

Response to Advance Questions

2022 Certification Review of the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

Organizational Structure: MOU, UZA Agreements, Membership & Committees

1. Was the [2020 UZA Agreement](#) signed by all parties? Similarly, can you share the full signed copy of the [2021 MOU for the MPO](#)? The versions online appear to be unsigned or missing a signature page.

Response: The 2020 UZA agreement was signed by all parties (MPO 5/26/2020). We have updated the link to the final signed version of the document. The 2021 MOU was voted on 11/23/2021, this link has been updated as well.

2. Thank you for the work to incorporate FRTA as an ex-officio member of the MPO. Has there been any discussion of having FRTA participate in the JTC as well? What is the status of their participation (and/or ex-officio members in general) at the MPO meetings?

Response: Our failure to include FRTA on the JTC was an unintentional oversight that we have corrected. FRTA Administrator Tina Cote serves as an ex-officio member of the Pioneer Valley MPO. Her attendance at MPO meetings was sporadic when the MPO was meeting in person, but she has not been attending MPO meetings since the meetings switched to the remote format.

3. When was the last time the JTC updated its membership? Were new members added, removed for non-attendance? Did any members petition for membership (per the by-laws) or were they recruited?

Response: The last official voting members added to the JTC were the representatives for the pedestrian and ADA community. These members were added in 2017. The JTC discussed the potential to expand Freight Provider membership at the October 2019 JTC meeting. While we have a freight representative from the rail community that has not been active on the JTC for some time there are no current members that represent the trucking community. The JTC reached out to representatives in the trucking sector but have not received any responses. PVPC performs outreach every January to inform/remind elected officials of their current members and alternates and ask for updates. The JTC has not removed any members for non-attendance. There have been no recent petitions for membership to the JTC.

Performance Based Planning and Programming

4. It is great to see utilization of regional-specific measures and targets in the system performance report! Any proposed changes as part of upcoming RTP development cycle?

Response: The System Performance Report was developed in cooperation with the Pioneer Valley Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) as part of the 2016 update to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). These targets were updated and included in the 2020 RTP to supplement the new federal performance measures. Our plan is to update the current System Performance

Report and discuss opportunities for both modifications and updates with both the JTC and MPO as part of the 2024 RTP development process. Potential modifications include:

- A discussion of how to incorporate “Vision Zero” statements into the Motor Vehicle Fatality and Serious Injury targets.
- Extension of existing targets beyond the 2025 horizon year.
- How to incorporate the Average Driver Delay target into the RITIS travel time data now used for the CMP.
- What new targets might make sense to incorporate into the 2024 System Performance Report.

5. We understand the TECs are currently being amended. What was the reasoning for this update? Please describe the process for how the amendment came about.

Response: PVPC staff performs a TEC self-assessment every three years, the last self-assessment was performed in 2021. Minor changes were implemented prior to the start of the TIP development process. Staff agreed to review the TEC again once the TIP was completed to ensure that the TEC was in compliance with the BIL. During the 2022 review staff identified several criteria that should be [modified or removed](#) to reduce redundancy as well as to make points available for BIL related criterion. The MPO approved the latest changes at the December 2022 meeting.

Financial Planning

6. Please describe the procedures/process used to ensure the TIP financials are consistent with those of the RTP.

Response: MassDOT provides the RPA’s with TIP financials each January. During the RTP cycle MassDOT provides the RPA’s with financial projections to use for the financial constraint section of the RTP. We work with the JTC and MPO to program the first five years of the RTP (TIP). For the outyears (projected funds) we use public outreach as well as discussions with the JTC and MPO to develop percentages for funding of projects: Roadway, Transit, Bicycle, Pedestrian, Safety, and Air quality. We then apply these percentages to the outyears of the RTP. Additionally, we use scenario planning to identify the funding needed to both maintain the existing conditions as well as the funding needed to bring the system up to our PM targets.

Regional Coordination

7. Can you provide an update on the coordination process to develop urbanized area targets for the CMAQ Traffic Congestion measures for the Springfield UZA? How are targets being developed? What role will the PVMPO region play in contributing to each target?

Response: We have been working cooperatively with MassDOT, the Boston MPO, CMRPC, and NMCOG since the summer of 2022 to coordinate a process to develop targets for the Springfield UZA. We have relied on MassDOT to discuss coordination of these targets with the Connecticut DOT. The Boston MPO proposed a series of alternative methods for setting targets for the CMAQ Non-Single-Occupancy-Vehicle (Non-SOV) travel performance measure (for the Springfield MA-CT UZA). Based on feedback it was agreed the trend line should be calculated

using 2010-14 and 2015-19 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. It was agreed that 2020 data should not be included at this time given the uncertainty of data from that time. A slightly higher target was also agreed upon to account for the expected increase in telework. Given this is the first time the MPO is required to adopt these targets we have relied heavily on MassDOT guidance. Once we report and receive endorsement of these targets from the MPO we will continue to work cooperatively with MassDOT to identify the role of the MPO in developing future targets.

8. Have there been any updates to the MOU between PVPC and CRCOG since the last certification review? If so can you elaborate on the updates?

