



# *5 Public Outreach, Input, & Participation*



## PUBLIC OUTREACH, INPUT AND PARTICIPATION

An important part of the development process for the RTP is public outreach and involvement. To obtain this, several methods were utilized in an attempt to bring as many individuals as possible into the plan development. This included updates at several meetings, targeted emails, online and hard copy surveys and web-based applications. Additionally, during the development of other planning documents, notice of applicability and linkage to the RTP were identified and incorporated.

### Public Meetings

Several meetings regularly held by or specifically scheduled by the MRPC were utilized as opportunities for input and discussion of the RTP. These included:

- RTP Workshops
- Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)
- Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
- Montachusett Regional transit Authority (MART) Advisory Board
- Montachusett Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (MRCEDS) Committee
- Montachusett Regional Trail Coalition (MRTC)
- Community Health Network Area 9 (CHNA 9)
- Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

### RTP Workshops

A series of meetings were held at five locations around the region to discuss various topics and to solicit input directly related to the RTP development. A mass mailing was disseminated to



various individuals, organizations and groups announcing the time and locations of these meetings. In addition, all relevant information was posted to the MRPC website.

#### RTP Workshops – Dates & Locations

Date	Location
February 21, 2019	MART Facility Fitchburg/Leominster
February 28, 2019	Town Hall Harvard
March 4, 2019	Town Hall Ayer
March 5, 2019	Public Safety Building Phillipston
March 12, 2019	Beals Memorial Library Winchendon

**REGIONAL  
TRANSPORTATION  
PLAN**

*WORKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE*

**PUBLIC OUTREACH WORKSHOPS**

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) would like to announce a series of meetings that will focus on the 2020 update of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The Regional Transportation Plan provides guidance to local and state officials in deciding how to spend federal and state transportation funds as well as address the transportation priority needs for the region. The plan is a long-range document for the maintenance and improvement for the road, highway, bicycle and pedestrian, bridge, rail, transit, freight and airport systems of the Montachusett Region over the next 20 years. The RTP is a federally mandated document that is developed through studies, discussions with local officials, boards and commissions and public comment/outreach. While the RTP may cover a 20-year period, it is updated every four years so it can be adapted to emerging needs and trends.

The Plan must examine and address all modes of transportation that exist in the region through an inventory of current conditions and then identify various needs and recommendations that can range from specific projects to general goals or policies. Additionally, in order for projects to be eligible for Federal Aid funds through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), they must be reflected within the RTP.

All interested individuals are encouraged to participate in the plan development process through attendance at various outreach events, completion of various surveys, feedback and comments on the draft documents as they are prepared and by contacting the MRPC. For more information please visit the RTP page on the MRPC website at [www.mrpc.org/transportation](http://www.mrpc.org/transportation). 2/28/2019

Fitchburg/Leominster  
February 21, 2019  
6:30 PM  
**MART Facility**  
1627R Water Street

Harvard  
February 28, 2019  
6:00 PM  
**Town Hall**  
13 Ayer Road

Ayer  
March 4, 2019  
6:30 PM  
**Town Hall**  
1 Main Street

Phillipston  
March 5, 2019  
6:30 PM  
**Public Safety Bldg.**  
99 State Road

Winchendon  
March 12, 2019  
6:30 PM  
**Beals Memorial Library**  
50 Pleasant Street

**MRPC**  
464 Abbott Avenue  
Leominster, MA 01453  
978-345-7376  
[www.mrpc.org](http://www.mrpc.org)

The following table is a summary of comments made at the RTP Outreach Meetings.

**Table 5 - 1. RTP Outreach Meeting Comments**

Meeting	Comments
2/21/19 – Fitchburg/Leominster Outreach	<p>Route 2 - Improvements needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mt. Elam Road – dangerous traffic light. Suggestion to buy out property owners and close roadway/eliminate light. Emergency response is also delayed to accidents at the light because it's in Fitchburg and they will be coming westbound and need to turn around to head eastbound where the light is located. More up to date &amp; visible advanced warning signage is needed prior to the light. Solar glare is also a problem here.</li> <li>Runoff into Monoosnoc Brook near the water filtration plant. MDOT settled a lawsuit against them 8+ years ago. A plan was established to fix the issues but it appears that no work has been done.</li> </ul> <p>Route I-190</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advanced warning signs needed before the merge with Route 2</li> </ul> <p>Prioritize Complete Streets &amp; trail connections</p> <p>Trail priorities –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect Twin Cities Rail Trail to the Mass Central Rail Trail</li> <li>Connect North Central Pathway into Ashburnham and points West</li> <li>MRTC to work on this at upcoming meetings</li> </ul> <p>Game On Fitchburg is currently being built. This is an economic development opportunity. It was mentioned that “active” people will be coming out to this facility so hiking &amp; biking opportunities nearby may be of interest.</p> <p>Route 31 railroad bridge in West Fitchburg is a pinch point. This should be expanded to accommodate the heavy truck traffic and also provide a safe place to connect the Streamline Trail to Wachusett Station.</p>



**Table 5 - 1. RTP Outreach Meeting Comments (continued)**

2/21/19 – Fitchburg/Leominster Outreach	Route 12 corridor in Fitchburg – potential TIP project. The area closer to down town and to the north. Sidewalks/pedestrian & bike improvements are needed.
<p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 2 at Mt Elam Road – Pursue discussions with MassDOT regarding prior commitments to address safety and runoff issues; Possible planning activity depending on MassDOT feedback and needs.</li> <li>• Identify planned ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems) improvements for the I-190 and Route 2 corridors as well as time frame for implementation.</li> <li>• Trail priorities and issues to be part of planned Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans (FFY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program)</li> <li>• Prior improvements identified in and around Wachusett Station and Route 31. Seek feedback from MassDOT regarding project potential. Possible planning activity to prioritize and finalize projects.</li> </ul>	
2/28/19 – Harvard Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route 117 – Willard Road, no sidewalks. This is a mode shift barrier</li> <li>• No Park &amp; Ride facilities in Harvard or along Route 2 in the area</li> <li>• Ayer Road corridor – good candidate for a bike lane to connect Ayer Center to Harvard Center and to the Nashua River Rail Trail</li> <li>• Devens – trail connections to Harvard (Old Mill Road), connect Ayer rotary area</li> <li>• Encourage strategic connections (future planning) for future TIP projects</li> <li>• Encourage people to force trail/bike/ped accommodates for projects that could create future trail connections</li> </ul>
<p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information related to Park &amp; Ride Lots to will be provided to MART for their review. Staff will coordinate with RTA on possible long-range plan related to implementation of Park &amp; Ride Lots along Route 2 corridor.</li> <li>• Trail and sidewalk connections to be discussed in upcoming Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans.</li> </ul>	
3/4/19 – Ayer Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Ch. 90 money needed, current funding levels have been the same for a number of years and it is impossible for communities to keep up with maintenance of their roads.</li> <li>• Project costs/process is out of control. A community spends much less money than the state on similar projects.</li> </ul>
<p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need for additional Chapter 90 funding is a common theme among municipalities. Staff will continue to stress needs to MassDOT and appropriate agencies and officials.</li> </ul>	



**Table 5 - 1. RTP Outreach Meeting Comments (continued)**

3/5/19 – Phillipston Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• UPWP project conversation</li><li>• TIP project process</li></ul>
RESPONSE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff will continue to work with local communities on project and planning study development to address areas of concern.</li></ul>	
3/12/19 – Winchendon Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No grocery store in town, need better access to grocery store for people without access to car/seniors.</li><li>• MART needs to do a better job of communicating bus service to the public. Active community members from Winchendon had no clue what service was available.</li><li>• North Central Pathway and its possible connections to Monadnock region and its assets would boost economy of Winchendon.</li></ul>
RESPONSE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comments passed onto MART for their review.</li><li>• As mentioned previously, trail and sidewalk connections to be discussed in upcoming Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans.</li></ul>	



## Regional Planning Documents

Through its work throughout the Region, the MRPC has been and continues to be involved in a number of planning activities. Many of these initiatives and studies address transportation needs and issues as a component of their scope. In several cases, they address certain targeted populations. The following is a summary of some of these studies and their transportation related findings.

### [Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan \(CPT-HSTP\)](#)

The Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) documents the Montachusett MPO’s unmet human-service transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals (or persons below the poverty level), the elderly and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons.

The CPT-HSTP was developed by the MMPO as a tool to help local transportation providers and communities improve transportation services, increase efficiency of service delivery, and expand outreach to meet growing needs. It provides a framework to guide the investment of existing transportation resources and the acquisition of future funds.

As a resource, this plan:

- Evaluates community demographics related to the target populations
- Assesses the transportation gaps and needs of the target populations
- Identifies strategies to address the gaps in transportation services
- Establishes relative priorities of the strategies

The following is a summary of the Priorities, Recommendations and Areas of Emphasis outlined within the CPT-HSTP.

- Extension of Existing Fixed Route Service Hours and Days of Operation.
  - a. Extend/Expand Transit Services
  - b. Sustain Existing Services and Maintenance of Vehicles



- Medical Transportation Services in Both the Fixed Route Areas and in the Rural Communities
  - a. Seek to Extend Medical Services to Rural Communities
- Expansion and Connection of Fixed Route Service to Additional Communities.
- Education and Training of Available Services
- Expand Outreach and Training of Transit Services to Target and LEP Populations
- Encourage Employer Vanpools
- Expand and Increase Commuter Rail Options
- Explore Additional Funding Options
- Explore Fare Options to Encourage Additional Commuter Rail Ridership
- Explore Additional Scheduling Methods for the Individuals with Disabilities and Target Populations
- Encourage More Cooperation Between Communities and Agencies

For the complete CPT-HSTP and all of its analysis and background, please contact the MRPC or refer to the document on the MRPC website: [www.mrpc.org/files](http://www.mrpc.org/files) under the MMPO heading.

