



# Regional Transportation Plan

For the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan  
Planning Organization



# 2020 Executive Summary to the Regional Transportation Plan

Final Report – July 23, 2019

Prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

For the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

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## What is the RTP

The Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) outlines the direction of transportation planning and improvements for the Pioneer Valley through the year 2040. It



provides the basis for state and federally funded transportation improvement projects and planning studies. Last published in 2015, the RTP is updated at least every 4 years and is endorsed by the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).



As the Pioneer Valley's blueprint for maintaining a safe and efficient transportation system for all modes of travel, this long range plan identifies the region's goals, strategies, and projects to both enhance and maintain our transportation system. The RTP is developed in concert with the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) legislation as well as the recommendations included in statewide transportation planning documents developed by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

All projects included as part of the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must come from a conforming RTP. This is extremely important as most major transportation improvement projects rely on federal transportation funds for construction.

Although the RTP focuses on transportation, it is a comprehensive planning document that has been developed and coordinated with other planning efforts in the region. The plan recognizes that while we do not know the future, change is inevitable and is important to advocate for change that is beneficial to our residents, workers, economy, and landscape. Changes in land use and development patterns transform the traditional visual character and function of the region and transportation plays a significant role in influencing how the region will grow and change.



# 2020 Pioneer Valley RTP Chapter Summary

## Introductory Chapters

### **Chapter 1** **2020 Update to the RTP**

Defines the RTP Vision, Goals and Emphasis Areas

### **Chapter 2**

#### **Transportation Planning Process**

Summarizes key federal and state transportation requirements, participants and products.

## Public Participation Chapters

### **Chapter 3** **Public Participation**

Provides a summary of RTP public participation efforts and comments received on the draft RTP.

### **Chapter 4**

#### **Equity**

Certifies compliance of the RTP with Title VI and Environmental Justice laws.

## Existing Conditions Chapters

### **Chapter 5** **Regional Profile**

Summarizes the characteristics of the regional transportation system.

### **Chapters 6 – 11**

#### **Safety, Security, Congestion, Pavement, Sustainability, Livability and Climate Change**

Provide an overview of ongoing transportation planning activities in each of the above areas to advance the goals of the RTP.

## System Performance Chapters

### **Chapter 12** **Performance Measures**

Identifies the regional targets developed to track system performance.

### **Chapter 13** **Future Forecasts**

Summarizes future regional population, housing, and employment forecasts.

### **Chapter 14** **Needs, Strategies, Projects**

Prioritizes the transportation improvement projects included in the RTP.

## Conformity Chapters

### **Chapter 15** **Financial Element**

Identifies the projects that can be funded using current revenue sources.

### **Chapter 16** **Conformity**

Addresses compliance with federal and state air quality requirements.

### **Chapter 17** **Environmental Consultation**

A summary of consultation efforts with environmental groups to develop the RTP.

## **RTP Vision:**

*The Pioneer Valley region strives to create and maintain a safe, dependable, resilient, environmentally sound, and equitable transportation system for all. We pledge to balance performance based strategies and projects that promote sustainable development, reduced use of fossil fuels, healthy and livable communities, provide for efficient movement of people and goods, advance economic vitality and enhance connectivity in the region.*

### **RTP Goals:**


1. **Safety** - To provide and maintain a transportation system that is safe for users of all travel modes and their property.
2. **Operations and Maintenance** - To provide a transportation system that is dependable, resilient, and adequately serves users of all modes. To give priority to adaptable repair of existing infrastructure.
3. **Environmental** - To minimize the transportation related adverse impacts to air, land, wildlife and water quality and strive to improve environmental conditions at every opportunity and incorporate green infrastructure.
4. **Coordination** - To facilitate collaborative efforts between the general public and local, state and federal planning and project implementation activities.
5. **Energy Efficient** - To promote the reduction of energy consumption through demand management techniques and increasing the use of energy efficient travel modes.
6. **Cost Effective** - To provide a transportation system that is cost effective to maintain, improve and operate.
7. **Intermodal** - To provide access between travel modes for people and goods while maintaining quality and affordability of service.
8. **Multimodal** - To provide a complete choice of adequate travel options that are accessible to all residents, students, visitors and businesses.
9. **Economically Productive** - To maintain a transportation system that promotes and supports economic stability and expansion.
10. **Quality of Life** - To provide and maintain a transportation system that enhances quality of life and improves the social and economic climate of the region.
11. **Environmental Justice** - To provide an equitably accessible transportation system that considers the needs of and impacts on low-income, people of color, elderly and disabled persons.
12. **Land Use** - To incorporate the concepts of Sustainable Development in the regional transportation planning process and integrate the recommendations of the current Regional Land Use Plan into transportation improvements.
13. **Climate Change** - To promote and advance transportation projects that reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change, decrease the production of greenhouse gasses, such as CO<sub>2</sub>, and advance new energy technologies consistent with the Pioneer Valley Climate Action & Clean Energy Plan.