Response: The most recent version of the MOU between CRCOG and PVPC was signed in October 2020. Staff discussed the status of the MOU at their March 2, 2022 bi-state coordination meeting with CRCOG. It was agreed that we may need to update the MOU based on future initiatives and IJJA/BIL. [See UZA agreement in question 1.](#)

9. Can PVPC provide a couple examples of transportation planning coordination with CRCOG or any other neighboring MPO's since the last certification review?

Response: PVPC and CRCOG have a longstanding policy of meeting once a year to review our Transportation Planning programs and projects. The last three meetings occurred on 4/29/20; 3/1/21; and, 3/2/22. PVPC staff also attended the CRCOG Federal Certification Review on 10/26/21. One specific project that PVPC and CRCOG recently collaborated on was commissioning AECOM to conduct an Economic Impact Analysis of future passenger rail service between Hartford and Boston [Link to Final Report](#). In December 2021, MassDOT applied for a CRISI grant to fund two daily Amtrak trains between Hartford and Boston. PVPC also has collaborated with CRCOG on regional bike share and served on the CRCOG selection committee for their Bike Share Feasibility Study - <https://crocog.org/2022/03/2022-bike-share-feasibility-study/>

Civil Rights & Title VI

10. Is the February 2020 Title VI Report the latest version? If not, can you provide a copy of your most recent update? Otherwise, what is the status of that update?

Response: PVPC provided a Title VI Report to the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) as subrecipient of FTA funds on August 31, 2022. A copy of this report is available on the PVMPO web site [at this link](#). In addition, the PVMPO is in the process of completing a comprehensive update to the PVMPO Title VI Program in coordination with the MassDOT ODCR for 2023. PVPC staff are updating Title VI demographic data for protected populations, revising the Public Participation Plan (PPP), and including updates to the Language Access Plan.

11. Can you provide a couple examples of outreach, engagement and/or collaborative training efforts with community-based organizations representing the interests of minority, persons with Limited English Proficiency and/or individuals with disabilities? Did you incorporate any changes as a result of your outreach efforts?

Response: The Pioneer Valley MPO routinely engages populations of color through the planning process. Two of the Region's largest municipalities (Holyoke and Springfield) are minority-

majority have representation on the MPO. MPO representatives are central to decisions on policies, procedures, programs, and activities.

Guided by the Public Participation Plan, MPO staff routinely uses the MassDOT Engage Tool to prioritize outreach and public engagement with minority stakeholders. Recent examples include 2022 public outreach for revisions to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). PVPC targeted outreach at local Farmer's Markets in neighborhoods with historically diverse racial composition. Document translations (survey) were provided to assist in identifying and prioritizing the region's goals, strategies, and projects to both enhance and maintain our transportation system. Public comments received (including translated responses) will be used to help guide regional planning activities such as East-West Rail, the regional bicycle network, public transit, air quality, sustainability, and equitable transportation over the next 20 years. Farmer's Markets venues included Springfield, Easthampton, Northampton, Westfield, Amherst and Holyoke.

In 2021, PVMPO staff received an AARP grant to identify barriers to participation in the region's bike share "ValleyBike." PVPC used this opportunity to identify underrepresented populations within ValleyBike Share and launched a series of bike share "demo days" at an inner-city fitness club (LA Fitness) in Springfield and at farmer's markets in Springfield and Holyoke. The outstanding success of reaching such a diverse and engaging public would guide larger outreach for the RTP. With over 116,939 trips in 2022, ValleyBike Share has been a tremendous success. To assure that this success is spread equitably PVPC worked with partners to secure subsidized memberships for lower income members of the community through the ValleyBike Equity Program. Qualified residents who are currently receiving S.N.A.P. Benefits or Section 8 Housing, or MassHealth Standard are eligible for the ValleyBike Access Pass. ValleyBike provides Access Pass users an annual membership for \$10.00 per year, this can be paid with a Debit Card, Credit Card or Money Order. The pass will allow users unlimited 1-hour rides.

PVPC staff convenes a coalition of stakeholders for the Springfield Built Environment Committee. The Springfield Built Environment committee brings together City of Springfield staff members who work on the Built Environment to assure regular communication and collaboration. The group, which meets monthly, first started meeting nearly 20 years ago. Members include representatives from the following city departments: Public Works, Planning & Economic Development, Parks, Buildings & Recreation Management, Health & Human Services, Elder Affairs, Police and Springfield Public Schools. In addition, representatives from other organizations participate, including PVPC staff, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA), Way Finders, the MassDOT Safe Routes to School Initiative, and the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts (PHIWM). PVPC and PVTA are quasi-governmental organizations that serve the city. PHIWM is a nonprofit organization that work in Springfield to advance a healthy built environment. The Mass DOT Safe Routes to School Initiative advances safe walking and bicycling to school.

Way Finders is an active partner in community building & public engagement, providing the

training, tools, and resources to help residents grow into skilled, capable leaders. Wayfinders has trained residents of Springfield's Mason Square on infrastructure advocacy—which brought improvements in street lighting, an improved roundabout at a dangerous intersection and introduced separated bike facilities to neighborhoods. Through the work of Wayfinders, Springfield residents have learned about the connections between climate change, health equity, digital equity, and systemic racism. In the City of Holyoke, they have organized neighborhood cleanups and been proactive in working to help close the digital divide—the gap between those who do and do not have ready access to technology. PVPC actively collaborates with Wayfinders on capacity building, around issues related to the built environment, safe street lighting, Bay State Bike Week demonstration projects, and safe routes to school.

