



Merrimack Valley
Planning Commission
*plan * develop * promote*



2011 Annual Report

Planning Region and Commissioners



COMMISSIONERS

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ANDOVER	Joan Duff
BOXFORD	Joe Hill
GEORGETOWN	Mathilda Evangelista, <i>assistant secretary</i>
GROVELAND	Robert O'Hanley
HAVERHILL	Joseph Sullivan, <i>chairman</i>
LAWRENCE	Dan McCarthy
MERRIMAC	John Thomas
METHUEN	Kevin P. Hagerty
NEWBURY	David Powell, <i>assistant treasurer</i>
NEWBURYPORT	Ed Ramsdell, <i>secretary</i>
NORTH ANDOVER	Richard Byers
ROWLEY	Robert Snow, <i>treasurer</i>
SALISBURY	Lou Masiello
WEST NEWBURY	Brian Murphey
REP-at-LARGE	Willie J. Smith
MVPC	Dennis A. DiZoglio, <i>executive director</i>



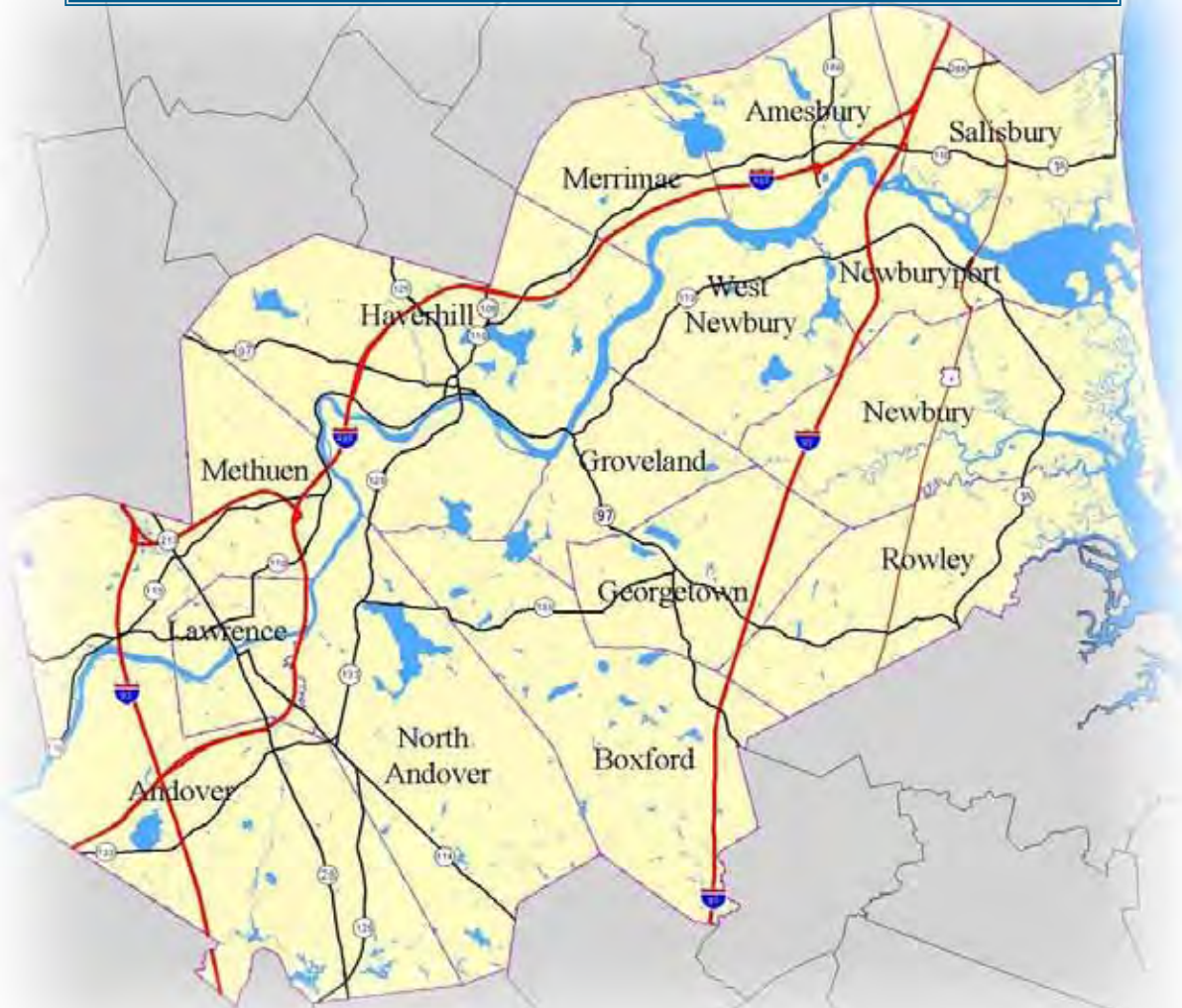
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The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
supports responsible forest management worldwide.