## RTP Emphasis Areas

Emphasis areas were identified to assist in the achievement of the RTP vision and are related to each of the thirteen Regional Transportation Goals.

- 1 Safety and Security**

The safety and security of the regional transportation system are vital to the efficient movement of people and goods. It is important to ensure that the transportation system is safe for all users across all modes. Similarly, the security of our transportation infrastructure and operations centers relies on emergency preparedness. The RTP will advance projects and studies that address safety, security and regional Performance Targets.


- 2 The Movement of People**


The movement of people is generally what most people associate with the term “transportation.” This area consists of the identification of needs for all modes of transportation and how to increase its efficiency. This emphasis area includes the principles of “Complete Streets” to enhance how the region can more fully utilize public right-of-way to improve mobility, safety and the quality of life for everyone.


- 3 The Movement of Goods**


The Pioneer Valley Region is strategically located at a geographic crossroads in which more than one third of the total population of the United States can be reached by an overnight delivery. The availability of an efficient, multimodal transportation network to move goods through the region is essential to maintain economic vitality. Several modes of transportation are available in the region to facilitate the movement of goods.


- 4 The Movement of Information**

The movement of information consists of the ability to utilize technology to maximize the efficiency of the existing transportation system and to convey real-time information to the traveling public. This area also includes the impact and advancement of new transportation technology such as autonomous vehicles.


- 5 Sustainability**

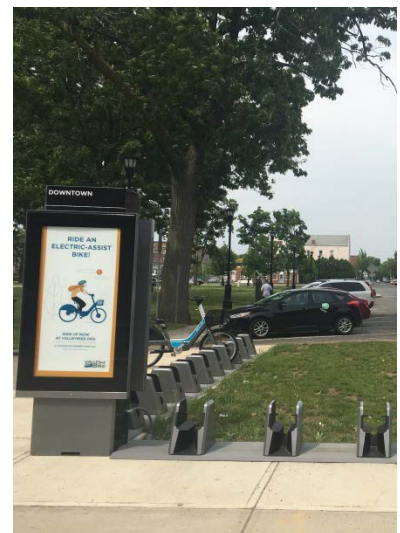
Sustainability considers both the environmental and social costs of the transportation system. It improves access and mobility while reducing environmental impacts such as the production of greenhouse gas emissions and increased air pollution. Sustainable projects reduce single occupant vehicles, promote fuel-efficiency, advance healthy lifestyles, support livable communities, and address climate change.



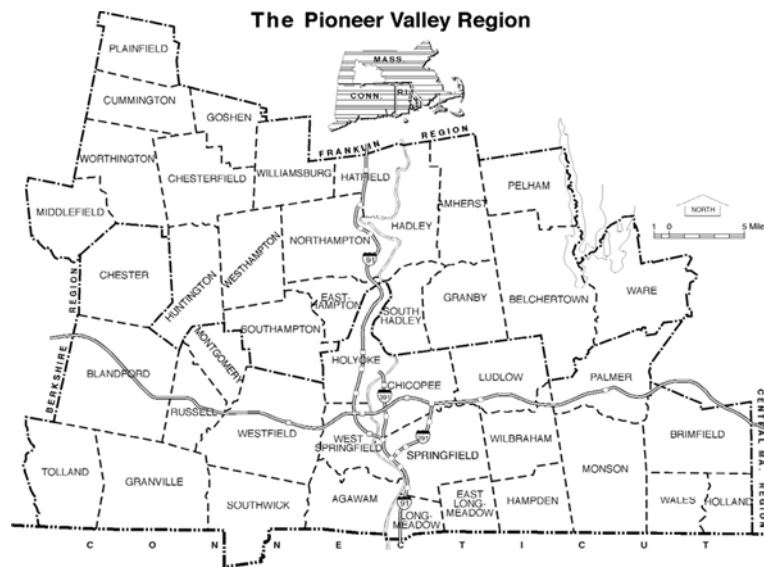
## RTP Problem Statements

Problem statements were developed to identify the potential obstacles to achieve the region's Vision for the transportation system. Problem statements are concise descriptions of the overarching issues that must be addressed through the implementation of the RTP.