[WalkBike Springfield](#): Since the creation of the first bike plan for the City of Springfield in 2014, PVPC staff have been an active partner with the advocacy group WalkBike Springfield. In collaboration with the Caring Health Center, Concerned Citizens of Mason Square, Develop Springfield, Mason Square Health Task Force, New North Citizens Council, Pioneer Valley Riverfront Club, Partners for a Healthier Community, Gardening the Community, and the Vietnamese American Civic Association, WalkBike developed a plan that became a catalyst for transforming the streets of Springfield. Today, WalkBike Springfield continues to be a leader offering education through a bicycle curriculum, outreach to Neighborhood Councils, creation of a Good Neighbor Handbook, improving pedestrian crossings, introducing a 25 MPH Speed Limit Campaign, securing designation as an Age Friendly City, updating Complete Streets Plans and advocacy for a skate park. PVPC is proud to have partnered with WalkBike Springfield on a number of initiatives. Most recently our staff attended design hearings for the Highland Division Trial in East Springfield.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is working to advance racial equity and access to opportunity. In 2019 we created a Racial Justice Equity Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI) staffed by members of our team to examine our potential biases as a workplace and as a public agency serving diverse communities across the 43 cities and towns of Hampden and Hampshire Counties. The Committee prepared a DEI statement that was adopted by our Commission in 2021.

In 2021, we partnered with the Healing Racism Institute of the Pioneer Valley to train **all** staff as part of our ongoing work leading to the adoption of actions to help catalyze change internally, as well as bringing racial justice and economic equality to the forefront of our projects. All existing staff members completed this training in 2021/2022 and all new staff members must complete this training within their first calendar year of hire.

In 2020 PVPC joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and collaborated with the Western Massachusetts Health Equity Network and the Massachusetts Public Health Association to organize a webinar for over 200 attendees explaining the GARE and introducing the tool: Racial Equity Impact Assessments. The goal of this work is to advance integration of racial equity tools and resources to our 43 local member municipal

governments. We are happy to share the presentations used in the webinar and the research on the status of racial equity impact assessments completed as part of this work. We are advancing integration of a Race and Health Equity Impact Assessment in Springfield as part of the LiveWell Springfield Climate Justice work funded by the Kresge Foundation's Climate Change Health and Equity (CCHE) initiative.

In 2020 PVPC received a CARES grant from the Economic Development Administration for the purpose of economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The agency has completed research on unemployment and other economic data by race to demonstrate the disparate impacts of the economic shutdown on minority populations in the region. PVPC is also conducting outreach to diverse communities and constituents to determine needs and potential solutions, as part of our commitment to a long-term inclusive economy strategy.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic recession that took its toll on the regional economy--hitting our Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities particularly hard--we created the Pioneer Valley COVID Recovery Dashboard and established a blog to enable us to share deeper analysis about data trends affecting the region. COVID hit the regional economy hard, both exacerbating and highlighting longstanding disparities in well-being rooted in race and ethnicity. <https://pioneervalleydata.org/covid19-recovery>

In 2021 PVPC applied for and was chosen as one of only six agencies nationwide to participate in an EDA and National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)-sponsored program to develop inclusive economic strategies. The initiative will involve research on regional economic clusters and more in-depth community engagement.

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission received \$490,300 to implement an e-bike ownership pilot program by leveraging an existing successful e-bike share program in the Pioneer Valley Region. In close collaboration with community-based organizations, the Commission will serve economically and structurally disadvantaged Environmental Justice populations in Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke, West Springfield, Northampton, Amherst, Easthampton, and South Hadley. The goal is to distribute 50 e-bikes in the Spring of 2023. Community based organizations include: [Ascentria Care Alliance](#), [Springfield Food Policy Council](#), [Gardening the Community](#), [One Holyoke](#), [Holyoke YMCA](#), [Valley Opportunity Council](#), [Community Action Pioneer Valley](#).

12. Please describe the PVMPO's procedures/methods to ensure equity in the distribution of transportation planning projects. Do you offer training/assistance to staff with limited expertise or staffing?

Response: PVPC relies on the annual Equity Assessment included as part of the UPWP to identify communities that have not received planning assistance. Transportation Planning projects are developed cooperatively with the JTC and MPO as part of the UPWP development process. Many studies are advanced through the RTP and include regional planning initiatives such as the regional Top 100 High Crash Intersection list and the Regional Safety Compass that provide safety planning and reporting for all 43 communities.

Communities that are found to have a lower number of completed planning tasks are identified as part of the annual UPWP Equity Assessment. PVPC has made efforts to reach out to these communities to offer planning assistance such as traffic counts and safety assessments. In 2019, PVPC started scheduling traffic counts for communities without recent count data as part of UPWP Task 2.1 – Traffic Counting. Upon completion, these counts are sent to the chief locally elected official and JTC representatives.

Transportation Planning Activities are solicited through the JTC and MPO at the beginning of the development of the UPWP, typically each February. Requests for a study to be included in the UPWP must be received from the chief locally elected official. Preference is given to communities that have not had a task included in the UPWP in recent years.

