



# Region Matters

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Merrimack Valley  
Planning Commission  
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**SUMMER 2014**

## MVPC and MassDevelopment Co-Host Regional Economic Summit

The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) and MassDevelopment, the state's finance and development authority, brought the region together on May 20 for a series of speakers and panel discussions at Northern Essex Community College's Hartleb Technology Center in Haverhill to highlight regional economic development trends and workforce development solutions.



*Kevin Hively, President & Founder, Ninigret Partners*

Keynote Speaker Kevin Hively of Ninigret Partners provided his take on manufacturing's renaissance and its implications for the Merrimack Valley. Mr. Hively, using his wealth of experience consulting for firms in the U.S., Europe, and Asia, touched on a number of topics, including the critical need for more workforce training and the importance of protecting manufacturing sites, while at the same time acknowledging the changing nature of product development.

Following an overview of the morning's event by Northern Essex Community College (NECC) President Dr. Lane Glenn in which he also discussed how NECC is evolving to cope with the rapidly changing demands of industry, Dennis DiZoglio, Executive Director of MVPC, opened the speaker portion of the event. Mr. DiZoglio presented a regional outlook on how the agency is helping lay the groundwork to best position the Merrimack Valley for future manufacturing success through data analysis, targeted infrastructure funding, strategic planning, and regional marketing.

Moderated by Dr. Glenn, a workforce development panel featuring Judy Burke, Dean of Corporate and Community Education & Training, Middlesex Community College, Mary Sarris, Executive Director, North Shore Workforce Investment Board, and Patricia Tyler, Director of Workforce Development, Lahey Health all provided helpful overviews on how their various agencies are approaching the issue of workforce development.

Next, David Tibbetts, President of the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council moderated a discussion on how regions can work together to tackle some of the challenges highlighted during the morning event. Robert Buckley, Vice President, Middlesex 3 Coalition, Ann Burke, Vice President, EDC of Western Massachusetts, and Greg Klemmer, Senior Vice President, Colliers International proved to be superb panelists for the dialogue.

The summit closed with inspiring remarks from Haverhill Mayor James Fiorentini on the number of actions his city has taken to enhance the community's business climate.

For more information on the summit, including links to the various presentations, please visit [MassDevelopment's](#) economic summit page.

*Written by Ted Semesnyei  
MVPC Economic Development Coordinator*

## MBTA Merrimack River Bridge Reconstruction Project



*MBTA Merrimack River Bridge, view west*

This iconic 1,042' long bridge, which is comprised of three spans linking Haverhill's Bradford section and Downtown, is now undergoing a three-year, \$24 million reconstruction. Its components, which date from as far back as 1880 and as recent as 1919, form a critically important structure that serves New England, the Commonwealth and the Merrimack Valley. Every weekday, it is crossed by twenty-six MBTA Haverhill Line Commuter Rail trains; ten Amtrak Downeaster intercity passenger trains, and several PanAm Railways freight trains. LM Heavy Civil Construction Company of Quincy was awarded a \$23.9 million contract to rehabilitate the superstructure.

This project consists of three phases. During Phases 1 & 2 (May 2014-June 2016) the MBTA's contractors will be making structural repairs; improving tracks, and painting bridge surfaces. During these Phases, MBTA Commuter Rail service to downtown Haverhill will operate on its current schedule excepting the following two morning and two evening trains that will operate on a slightly revised schedule only as far north as Bradford:

- **Train #203:** Outbound from Boston, 9:24 a.m. departure from Bradford Station, bus to Haverhill
- **Train #212:** Inbound to Boston, 9:44 a.m. departure from Haverhill Station, bus to Bradford
- **Train #213:** Outbound from Boston, 5:49 p.m. departure from Bradford Station, bus to Haverhill
- **Train # 222:** Inbound to Boston, 6:09 p.m. departure from Haverhill Station, bus to Bradford

Passengers are being bused between the Bradford and downtown Haverhill stations for the above trains at no extra charge.

