Westminster, MA

Lisa A. Pineo, LMHC

545 Westminster Street, Fitchburg, MA

Denis A. Bradley, LMHC

63 Fairmount St, Fitchburg, MA

Parkhill Family Practice

155 Franklin Rd, Fitchburg, MA

Brian McDowell DDS

558 Electric Ave, Fitchburg, MA

North County Nephrology Associates

551 Electric Ave, Fitchburg, MA

Government Offices

Offices within the study area

Leominster State Forest- Headquarters

90 Fitchburg Rd, Westminster, MA

Worcester County Sheriff's Office

19 Fairmount Pl, Fitchburg, MA

Parks and Recreational Facilities (overview, more detailed description will be in Open Space Element)

Parks

Crocker Playground

Philips Playground

Moran Field

Parkhill Park

Forests

Leominster State Forest

Fitchburg City Forest

Nashua Valley Conservation Area

Dolloff Conservation Land

Bird Sanctuary

Cogshall Park

Other

Fitchburg Steamline Greenway

Other relevant government services

Montachusett Opportunity Council

Provides Nutrition and Wellness Programs, Childcare and Head start, as well as Housing and Community Services

Nutrition and Wellness: Community Health Education, Youth Development, CARE Services, Safe and Healthy Environment, WIC, and Elder Nutrition programs

Childcare and head start: Head start, Family Child Care Homes, Toddler programs, School Age Program, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Program

Housing and Community Services: Energy and Environmental Services, Housing and Emergency Services, Financial Education/ Asset Development, Youth Services, and Fitchburg Family Connections Coalition

LUK social services

Prevention, Counseling, Placement, and Support Services

Main office: 545 Westminster St Fitchburg, MA

Fitchburg office: 99 Day St, Fitchburg, MA

The Twin Cities Community Development Corporation (CDC)

Promotes:

Neighborhood leadership and civic engagement

Affordable housing development

Homeownership and small business development

Their committees include:

Real Estate Development

Economic Development

Personnel and Finance

Resource Development

Neighborhood Revitalization

Inventory of Schools in the Wachusett Corridor

Fitchburg Public Schools

Enrollment by Grade (2013-14)																	
	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	SP	CT	Total
Arthur M Longsjo Middle School	0	0	0	0	0	0	117	114	122	121	0	0	0	0	0	-	474
Crocker Elementary	103	104	99	84	101	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	580
Fitchburg High	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	301	322	244	223	0	-	1,116
Goodrich Academy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	27	55	86	0	-	179
McKay Arts Academy	24	75	72	65	72	68	94	74	64	76	0	0	0	0	0	-	684
Memorial Intermediate	0	0	0	0	0	0	165	162	172	157	0	0	0	0	0	-	656
Reingold Elementary	0	132	131	142	147	125	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	677
South Street Elementary	28	138	130	120	129	99	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	644
District	181	449	432	411	449	381	376	350	358	354	312	349	299	309	0	-	5,010

4-Year Graduation Rate (2013)							
Student Group	# in Cohort	% Graduated	% Still in School	% Non-Grad Completers	% GED	% Dropped Out	% Permanently Excluded
All Students	450	71.6	9.6	1.8	3.1	14.0	0.0
Male	229	63.8	12.2	2.2	3.9	17.9	0.0
Female	221	79.6	6.8	1.4	2.3	10.0	0.0
ELL	35	62.9	20.0	0.0	0.0	17.1	0.0
Students w/disabilities	116	60.3	13.8	0.9	3.4	21.6	0.0
Low income	334	70.4	9.3	2.1	2.4	15.9	0.0
High needs	349	69.9	9.7	2.0	2.6	15.8	0.0
Afr. Amer./Black	40	77.5	7.5	2.5	0.0	12.5	0.0
Asian	23	78.3	8.7	0.0	4.3	8.7	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	161	64.0	13.0	3.1	3.1	16.8	0.0
Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	216	75.5	7.9	0.9	3.7	12.0	0.0
Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multi-race, Non-Hisp./Lat.	9	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	33.3	0.0

Teacher Data (2012-2013)	District	State
Total # of Teachers	351.8	70,635.8
% of Teachers Licensed in Teaching Assignment	99.7	97.5
Total # of Classes in Core Academic Areas	1,769	345,316
% of Core Academic Classes Taught by Teachers Who are Highly Qualified	99.5	98.0
Student/Teacher Ratio	14.0 to 1	13.5 to 1