UPWP Task 4.4 – Local Technical Assistance provides short term technical transportation support as requested by the chief locally elected official. Typical activities may include data collection, operational analysis, and small scale studies that can be completed in 2 -3 days of staff time. Community requests are considered on a 44 case by case basis and preference is given to communities that have not recently received assistance. PVPC will conduct up to 2 daily traffic counts per calendar year at the request of a member community. These counts are requested via this form on the PVPC website: [traffic count request form](#). A reminder of this free count program is given to the JTC each calendar year, typically in March/April.

PVPC reviews all documents submitted under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) in the Pioneer Valley region. Staff consult with local officials on the proposed project and develop comment letters as appropriate. Copies of the PVPC comment letters are sent to local officials and PVPC Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners.

13. Are there any efforts to identify and incorporate roadway safety projects based on an analysis of Vulnerable Road Users?

Response: The current Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC) awards 4 points for projects that are designed to improve safety in a location defined as a MassDOT High Bicycle or Pedestrian Crash Cluster.

PVPC included an assessment of vulnerable road users (p. 9 – 12) as part of the 2021 Pioneer Valley Safety Compass - https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/Full%20Final%20Safety%20Compass%202015-2017_1.pdf. This information is ranked by total number of crashes and the crash rate per 10,000 population. PVPC uses this information to identify potential locations for future safety studies.

All safety studies conducted by the PVPC include an analysis of safety for vulnerable road users. Most recently, PVPC completed a study for a portion of Route 20 in West Springfield, MA. This study expanded on a roadway safety audit completed by MassDOT along the same corridor. A highly visual web component was developed as part of the study to document

the existing safety problems experienced by all users along this corridor:
<https://express.adobe.com/page/ZflbO3uzhhIRM/>. A series of recommendations to improve compliance with posted speed limits and improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations were included as part of the study.

Travel Demand Model and Congestion Management Process

14. The TDM travel time contours were a great analysis, any consideration of doing these types of analysis for other modes (bike/transit) as well?

Response: PVPC has access to CONVEYAL through MassDOT. CONVEYAL, is a web based multi-modal analysis tool. PVPC staff have utilized this tool for masterplans as well as congestion analysis as a way to measure travel times for transit users as well as bicycle and pedestrians. CONVEYAL gives us the ability to create travel time contours for current conditions as well as well as proposed changes (transit) for use in our various studies. This analysis will also be expanded as part of the 2024 RTP Update.

15. Has the acquisition of RITIS XD data mentioned in the 2021 JTC presentation, and the greater coverage on arterials, changed the analysis of congestion within the region?

Response: The XD data has allowed us to utilize the PM 3 measure on segments of roadway not covered by the NPMRDS data. This data is formatted differently than the NPMRDS data, therefore it has not been interchangeable in our analysis. Some of the XD data for roadways with lower volumes appear to give inconsistent data, resulting in locations appearing to be congested that are not. For the most part we have been able to use this data to perform PM 3 analysis as well as other congestion measures, including travel time index and cost analysis. We had found that despite some limitations, the XD data allows us to have expanded coverage of the roadway network in the region.

UPWP

16. How are studies, counting locations, etc. selected and prioritized each year for inclusion in the UPWP?

Response: Transportation Planning Activities are solicited through the JTC and MPO at the beginning of the development of the UPWP, typically each February. Requests for a study to be included in the UPWP must be received from the chief locally elected official. Preference is given to communities that have not had a task included in the UPWP in recent years.

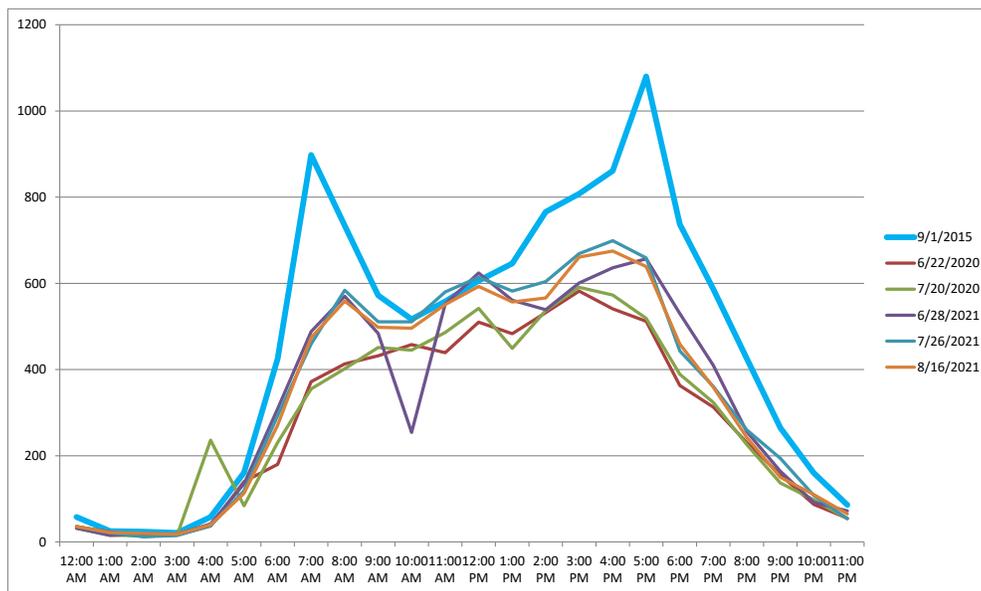
Locations for HPMS traffic counts in the Pioneer Valley region are provided each calendar year by MassDOT. From 2020 – 2022 this consisted of 57, 45, and 47 counts respectively. PVPC identifies count locations that will be necessary based on anticipated needs for the planning studies and the regional model. We also work with our Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee to identify locations for counts each year. Certain locations on key regional corridors and freight corridors are counted regularly as time and budget allow to track changes.