#### [Montachusett Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(MRCEDS\) - Draft](#)

The MRPC updates the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every 5 years and completes an Annual Update of the economic planning and development work accomplished in the Montachusett Region, in accordance with the Montachusett Region CEDS. A Draft Update and Annual Report was developed in May 2019 that identifies the accomplishments of multiple economic development entities and adjusts the MRCEDS' vision, goals, objectives and work plan as needed to reflect changing economic conditions.

The MRCEDS highlights the public meetings and input as well as regional surveys that were conducted to guide and develop the update. Outreach included the MRCEDS Committee, the Montachusett Economic Development District (MEDD), MRPC Planning Commissioners, Chambers of Commerce, representatives of minority groups and low- and moderate-income groups, local officials, business representatives, and other economic development leaders.



Through this outreach effort, the MRCEDS has identified the following strengths, weakness and recommendations.

### *Regional Strengths*

- *Recreational opportunities* - The most commonly identified strength in the Montachusett Region is our abundant recreational opportunities. 71.4% of respondents identified recreational opportunities as either “Somewhat of a strength” or “One of our greatest strengths” in the region.
- *Quality of educational programming provided at the Associate degree level* - 68.6% of survey respondents agreed that the quality of educational programming available at the Associate degree level is a strength of our region. The Montachusett Region has two postsecondary institutions which are driving the success of this programming: Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College.
- *Quality of educational programming provided at the K-12 level* - The third most identified strength of the Montachusett Region is the quality of educational programming at the elementary and high school levels. More than half (51.4%) of respondents identified K-12 education as somewhat of a strength, while 8.6% said it is one of the region’s greatest strengths.

### *Regional Weaknesses*

- *Quality of transportation infrastructure* - The greatest weakness identified by leaders in the region by a wide margin is the quality of our transportation infrastructure. The challenges associated with maintenance and improvement region’s transportation infrastructure are in many ways directly linked to challenges related to housing, business retention, and other elements of successful economic development.
- *Quality and availability of public transportation* - As mentioned ... promoting transit and commuter rail options is a major priority for the Montachusett Region. However, 50% of respondents agree that presently the quality and availability of public transportation is one of the region’s greatest weaknesses, and an additional 22.2% say it is somewhat of a weakness.





- *Housing options* - A majority (61.8%) of respondents perceived housing options as either somewhat of a weakness (44.1%) or one of the region's greatest weaknesses (17.7%). The Montachusett Region is situated uniquely due to the competitive and comparatively expensive housing options in nearby Boston and Worcester. In order to attract those who may be priced out of these markets, as well as retain those residents who are already here, the Montachusett Region needs to ensure a robust and affordable housing stock.

#### *Possible Opportunities*

- *Collaborative Workspaces* - The majority of respondents support the ongoing development of collaborative workspaces in the Montachusett Region. Makerspaces, along with co-working spaces and business incubators, have the mission of creating businesses and providing support for people to develop new employable skills and collaborate with others on business endeavors. Additionally, makerspaces in particular may help the Montachusett Region strengthen its greatest asset of recreational opportunities by providing fun classes and workshops indoors during the tough winter months. Currently, there are a small number of collaborative workspaces being developed in the region, including the Wachusett Business Incubator in Gardner and LaunchSpace, Inc. in Athol.
- *Opportunity Zones* - The designation of Opportunity Zones also poses a potential economic opportunity according to almost half of all respondents. By providing tax incentives to invest in distressed communities, there may be many yet unrealized benefits of these zones. To date, five Montachusett communities (Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, and Leominster) received formal approval of two Census Tracts each (ten total) for designation as federal Opportunity Zones.
- *Recreational cannabis industry* - The current growth of the recreational cannabis industry was included due to its growing role in the region, including occupying and improving the infrastructure of very large commercial and industrial spaces for cultivating, processing, testing, and sales of recreational cannabis. However, this industry poses a number of risks as well, including its legal status at the federal level.
- *Other identified opportunities*



- a. Housing - ...noted that support should be aimed at attracting people who are being priced out of high cost housing in nearby Boston, and help meet their desire to live close to employment.
- b. Life Sciences at Devens - a 40-acre site in Devens was re-zoned to make it eligible for biotechnology firms and manufacturers with ample office, industrial, and research and development spaces. At the time, MassDevelopment anticipated the rezoning would support hundreds of new permanent jobs in the region, with up 350 to 500 new skilled positions with the addition of a biomanufacturing facility

### *Potential Threats*

By a significant margin, the region's aging infrastructure was chosen as the greatest threat to our region's economic well-being. The connection between transportation infrastructure and economic vitality is critical and is explained in greater detail in the forthcoming 2020 Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan.

### *Goals and Objectives*

As part of the CEDS update, and in response to key trends and our regional outlook, goals and objectives for the region were developed under ten independent (but highly interrelated) categories:

#### 1. Infrastructure Development

- a. Conduct an analysis of livability by municipality to identify strengths as well as areas for improvement within the region. Start by establishing a list of characteristics for communities where people are moving in and then do a regional assessment of municipalities to provide productive feedback on infrastructure, cultural, and civic improvements/changes; and
- b. Advance high-quality infrastructure and community improvements to support development, redevelopment and revitalization of the built environment.

#### 2. Regional Cooperation

#### 3. Regional Promotion

#### 4. Local Business Creation and Support



## 5. Workforce Attraction and Retention

## 6. Redevelopment and Reuse

## 7. Education

## 8. Housing

- a. Focus resources and investments on helping existing residents, including students, young adults, and families to stay in the area. Support establishing creative tax policies to incentivize investment in existing and development of new high-quality housing stock, develop first time homebuyer assistance, create student loan repayment programs, and research other strategies designed to retain population;
- b. Identify target properties, parcels, and areas for housing or mixed-use development. Prepare a financial feasibility analysis on each and create incentives to spur development of a variety of housing solutions in communities that are feeling the greatest pressure; and
- c. Conduct a region wide housing needs and opportunities assessment, including utilizing existing work that has been done. Use this to establish a comprehensive understanding of the gaps in housing supply for current and future population. Establish an inventory of available funding and financial assistance programs for housing development and redevelopment work. Identify funding gaps and mechanisms for filling those gaps. Identify zoning or other regulations that hinder effective residential development needed to respond to current market needs.

## 9. Public Health and Safety

## 10. Energy and Resources

For the complete MRCEDS Update and all of its analysis and background, please contact the MRPC or refer to the MRPC website.



## Regional Needs Assessment Survey Report

This project was developed as a method to augment data collected from past MART rider and non-rider surveys and to expand the analysis among four key elements for transportation needs in the region. Distribution of the survey focused on large business employers, elderly and disabled populations, medical offices and higher education facilities. As part of this effort, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) worked with the Community Health Network of North Central Massachusetts (CHNA9) and Fitchburg State University (FSU). The overall goal for this project is to develop a better and more comprehensive understanding of the transportation needs of the region which will help lead to more focused transportation and transit projects.

### *Methodology*

The MRPC worked with the CHNA9 Transportation Subcommittee to develop four different but comparable surveys based on the identified target population groups or institutions. These target groups were as follows:

1. Large business employers (50 or more employees);
2. Elderly and disabled populations in the Region (based on 2010 Census data);
3. Medical facilities (hospitals and medical centers/offices);
4. Higher education institutions (FSU and Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC)).

Upon completion of the surveys, a list of distribution sites was established. Sites were identified based on local knowledge and existing outreach lists for each specific target group or facility. The overall goal was to gather approximately 400 surveys per identified group across all areas of the Montachusett Region.

As data is received, any paper surveys were entered into the online questionnaires on Survey Monkey. This allowed for easier analysis of the responses. The following is a summary of responses by target group as of September 6, 2018.

1. Large Business Employers – 312
2. Elderly/Disabled Populations – 174
3. Medical Facilities – 291



#### 4. Higher Education – 181

Based upon responses as of September 6<sup>th</sup>, certain key or repetitive issues can be identified. A certain amount of caution is needed however when reviewing these items as final results and analysis is still pending. Never the less, the following appear to be point of interest for each of the target groups.

##### *Preliminary Key Issues*

##### a. Large Business Employers

- Approximately 84% of respondents would use transit to work if available;
- Cost Effectiveness and reliability are cited as most the important factors towards transit use;
- About 50% would be interested in a company run shuttle followed by a bus and rideshare;
- 53% cite transportation as a major factor in applying for a job;
- Extended bus routes and times for non-traditional work hours and shifts;
- Cost is also an issue.

##### b. Elderly/Disabled Populations

- Approximately 42% to 45% use a Council-on-Aging or MART van;
- 75% would use it more often if it were available;
- Cost effectiveness and reliability were cited as the most important factors regarding transit use;
- Over a 3-month period, almost 62% were unable to a make a medical appointment due to lack of transportation;
- 57% said transportation was a major factor in whether or not they schedule a medical appointment;
- Lack of knowledge regarding transportation options was identified by 54% of respondents;
- Over half (59%) were on some form of benefit program;
- More COA vans were cited as recommendation;



c. Medical Facilities

- Over 61% do not use public transit to get to their medical appointments;
- About 71% would use transit if it was an option;
- 75% cite reliability as an issue;
- Cost effectiveness and reliability were the most important issues when it comes to public transportation;
- Approximately 31% would be willing to pay \$5.00 or more for a one-way ride to an appointment;
- Respondents mentioned that the bus and a ride share option, such as Uber, were their preferred public transportation options but would rather drive their own vehicle out of convenience;
- Longer service hours were identified as a recommendation;
- Easier or quicker scheduling options and better promotion of services were also identified.

d. Higher Education

- Approximately 33% use transit to get to and from school;
- 48% cite reliability as an issue;
- Approximately 58% commute 30 minutes or less to school;
- Students cited more bus frequency, better time reliability, longer hours of operation, fare discounts and larger service area as issues that affect their use of transit.