Mission Statement

The mission of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is to foster cooperation among its communities to resolve common, shared regional problems, to allow its communities to plan jointly, and to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated and orderly development of the region and the general welfare of its residents. This 2011 Annual Report is organized to demonstrate MVPC's commitment to this mission and to provide the region a vision to ensure that the Merrimack Valley is a great place to live, work and visit.



Chairman's Comments

- *Joseph P. Sullivan*



Joe Sullivan was elected as Chairman of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission at the annual meeting in May of 2011 and has represented the City of Haverhill on the commission since 2006. Joe has also served as the vice-chair and treasurer of the MVPC in the past. He is a member of the Haverhill Planning Board and maintains a law practice in Newburyport focusing on real estate, land use, estate planning and estate administration. A former Newburyport resident prior to moving to Haverhill in 2004, Joe is a former Newburyport City Solicitor (2002-2004). He served as a Newburyport City Councillor (1998-2000) and member of the Newburyport Zoning Board of Appeals (1993-1998). He resides in Haverhill with his wife and two children.

As chairman of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the staff and management on another successful year. During the past year the commission has experienced change as well as forward progress. Robert Lavoie completed his tenure as chairman of the commission at our annual meeting in May of 2011 and took office as vice-chairman and we said goodbye to long serving West Newbury Commissioner Rob Phillips who served the commission in various capacities. We also welcomed several new commissioners and we elected a new executive board. The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is poised to continue serving the fifteen communities in the Merrimack Valley with excellent services and outreach. We are becoming an increasingly relevant partner to the communities we serve and the efforts of our management and staff have not gone without notice.

An ancient proverb proclaims, "May you live in interesting times." This proverb, seen by many as a blessing and a curse correlates directly to our present condition and the fiscal environment of our communities and their citizens. Delivering quality constituent services and planning for future growth and development has never been more important. The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission has stepped into the breach to assist our communities as the struggle with planning, compliance with state and federal mandates and seeking new opportunities for regionalization of services. The Merrimack Valley Mayors and Managers Coalition has continued to provide a significant opportunity for collaboration. This year, through the efforts of the commission staff and director, a new regional inspectional services program was launched to help streamline our member communities' efforts to quickly and efficiently obtain qualified inspectional services on an outsourced basis. Our Priority Growth Strategy, prepared in 2009, has continued to be recognized as a model for regional planning.

We will continue to think of new and innovative ways to serve our member communities and remain a relevant partner in the coming years. On behalf of the commissioners who collectively serve our fifteen communities, I wish to thank and congratulate our staff and executive director on another year of exceptional performance.

Very truly yours,

Joseph P. Sullivan, Chairman

Executive Director's Comments

- Dennis A. DiZoglio



In 2011 MVPC's Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy received an Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organization (NADO). While it is great to receive recognition from your peers I think it is more important that the communities in the region recognize the role MVPC can play in planning, developing and promoting the Merrimack Valley Region. I firmly believe that the communities in the region have confidence in MVPC and look to us for help when it comes to strategic planning that creates a balance between growth and preserving the natural resources, and how to create a livable, sustainable region, connected and innovative.

In 2010 we rolled out a vision for the region, the Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy, the first comprehensive plan for the region in over thirty years. This year we began work on a Regional Clean Energy Plan. We obtained Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding and have reached out to our communities to begin the process. We hope to be completed with this strategic plan in 2012.