During the 2020 calendar year, in response to the dramatic change in traffic volumes and daily traffic flow, the PVPC monitored traffic at 30 locations selected across the region to

sample how traffic volumes changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal was to attempt to count each location 3 times. The same program was repeated in 2021. A summary table is shown below:

Community	Location	2020			2021			Pre Pandemic Count
		June	July	August	June	July	August	
Springfield	Dickinson Street S/O Belmont Avenue	9,633	6,594		10,680	10,519	10,189	
Springfield	Liberty St. S/O Springfield Plaza	11,483	11,391		11,869	11,656	11,678	
Springfield	Main St. N/O Howard St.	7,680	8,110		8,751	8,643	8,723	13,456
Longmeadow	Longmeadow St. N/O Pleasant View Ave	15,832	16,330		18,688	17,597	15,033	
Holyoke	Whiting Farms Rd. N/O Sullivan Rd.	7,307	7,332		7,553	7,789	8,081	
Holyoke	Hampden St. W/O Pleasant St.	8,203	8,193		9,031	9,415	8,541	
Chicopee	Burnett Road @ Ludow T.L.	10,700	10,912		11,473	11,476	11,930	
Chicopee	Montgomery St. S/O Medical Drive Riverbend	7,915	8,445		8,041	7,970	NA	
Ludlow	East St. N/O Winsor St.	7,376	7,455		7,516	7,487	7,507	8,706
South Hadley	Route 116 N/O Wilson St.	7,023	7,222		8,060	8,426	8,175	11,079
Granby	Route 202 @ Belchertown T.L.	6,214	5,962		6,668	6,388	6,500	6,801
Agawam	Springfield St. E/O Columbus St.	7,827	8,552		9,028	9,177	9,658	
Westfield	Route 202 W/O East Mountain Rd.	10,669	11,116		12,433	11,693	10,498	11,119
Westfield	Route 10/202 @Southwick T.L.	8,317	8,858		9,973	9,348	9,196	
West Springfield	Union St. N/O Day St.	9,393	9,999		9,419	9,307	8,959	10,077
Southwick	Route 57 E/O Foster St.	9,334	9,913		11,099	10,602	10,611	11,709
Huntington	Route 20 S/O Route 112	3,713	3,452	3,942	3,597	4,189	4,149	
Amherst	Route 116 S/O Country Corners Road		8,507	8,422	10,023	10,143	10,765	
Amherst	East Pleasant St. S/O Eastman Lane	3,517	4,287		6,024	5,150	NA	7,473
Northampton	Pleasant St. S/O Conz St.		15,971	17,543	18,500	19,187	18,624	23,339
Northampton	Damon Rd. By DCR Offices	14,709	14,063		14,430	12,367	12,455	
Easthampton	Route 10 N/O Groveland St.	16,372	16,357		17,376	17,123	17,082	
Hadley	S. Maple St. S/O Moody Bridge Road		6,207	5,885	7,045	7,129	7,005	6,512
Williamsburg	Route 9 N/O Hatfield Street	9,372		7,895	10,211	10,458	10,385	
Ware	Route 9 @ Belchertown T.L.		5,664		5,963	5,920	5,821	
Ware	Route 32 W/O Anderson Rd.		11,680		12,391	12,544	NA	14,134
Brimfield	Route 20 E/O New Holland Rd.		7,266		8,469	7,936	7,991	10,052
Belchertown	Route 181 S/O Micheal Sears Rd.		4,109		4,424	4,724	5,297	
Monson	Chestnut St. E/O Route 32		2,147		2,462	2,293	2,251	
East Longmeadow	Route 83 W/O Harkness Ave.		15,492		16,492	15,956	16,803	20,506

This data was also tracked hourly to attempt to understand the changes in peak hour traffic as a result of the pandemic. An example of hourly traffic volumes on Route 116 in South Hadley, MA is shown below:



Public Engagement

17. Please highlight key changes to your PPP with your recent update.

Response: Key changes to the 2022 update to the Public Participation Plan (PPP) include the use of virtual meetings as a component of the PVMPO's public outreach and planning strategy. It is important to note that the MPO anticipates additional changes to the PPP in 2023 when updates are released for the MassDOT Public Participation Plan. These updates will likely include "hybrid" options as well as other accessibility measures.