Total Expenditure Per Pupil, All Funds, By Function	2011				2012			
	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)
Administration	$1,869,988	2.67%	$384	$447	$2,000,851	2.81%	$410	$471
Instructional Leadership	$4,662,298	6.66%	$958	$832	$3,409,030	4.79%	$698	$855
Classroom and Specialist Teachers	$23,087,484	33.00%	$4,746	$5,026	$25,137,059	35.35%	$5,150	$5,125
Other Teaching Services	$3,066,756	4.38%	$630	$991	$2,092,951	2.94%	$429	$1,027
Professional Development	$397,310	0.57%	$82	$238	$440,524	0.62%	$90	$232
Instructional Materials, Equipment and Technology	$2,210,614	3.16%	$454	$422	$3,980,111	5.60%	$815	$377
Guidance, Counseling and Testing	$1,461,301	2.09%	$300	$372	$1,634,417	2.30%	$335	$387
Pupil Services	$6,833,812	9.77%	$1,405	$1,196	$7,163,642	10.07%	$1,468	$1,249
Operations and Maintenance	$4,791,012	6.85%	$985	$1,067	$4,137,178	5.82%	$848	$1,035
Insurance, Retirement Programs and Other	$10,558,043	15.09%	$2,170	$2,298	$10,357,845	14.57%	$2,122	$2,364
Payments To Out-Of-District Schools	$11,028,720	15.76%	$15,440	$20,548	$10,759,930	15.13%	$14,792	$21,549
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$69,967,338	100.00%	$12,540	$13,354	$71,113,538	100.00%	$12,681	$13,636

Leominster Public Schools

Enrollment by Grade (2013-14)																	
	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	SP	CT	Total
Bennett	107	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	107
Center For Technical Education Innovation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	264	148	118	124	0	-	654
Fall Brook	0	68	125	114	109	99	120	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	635
Johnny Appleseed	0	92	128	132	121	138	124	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	735
Leominster Center for Excellence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	21	0	1	0	-	34
Leominster High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	184	294	306	321	0	-	1,105
Lincoln School	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	48
Northwest	0	46	118	136	109	136	139	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	684
Priest Street	0	146	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	146
Samoset School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	168	178	204	0	0	0	0	0	-	550
Sky View Middle School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	293	264	336	0	0	0	0	0	-	893
Southeast School	0	108	83	93	89	112	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	580
District	155	460	454	475	428	485	478	461	442	540	460	463	424	446	0	-	6,171

4-Year Graduation Rate (2013)							
Student Group	# in Cohort	% Graduated	% Still in School	% Non-Grad Completers	% GED	% Dropped Out	% Permanently Excluded
All Students	477	89.9	3.8	1.7	0.8	3.8	0.0
Male	233	87.1	5.2	1.7	0.4	5.6	0.0
Female	244	92.6	2.5	1.6	1.2	2.0	0.0
ELL	36	75.0	2.8	11.1	0.0	11.1	0.0
Students w/disabilities	62	71.0	16.1	6.5	0.0	6.5	0.0
Low income	234	85.9	5.6	3.0	0.9	4.7	0.0
High needs	265	84.5	6.4	3.0	0.8	5.3	0.0
Afr. Amer./Black	32	93.8	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Asian	14	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	96	82.3	5.2	5.2	0.0	7.3	0.0
Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	324	91.4	3.4	0.9	1.2	3.1	0.0
Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multi-race, Non-Hisp./Lat.	10	90.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.0	0.0

Teacher Data (2012-2013)	District	State
Total # of Teachers	448.1	70,635.8
% of Teachers Licensed in Teaching Assignment	99.2	97.5
Total # of Classes in Core Academic Areas	2,399	345,316
% of Core Academic Classes Taught by Teachers Who are Highly Qualified	97.0	98.0
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.8 to 1	13.5 to 1

Total Expenditure Per Pupil, All Funds, By Function	2011				2012			
	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)
Administration	$1,986,752	2.61%	$323	$447	$2,341,533	2.89%	$383	$471
Instructional Leadership	$3,876,885	5.10%	$631	$832	$4,169,325	5.15%	$682	$855
Classroom and Specialist Teachers	$26,868,127	35.32%	$4,372	$5,026	$27,363,000	33.77%	$4,475	$5,125
Other Teaching Services	$5,473,387	7.19%	$891	$991	$5,704,945	7.04%	$933	$1,027
Professional Development	$945,743	1.24%	$154	$238	$722,249	0.89%	$118	$232
Instructional Materials, Equipment and Technology	$1,123,217	1.48%	$183	$422	$1,469,491	1.81%	$240	$377
Guidance, Counseling and Testing	$1,939,410	2.55%	$316	$372	$1,994,956	2.46%	$326	$387
Pupil Services	$6,225,609	8.18%	$1,013	$1,196	$7,049,665	8.70%	$1,153	$1,249
Operations and Maintenance	$4,760,254	6.26%	$775	$1,067	$5,138,335	6.34%	$840	$1,035
Insurance, Retirement Programs and Other	$12,979,802	17.06%	$2,112	$2,298	$15,226,985	18.79%	$2,490	$2,364
Payments To Out-Of-District Schools	$9,895,684	13.01%	$20,311	$20,548	$9,848,574	12.15%	$19,326	$21,549
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$76,074,870	100.00%	$11,471	$13,354	$81,029,058	100.00%	$12,233	$13,636

