

Ideas from the TRANSPORTATION BRAINSTORM at the November 30, 2017 CEDS MEETING

The meeting kicked off with a presentation from Secretary Stephanie Pollack. Secretary Pollack provided an overview of what MassDOT has achieved over the past two years, and steps to how we invest wisely to realize multiple returns on transportation. These returns include: perform, fix, invest, innovate, and partner.

After the presentations, we broke into small tables of 10 people that focused on one of two issues: 1) Transportation for Tourism, and 2) Transportation and our Priority Development Areas. Each group got 25 minutes to discuss transportation issues, opportunities, and solutions for each of these topics. The following is a summary of the discussions from each breakout:

1. Transportation and Tourism

- Need to consider those that rely on public transportation
- Tourism includes: rivers, beaches, trails
- Limited train schedules right now
- People live in smaller towns need to be able to use public transportation to get to other recreation
- Connect rail trails through towns
- Most important transportation need or idea:
 - Market existing transportation resources that DO get people to destinations or events
 - Water taxi between Groveland and Haverhill along the Merrimack River
- Need better bus access to the beach
- Steamboats used to bring people from Haverhill to the beaches 115 years ago
- Seasonally, could you go up to Lawrence or Lowell?
- Last stops for trains (Newburyport and Haverhill) have no easy transfer to busses or informational booths or shelves with information for tourists (like they do in Gloucester station)
- Transportation system is not based on tourism spots
- How do we define tourist? Would that include places like Smolack Farms and Cider Hill Farms?
- MVRTA services Salisbury Beach
- Unlikely that bus transportation will drive tourism
- Wayfinding signs are needed at points of transfer between modes (i.e., at train stations)
- Our table was about transportation and tourism and we basically came to the conclusion that our train and bus systems are simply not built for tourism. They are built around our commuter population. And that's fine. If there is an interest in catering to tourists that's a bigger conversation to have. Otherwise, our focus for tourism is really on people with wallets, who are driving and using the roadways.

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The challenge then becomes signage and getting them to stop. The color coded signs on the highways are expensive for the mom and pop style shops and tourism councils that make up this area of the state (or country really). If there is anything we can do together with the Secretary to re-evaluate that system it would be great! We need to get the tourists to stop in these small New England towns and to explore our Main Street and Market Square areas but wayfinding is a real problem. Very few of us are built on a grid and attractions are hard to find. But from a state level, those signs and the system surrounding them seem outdated and expensive or maybe the process to acquire them is just too confusing to navigate. We've looked into them, couldn't figure out if we qualified and found the expense too high to consider.

2. Transportation and Priority Development Areas

- We need to support employees getting to their job site
- Specifically, students at the Greater Lawrence Technical School need to access their coop location (we discussed mapping the coop locations and where students live to determine available transportation or lack thereof).
- Difficulty in getting to downtown Methuen for jobs or retail
- Salisbury – need to consider congestion management techniques
- Job Access/congestion are issues. Potentially put in a roundabout in Georgetown?
- Marketing transportation resources to educate people on how to get there. For example: how can we get people via public transit to a festival in W. Newbury?
- Water taxi on Merrimack River
- How can we improve the Merrimack Street Gateway? Has good Bike/Ped Access, but not widely used right now. Perhaps put a Riverwalk along Lupoli's property to connect with the Rail Trail?
- Fun Friday???
- On River Road here is limited transportation service and access to commuter rail
- Salisbury Beach:
 - Impediments: seasonal traffic congestion from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Bike lanes/networks not in place. There is a quite a distance between other modes of transportation.
 - Solutions: shuttle bus or ferries. Connection between Newburyport station and beach
 - Need: congestion management, shift to non-use
- Newburyport:
 - Impediments: Seasonal traffic, flow issues. Safe bike and ped network/connections not in place. Parking.

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- Solutions: garage expansion. Shuttle from MBTA station to PI Beach.
Water taxi to Salisbury Beach from downtown Nwbypt.
- Need: Route 1a Merrimac safety and capacity (pinch point)
- Merrimack Street:
 - Electric Charging stations needed
 - Rush hour traffic/egress from Riverwalk complex
 - Train can cause congestion
 - Light has been fixed
 - Additional parking
 - Things are improving
 - A Riverwalk would improve access, especially if connected to Rail Trail.
Avis is developing the Rail Trail
- Haverhill:
 - Better cyclist access to downtown from Bailey Blvd.