In this revised PPP, the MPO has established a criterion for virtual meetings:

- a. If a public meeting is to be held virtually or have a virtual component, all meeting materials will be presented via video stream and can be downloaded via the virtual meeting platform's chat or document transfer medium.
- b. Virtual meetings must be recorded, and those recordings reviewed for public input.
- c. To better understand how the MPO is meeting its commitment to fostering public engagement in all MPO planning activities, it is important to have a series of measurements to better understand the effectiveness of the public outreach efforts. It is through the tracking of public engagements, whether in person, via email, through social media or through utilizing virtual public engagement that the MPO can discern if its public outreach efforts are delivering the desired results. The results of these public outreach efforts can be viewed in the Measurements of Effectiveness (MOE) Report.
- d. Trained staff are assigned to manage the virtual engagement portion of meetings and provide assistance to individuals that require help or special accommodations.
- e. Upon request PVPC will use a 3rd party API for closed captioning. Third party captions should be monitored for errors. If possible, have a chat line open to post clarifications and to allow participants relying on the captions to ask for clarification.
- f. The MPO will explore hybrid meeting formats with in-person and virtual engagement for future MPO meetings and MPO committee meetings. MPO-sponsored events will take place either virtually or in person. Virtual access is available through Zoom links on the MPO meeting calendar.
- g. MPO staff will communicate with participants, providing reminders about the recording and information on how it will be shared and that they have provided permission to use the recording.
- h. Virtual public meetings should be publicized as early as possible on the PVPC website—ideally, a minimum of 21 calendar days in advance, but never less than 14 days in advance. This allows attendees time to submit requests for reasonable accommodations and for meeting planners to set deadlines for accommodation requests to be made in a timely manner.
- i. PVPC will explore opportunities to livestream meetings on YouTube, Facebook, or another service (like local cable access) to make meetings more accessible to people in your community and ensure that folks without internet access can view.

18. How are you ensuring your process is fully accessible, particularly to those who may not be able to attend meetings virtually?

Response: PVPC has started recording and posting the JTC and MPO’s public [meetings online](#) (with closed captioning) for members of the public that are not able to attend the scheduled/posted virtual meeting. PVPC posts meeting agendas, notices, and offers interpretive services online, with hard copies posted at the reception desk. Meeting minutes are posted on the MPO website.

Digital equity is a concern for our region where people may lack adequate internet access. While many public libraries offer “mobile hot spot” devices and internet access, these resources are in high demand. The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners provided 3000 hotspots to [220 public libraries](#) for loan to library users. The hotspot lending program was funded through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to address issues of digital inclusion. In addition., the Massachusetts Broadband Institute has worked with local internet service providers (ISPs) to offer [Wi-Fi indoor and outdoor hotspots](#) to [unserved municipalities that lack broadband access](#).

PVPC has been pre-approved as a consultant for the [Massachusetts Broadband Institute’s Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program](#) to work with municipalities to do planning around digital access to devices and digital literacy. The Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program engages communities in identifying needs and solutions to bridge the digital divide for vulnerable populations.

PVPC continues to pursue new strategies for effective engagement. MassDOT and FHWA have been hosting bimonthly Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) Committee meetings as part of FHWA's Everyday Counts 6 (EDC-6) initiative for the past two years and PVPC has been an active participant. Recently PVPC participated in the USDOT training: “Accessible Virtual Public Involvement (VPI): State and MPO Tools & Practices.” PVPC staff have also reviewed guidance from USDOT transportation 2022 guide; [Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making](#).

19. How do you measure effectiveness of your PPP strategies? What are your findings and how has this effected the evolution of your program?

Response: PVPC routinely conducts surveys to gauge the effectiveness of public participation practices. A 2021 survey informed staff that the MPO’s transition to virtual Zoom meetings was an effective strategy. Information from the survey also identified shortcomings. As a result of people expressing a lack of interest in virtual meetings, staff conducted direct outreach to identify technological barriers and potential solutions. In some specific cases staff set up “one-on-one” training in the use of Zoom.

For in-person outreach related to an AARP grant targeted at an older demographic and their participation in a regional bikeshare “ValleyBike,” PVPC staff found that canvassing members at a local health/fitness club (LA Fitness) was not effective. Members were regimented in

their routine/schedules and had little time to interact with PVPC staff. Conversely PVPC's shift to trying public engagement at local farmers markets proved to be very effective, especially regarding diversity and level of engagement with the public.

PVPC measured the effectiveness of RTP outreach through metrics that included the number of public interactions to a "one word" question and the quantity of completed surveys. Effectiveness was also assessed based on the frequency of "non-English" responses and requests for additional information. PVPC also measured the success based on the geographic distribution on coordinated public outreach events, with an emphasis on underserved populations (were outreach locations transit, bike, and pedestrian accessible?).

In addition to PVPC's outreach, the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (an MPO member) conducts ridership surveys. PVPC staff work with PVTA to establish sampling rates for each route to assure an effective measure of success. PVTA ridership surveys are a valuable outreach tool and are critical the region's planning process.

PVPC routinely conducted surveys on shared use paths. In 2020 the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission surveyed trail users on the New Haven to Northampton Canal Greenway in cooperation with the Friends of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail, the City of Westfield, Friends of the Southwick Rail Trail and the Southwick Park and Recreation Department. Because of COVID, the "in-person" survey transitioned to an online format. Signs and an online link for the survey were posted along the shared use path. The 20-question survey took users 5 minutes to complete. The survey was active for ten days and provided a wealth of information that was used to measure the health and economic impacts and to improve the user's trail experience. The survey provided community leaders, trail planners, and advocates with an accurate picture of who uses trails and to provide information on the benefits of trails, and recommendations for advancing design, policy, and programming initiatives. The transition from "in-person" to a virtual survey was a success in this instance.