2011 also marks the year the Region Transportation Plan (RTP) was updated. We established a set of Goals and Objectives, identified the long range transportation needs in the region and prioritized our future investment strategy based on a fiscally strained financing plan. The highlights of which included the I-93 Lowell Junction Interchange, the Route 110/113 & I-93 Rotary and Whittier Bridge. I encourage you to review the RTP. We took considerable effort to make it more user friendly and policy oriented rather than a "data dump" which could describe past RTPs. After review of the RTP I certainly believe that you will see the needs and the dilemma we face in the region to adequately fund our transportation system.

This year we continued our Citizen Training Certification Program. In today's complex world we ask average citizens to help their community plan for its future by serving on boards and commissions. The program focused on training these volunteers in the intricacies of the legal and programmatic requirements associated with the development review process.

This year four more communities decided to participate in MVPC's Municipal Information Mapping Access Program (MIMAP). This GIS initiative is a web base browser, which allows communities to layer a multitude of data on assessors' maps and provides a method for communities to share and analyze information that impacts the use and development on every parcel of a community. Every community that has seen this planning tool demonstrated has decided to participate in the program.

In 2011 MVPC continued its role as a community organizer. Working with the Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition and the Town Administrators in the region, MVPC helped these alliances identify ways to work together. We hope that this regional approach will help the communities deal effectively with their fiscal challenges and become more efficient.

All of our accomplishments in 2011 can be viewed on our recently updated website. As we close our look on the MVPC accomplishments of 2011 we hope to be as successful in accomplishing our goals for 2012.

2012 Goals

1. Develop a Regional Energy Plan for the Valley.
2. Expand the use of MVPC GIS Technology throughout the Region.
3. Support the implementation of the Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy.
4. Manage the FFY 2012 TIP & UPWP and Develop the FFY 2013 TIP & UPWP. Assist communities to advance their Prioritized List of Transportation Projects for programming purposes.
5. Begin updating the CEDS for the Region and articulate and expand the Role MVPC can play in Promoting Economic Development in the Region.
6. Provide "Smart Growth" technical assistance to member communities.
7. Provide information and training to the Region's Professional and Volunteer Planners.
8. Identify ways to improve the overall administration of the Commission to make it more efficient and effective.
9. Continue to elevate the profile of the Commission throughout the Region and the Commonwealth.
10. Promote regional cooperation and collaboration and bring solutions to common challenges communities face.



Promoting Redevelopment and Growth

MVPC adopted a strategy that will drive the orderly development of the region for years to come. The Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy, the cornerstone of this effort, was rolled out by the Commission in 2009. The Strategy identifies where the region encourages growth, where the region would like to preserve and protect land from development, and how the transportation network of the region can be upgraded and enhanced to sustain and connect these development patterns. In 2011 MVPC received the Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for developing the Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy. NADO is a Washington, DC based association that promotes programs and policies which strengthen local governments, communities, and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery, and comprehensive strategies. The association's Innovation Awards program recognizes regional development organizations and partnering organizations for improving the economic and community competitiveness of our nation's regions and local communities.

Regional Strategic Framework Plan: With funds awarded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), MVPC completed the Framework Plan in May of 2011. The Plan followed, and was a logical extension of, the nationally recognized Priority Growth Strategy (PGS) completed by MVPC in 2009. Together, the PGS and Framework Plan have provided MVPC's communities and EOHED with a detailed examination of the region's zoning, land use, and regional goals and objectives for housing, economic development, and open space. EOHED will use this information to identify promising places for growth that are consistent with regional considerations; create prompt and predictable zoning and permitting in those places; invest in public infrastructure needed to support that growth; and market those places to businesses and developers interested in locating and growing in the Commonwealth.



Downtown Newburyport

HUD Sustainable Communities Planning Grant: In October 2011, MVPC submitted a federal grant application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to help improve mobility and to encourage high density transit oriented development in suitable locations throughout the region. Targeting development to sites that have existing infrastructure, transportation access, suitable zoning, and limited environmental impacts was the thrust of the application, and is consistent with the region's Priority Growth Strategy. Although unsuccessful in our attempts to secure funding, MVPC has been awarded "Preferred Sustainability Status" which signifies that the region is ready to advance planning that prioritizes sustainability as a core outcome of community development. Having met this criterion, MVPC has qualified for several benefits from HUD, including access to capacity building resources.