In Phase 3 (June 2016-April 2017) bridge bearings will be replaced during six weekend outages spread out over a span of twelve (12) weekends. Variable message sign boards will notify MBTA passengers at Bradford and Haverhill on the schedule modifications.

The MBTA anticipates that it will award a second, separate, contract for repairs to the bridge's substructure for the bridge piers in the river. The full cost of rebuilding the bridge, including substructure work, is expected to reach \$100 million.

The Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority (NNEPRA) will maintain Amtrak Downeaster passenger service between Brunswick, ME and Boston. It will utilize buses to provide Downeaster passenger service for certain trips during periods in which the bridge is to be closed.

*Written by Todd Fontanella  
MVPC Sr Transportation Planner*

## Merrimac Square Reconstruction Project



*Merrimac Square, Merrimac*

This long-awaited project advanced significantly in the last twelve months. The project was advertised for construction bids in September 2013; bids opened in December 2013, and awarded to Newport Construction ("Contractor") on January 22, 2014. MassDOT subsequently issued a Notice to Proceed and held a preconstruction conference on April 29, 2014. The Contractor has begun work on the project schedule and shop drawing submittals and reportedly in May 2014 began minor field work. On-site project activity is anticipated to begin in 2014; construction is expected to be complete in November 2015.

*Written by Todd Fontanella  
MVPC Sr Transportation Planner*

## Methuen Rotary I-93/MA-110/MA-113 Reconstruction Project

The Methuen Rotary is the highest crash location in the Merrimack Valley. MassDOT and the MVPC have been working together for many years to analyze, design and program funds for its replacement. MassDOT awarded a \$66 million contract to E.T. & L. Corporation in Winter 2014. As of June 2014, essential capacity and safety improvements are about to be implemented, including:



- Construction or realignment of four I-93 on- and off-ramps;
- Construction of a new I-93 southbound loop on-ramp and northbound loop off-ramp;
- Realignment of MA-110 and MA-113;
- Construction of new signalized intersections east and west of the interchange on MA-110 and MA-113;
- Reconstruction of existing city-owned signalized intersections at Forest Street/North Lowell Street (MA-113) and Burnham Road/Green Street/Haverhill Street (MA-110), and
- Improvement of bicyclist and pedestrian accommodations.

MassDOT held a Public Information Session on June 12 at the Methuen Senior Center on Lowell Street. An enthusiastic crowd turned out to learn more about the project schedule, projected roadway closures, and many other details.

Secretary Davey, along with the region's federal, state and local elected officials and agency representatives attended a project groundbreaking on July 2.

To view more detailed Project information or to sign up for periodic Project updates, log on to MassDOT's Methuen Rotary Reconstruction Project webpage at <http://methuenrotary.mhd.state.ma.us/>

*Written by Todd Fontanella  
MVPC Sr Transportation Planner*



## MVPC Welcomes Joe Cosgrove

Long time Environmental Program Manager, Alan Macintosh retired in May of this year after 36 years of dedicated service to MVPC. Replacing Alan is Joseph Cosgrove. Joe has 30 years experience in local, regional and state government. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Middlebury College and received a Masters Degree from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Before coming to MVPC he was the Director of Strategic Business & Innovation at the MBTA, reporting directly to the General Manager. He has experience in administered EPA Brownfields funds, preparing open space & recreation master plans and assessing the impact of climate change on transportation infrastructure, which is one of the projects MVPC will be undertaking over the course of the next few years. He has worked for NMCOG and was on the Executive Board of MAPC. He is a member of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association and a former Board Member.



*Hurricane Sandy, Ipswich*

## Sandy Coastal Resiliency Funding Award

MVPC partnered earlier in the year with the National Wildlife Federation and submitted a proposal for matching federal grant funding available through the Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Grant Program. On June 16<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Department of Interior announced grant award of \$2,940,000 for the Coastal Resiliency Planning and Ecosystem Enhancement project which will involve restoration work of the Great Marsh's wetlands and dunes. Our region's project is one of 54 funded along the Atlantic Seaboard through the competitive grant program. The Interior Department received 375 proposals and funded 54 (including four projects in Massachusetts) with a total of \$102.7 million in federal funding distributed.