1. There are seriously insufficient resources to support the state of good repair of the regional transportation system.
2. Existing passenger rail and transit service does not meet the needs of residents of the Pioneer Valley. Expanded regional passenger rail and transit service is integral to education, economic development and workforce development.
3. There is a need for innovative, cost-effective solutions independent of the regional transit authorities to provide services to rural areas.
4. There are a lack of intermodal connections that support and enhance transportation options for downtown areas and village centers.
5. Increased and comprehensive resources and policies to improve sustainability in the transportation sector are necessary if the region is to meet its fair share of GHG reductions to comply with the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act.
6. The regional transportation infrastructure does not sufficiently accommodate the movement and distribution of freight.
7. The built environment for walking, bicycling and transit is hampered by significant barriers that include: narrow road and bridge cross sections, disjointed/unconnected off-road trail networks, a lack of sidewalks, uniformity in signs/markings, transit access points and maintenance issues.
8. The regional transportation system is not prepared to adequately support changes in future transportation technology. The system must be prepared for the safe and seamless integration of innovations in technology which includes autonomous vehicles.
9. People use the regional transportation system differently based on their age, residence and occupation. The regional transportation system must continue to evolve to safely meet the needs of an aging population, young adults and children.
10. There are inconsistencies in how cities and towns regulate development and their requirements to encourage alternative forms of transportation through development.



## Our Region



Map of the Pioneer Valley

The Pioneer Valley Region consists of 43 cities and towns covering 1,179 square miles. Bisected by the Connecticut River, it contains a diverse economic base including well known educational institutions and prime agricultural land. Its unique combination of natural beauty, cultural amenities, and historical character make the Pioneer Valley region an exceptional environment in which to live and work.

The Pioneer Valley area is considered the crossroads of transportation in Western Massachusetts. Situated at the intersection of the area's major highways, Interstate 90 and Interstate 91, the region offers easy access to all markets in the Eastern United States and Canada. Major southern New England population centers are accessible within hours.

### Highways

- 4,387 Roadway Miles
- 1,360 Federal Aid Eligible Roadway Miles
- 685 Bridges
- 15,331,000 Estimated VMT
- 4 Designated Scenic Byways

### PVTA

- Serves 24 communities
- 189 vehicle fixed route fleet
  - 3 electric
- 42 fixed bus routes
- 142 van paratransit fleet

### North/South Rail Service

- Amtrak and CTRail
- 11 arrivals/11 departures
- 28,000 riders in 2017

The regional transit system offers many different modes of public transportation. Intra-county and Intercity buses, passenger rail service, van service for seniors and disabled riders, ridesharing, and park and ride lots are all vital to the mobility of the regions residents.

A 2015/16 passenger survey found that 55.1% of PVTA riders use the bus to commute to work or school. The Springfield Union Station is currently served by 24 trains daily. The FRTA provides paratransit service to 14 towns in the region.



Bicycling and walking are inextricably linked to quality of life in our communities. The Pioneer Valley region affords some of the best environments for walking and bicycling in the Commonwealth. An expanding network of off-road trails, vibrant downtowns laced with sidewalks and scenic shared-use roadways create an unmatched potential. As a destination or as a place to call home, the Pioneer Valley offers a wide range of transportation choices.

Bicycle Network

- 90+ mile network across 17 communities.
- 45 miles of on-road lanes
- ValleyBike regional bike share

Pedestrian Network

- Varies by community
- More comprehensive in downtown and village centers
- 83 Schools participate in MA Safe Routes to School

Trucking

- Dominant mode for freight
- Small, private carriers

Rail Carriers

- CSX Transportation
- Pan AM Southern Railways
- New England Central
- Pioneer Valley Railroad

The major interstates and rail lines in the Pioneer Valley Region enable the quick delivery of goods to some of the nation’s largest cities. The proximity of the region to major and middle sized cities allows goods from the Pioneer Valley to be quickly transported to competitive markets. Freight is moved in and out of the Pioneer Valley primarily by truck with rail, air and pipeline carrying the remaining goods.

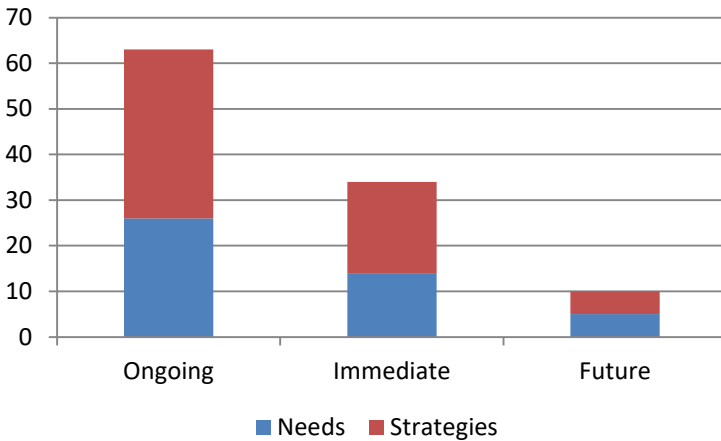
The regional population continues to grow at a steady rate. Between 2000 and 2010, the region’s population grew by 2.4%. Overall household size is decreasing. Only 20% of all households report a size of four or more. Per capita income in the Pioneer Valley region, has been increasing steadily having grown by nearly \$7,000 since 2011.