[North Central Mass Community Health Improvement Plan 2020 & 2017 Annual Report](#)

The CHNA9 worked with a number of groups and organizations to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). According to the plan, “A CHIP is a broad, action-oriented strategic plan to improve the health of the community, based on the needs identified by Community Health Assessments. The North Central CHIP is based on the 2012 and 2015 Community Health Assessments conducted for our region. It includes five priority areas with goals, objectives, strategies and measures to address them.”



The five priority areas are:

**Table 5 – 2. CHIP Priority Areas**

Priority Area	Based on
Healthy Eating and Active Living	High rates of diabetes/heart disease/obesity
Healthy and Safe Relationships	High rates of domestic violence and child abuse/neglect
Mental and Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse	High rates of smoking, alcohol, and opioid abuse and an ongoing shortage of beds/services for mental and behavioral health
Transportation and Access	Data showing transportation as a major barrier to accessing health care, jobs, social services, and healthy foods
Racial Justice	Racial tensions at the national and local levels, immigration policy and enforcement concerns, and data showing inequitable access to career and education opportunities.

“A CHIP is an established, evidence-based tool for responding to the results of a community assessment. It establishes a shared framework for partners from many sectors so that identified community needs can be addressed at the systemic level, harnessing collective resources and political will, and coordinating strategies between multi-sector organizations and communities.”  
(source: CHIP 2020)

The following summarizes the Transportation and Access Priority Area’s Goals and Strategies.

**Goal: Improve transportation services and systems to ensure equitable access for diverse communities.**

<b>Objective 4.1: By 2020, restructure existing transit service options in North Central to better align with the needs of current and prospective consumers.</b>
<p>4.1.1: Form an accountability board that will conduct annual performance reviews of transit service providers and gaps as identified by consumers and prospective consumers and will review and call attention to and address policy issues and policy enforcement issues that affect utilization.</p> <p>4.1.2: Work with transit providers to restructure eligibility guidelines for transportation vouchers.</p> <p>4.1.3: Advocate for fixed buses to have fixed stops (end of flagging system except for people w/ special considerations) and for buses to announce upcoming stops and have visible LED signs showing the next stop.</p>
<i>Successful 2020 Outcomes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ridership of existing transit options in North Central has increased by 15%.</li> <li>• Average ride time relative to distance traveled via public transit has decreased by 40%.</li> <li>• Availability of transit services and connections at peak times has increased by 10%.</li> </ul>



**Objective 4.2: By 2020, increase public knowledge and usage of available transit service options within North Central.**

- 4.2.1: Work with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission to create an accessible database of transportation options geared toward health and human service providers.
- 4.2.2: Advocate to increase the number of bus shelters with schedules, including a signal for vision impaired indicating when the next bus will arrive.
- 4.2.3: Advocate to increase the amount of language appropriate visible bus signage.
- 4.2.4: Advocate for funding for an increased number of travel trainers with area language skills and cultural competence.

**Successful 2020 Outcomes**

- Ridership of existing transit options in North Central has increased by 15%.
- 75% of health and human service providers surveyed report an increased knowledge of existing transportation options for their clients.
- 50% of surveyed consumers within public transit service areas report an increased knowledge of existing transit service options.

**Objective 4.3: Identify the top five service gaps within North Central and successfully advocate for at least one of those gaps to be closed by 2020.**

- 4.3.1: Partner with Montachusett Regional Planning Commission and other regional groups to conduct transportation gap study.
- 4.3.2: Establish bus routes or other transit options in unserved communities as needed based on transportation gap study.
- 4.3.3: Work with transit providers to increase bus routes and other transit options in the evening and on weekends.
- 4.3.4: Organize constituencies of local citizens and civic leaders to raise awareness of identified transit gaps/needs and to advocate for projects intended to close those gaps.

**Successful 2020 Outcomes**

- Service gaps have been identified in a comprehensive study.
- Service hours have increased in response to the study results.
- At least one new service or service expansion has been created to address an identified gap.

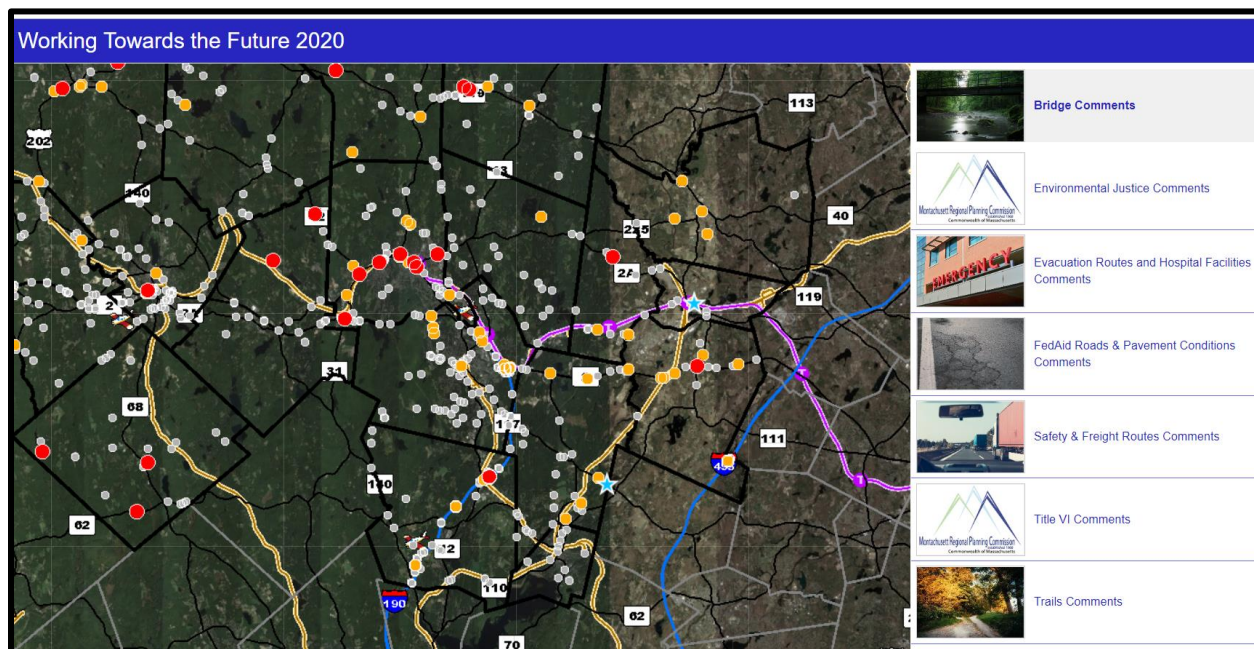
[Montachusett RTP Online Comment Applications](#)

As part of the public input process, the MRPC's GIS department developed an online application that allowed individuals to review current data and information and to leave comments regarding different areas of interest. Comment sections included: Bridges, Environmental Justice, Evacuation Routes, Federal Aid Roads & Pavement Conditions, Safety & Freight, Title VI and Trails. The overall goal was to encourage individuals to identify issues and or locations of concern that might then be incorporated into the RTP.





Figure 5 - 1. Montachusett Online Comment Application



Some 35 comments were posted to the website on four of the seven map applications. The over majority were related to the Federal Aid Roads & Pavement Conditions map. The following table summarizes the types of comments received.

Table 5 - 3. Montachusett Online Comment Application - Comments

Comment App	Comment Type	Response
Federal Aid Roads & Pavement Conditions	Accident Locations; Geometric Deficiencies; Intersection or Locations That Need to be Addressed; Enforcement Areas; Speed Issues; Pavement Issues	Specific locations were noted and will be reviewed as part of Safety Analysis or possible future UPWP planning task.
Safety & Freight	Geometric Deficiencies; Areas of Congestion; Improper Motorist Behavior; Truck Access Issues; Accident Issues & Locations	Areas of concern will be addressed in current or planned work activities. This includes freight issues and safety analysis programs.
Trails	Trail Support; Bicycle Usage Support	Trail support will be noted in planned Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans.
Evacuation Routes	Facility Update	Routes discussed as part of Homeland Security participation work.
Bridges, Environmental Justice, Title VI	No Comments Provided	



## Outreach Survey

The MRPC developed a survey for distribution throughout the region that would help in the development of this RTP. Primarily, it would help to identify the mood of the region towards various programming options and needs as well as shape potential planning scenarios. This chapter outlines the survey, the responses received and conclusions drawn from the results.

### The Survey

The survey was devised to be short, easy to answer and hopefully, provide insight to the needs of the Region. Respondents were asked to identify themselves as municipal employees or officials or as members of the general public. This would help us compare community needs from both the professional and public points of view.

The survey was made available at each of the public outreach workshops put on by the MRPC, at meetings of the MPO, MJTC and full Commission and online via SurveyMonkey.com. In addition, notices regarding access to the survey were distributed multiple times to all members of the RTP mailing list. From this outreach effort, some 200 responses were received.

### Questions, Responses and Observations

The following section reviews each question individually, summarizes the responses received and draws observations based upon an analysis of the data.

#### Question 1 - Where do you live? (Zip Code)

This question simply asks the respondent to identify the primary place of residents by zip code.



**Table 5 - 4. RTP Survey Respondents by Community**

<b>MRPC Communities</b>		<b>Outside MRPC Region</b>	
<b>Respondent Communities</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Respondent Communities</b>	<b>No.</b>
Ashburnham	25	Arlington	1
Ashby	6	Barre	2
Athol/Phillipston	3	Batavia NY	1
Ayer	3	Belchertown	1
Clinton	2	Chicopee	1
Devens	2	Concord	1
Fitchburg	18	Fitzwilliam NH	1
Gardner	3	Holden	3
Groton	7	Hudson	1
Harvard	45	Nashua NH	1
Hubbardston	5	Paxton	1
Lancaster	2	Pepperell	3
Leominster	3	Princeton	1
Lunenburg	6	West Boylston	1
Petersham	1	No Response	1
Shirley	2	<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>20</b>
Sterling	2		<b>9.85%</b>
Townsend	28		
West Townsend	5		
Westminster	4		
Winchendon	11		
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>183</b>		
	<b>90.15%</b>		

- Of the 203 responses, over 90% were from residents of the 23 MRPC members (22 communities plus Devens). All but two municipalities, Royalston and Templeton, were represented.
- The remaining 20 respondents were from communities outside of the planning region. One survey participant did not respond to the question.