Ashburnham - Westminster Public Schools

Enrollment by Grade (2013-14)																	
	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	SP	CT	Total
Briggs Elementary	62	68	80	64	81	88	75	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	518
Meetinghouse School	0	78	82	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	160
Oakmont Regional High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	189	176	168	151	5	-	689
Overlook Middle School	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	175	180	210	0	0	0	0	0	-	565
Westminster Elementary	0	0	0	103	95	63	104	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	365
District	62	146	162	167	176	151	179	175	180	210	189	176	168	151	5	-	2,297

4-Year Graduation Rate (2013)							
Student Group	# in Cohort	% Graduated	% Still in School	% Non-Grad Completers	% GED	% Dropped Out	% Permanently Excluded
All Students	165	93.9	3.0	0.0	0.6	2.4	0.0
Male	79	91.1	5.1	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0
Female	86	96.5	1.2	0.0	1.2	1.2	0.0
ELL	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Students w/disabilities	31	74.2	12.9	0.0	3.2	9.7	0.0
Low income	36	88.9	5.6	0.0	0.0	5.6	0.0
High needs	60	83.3	8.3	0.0	1.7	6.7	0.0
Afr. Amer./Black	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hispanic/Latino	8	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	151	94.0	2.6	0.0	0.7	2.6	0.0
Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multi-race, Non-Hisp./Lat.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Teacher Data (2012-2013)	District	State
Total # of Teachers	149.3	70,635.8
% of Teachers Licensed in Teaching Assignment	97.8	97.5
Total # of Classes in Core Academic Areas	876	345,316
% of Core Academic Classes Taught by Teachers Who are Highly Qualified	98.2	98.0
Student/Teacher Ratio	15.4 to 1	13.5 to 1

Total Expenditure Per Pupil, All Funds, By Function	2011				2012			
	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)
Administration	$800,993	2.87%	$346	$447	$866,717	3.07%	$384	$471
Instructional Leadership	$1,524,774	5.46%	$658	$832	$1,583,078	5.60%	$701	$855
Classroom and Specialist Teachers	$10,040,514	35.94%	$4,334	$5,026	$9,674,514	34.21%	$4,283	$5,125
Other Teaching Services	$2,310,869	8.27%	$998	$991	$2,385,011	8.43%	$1,056	$1,027
Professional Development	$280,865	1.01%	$121	$238	$257,640	0.91%	$114	$232
Instructional Materials, Equipment and Technology	$366,237	1.31%	$158	$422	$649,672	2.30%	$288	$377
Guidance, Counseling and Testing	$772,571	2.77%	$334	$372	$797,144	2.82%	$353	$387
Pupil Services	$3,559,787	12.74%	$1,537	$1,196	$3,785,778	13.39%	$1,676	$1,249
Operations and Maintenance	$2,291,535	8.20%	$989	$1,067	$2,487,138	8.80%	$1,101	$1,035
Insurance, Retirement Programs and Other	$3,350,828	11.99%	$1,447	$2,298	$3,341,074	11.82%	$1,479	$2,364
Payments To Out-Of-District Schools	$2,637,454	9.44%	$30,005	$20,548	$2,450,417	8.67%	$26,520	$21,549
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$27,936,427	100.00%	$11,619	$13,354	$28,278,183	100.00%	$12,027	$13,636

Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical

Enrollment by Grade (2013-14)																	
	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	SP	CT	Total
Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	374	376	347	336	0	-	1,433
District	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	374	376	347	336	0	-	1,433