Demographics

- 2017 population = 630,385
  - Up 1.4% from 2010
- 2017 regional households = 237,713
- 2017 total employment = 273,376
- Median household income = \$55,666
- 2015 registered vehicles = 489,999



## Needs and Strategies



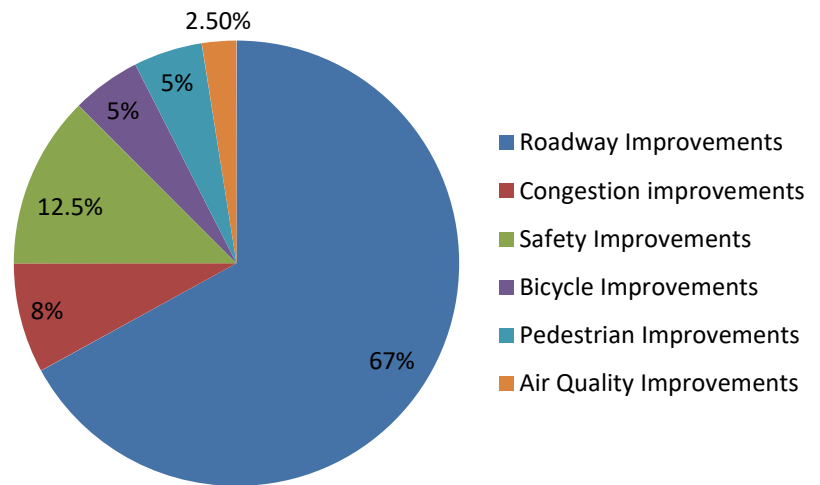
*RTP Needs and Strategies Chart*

To achieve the RTP vision and its associated goals, regional transportation needs have been identified and appropriate strategies were developed that both address these needs and adhere to the policies and objectives of the RTP. Needs and Strategies are prioritized as either “Immediate,” “Future,” or “Ongoing.” Immediate priorities are of high importance and must be addressed through the

implementation of future planning studies and projects. Future priorities are considered to be areas of a medium importance that should be addressed in the development of future projects. Ongoing priorities are areas that require routine attention through the regional transportation planning process. Needs and strategies are summarized by RTP Emphasis Area. Some strategies address multiple needs.

## RTP Projects

The RTP advances planning studies and implements improvement projects that will enhance the transportation system in a manner consistent with our vision. The MPO uses the regional Transportation Evaluation Criteria as a management tool to identify projects of regional priority and program them in the RTP. Visionary Projects are defined as projects that would likely result in an



*RTP Discretionary Funding Allocation Chart*

improvement to the regional transportation system but do not have an identified source of construction funding. The Pioneer Valley MPO developed a preferred scenario for how to allocate their discretionary funding over the life of the RTP.



## **Our Future**

It's not unusual for planning studies, environmental permitting, and project design to take several years before a project can advance to construction. Over the last four years, the Pioneer Valley Region has benefited from a number of major transportation improvements. The list includes but is not limited to the restoration of Springfield's Union Station Intermodal Transportation Center, the repairs to the Interstate I-91 Viaduct, and expansion to passenger rail service from Springfield into the State of Connecticut. The region has also seen the expansion of the Columbia River Greenway Rail Trail in Westfield, safety improvements such as the roundabout at the intersection of Pleasant and Conz Streets in Northampton, and the purchase of state of the art electric buses at the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority. None of these improvements would have been possible without an investment of transportation dollars.

Strategic planning is a continuing process that produces planning documents and agendas which decision-makers can use to prioritize local needs. A truly effective planning process relies upon the input of the chief elected official(s), city and town staff, and the general public. In addition, the strategic planning process is based on a realistic assessment of external forces - political, social, economic, and technological - that can affect Pioneer Valley communities and residents. All recommendations generated through the strategic planning process must have a real potential for implementation. By developing the RTP for the Pioneer Valley in such a manner, the region will be able to conduct successful transportation improvement programming through the year 2040.