**Question 2 - Where do you work or travel to most often in a week? (Zip Code)**

This question followed up the where do you live question by seeking to ascertain where respondents most often traveled to in a week in order to develop some travel patterns.



**Table 5 - 5. RTP Survey Respondents Communities**

MRPC Communities	
Respondent Communities	No.
Ashburnham	16
Athol/Phillipston	2
Ayer	7
Clinton	1
Devens	6
Fitchburg	18
Gardner	8
Groton	8
Harvard (Still River 1)	17
Hubbardston	3
Leominster	12
Lunenburg	2
Shirley	2
Sterling	3
Templeton (E Templeton)	1
Townsend	10
Westminster	4
Winchendon	5
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>125</b> <b>61.58%</b>

Outside MRPC Region	
Respondent Communities	No.
Acton	3
Amherst MA	1
Andover	1
Barre	1
Batavia NY	1
Bedford	1
Bolton	1
Boston	4
Boxborough	1
Brookline NH	1
Burlington	1
Cambridge	3
Concord	6
Dracut	1
Framingham	1
Hanscom AFB	1
Holden	2
Hollis NH	1
Hudson	1
Littleton	6
Lowell	3
Marlborough	1
Milford NH	2
Nashua NH	2
Natick	2
Northborough	1
Princeton	2
Rindge NH	2
Sudbury	1
Tyngsboro	1
West Boylston	1
Waltham	1
West Medford	1
West Roxbury	1
Westborough	1
Westford	5
Worcester	6
Blank	7
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>78</b> <b>38.42%</b>

- One hundred twenty-five (125 or 61.58%) individuals indicated that they worked or travel to on a regular basis, a community within the Montachusett region.



- Of the remaining 78 responses, 38.42% indicated travel outside of the region. Seven (7) of those 78 left no response at all.

### Question 3 - Are you ...?

This question identified the respondent as a Municipal Employee, a Municipal Official (board member, etc.) or the General Public and allowed us to analyze answers based on their role within a community.

	Lived In Region - Worked In Region	Lived In Region - Worked Outside Region	Lived Outside Region - Worked In Region	Lived Outside Region - Worked Outside Region	Total Responses	Percent of Total
Municipal Employee	19	4	2	4	29	14.43%
Municipal Official	16	5	0	2	23	11.44%
General Public	87	52	8	2	149	74.13%
Totals	122	61	10	8	201	
Percent of Total	60.70%	30.35%	4.98%	3.98%		

- Almost 61% of respondents both lived in and worked in the Montachusett region. Only 5% that lived outside of the region commuted into the region on a regular basis.
- Only two (2) individuals did not provide enough information to determine residence and/or place of work.
- In regards to MRPC communities, only four municipalities (Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston and Templeton) were not represented.

### Question 4 - Rank in importance from 1 (Most) to 10 (Least), the following issues that need to be addressed in your **COMMUNITY** over the next 25 years.

This question provided respondents with 10 individual issues commonly faced by communities and asked them to rank them from 1, most important, to 10, least important. An opportunity to provide a different issue was also provided.

The ten issues were as follows:

- Road Maintenance & Infrastructure
- Transit Options
- Congestion
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Accessibility
- Safety – Road & Highway
- Economic Development
- Residential Development
- Climate Change & Environment
- Changing Demographics
- Improved Town Center



The following table summarizes the ranking of issues by the respondents based on their categorization as Municipal Employee, Municipal Official or General Public.

**Table 5 - 6. RTP Survey Question 4 Summary**

	RESPONDENT				Average Rank All Respondents
	Municipal Employee	Municipal Official	General Public	All Respondents	
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure	2.76
2	Transit Options	Economic Development	Transit Options	Transit Options	4.61
3	Safety – Road & Highway	Safety – Road & Highway	Pedestrian & Bicycle Accessibility	Economic Development	4.65
4	Economic Development	Improved Town Center	Economic Development	<i>Pedestrian &amp; Bicycle Accessibility</i>	4.72
5	Pedestrian & Bicycle Accessibility	Pedestrian & Bicycle Accessibility	Safety – Road & Highway	<i>Safety – Road &amp; Highway</i>	4.72
6	Improved Town Center	Transit Options	Climate Change & Environment	Improved Town Center	5.80
7	Climate Change & Environment	Climate Change & Environment	Improved Town Center	Climate Change & Environment	5.95
8	Residential Development	Residential Development	Congestion	Residential Development	7.11
9	Changing Demographics	Congestion	Changing Demographics	Congestion	7.18
10	Congestion	Changing Demographics	Residential Development	Changing Demographics	7.32
11	Other (Rank)	Other (Rank)	Other (Rank)	Other (Rank)	9.05

*Issues in Italics Represent  
a tie in their Ranking*

- Road Maintenance & Infrastructure ranked first among all categories of respondents, i.e. Municipal Employee, Municipal Official and the General Public.
- The second highest ranked issue behind Roadway Maintenance & Infrastructure, had an average rank that was almost twice that of Road Maintenance & Infrastructure (4.61 compared to 2.76). This would indicate that among survey takers of the importance placed on the issue of Roadway Maintenance & Infrastructure.
- Transit Options ranked second in importance among the General Public and Municipal Employees. Surprisingly, among Municipal Officials, Transit Options fell all the way to sixth in importance.
- Safety – Road & Highway, Pedestrian & Bicycle Options and Economic Development all placed in the top five issues among each respondent group. Not surprisingly, Economic Development was a strong issue for Municipal Officials. It also placed high for the General Public, before Safety – Road & Highway.





- Among those respondents that replied with “Other” issues, their comments were examined and grouped based upon their perceived theme as follows:

#### Senior Issues

- \* Senior Housing, a Senior Center, a LGBT friendly community
- \* Harvard is minimally invested in its Senior Citizens COA. We have NO Van of our own. Most importantly, we have NO VAN to take Seniors into Boston for medical appointments. This is vitally important, as all my doctors are in Boston. And their current arrangement to 'drop off' Seniors at a nearby town's rapid transit stop (Littleton) is hardly appropriate for seniors unable to navigate train stations and then walk to hail cabs!
- \* Reliable van service for seniors
- \* Senior housing opportunities

#### Mobility/Bicycle & Pedestrian Accessibility

- \* Community connections
- \* As medical services become more and more dependent on independent travel, transportation is needed.
- \* Recreation availability, in town transportation availability
- \* We need busses for transportation
- \* Transportation from rural communities to places they work, healthcare and education. This is extremely important for our area.
- \* Bicycle safety on our roads
- \* Sidewalks and bike lanes
- \* I didn't answer other. Climate concerns are real but secondary in this questionnaire. I would take a bus if i could. Or a train. Or a bike. Or walk.

#### Open Space/Historic Preservation

- \* Preservation of historic buildings and community fabric in the face of over-development and excessive automobile traffic
- Linked open space/ bike trails
- \* Recreational opportunities and tourism
  - \* Protection from development near water supply, wetlands, and streams. Non-point source runoff.
  - \* Better protection for local waters, i.e. 1, replace culverts to meet DER standards for passage; 2, promote open space; 3, reduce road runoff/road salt
  - \* Acquisition of open space/multi-purpose trails, including equestrian access

#### Other

- \* Education
- \* Population health/health equity/SDOH
- \* Overall quality of life; viable food system; sense of belonging
- \* Use of sand on roads during Winter whenever it snows needs to be abolished immediately as it causes dirt after the snow melts and clogs sewer/drainage systems.
- \* Social and economic too many people living in poverty
- \* Overall road safety is horrible.
- \* Business/Industrial Park needs to be in the 20-year plan. Rezoning parcels on Route 12 and continuing the water supply in order to do this will be key to any economic future of the town.
- \* Healthcare
- \* Harvard is a town out of balance. Over 90% of property tax revenue goes to public schools run like private ones. Schools get all. Seniors are marginalized, severely underserved.....



Several of these issues can be categorized as applicable to the identified issues, i.e. Transit Options, Safety and Changing Demographics.

Question 5 - If you were in charge of allocating transportation funds for your **COMMUNITY** over the next 25 years, how would you invest or divide a budget of \$100?

Question 5 then asked the respondents to monetarily rank improvement strategies by having them distribute a budget of \$100 among the following:

- Road Maintenance & Infrastructure
- Transit Options
- Congestion Relief
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities
- Safety (High Crash Locations)
- Complete Streets
- Community Access
- Regional Access
- Climate Change & Environment
- Other

For analysis purposes, results were broken down for MRPC member communities only. These were further separated into urban and rural communities based upon the character of the community and not along any federal census guidelines.

**Table 5 - 7. RTP Survey Question 5 Urban vs Rural Communities**

Montachusett Communities Urban vs Rural	
Rural	Urban
Ashburnham	Ayer
Ashby	Athol
Groton	Clinton
Harvard	Devens
Hubbardston	Fitchburg
Lancaster	Gardner
Petersham	Leominster
Shirley	Lunenburg
Sterling	
Townsend	
West Townsend	
Westminster	
Winchendon	

- Among rural communities, the top three funded strategies are consistent among the respondent type, i.e. Road Maintenance & infrastructure, Transit Options and Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities. Road Maintenance average funding is more than double the next option, i.e. Transit or Bike & Ped Facilities.