Cordovan Housing Development, Haverhill

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

Regional Clean Energy Plan: MVPC applied for and was awarded a \$50,000 grant in March from the U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration (EDA) to develop a regional clean energy plan. The grant comes through the Global Climate Change Mitigation Incentive Fund, which was formed to support projects that aim to decrease dependence on fossil fuels, curb greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance energy efficiency. "Increasing economic resiliency and sustainability are top priorities" said U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development John R. Fernandez in a press release. "This EDA investment will help to strengthen fifteen local municipalities by planning for and developing business and employment opportunities within the field of clean energy."



*Wind Turbine in
Newburyport*

The Energy Plan will complement the Mayors and Managers Coalition efforts to develop energy management strategies and energy conservation programs such as the procurement of an energy services company to conduct energy audits, the exploration of the development of solar or wind farms on closed landfills, and the hiring of an energy manager to assist communities interested in renewable energy projects.

MVPC's communities have been asked to complete an "energy needs assessment", the purpose of which is to better understand the interests and issues each community has with respect to energy management, local energy development, and what communities have accomplished and hope to accomplish in the future.

Development of the Energy Plan has given MVPC the opportunity to partner with **Merrimack College** in **North Andover**. Merrimack College students will be working with member communities using MassEnergyInsight data to analyze the energy consumption use in all municipalities which sign on. Energy consumption data (electric, gas, water, propane, etc.) can be gathered for all municipal buildings in the community to determine which buildings and/or departments are using the most energy.



Merrimack Center

Merrimack Housing Production Plan: In the fall of 2010, the **Merrimack** Planning Board and Board of Selectmen adopted a new Housing Production Plan which was developed on behalf of the town by MVPC's Comprehensive Planning department and the **Merrimack** Affordable Housing Board of Trustees. The Plan was approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in early 2011. The Housing Production Plan is an update of **Merrimack's** 2005 Housing Plan which expired. A Housing Production Plan is a proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing in a way consistent with the Town's goals and objectives by

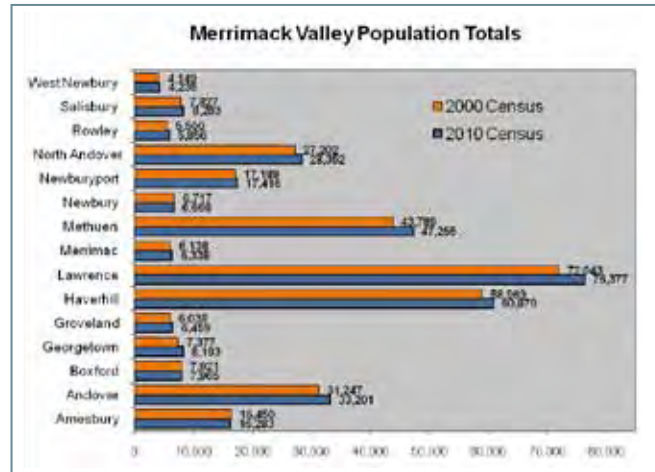
placing affordable housing where the Town determines it most appropriate. By taking a proactive approach, Merrimack is much more likely to achieve both their housing and community development goals.

Merrimack Valley Means Business: The Merrimack Valley Means Business website at www.mvmb.biz, officially launched on October 15, 2009, has now been successfully running for over two years. MVMB is a pioneering concept for new and existing businesses in the Merrimack Valley. Developed by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC), in partnership with the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council (MVEDC), regional Chambers of Commerce, and community development departments, MVMB offers a unique and technologically advanced service for prospective and existing businesses looking to market or expand in the region. The only comprehensive, field-based inventory of properties in Massachusetts, the website offers valuable information on over 11,500 businesses and 500 locations for sale or lease in the Valley and employs the latest mapping and imaging technologies.

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

The data-rich, interactive website allows users to conduct qualitative online geographic research on key location factors, including: quality of workforce; consumer buying habits; tax incentives and enterprise zoning; transportation access; and available property attributes, such as building size, alternative energy sources, parking, and realtor contact information. In addition, high resolution, oblique aerial images using MVPC's Pictometry Image Warehouse System is available for each business and property location. This interactive imaging system is a first-of-its-kind tool offered on a business and property information website.