4-Year Graduation Rate (2013)							
Student Group	# in Cohort	% Graduated	% Still in School	% Non-Grad Completers	% GED	% Dropped Out	% Permanently Excluded
All Students	325	96.6	1.5	0.0	0.6	0.9	0.3
Male	181	96.1	2.2	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.6
Female	144	97.2	0.7	0.0	1.4	0.7	0.0
ELL	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Students w/disabilities	65	95.4	3.1	0.0	0.0	1.5	0.0
Low income	146	94.5	2.7	0.0	0.7	1.4	0.7
High needs	183	95.6	2.2	0.0	0.5	1.1	0.5
Afr. Amer./Black	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	7	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hispanic/Latino	38	97.4	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	257	96.9	1.2	0.0	0.8	0.8	0.4
Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multi-race, Non-Hisp./Lat.	18	88.9	5.6	0.0	0.0	5.6	0.0

Teacher Data (2012-13)	District	State
Total # of Teachers	106.0	70,635.8
% of Teachers Licensed in Teaching Assignment	98.1	97.5
Total # of Classes in Core Academic Areas	307	345,316
% of Core Academic Classes Taught by Teachers Who are Highly Qualified	98.0	98.0
Student/Teacher Ratio	13.5 to 1	13.5 to 1

Total Expenditure Per Pupil, All Funds, By Function	2011				2012			
	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)	Total Exp	% of Total	Per Pupil	Per Pupil (State)
Administration	$967,300	4.13%	$714	$447	$1,015,693	4.10%	$725	$471
Instructional Leadership	$1,154,514	4.92%	$852	$832	$1,337,124	5.40%	$954	$855
Classroom and Specialist Teachers	$7,162,979	30.55%	$5,286	$5,026	$7,573,043	30.59%	$5,404	$5,125
Other Teaching Services	$604,355	2.58%	$446	$991	$680,202	2.75%	$485	$1,027
Professional Development	$308,234	1.31%	$227	$238	$531,105	2.15%	$379	$232
Instructional Materials, Equipment and Technology	$2,341,460	9.99%	$1,728	$422	$2,308,427	9.32%	$1,647	$377
Guidance, Counseling and Testing	$1,029,197	4.39%	$760	$372	$1,154,415	4.66%	$824	$387
Pupil Services	$2,870,114	12.24%	$2,118	$1,196	$3,262,602	13.18%	$2,328	$1,249
Operations and Maintenance	$2,859,594	12.20%	$2,110	$1,067	$2,854,881	11.53%	$2,037	$1,035
Insurance, Retirement Programs and Other	$3,989,500	17.02%	$2,944	$2,298	$3,854,798	15.57%	$2,750	$2,364
Payments To Out-Of-District Schools	$157,103	0.67%	$6,860	$20,548	$183,161	0.74%	$5,908	$21,549
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$23,444,350	100.00%	$17,015	$13,354	$24,755,451	100.00%	$17,281	$13,636

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Appendix H: Statement from Town of Westminister

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The following statement was provided by the Westminster Board of Selectmen who requested its inclusion in Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan. The text is shown as submitted to MRPC on June 4, 2014. The statement is an opinion of the Town of Westminster and does not reflect the opinion of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development:

Westminster Layover Objections – for inclusion in the Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Plan

It should be noted for the record that the Town of Westminster *did not* support the building of the MBTA layover station within the Westminster Business Park. The Town exhausted every avenue of appeal, even asking the federal Department of Transportation's Inspector General for an investigation. All of the Town's appeals were turned aside and the layover station is now under construction. The Town's primary objections to the layover station are as follows:

- The Town has gone to great lengths to reserve the land that comprises the Westminster Business Park for economic development, and the land's industrial zoning designation reflects this. In 2009, the Town went so far as to designate this area as a Priority Development site through the State's Streamlined Permitting law (MGL Chapter 43D). Having the MBTA purchase a lot that represents 10% of the Business Park's total area for a use that will generate no tax revenues for the Town and only a handful of jobs was not something the Town could support.
- The parcel that the MBTA purchased was one of only three parcels within the Park that has direct access to the Pan Am freight rail line. Thus, this parcel is no longer available to an industry that could make use of the freight rail connection, create tax revenues for the Town and living wage jobs for the residents of the region.
- The layover station will be tying into the municipal sewer system during a time when there is a moratorium on new sewer connections and other lots within the Park that could be used for tax-paying industries cannot tie into the system.
- Early on in the project, MART and the MBTA made representations to the Town that businesses within the Park could utilize the layover facility for the loading/unloading of freight during the daytime. This representation turnout out to be false.
- Lastly, the Town had concerns that the layover station would create nuisance conditions that could impact the surrounding neighborhood. The Town went so far as to pay for a noise study that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) noise guideline of 10 dB(A) increases in noise levels will likely be exceeded at a number of locations on both sides of the proposed layover facility.