- Of the top five strategies, the only difference between Municipal respondents and the General Public is at number 4 and 5. The Public puts more emphasis on Climate Change and Safety while Municipals rank Complete Streets and Climate Change over Safety.
- For urban communities, all respondents list in their top four strategies Road Maintenance & Infrastructure, Transit Options, Safety and Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities in one order or another. The only difference in strategy rankings occur with the fifth ranked issue; Congestion Relief for Municipals and Regional Access for the General Public. and Congestion Relief. In both instances, Road Maintenance average costs is more than double the next highest strategy.
- Not surprisingly, Congestion Relief and Regional Access are more important issues to the Urban municipalities.
- When the entire Region is examined, the top three strategies remain Road Maintenance & Infrastructure, Transit Options and Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities with Road Maintenance again garnering more than twice the dollars as strategy number two.



**Table 5 - 8. RTP Survey Question 5 Summary**

Funds Per Strategy Municipal Employees & Officials Rural MRPC Communities Only			Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure		\$47.71
2	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities		\$14.83
3	Transit Options		\$9.17
4	Complete Streets		\$6.02
5	Climate Change & Environment		\$5.54
6	Safety (High Crash Locations)		\$4.78
7	Regional Access		\$4.58
8	Community Access		\$3.27
9	Other (Please Explain)		\$2.59
10	Congestion Relief		\$1.51

Funds Per Strategy Municipal Employees & Officials Urban MRPC Communities Only			Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure		\$47.67
2	Transit Options		\$11.87
3	Safety (High Crash Locations)		\$7.33
4	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities		\$6.80
5	Congestion Relief		\$6.00
6	Climate Change & Environment		\$5.33
7	Complete Streets		\$4.73
8	Regional Access		\$4.27
9	Other (Please Explain)		\$3.67
10	Community Access		\$2.33

Funds Per Strategy Municipal Employees & Officials MRPC Communities Only			Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure		\$47.69
2	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities		\$11.82
3	Transit Options		\$10.18
4	Safety (High Crash Locations)		\$5.74
5	Complete Streets		\$5.54
6	Climate Change & Environment		\$5.46
7	Regional Access		\$4.46
8	Congestion Relief		\$3.19
9	Other (Please Explain)		\$2.99
10	Community Access		\$2.92

Funds Per Strategy General Public Rural MRPC Communities Only			Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure		\$34.48
2	Transit Options		\$16.44
3	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities		\$14.01
4	Climate Change & Environment		\$8.56
5	Safety (High Crash Locations)		\$7.02
6	Congestion Relief		\$5.17
7	Complete Streets		\$4.14
8	Regional Access		\$4.01
9	Community Access		\$3.83
10	Other (Please Explain)		\$2.33

Funds Per Strategy General Public Urban MRPC Communities Only			Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure		\$31.14
2	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities		\$13.52
3	Transit Options		\$13.27
4	Safety (High Crash Locations)		\$10.09
5	Regional Access		\$7.70
6	Congestion Relief		\$7.36
7	Complete Streets		\$6.82
8	Climate Change & Environment		\$5.41
9	Community Access		\$4.68
10	Other (Please Explain)		\$0.00

Funds Per Strategy General Public MRPC Communities Only			Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure		\$33.91
2	Transit Options		\$15.90
3	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities		\$13.92
4	Climate Change & Environment		\$8.02
5	Safety (High Crash Locations)		\$7.55
6	Congestion Relief		\$5.54
7	Regional Access		\$4.64
8	Complete Streets		\$4.60
9	Community Access		\$3.98
10	Other (Please Explain)		\$1.93



Table 5 - 8. RTP Survey Question 5 Summary (continued)

Funds Per Strategy All Respondents		
Rural MRPC Communities Only		Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure	\$37.00
2	Transit Options	\$15.06
3	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities	\$14.16
4	Climate Change & Environment	\$7.98
5	Safety (High Crash Locations)	\$6.60
6	Complete Streets	\$4.50
7	Congestion Relief	\$4.47
8	Regional Access	\$4.12
9	Community Access	\$3.73
10	Other (Please Explain)	\$2.38

Funds Per Strategy All Respondents		
Urban MRPC Communities Only		Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure	\$37.84
2	Transit Options	\$12.70
3	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities	\$10.80
4	Safety (High Crash Locations)	\$8.97
5	Congestion Relief	\$6.81
6	Regional Access	\$6.31
7	Complete Streets	\$5.97
8	Climate Change & Environment	\$5.38
9	Community Access	\$3.73
10	Other (Please Explain)	\$1.49

Funds Per Strategy All Respondents		
MRPC Communities Only		Avg \$
1	Road Maintenance & Infrastructure	\$37.19
2	Transit Options	\$14.54
3	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities	\$13.43
4	Climate Change & Environment	\$7.41
5	Safety (High Crash Locations)	\$7.12
6	Congestion Relief	\$4.98
7	Complete Streets	\$4.82
8	Regional Access	\$4.60
9	Community Access	\$3.73
10	Other (Please Explain)	\$2.18

- Several respondents entered funding under the Other strategy box of Question 5. However, many of the explanation identified an address with no other description to indicate what type of issue or strategy would be applicable. These responses were therefore not categorized in the analysis. Fourteen (14) respondents did indicate a particular strategy with their comment. These comments were summarized between Rural and Urban MRPC communities and are listed below. With each comment, an attempt was made to identify one or more of the existing strategies that might effectively address the concern listed. In a few cases, a new or different issue was identified requiring consideration of a possible new improvement strategy. Two in particular were Tourism and Stormwater Runoff. However, the strategies of Community and Regional Access as well as Climate Change have the potential to provide benefits to these identified issues.



**Table 5 - 9. RTP Survey Question 5 Comment Summary**

<b>RURAL - MRPC Region Only</b>		
Community	Comment	Applicable Strategy
<b>Municipal Employees &amp; Officials</b>		
Harvard	Sidewalks and trails	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities
Townsend	Sidewalks	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities
<b>General Public</b>		
Ashburnham	Commuter rail service	Transit Options
Harvard	Availability for independent travel for medical needs, other individual needs \$50	Transit Options; Community & Regional Access
Harvard	\$100 to the COA for a van that can travel into Boston	Transit Options; Community & Regional Access
Shirley	Turn the rail line, in Ayer, heading to West Groton into a road. This will relieve traffic on Lawton Road & 111 (past Tiny's); Add a Market Basket to Devens	Community & Regional Access
Townsend	Connecting towns together by trails - bike / walking	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities
Townsend	Decrease pollution/climate change and congestion by improving bike and pedestrian access.	Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities; Climate Change & Environment
Townsend	Explore better town management systems	Local Management
Winchendon	Tourism & Recreation	Tourism; Recreation
<b>URBAN - MRPC Region Only</b>		
Community	Comment	Applicable Strategy
<b>Municipal Employees &amp; Officials</b>		
Fitchburg	Use people and fundraisers for many projects. Charge permits for using the rail trail. Put more police officers out in high crash locations. Try earning money for projects instead of taking money ahead of time.	Local Management; Safety (High Crash Locations)
Gardner	Stormwater Infrastructure	Stormwater; Climate Change & Environment
Lunenburg	Stormwater; keeping it off the roads and keeping it from flooding our roadways and polluting our waters	Stormwater; Climate Change & Environment
<b>General Public</b>		
Fitchburg	Access to Route 2	Community & Regional Access

**Question 6 - Looking forward 25 years, what do you think **WOULD BEST DESCRIBE** YOUR COMMUNITY in 2045?**

This question attempts to determine how residents perceive their community currently and, in the future, based on current trends and patterns.



**Table 5 – 10. Question 6 Responses – Rural, Urban and All Montachusett Communities**

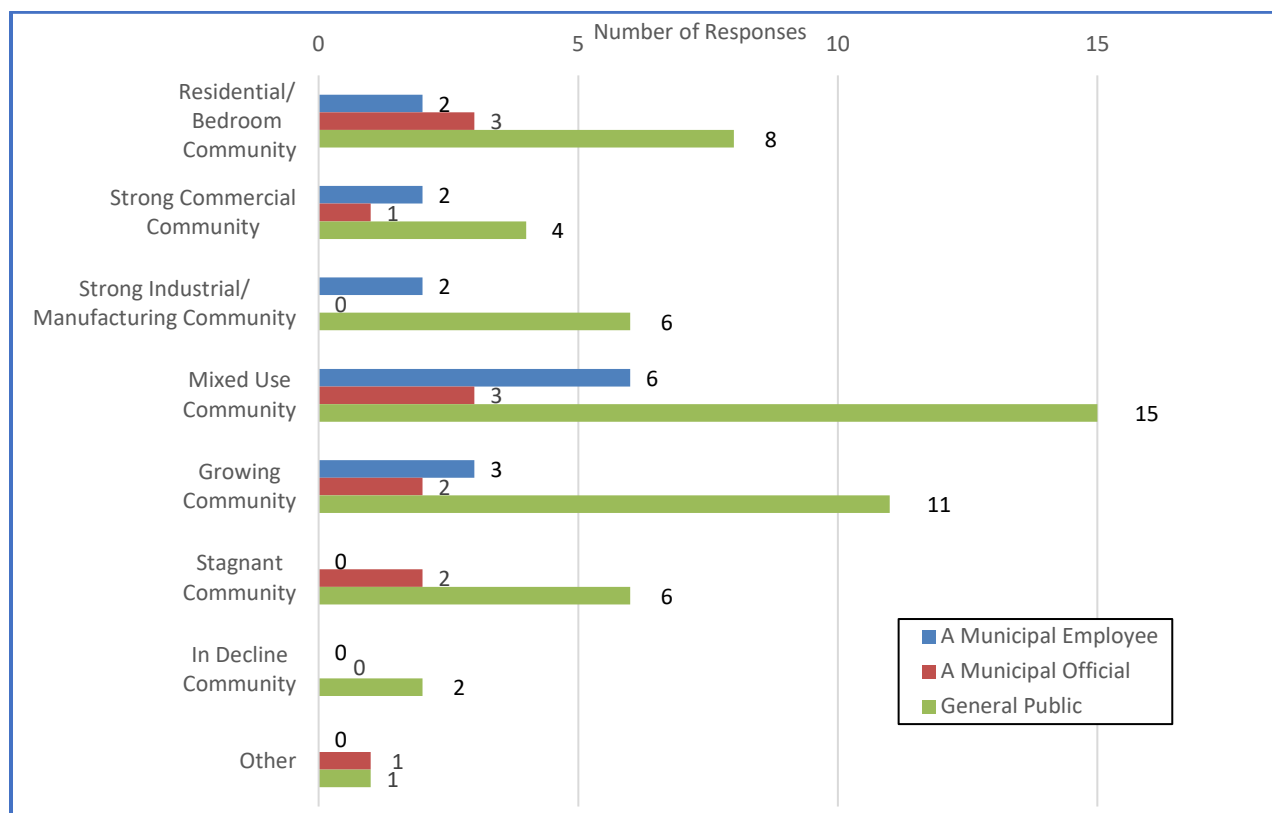
		Residential/ Bedroom Community	Strong Commercial Community	Strong Industrial/ Manufacturing Community	Mixed Use Community	Growing Community	Stagnant Community	In Decline Community	Other
RURAL	A Municipal Employee	11	0	0	5	4	1	0	0
	A Municipal Official	9	0	0	6	4	5	2	2
	General Public	84	2	1	24	29	22	9	4
	Total Rural Responses	143							
URBAN	A Municipal Employee	2	2	2	6	3	0	0	0
	A Municipal Official	3	1	0	3	2	2	0	1
	General Public	8	4	6	15	11	6	2	1
	Total Urban Responses	40							
All MRPC Communities	A Municipal Employee	13	2	2	11	7	1	0	0
	A Municipal Official	12	1	0	9	6	7	2	3
	General Public	92	6	7	39	40	28	11	5
	Total All Responses	183							