Regional Data Center: MVPC is the regional repository of demographic data from various federal and state agencies. In 2011, MVPC was busy collecting and analyzing data releases from the 2010 Census and American Community Surveys. The Merrimack Valley region's population grew by 4.8% compared to 3.1% for the State as a whole. Local population, race and housing unit totals from the 2010 Census were released on March 22nd, showing our region growing, albeit more slowly than in previous censuses, and continuing to diversify. The region traditionally has seen its population grow faster than the State. After the 1990 census the region saw a 10.5% increase compared to a State increase of 4.9% and in 2000 the region again saw a 10.5% increase with the State realizing a 5.5% increase. The total population for the 15-community Merrimack Valley region now stands at 333,748, up from 318,556 in 2000.



"ROUTE 133/I-95" & "NATIONAL AVE." PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT SITES



Priority Development Sites: MVPC assisted the Town of **Georgetown** with their application to be designated a state Economic Target Area (ETA). Companies locating in an ETA can receive state and local tax incentives in exchange for job creation and private investment commitments. **Georgetown** hopes to retain a long standing business in town by providing these incentives; otherwise the business could possibly relocate to another area or a different state which offers similar incentives.

Brownfields Assessment: MVPC continued its Merrimack Valley Brownfields Assessment Program in

2011, which began in 2003. Through a series of grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Program has performed environmental assessments on a number of properties in the region, including the site of the proposed **Lawrence** Allied Health and Technology Center. While the current assessment program is set to expire in 2012, MVPC applied for additional funding in the fall of 2011 to extend the assessment program another three years. The award decision by EPA is expected to be made in spring 2012.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: The 2011 Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Performance Report was submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) on June 30. The report provides an update on economic development conditions, studies, and initiatives in the region since the release of the 2008 Merrimack Valley CEDS. The 2008 CEDS was a complete update of the regional master plan, featuring a new set of goals, objectives, and action plan. MVPC has worked closely with the private, public, and nonprofit sectors on numerous initiatives reflected in the CEDS, centered on the themes of infrastructure, marketing, green initiatives, and entrepreneurship support.



Protecting the Region's Environment

From the panoramic 20,000-acre Great Marsh and sandy beaches lining our coast, to the patchwork of forests and farms in our uplands and river corridors, the Merrimack Valley is home to some of the most picturesque and ecologically-significant natural resources in the Commonwealth. During 2011, MVPC environmental planners worked closely with our member communities, state and federal agencies, and environmental organizations to help inventory, map, and protect the Valley region's vital land and water resources. Program highlights included active support for the Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Program, assessment of contaminated Brownfields properties, and stormwater management technical assistance to communities.

Massachusetts Bays Program (MBP) Support: MVPC's environmental staff provided ongoing planning and management support to the Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Program, one of 28 federally-designated estuary programs in the country. MVPC served on the program's management committee and assisted on a wide array of coastal education and improvement projects. These included field surveys of invasive plant species in the Great Marsh, as well as seminars on stormwater management, climate change adaptation, and greenscaping. Sharing a vision of "clear water, clean beaches, and safe shellfish", MVPC and MBP work cooperatively to help protect the vulnerable natural resources of the Bays' ecosystem.



Site near downtown Merrimac

Brownfields Assessments: With funding from EPA National Brownfields Program grants, and with ongoing technical support from TRC Environmental Corp. (Lowell), MVPC continued to work collaboratively with municipal community development departments, Groundworks Lawrence and other area nonprofits, MassDevelopment, and MassDEP to carry out ASTM Phase I and II environmental site assessments on idled or abandoned Brownfields properties in the region. Once restored, these blighted properties provide outstanding opportunities for new business and housing development as well as for public greenspace, including community gardens in **Lawrence** and the multi-use Bradford Rail-Trail in **Haverhill**.

