



Region Matters

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Merrimack Valley
Planning Commission
plan • develop • promote



FALL 2012

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MVPC "Energizes" the Region

MVPC is pleased to announce completion of the "Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan". The Plan is being distributed to all

the cities and towns in the region through the MVPC Commissioners, Mayors/Managers Coalition, Town Administrators/Finance Directors Coalition, and to all the Planning/Economic Development Directors. The Plan will also be available to view on the MVPC website in the "Regional Solutions" dropdown menu.

The Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan is just one element of a very aggressive Energy Program that MVPC offers its municipalities. MVPC has procured the services of an Energy Management Company, a Regional Energy Services Company, and a Regional Renewable Energy Manager. All the region's communities can utilize these services without having to bid for the service individually. And if there is sufficient interest among the regions communities, MVPC will develop a Regional Net-Metering Credit RFP.

The Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan was initiated from ideas discussed in preparation of the 2008 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and its stated goal of seeking to advance opportunities for low impact development, green building, and alternative energy uses. MVPC's Mayors and

Managers Coalition then became the driver for this regional opportunity.

"The Energy Plan we have put forth is an innovative, action-oriented document, developed with advice and guidance from our communities, and offers specific recommendations for each city and town in the region to help them advance their energy goals", states Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio in the Energy Plan introduction. "To becoming a designated 'green community' through the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, to putting an infrastructure improvement and modernization plan in place to reduce energy consumption, to building solar farms on closed landfills – the Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan has ideas and solutions for the largest city in our region to the smallest town."



For questions contact Dennis DiZoglio, Executive Director ddizoglio@mvpc.org or Mike Parquette, Comprehensive Planning Manager mparquette@mvpc.org or by phone: 978-374-0519.

This document is available at the MVPC website: www.mvpc.org

*Written by: Mike Parquette
MVPC Comprehensive Manager*

Merrimack Valley Bridge Projects



Canal Street Bridge, Lawrence

In driving around the Merrimack Valley region, one cannot help but notice the level of commitment by MassDOT in repairing/replacing many of our most important bridges.

A recent MVPC analysis revealed that 40 of the 238 federal aid-eligible bridges in the Valley (i.e., bridges with spans greater than 20 feet) will have been repaired or replaced between 2010 and 2020 at an estimated aggregate cost of almost \$640 million. Focusing on the region's greatest water resource, with the anticipated completion of the Whittier Bridge in 2016, 11 of the 17 bridges over the Merrimack River will have been substantially repaired or replaced since 2003.

Recently completed bridge projects include the replacement of the Route 28 Bridge over Route 213 in Methuen (2010 - \$13 million), replacement of the Hines Bridge in Newburyport (2012 - \$34 million), upgrade of the Route 28 Bridge over the Merrimack River in Lawrence (2010 - \$10 million), replacement of the Route 1A Bridge over the Parker River in Newbury (2010 - \$14.1 million), and the painting and repair of the Gillis Bridge in Newburyport (2011 - \$3.2 million). Work is well underway on the replacement of the Bates Bridge over the Merrimack River between Groveland and Haverhill (2014 - \$49 mil-

lion, now 61% complete), repair of the Rocks Village Bridge, which links Haverhill and West Newbury (2013 - \$13.9 million), construction of a new Canal Street Bridge over the Spicket River and reconstruction of the Duck Bridge over the Merrimack River, both in Lawrence (2014 - \$10.5 million; 2013 - \$19.9 million, respectively).

In 2013, work will begin on the replacement of the Whittier Bridge over the Merrimack River, a project that will include replacement of the Pine Hill Road Bridge over I



Whittier Bridge, Newburyport

-95 in Newburyport and improvements to seven other bridges along the corridor in Amesbury and Salisbury (2016 - \$285 million).

Now under design are the replacement of the Basiliere Bridge over the Merrimack River in Haverhill (\$47 million), and the replacement of the I-495 Bridge over Route 28 in Andover (\$27 million).

Additional information on these and other bridge projects in the Valley may be found at: www.mhd.state.ma.us/ProjectInfo

*Written by: Anthony Komornick
MVPC Transportation Program Manager*

Hazard Mitigation Plan Advances



Following a project kick-off meeting at Northern Essex Community College in March, MVPC planners and GIS staff have been working collaboratively with local emergency managers and other public safety personnel to update the region's federally-approved "**Merrimack**

Valley Region Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan". The current 5-year plan, due to expire in February 2013, prescribes a series of recommended actions communities can take to reduce risks from floods, fires, wind storms, and other natural hazards.

The economic costs of these hazards, together with the emotional and social upheaval they cause, can be staggering. During the last decade alone, the no-

torious Mothers Day Flood of 2006 and Patriots Day Flood of 2007 damaged hundreds of Valley area homes and businesses, closed scores of public roads, washed out numerous culverts, bridges, and other key infrastructure, and forced the emergency evacuation of nursing home residents and other sensitive populations.