**Figure 5 - 2. Question 6 - Montachusett Rural Communities Only**



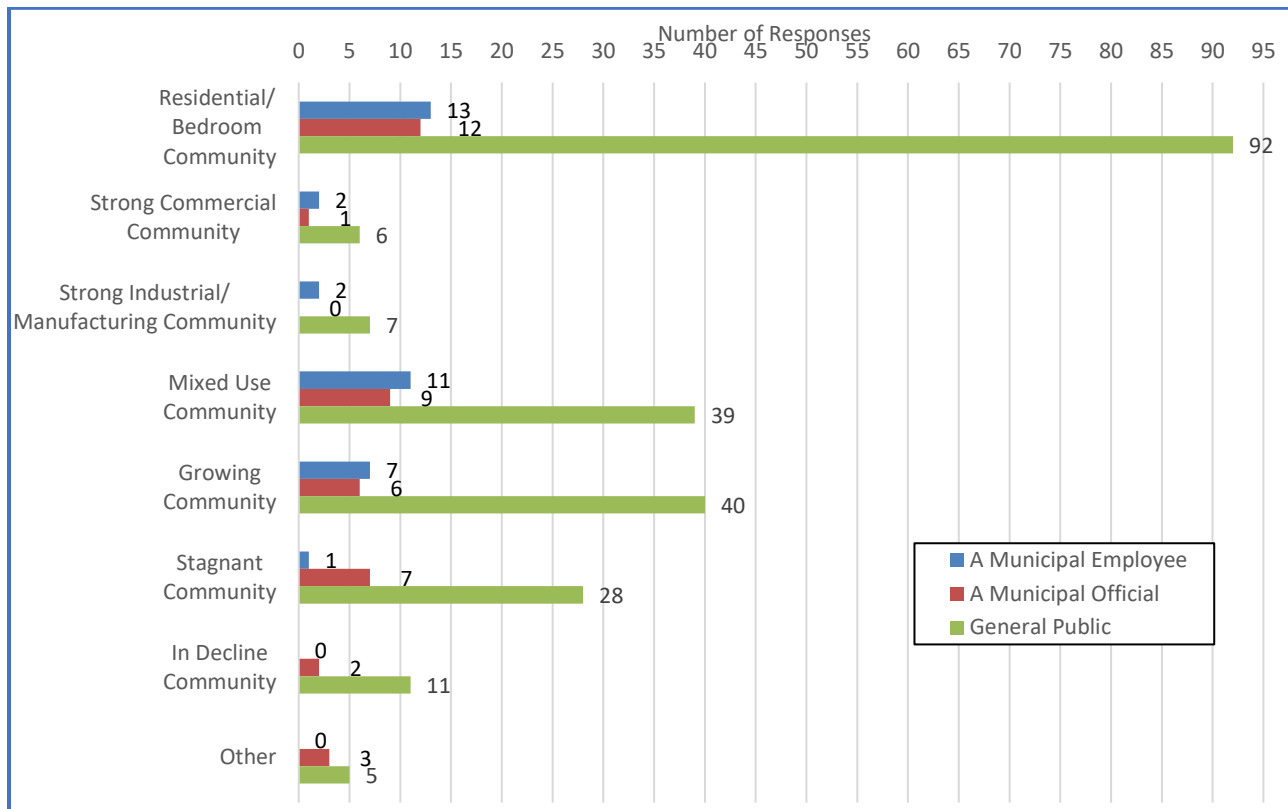


**Figure 5 - 3. Question 6 - Montachusett Urban Communities Only**





**Figure 5 - 4. Question 6 - Montachusett All (Rural & Urban) Communities**



**Table 5 – 11. Question 6 Other Comments**

Rural		
Harvard	Municipal Official	Sustainable, rural, smart agritourism community w/return of jurisdiction of Devens as economic base diversifier/engine.
Hubbardston	Municipal Official	I think the population will continue to grow slightly but the school age population has declined sharply and is likely to continue to, unless we can attract young families.
Harvard	General Public	Seeking senior housing and business development.
Harvard	General Public	Poorly governed town, run by insiders and those with an agenda. People move here for schools only, care about themselves & not the whole town. They are affluent and entitled. Not invested in this place, they leave after kids graduate. Leaving long term school dept behind. Harvard's Seniors are underserved and devalued.
Harvard	General Public	Rural residential - low key industry - way more trees than people. Keep it rural.
Winchendon	General Public	If little changes, a stagnant community with lots of aspirations, but not quite succeeding.
Urban		
Lunenburg	Municipal Official	Farming, hopefully
Fitchburg	General Public	Clean and desirable living environment with good infrastructure and public amenities like parks. Good schools.

- The majority of respondents whether municipal employees, officials or general public view their communities as a Residential/Bedroom Community.



- Few respondents considered their municipalities as a Strong Commercial Community whether Urban or Rural.
- An equal number of Urban and Rural respondents, 15% in each case, consider their community as stagnant with 5 to 6% categorizing their community as In Decline.
- On the other hand, 20% of Rural respondents listed their community as Growing. For Urban respondents this number increases to 27%.
- Those that responded under Other, listed generally positive items about their towns but with concerns for future growth due to changing demographics and the need for some diversification in the town image or base.

**Question 7 - Looking forward 25 years, how **WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR COMMUNITY****  
**TO BE DESCRIBED in 2045?**

Question 7 seeks to assess how individuals would like their particular community to be described or perceived in 2045. Based upon the responses, an indication of the type of growth is preferred in the region.

**Table 5 – 12. Question 7 Summary**

		Residential/ Bedroom Community	Commercial Community	Industrial/ Manufacturing Community	Mixed Use Community	Growing Community	Up & Coming Community	Other
RURAL	A Municipal Employee	6	0	0	4	5	1	1
	A Municipal Official	6	1	1	6	4	5	3
	General Public	51	3	1	49	44	33	10
	Total Rural Responses	143						
URBAN	A Municipal Employee	1	1	1	2	6	1	1
	A Municipal Official	2	0	1	4	4	3	1
	General Public	3	4	3	17	16	9	2
	Total Urban Responses	40						
All MRPC Communities	A Municipal Employee	7	1	1	6	11	2	2
	A Municipal Official	8	1	2	10	8	8	4
	General Public	91	43	41	89	84	73	50
	Total Rural Responses	183						