*Written by Joe Cosgrove  
MVPC Environmental Program Manager*

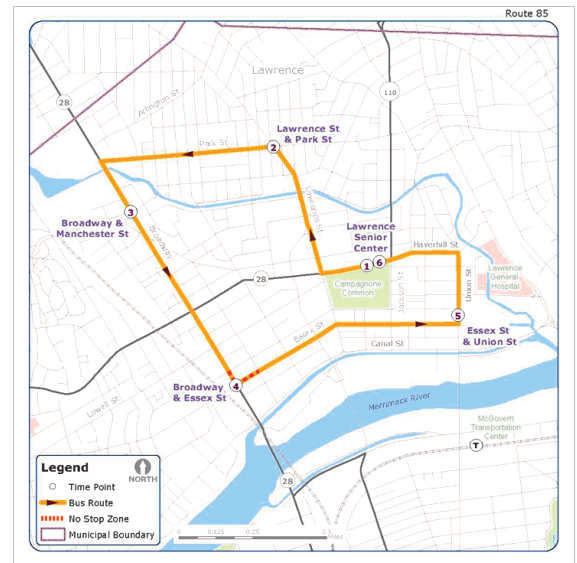
## Hop on a Bus !

The Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority is making several service improvements that will increase mobility and make it more convenient.

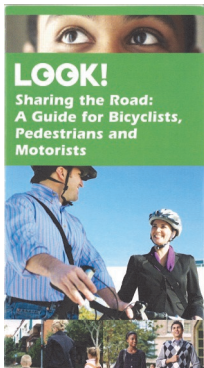
- **Downtown Shuttle**. On July 1, the MVRTA launched Route 85 that will provide better circulation in downtown Lawrence. The MVRTA worked with Mayor Dan Rivera to design the route.
- **Holiday Service**. Service will be provided on President's Day, Martin Luther King Day and Patriot's Day along a Saturday time schedule.
- **Sunday Service**. Starting September 7<sup>th</sup>, the MVRTA will run Sunday service on all Lawrence-based routes, as well as for Routes 51 and 54.
- **Boston Commuter Bus**. One additional outbound bus will be added at 4:45 p.m. from Bedford Street in Boston.

Fixed route rides are only \$1.25 or \$1 with a Tap and Ride/Charlie Card and the Boston Commuter Service is only \$5.00 (\$4.00 with the Charlie Card).

MVPC is also now creating all maps for MVRTA routes, such as the one for the new Route 85 shown above.



*Written by Betsy Goodrich  
MVPC Sr Transportation Planner*



## Haverhill Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program

MVPC and the Haverhill Police Department received a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to address bicycle and pedestrian safety. The City of Haverhill saw a total of 302 bicycle and pedestrian crashes between 2007-2011, making it the 14<sup>th</sup> highest community in the state, according to MassDOT.

To address this problem, the safety program will focus on enforcement and education. The Haverhill Police Department will issue citations and talk with bicyclists, pedestrians and drivers about safety issues and behavior at 7 locations in the city that have been deemed high crash areas for cyclists and pedestrians. The feedback they receive from people about potential infrastructure problems will be recorded and used to address safety concerns, including a walkability assessment that will identify both good and poor aspects of existing design and offer recommendations for improving the bicycle and pedestrian environment.

"Bicycle and pedestrian safety is a top priority for both the Haverhill Police Department and the MVPC. We need to bring the crash rate down and we hope that this program will help us do just that," stated Tony Kormornick, MVPC's Transportation Program Manager.

One of the unique aspects of this program is the partnership being created to address safety from a variety of directions. MassBike, WalkBoston, MassRides' Safe Routes to School Program and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Mass in Motion program will collectively provide additional resources and manpower in the City to educate people about safe bicycle and pedestrian behavior.

*Written by Betsy Goodrich  
MVPC Sr Transportation Planner*