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

Stormwater Management: MVPC continued to provide timely information and advice to local governments on their federally-mandated Phase II stormwater management programs (SWMPs). These programs target stormwater runoff in the communities' designated "urbanized areas", and are intended to: reduce the discharge of stormwater pollutants to the 'maximum extent practicable" (MEP), protect local water resources, and satisfy applicable requirements of the Clean Water Act. Attainment of the MEP standard requires the development and ultimately the implementation of six minimum control measures:



- public education and outreach
- public participation and involvement
- illicit discharge detection and elimination
- construction site runoff control
- post-construction runoff control
- pollution prevention/good housekeeping

MVPC assistance included preparation of public outreach materials on household best management practices, inventorying and mapping of critical stormwater facilities, and the compilation of data in support of MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) annual reporting to EPA. MVPC will offer additional assistance to member communities in 2012 when the next 5-year cycle of the federal Phase II program is expected to get underway.

Open Space Planning: MVPC, in collaboration with the Green Neighborhoods Alliance, continued to assist communities in the drafting and refinement of Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) bylaws. An alternative to conventional subdivision design, OSRD is a proven technique for building new housing and desirable neighborhoods while maximizing the retention of prime open space, including forests, farmland, wildlife habitat, and off-road trail corridors. The result is a more compact, "people-friendly" subdivision that promotes walking and resident interaction while protecting a site's most important conservation and historical attributes. MVPC also worked with municipal planners and conservation agents in several communities – most notably **Amesbury**,



Merrimac, and **Methuen** – to help update their 5-year open space & recreation plans (OSRP). A current OSRP conforming to state Division of Conservation Services guidelines is a requirement for receiving land acquisition and outdoor recreation facilities grants. Finally, MVPC collected and shared sample open space baseline reports and management plans to aid conservation commissions in documenting their planned land acquisitions.



Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region



The Eight Towns and the Bay Committee is now known as the *Eight Towns and the Great Marsh (8TGM) Committee*. Committee members voted in December 2011, after a year-long discussion, to change the organization's name to more closely reflect the focus of the Committee's work. Activities centered in the communities and estuaries of the 25,000 acre coastal Great Marsh include; improvement of high marsh habitat as well as estuarine and riverine habitat; sea level rise adaptation; shellfish bed restoration; reduction in nutrient loading to the marsh; and reduction of marine invasive species. Some key projects addressed in 2011 include:

Great Marsh Revitalization Task Force: To better address the degradation of the Great Marsh from the threat of the invasive, non-native, marsh plant, Phragmites or common reed, the 8TGM Committee worked with local state senators and representatives to form the legislatively chaired Great Marsh Revitalization Task Force (GMRTF). The Task Force representative's sole goal is to manage and control Phragmites in the Great Marsh. The Task Force is comprised of federal, state, local, academic, and not-for-profit stakeholders concerned with the recent proliferation of Phragmites in the Great Marsh, particularly in the communities of **Salisbury**, **Newburyport**, and **Newbury**. The Task Force established four committees to concentrate on the long-term and short-term goals of: (1) Science and Research, (2) Permitting, (3) Funding, and (4) Education and Outreach. Long-term activities are those associated with the understanding of the environmental changes that have occurred in the marsh that have allowed the *Phragmites* plant to expand throughout the open marsh. Short-term actions (*Phragmites* control) are those associated with managing the further spread of the *Phragmites* plant until the long-term solutions can be identified and implemented.

Under the guidance of the GMRTF and using multiple funding sources, several projects were accomplished in 2011. With the support of MVPC GIS staff, all Phragmites stands were GPS mapped in the **Salisbury** marsh south of Beach Road and overlain with property assessor maps to identify property owners for obtaining permission for future Phragmites control. Also in the **Salisbury** marsh, control activities took place along the **Salisbury** State Beach Reservation access road which included herbicide application and subsequent mowing.



Mowing invasive Phragmites post herbicide treatment



Treatment of invasive Phragmites in Salisbury

Control activities in both Newburyport and Newbury included pesticide application and mowing of the more robust stands in the upper marsh. This work will greatly reduce the Phragmites seed source and allow native vegetation to return to the treated areas.

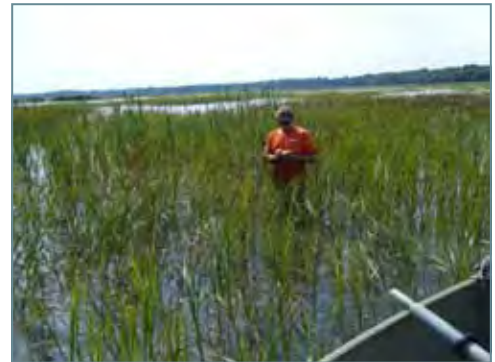
Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

Further research on the reasons for phragmites proliferation was undertaken in the **Newbury** section of the marsh. This research included detailed investigation into salinity, sulfate, and plant combinations to determine factors affecting Phragmites growth. Preliminary results indicate that much of the infested area of the marsh is at a critical tipping point; however, control efforts, thus far, are working to contain the Phragmites.