Figure 5 - 5. Question 7 - Montachusett Rural Communities Only

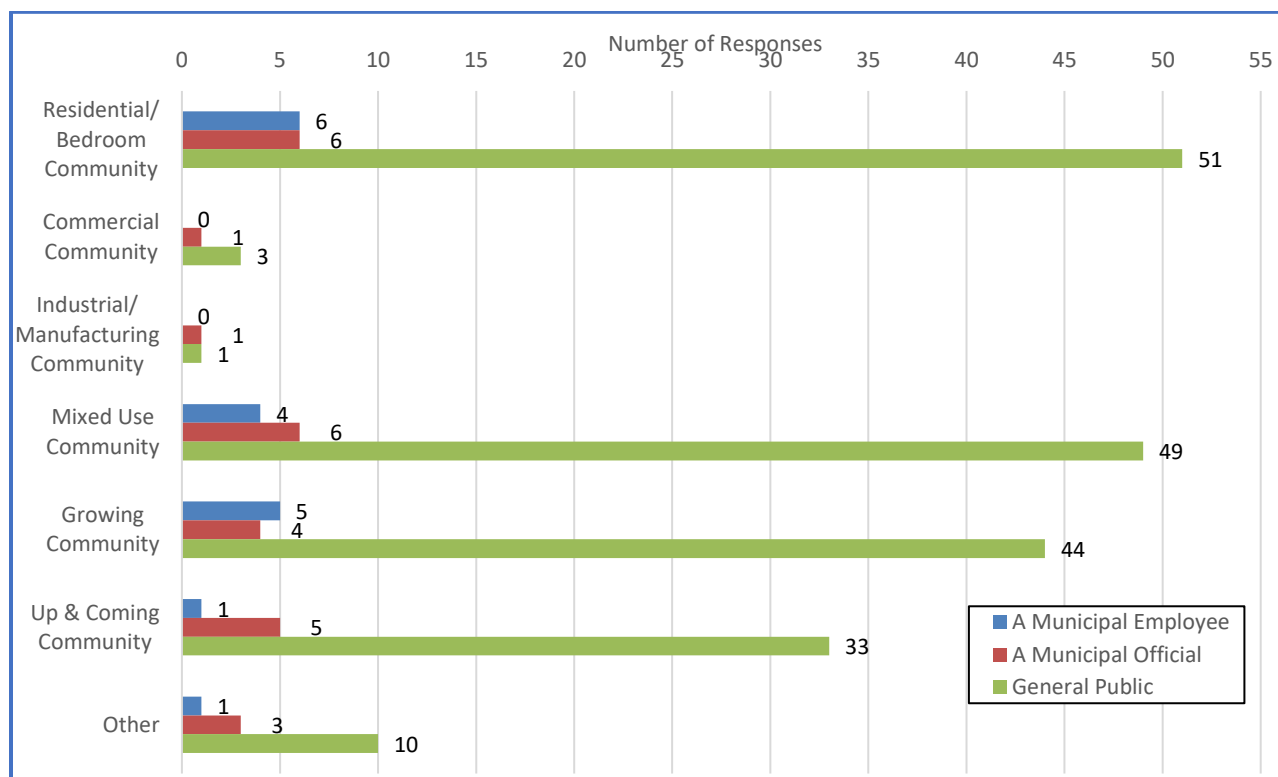
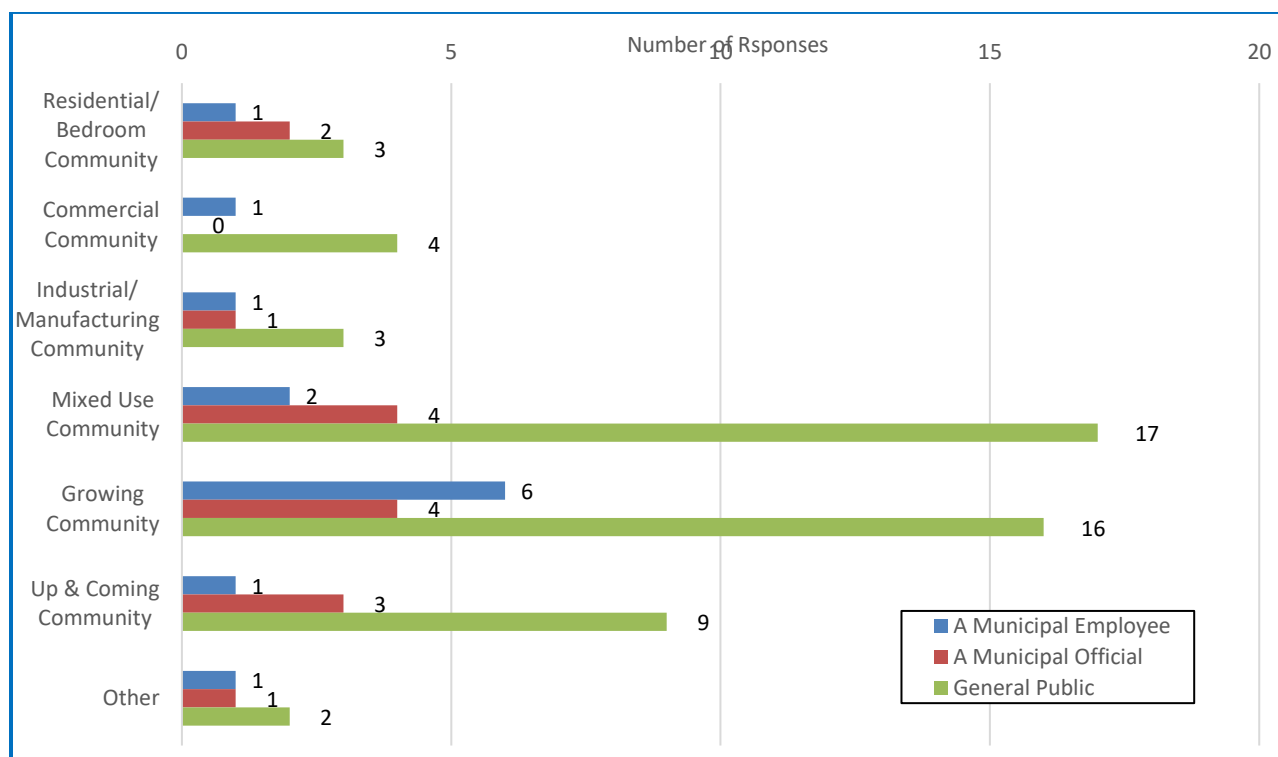
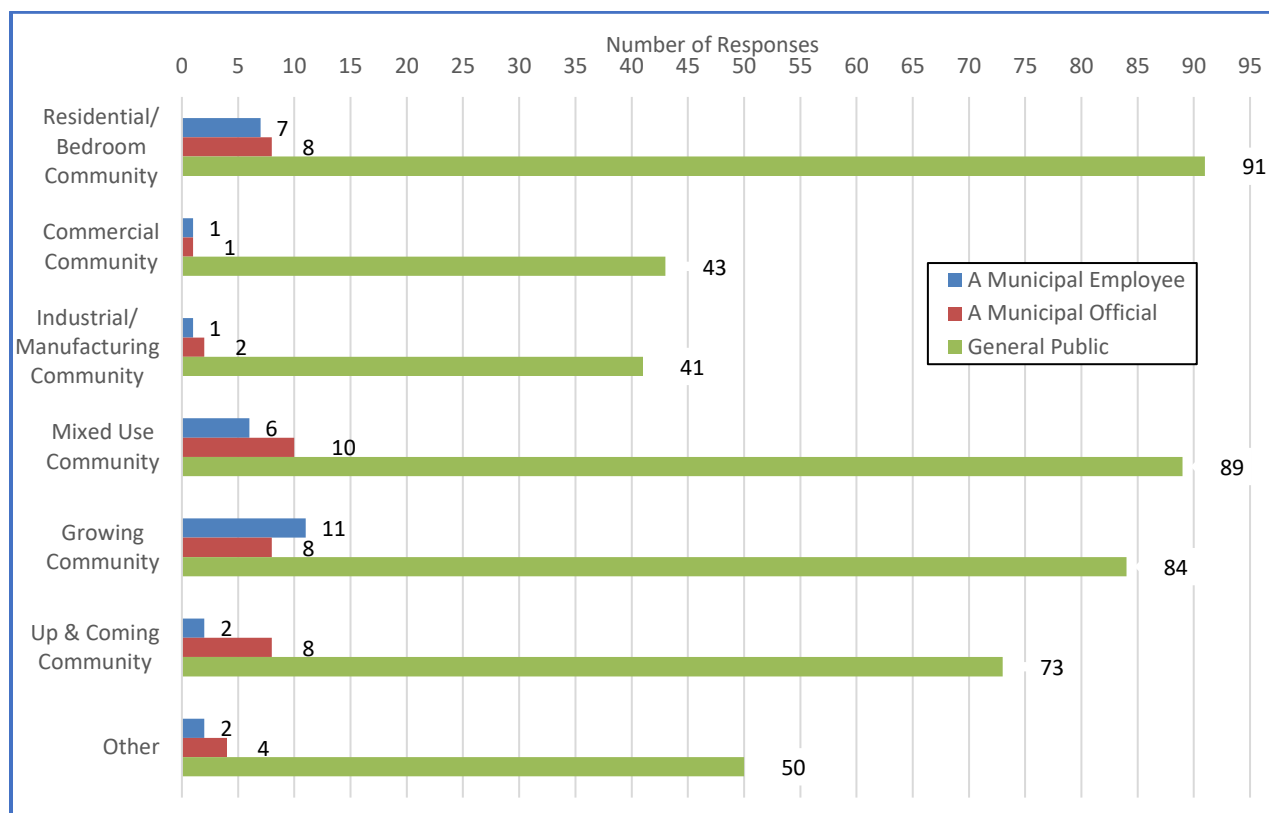


Figure 5 - 6. Question 7 - Montachusett Urban Communities Only





**Figure 5 - 7. Question 7 - Montachusett All (Rural & Urban) Communities**



**Table 5 – 13. Question 7 Other Comments**

Rural		
Groton	Municipal Employee	A residential community with housing available to all demographic types and needs while preserving environmental diversity and habitat
Harvard	Municipal Official	Up & coming bc it has planned for future development ie managed growth impacts like traffic, values rural, sustainable growth, retains its natural beauty & resources, supports strong schools, regains Devens to financially support smart growth policies.
Hubbardston	Municipal Official	Regional tourist destination for outdoor recreation
Lancaster	Municipal Official	A turn around to ethical and improved government integrity
Ashburnham	General Public	Part of a region wide network supporting local Ag, small businesses and micro grids for energy
Ashburnham	General Public	Quiet rural alternative to suburbia
Ashby	General Public	Resilient, 50% Art. 97 protected open space
Groton	General Public	Sustainable, Accessible, Pedestrian & Bike Friendly
Groton	General Public	Arts & recreation destination
Harvard	General Public	A Senior friendly community with outstanding public schools.
Harvard	General Public	Rural residential with as much open space and nature as possible.
Harvard	General Public	Stable community
Harvard	General Public	Conservation-minded leading by example community
West Townsend	General Public	Townsend - a friendly town that has lots of open space, supports it elderly, veterans, schools and local churches AND continues its charm with Summer Band Concerts on the Common!