Multimodal Planning: Bicycles, Pedestrians, Freight

20. Specifically, what are the functions of the bike/ped/complete streets committee as part of JTC?

Response: The JTC's Bicycle Pedestrian and Complete Streets Advisory Committee meets every month prior to the JTC meeting. As an advisory committee, all JTC members are welcome to attend and participate. The Bike/Ped/Complete Streets committee reviews all the MPO's major planning documents include the RTP, UPWP, and TIP and makes recommendation through the JTC. The Committee also review MassDOT planning documents (Statewide Bicycle Plan, SIP, and Statewide Pedestrian Plan) and provides input on programs and policies. Most participants are actively engaged in Complete Streets, Safe Routes to School, Safe Streets and Spaces, Mass Trails, and Gateway Cities funding programs within their community. The Committee routinely discusses shared challenges and solutions related to the build environment. The Committee is currently working on developing a regional bicycle network plan and recently reviewed examples of other network plans and associated prioritization methodologies. In the past they have advised JTC staff on effective strategies to engage

communities around complete streets and age friendly initiatives. The committee is an invaluable resource in reviewing crash data and consulting on safety performance measures. Example: The Committee recently requested that bicycle and pedestrian crashes be added to the Community Safety Compass reports.

21. Great to see ValleyBike reports and dashboards. Any preliminary findings from 2022 data and planned enhancements/changes to the program?

Response: The 2022 Report on Valley Bike is included as part of the current UPWP and a draft report is anticipated in March of 2023. A Phase 3 expansion project is included as part of the TIP for year FFY2023 . If funded Phase 3 will add 18 new stations and three new communities (Agawam, Hadley, and Westfield) as well as 180 new bicycles to the system, increasing projected miles ridden to 150,000 miles per year. A copy of the CMAQ analysis for this expansion is located here: [ValleyBike CMAQ Analysis](#)

22. How are freight needs addressed in your long range planning efforts and project evaluation and programming process?

Response: [The Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Plan](#) address long range needs beginning on page 62. PVPC has been incorporating freight planning studies into the UPWP as defined in Table 28. To date PVPC has updated its analysis of crash data to be understand the safety impacts on freight. The locations of all low-clearance structures in the region have been inventoried and there is more consistent data collection on the needs of truck rest areas – particularly during evening hours. PVPC plans to use INRIX data to analyze freight travel time data including truck travel time reliability. A model freight bylaw is currently in draft form. PVPC staff participate as part of MassDOT’s Statewide Freight Plan Advisory Committee.

A methodology to assess the impacts of future transportation projects on freight was developed in section 5.5 of the Regional Freight Plan. This identified projects either on the TIP or in the MPO project universe that may have freight benefits. This analysis will be updated as part of the 2024 Update to the RTP. The current Regional Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC) awards 1 point to projects that will reduce congestion on roadways with more than 5% truck traffic and 1 point to a project that implements a strategy in the State or Regional Freight Plan. Other scoring areas for congestion and safety, while not specific to freight, would award points for criteria that would have freight benefits once implemented. A new scoring category that awards points for the construction of a rest area as part of a project would also have benefits for freight.

23. It does not look like PVMPO has a standalone regional bike/ped plan. To that end:
a. What guides your bike/ped/complete streets investment decisions?

Response: The TEC has a robust set of criteria directly related to bike/ped/complete streets project elements. Additionally, we have a very active subcommittee to the JTC that meets monthly to discuss projects and initiatives that support our planning activities.

- b. How does your work coincide with the MA bike and pedestrian statewide transportation planning efforts?

Response: PVPC's does not have a standalone regional bicycle and pedestrian plan. A concerted effort is made to incorporate and substantiate active transportation and complete streets into the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan. The projects, goals, and objectives of the RTP are actively supported through Unified Planning Work Program and Transportation Improvement Program. Having moved away from a stand-alone bike/ped plan, we have found that bicycling and walking have a greater likelihood of becoming integrated into all aspects of a comprehensive transportation planning program and less likely to be marginalized as a special interest. A separate JTC Bike/Ped subcommittee allows for UPWP tasks that are focused (such as this year's regional bike network plan) while still addressing all modes (including transit) in a unified approach in accordance with MassDOT's engineering and policy directives on context sensitive design and complete streets.

PVPC is an active participant and member of the Massachusetts Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Board (MAPAB) and has been a host for these meetings in the past. The JTC's Bike/ped and Complete Streets Subcommittee participated in the development of the Massachusetts Bicycle Plan and Pedestrian Plan. PVPC has an ongoing and productive relationship with MassBike. Together MassBike and PVPC host the annual [Pioneer Valley Bay State Bike Month](#) with some of the highest levels of participation in the Commonwealth. MassBike is a voting member of JTC.

Transit Planning

24. Since the last coordinated plan was updated in November of 2019 the pandemic has had a significant impact on the transit industry. Can you describe some of the services that were suspended or terminated due to the pandemic? How has human services transportation been provided in the interim for these suspended/terminated services? Has there been any coordination and/or discussion regarding the next update to the coordinated plan that will be due in November 2024?