By updating the regional plan every 5 years, our communities will retain their eligibility for various federal hazard mitigation grants administered by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). For more information on MVPC's regional hazard mitigation planning project, contact Alan Macintosh, assistant director/environmental program manager.

*Written by: Alan Macintosh
MVPC Assistant Director/Environmental Program Manager*

Regionalization Best Practices Website



The MVPC is pleased to introduce, on the behalf of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA), the new MARPA Regionalization Best Practices Website www.regionalbestpractices.org. This site details the Commonwealth's 351 municipalities' efforts to maintain or improve the essential services that they provide. Learn about innovative tools being implemented including joint procurements, shared services agreements and creation of regional districts. The site is designed to guide you according to your prospective interest in regionalization, whether you are a chief elected official, department head, employee, interested citizen or goods/services vendor. MARPA members will periodically update the website content to feature the latest information on relevant laws and regulations, new projects, and Best Practices for municipal government inter-local cooperation and shared services.

For additional information on this website, contact Dennis DiZoglio, MVPC's Executive Director at ddizoglio@mvpc.org or by phone at 978-374-0519.

*Written by: Todd Fontanella
MVPC Sr. Transportation Planner*

Fourth Annual Regionalization Conference

The Fourth Annual Regionalization Conference was held at the College of the Holy Cross on Monday, September 10th. Lt. Governor Murray and various Commonwealth officials praised the work being done by the Commonwealth's agencies and municipalities to find ways to improve municipal service delivery, generate efficiencies and cost savings in an increasingly constrained fiscal climate. Eleven breakout sessions were held to engage attendees

on topics such as e-government, health care, animal control, materials procurement, and public safety. Details are available on www.mass.gov/dor and the materials presented at the conference are posted on <http://www.mass.gov/dor/local-officials/dls-newsroom/employee-contacts/dls/regionalization-conference.html>.

*Written by: Todd Fontanella
MVPC Sr. Transportation Planner*



Road Vista 922

Reflecting in your Community

For the past few months the Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition DPW committee has been discussing the national standard for sign retroreflectivity maintenance. The FHWA is requiring that each community in the region has to conduct an inventory of applicable signs, measure retroreflectivity and develop a sign replacement implementation plan. Initially the cost associated with compliance was significant however the good news is that FHWA has backed off of the time frames associated with the replacement for all signs but there still is a need for communities to be in compliance with the standards. FHWA's retroreflectivity toolkit can be found at http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadway_dept/night_visib/retrotoolkit/

To do so municipalities need to have either an assessment method or a management method in place by June 13, 2014. The assessment method requires municipalities to measure the reflectivity of the signs in your community. Some communities have engaged a private firm to conduct their inventory others have been discussing this assessment with MVPC. Regardless of how the inventory is completed communities need to undertake an evaluation assessment on a regular schedule.



To conduct an assessment a reflectometer is required. It is inefficient for each community to purchase their own equipment, which is specialized, to conduct their assessments. Most of the communities feel that the equipment can be shared among the communities in the region. MVPC has facilitated this equipment sharing concept. For more information contact Dennis DiZoglio, Executive Director ddizoglio@mvpc.org or by phone at 978-374-0519.



MVPC's Citizen Training Program for Planners

Another edition of MVPC's popular citizen planner training program is scheduled for 2013, according to Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio.

The subjects range from permitting to interdepartmental cooperation to duties of municipal officials. Later in the year, participants will have a choice of two workshops. The three evening sessions will be held at the MVPC office, 160 Main St., Haverhill at 7pm.

Session I: Deals with legal matters related to permitting, including ethics law, open meeting laws, public records, and conduct of meetings.

Session II: Involves cooperation and coordination among municipal departments, permit seekers and various boards.

Session III: Outlines the duties of each board and commission, as well as various municipal officials.

Cost: \$100

Upcoming Workshops

Thursday, October 25 - **Roles and Responsibilities of Planning & Zoning Boards Part 2** (MIIA credit)

Location: MVPC office Time: 7:00pm

Wednesday, November 14 - **Special Permits & Variances** (MIIA credit)

Location: MVPC office Time: 7:00pm

Contact CPTC to register: http://www.umass.edu/masscptc/pdfs/CPTC-fall-2012-courses_3pg.pdf

MVPC Monthly Commission Meetings

At the MVPC Commission Office—Third Thursday of the month

Thursday, October 18 @ 7pm

Thursday, November 15 @ 7pm

Thursday, December 20 @ 7pm

Check our website for details on upcoming events www.mvpc.org

Contact Nancy Lavalley - nlavalley@mvpc.org or 978-374-0519 extension 10