**Table 5 – 13. Question 7 Other Comments (continued)**

Urban		
Fitchburg	Municipal Employee	Well balanced
Lunenburg	Municipal Official	Farming, hopefully
Fitchburg	General Public	Improved socioeconomic
Leominster	General Public	Green community including transportation

- Thirty to 35 % of Rural General Public respondents indicated that they would like their communities to remain or be considered as a Residential/Bedroom Community, Mixed Use Community or an Up and Coming Community.
- The number of Rural General Public respondents that want to see their community considered a Mixed-Use Community in 2045 was more than double the number that currently consider their town as Mixed Use.
- In terms of All respondents, the number that wished to have their community considered Growing in 2045 was also more than double the number who responded with the same description under Question 6.
- In comparison to Question 6, it appears that most respondents would like to see a growth in their community with less emphasis on Residential and more on Mixed Use.

#### Question 8 - Comments/Recommendations

Question 8 was an opened ended question that let respondents identify other key issues or to expand upon points made or discussed in the survey. All responses were reviewed and grouped together based upon a perceived common thread. The following tables highlight these comments.



**Table 5 – 14. Question 8 Other Comments**

<b>Senior Issues</b>
<b>Rural</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transportation options for seniors and disabled is the number ONE issue we deal with.</li> <li>- Seniors need services or we will lose them!</li> <li>- In Harvard ... concerned about getting around town... to services in nearby towns when I have to give up driving ...</li> <li>- Need better senior housing opportunities and better van or other transportation opportunities for seniors</li> <li>- Senior transit and housing</li> </ul>
<p>Response:</p> <p>Accessibility for seniors remains a key issue throughout the Region. Planning activities will continue to examine these problems and attempt to develop strategies to address. Future updates to the Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan will address issue directly. Further information will be provided to MART as they continue to monitor services directly related to seniors.</p>
<b>Mobility/Transit Options</b>
<b>Rural</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Groton needs bus and other shared ride options.</li> <li>- ...more should be done so that people can work in the community that they live in and not have to commute 30-60 miles away ... to work. Ideally, people should be able to walk or bike to work</li> <li>- We need more travel options in and out of town.</li> <li>- Help with access to highways/jobs. 20 minutes to highways means no younger home buyers which leads to aging and stagnation</li> <li>- ... if we devote more resources to mass transportation, bicycle and pedestrian travel, that should help reduce single-occupant automobile traffic</li> <li>- We need better access to Rt 2 whether by highway or train.</li> <li>- Enhance access to the commuter rail for residents of neighboring communities. ... a shuttle twice a day from Harvard to the Ayer, Littleton, or South Acton stations.</li> <li>- Harvard needs transit options for all citizens to save the environment and give non-drivers quality of life</li> <li>- Need to broaden accessibility of transportation systems including vac services for seniors and disabled</li> <li>- Must help improve the quality of life by reducing the commute to Boston/ inside 495</li> <li>- As a very rural area...most accommodations at least 8-10 miles away... need for transportation for...less fortunate population is a must...While...buses are available, the schedule is nearly non-existent, and that could easily be changed.</li> <li>- Fixed the commuter rail. The congestion and wider region transit goals cannot be met without a strong and vibrant mass transit option to Boston.</li> </ul>
<b>Urban</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We need to link Leominster MART and Worcester WRTA! The WRTA Route 30 and Leominster Jytex link!</li> <li>- I believe we should continue to work to improve transportation infrastructure within our region, especially long distance trails and bike path/greenways (not emphasized in this survey). However, I believe we also need to advocate strongly for improvements to Route 2 through Concord to eliminate that "bottleneck" congestion problem associated with the rotary and cross-traffic. It is long overdue and affects thousands of commuters from this region each day. While this is outside of our region, I believe it is important to the social, cultural, and economic success of the Montachusett Region.</li> <li>- Use riverway and rail lines for accessible trails coupled with transit. On road routes should be barrier-protected.</li> </ul>
<p>Response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information will be provided to MART and staff will continue planning work with the Transit Authority on improved services to outlying communities. In addition, expansion of shuttle services continues to be a focus of MART.</li> <li>- Bicycle and pedestrian issues to be addressed within upcoming Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plans.</li> </ul>



**Table 5 – 14. Question 8 Other Comments (continued)**

<b>Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Accessibility</b>	
<b>Rural</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Making Townsend walkable - both pedestrian and hiking - would be great.</li> <li>- The more we make our communities walkable and bikeable, the better life will be in them.</li> <li>- ...would love more sidewalks and sidewalk to bike path/long-distance mixed-use trail connections. Once you are home, you should be able to take a safe walk through your community.</li> <li>- Being able to get around rt 119 on a bicycle is key for me. Plus, more protected land around the watershed.</li> <li>- Plant more trees downtown; include bicycle lane on roads</li> </ul>	
<p>Response:</p> <p>Bicycle and pedestrian issues to be addressed within upcoming Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plans.</p>	
<b>Other</b>	
<b>Rural</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tree removal at roadsides where they interfere with power lines if they fall...they loom dangerously over...roads.</li> <li>- less development; more land conservation and historic preservation.</li> <li>- Ashburnham does not do something to rein in spending... the current lack of upkeep on infrastructure will...lead to unnecessary spending...roads... just paved in last 5 years...already showing signs of breakdown because crack-sealing has never been a priority. The DPW needs ...resource management software.</li> <li>- Education is number 1 in importance...to support this, the community needs to grow in population and in industry and commerce.</li> <li>- The Town needs to do better on maintaining their facilities.</li> <li>- With the population decreasing, we need to adapt our schools' systems, transportation and tax base.</li> <li>- ...town of Harvard is losing its younger population due to costly real estate, taxes, low commercial development... As a result, the retired older pop. is footing more and more of the tax burden thus forcing them to consider...leaving.</li> <li>- I would like to see it more as a diverse community that invests in keeping people as they age by meeting their needs such as a strong COA, housing options that prevent isolation, down to simple things such as level walking paths.</li> <li>- More commercial entities.</li> <li>- Increased traffic pressure from outside Harvard and the growing concern for safety and speed limit enforcement have the potential to dramatically impact safety and lessen the enjoyment of the rural qualities of our town for everyone.</li> <li>- There needs to be more retail in our area. A large scale build up would increase foot-traffic and raise housing prices. Also, our schools would improve.</li> <li>- Open space is paramount to keeping 01469 a bedroom place forever</li> <li>- Town and State groups more closely together. Maybe forums set quarterly around the state to meet with groups of towns on transportation issues to obtain a broader perspective on where the citizens would like us to move.</li> <li>- If we don't start working on climate change, we won't have a future to worry about.</li> <li>- Townsend does not have enough local business for tax support. A lot of the burden of infrastructure improvements lay on the tax payers. This does not lead to positive feedback from the community when trying to enact positive changes for the future of the town.</li> <li>- More work needs to be done to develop an across-community regional identity for North Central MA.</li> </ul>	
<b>Urban</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Describe Fitchburg in next 10 years as Fitchburg as regional destination for arts and culture with a strong mixed-use portfolio- it is a vibrant hub to an integrated transportation system</li> </ul>	



## Trends

Through the public outreach process, a number of issues and recommendations were brought forward, either as a direct comment or through plan development and analysis.

The following summarizes the trends discussed through these various meetings and plans. For a more detailed discussion, please contact the MRPC for further information.

- A need for infrastructure improvements to existing facilities as well as potential expansion projects to improve efficiency;
- Environmental issues related to state highways are need to improve issues such as water quality;
- The expansion and development of trails have shown various benefits to the region from economics to health;
- The Complete Streets program and funding opportunities has been embraced by communities;
- Chapter 90 funding levels continue to be a problem for local communities, especially smaller, more rural municipalities;
- Project costs as well as the overall process continue to be an issue;
- Recreational opportunities in the region are a strength to be promoted;
- The quality of the regions educational systems is a strength that should also be promoted;
- The quality of the transportation infrastructure is seen as a weakness from the business and local official perspective;
- The quality of the public transportation system is also seen as a weakness;
- Public transportation is seen as a viable option when and where available, however, reliability, cost effectiveness and operating schedules are major factors affecting their use by students, elderly and disabled individuals.
- Company run shuttles are also seen as an attractive option for employees;



- There is a general consensus that local knowledge of the transit system and all of its available options is a major reason for a lack of use;
- Transportation issues are a major barrier to accessing health care, jobs, social services and healthy foods;
- Prioritize regional target funding to the following categories:
  - a. Road Maintenance & Infrastructure
  - b. Transit Options
  - c. Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities
  - d. Climate Change & Environment
  - e. Safety (High Crash Locations)
  - f. Congestion Relief
  - g. Complete Streets
  - h. Regional Access
  - i. Community Access



## Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations compiled through the public input process. In many cases, a specific location was identified as a trouble spot or issue. These specific projects, unless considered “Regionally Significant”, are not necessarily identified with or tied to a specific funding year in this RTP. Rather, general programming funding areas, i.e. pavement reconstruction, trail development/construction, etc., are assumed to cover these projects. Any “Regionally Significant” projects that can be reasonably expected to move forward in this RTP time frame are, however, identified.

- Rt 2/South Athol Road interchange construction;
- Mt Elam Road at Route 2 – removal of traffic signal and stormwater run-off mitigation;
- Route 12 corridor in Fitchburg;
- Twin Cities Rail Trail to the Mass Central Rail Trail;
- North Central Pathway into Ashburnham and points west;
- Devens trail connections to Harvard (Old Mill Road) and the Ayer rotary area;
- North Central Pathway connection to Monadnock region;
- Complete streets - More funding for local community projects;
- Park & Ride lots expansion along the Route 2 corridor;
- Chapter 90 funding increase for local projects and needs;
- Improve MART’s communication and advertisement of bus and transit services;
- Support and expand Collaborative Workspaces in the Montachusett Region. Makerspaces, along with co-working spaces and business incubators can improve and increase businesses. They can also support the development of new skills.
- Expand the designation of Opportunity Zones. This poses a potential economic opportunity by providing tax incentives to invest in distressed communities;
- Continue and increase promoting transit and commuter rail options;
- Restructure existing transit service options in North Central to better align with the needs of current and prospective consumers.
- Promote the need for more COA vans.