Response: The Coordination Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) is a guiding document that focuses on the coordination of transportation services for the populations of older adults, persons with limited incomes, and persons with disabilities. Stakeholder outreach is a critical component in updating this plan and at PVPC we are just starting discussion around building a more effective outreach component to this effort. PVTA has transitioned the Paratransit Rider's Council meetings to a virtual format.

Terminated Services - [Link to Terminated Services Maps and Schedules](#)

B7S: A grant-funded service intended to supplement the B7 between downtown Springfield and the Raymond Jordan Senior Center. This route performed poorly and was scheduled to be discontinued at the end of June 2020 when its funding expired. It was instead discontinued in mid-March 2020 due to COVID.

Loop: A free downtown shuttle service funded by MGM Springfield. Performed poorly pre-COVID and was likely to be discontinued, although no specific date was proposed. Discontinued in mid-March 2020 due to COVID.

Rt 39: A free bus route connecting Hampshire College and Smith College with historically low ridership and productivity. Had previously been proposed for elimination due to budget constraints in 2017 and 2018 but was retained due to vocal public support for the route. “Suspended” in mid-March 2020 due to COVID, but effectively discontinued as there are no current plans to restore the route. Hampshire College has contracted with an independent transportation provider to operate a replacement service following the same route.

R10S: A free bus route connecting Westfield State University and downtown Westfield. Service along the same route is provided by the R10. Discontinued in mid-March 2020 due to COVID.

G2E: An express bus route connecting downtown Springfield and the Memorial/Cottage Street industrial park. Route performed poorly pre-COVID but was retained as it provided a convenient link for bus drivers between the Springfield bus garage and the main PVTa hub. Discontinued in mid-December 2021 due to driver shortages.

P20E: An express bus route connecting downtown Springfield and the Holyoke Mall. Replaced in late June 2021 by the G73E, which operates a more frequent schedule and extends beyond the Holyoke Mall to downtown Northampton.

Suspended Services - [Link to Suspended Services Maps and Schedules](#)

Rt 34: A free campus shuttle route at UMass Amherst, operating a one-way loop as a counterpart to Rt 35. Only operates during the academic year. Route was suspended from mid-March to mid-May, 2020 and was restored in late August 2020 with the start of the new academic year.

P11: An express route connecting downtown Springfield and Holyoke Community College. Only operates during the academic year. Suspended in mid-March 2020 due to COVID and was restored in September 2021.

39E: An express route connecting Smith College and Mount Holyoke College. Only operates during the academic year. Suspended in mid-March 2020 due to COVID and was restored in September 2021.

OWL: A free campus shuttle route at Westfield State University. Only operates during the academic year. Route was suspended from mid-March to mid-May, 2020, temporarily restored from September 2020 through November 2020, and suspended again in December 2020. Modified to incorporate some trips previously operated by the R10S, renamed as the “WSU Shuttle,” and restored in September 2021.

Reduced Services

From mid-March 2020 through June 2020, most routes operated on a Saturday schedule from Monday to Saturday, reducing frequency and span of service compared to their original

weekday schedules.

COVID contributed to an acute shortage of drivers and mechanics across the PVTA system, ultimately leading to cuts in frequency on routes B6, B7, Rt 30, Rt 31, Rt 33, Rt 34, Rt 35, B43, R44, B48, and X90.

HST Impact

Paratransit coverage was not affected by discontinued routes, as other bus routes retained service in those places.

Paratransit span was slightly reduced from mid-March through June 2020 due to corresponding span reductions on fixed routes.

Paratransit capacity was significantly constrained by COVID safety measures, which included occupancy limits on paratransit vehicles.

Environmental Coordination

25. How does the MPO address environmental mitigation in the RTP? What strategies or activities identified through the RTP have been implemented or are underway?

Response: Environmental Mitigation is addressed in Chapter 14 of the RTP through the Sustainability Needs and Strategies. [2020 RTP Chapter 14](#). The Transportation Evaluation Criteria ([TEC](#)) awards bonus points to projects that reduce their impact on the environment in areas such as air quality, improving fish and wildlife passage, reduction of impervious surfaces and the preservation of floodplains and wetlands. The UPWP for the Pioneer Valley has annual task on Climate Change and Green Street and Infrastructure to assist communities in environmental mitigation efforts. Examples implemented in this area include a prioritized listing of regional dams and culverts, the Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan and the [Green Infrastructure Toolkit](#).

PVPC reviews all documents submitted under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) in the Pioneer Valley region. Staff consult with local officials on the proposed project and develop comment letters as appropriate. Copies of the PVPC comment letters are sent to local officials and PVPC Commissioners and Alternate Commissioners.

26. Does the MPO have a RTP consultation guide document outlining roles and responsibilities with environmental stakeholders and resource agencies, methods of contact/individual contacts, etc.?

Response: There is no formal guide/document at this time. PVPC does maintain an internal project database that has contact information for local resource agencies such as conservation commissions, planning boards, the Environment and Sustainability RTP Focus Group invite list, and the environmental consultation invite list. Many of these contacts are also included as part of the email list for the JTC and MPO.