Greenscapes: Eight Towns and the Great Marsh, a key member of the Greenscapes Coalition North Shore, worked with member communities, including the towns of **West Newbury, Merrimac, Rowley, Salisbury, Newbury, and Georgetown** to promote the Greenscapes, environmentally sustainable landscaping program. To reduce stormwater in the region the Greenscapes Program in 2012 provided communities with Greenscapes workshops, website resources, e-newsletters, educational materials, and assistance in developing the education and outreach component for the required Notice of Intent for the pending EPA stormwater permit.

Marine Invasive Species Monitoring: Marine invasives species were monitored at several sites in the Great Marsh area by the Eight Towns and the Great Marsh Committee. Most of these sites are toward the southern end of the Marsh where substrate and salinities are more favorable for their growth. Marine invasive species in the region, primarily different types of crabs and tunicates (small, colonizing filter feeding animals), outcompete native species for habitat and food; clog water intakes; foul fishing gear, lines, and docks and piers, creating economic impacts to boaters, fishermen and marine enterprises. Invasive tunicates are well established in Gloucester, however, in Rockport Harbor and Essex Bay, marine invasive species are just beginning to get a

foothold. Aside from an occasional green crab, marine invasive species have not been detected in Plum Island Sound. Eight Towns and the Great Marsh also worked this year with local stakeholders in an effort to discover sites in the Merrimack River area where salinities could be conducive to marine invasive growth. No such sites were found. The fresh waters of the Merrimack and the turbulence of the open Atlantic ocean make it difficult for marine invasive species to colonize the MVPC communities.



MVPC's Eight Towns and the Great Marsh Representative, Peter Phippen mapping Phragmites



Salinity monitoring in Newbury portion of the Great Marsh

foothold. Aside from an occasional green crab, marine invasive species have not been detected in Plum Island Sound. Eight Towns and the Great Marsh also worked this year with local stakeholders in an effort to discover sites in the Merrimack River area where salinities could be conducive to marine invasive growth. No such sites were found. The fresh waters of the Merrimack and the turbulence of the open Atlantic ocean make it difficult for marine invasive species to colonize the MVPC communities.

Invasive marine tunicates coating a fishing line



Three different invasive tunicates



Prioritizing Transportation Investments

MVMPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): Any transportation project in the region that is to be funded in whole, or in part, with Federal transportation dollars must appear in the regional TIP.

Amendments to the FY 2011-2014 TIP were made throughout the year to update the FY 2011 element with additional projects which were anticipated to be ready to advertise by September 30, 2011 and to change projects costs and add additional funding in categories where new funding became available. In January the project to fund the preliminary design of the Border-to-Boston Bikeway was added.

The MVMPO endorsed the FY 2012-2015 TIP in September, which includes continued Federal funding for the reconstruction of Route 125, South Main Street in **Haverhill**, and the replacement of the Bates Bridge which carries Routes 97 and 113 over the Merrimack River between **Haverhill** and **Groveland**, two large projects being “Advanced Constructed” (AC) by the State. Both of these projects are currently underway, with the State fronting the money and the TIP includes funding to reimburse the State with Federal funds. The largest project to ever be programmed in the MVMPO TIP is slated to begin in FY 2012, replacing the I-95 Whittier Bridge over the Merrimack River between **Newburyport** and **Salisbury**, a \$285 million project.

The TIP also includes FY 2012 funding for Interstate Maintenance of I-495 in **Haverhill** and Federal Aid Bridge funding to clean and paint four bridges along I-95 in **Boxford** and **Georgetown**.

Additional projects programmed in the future years (i.e. 2013, 2014 and 2015) are reconstruction of Route 110 in **Merrimac** Square, construction of the **Bradford** section of the Haverhill Riverwalk, replacement of the Lowell Street Bridge over the railroad in **Lawrence**, construction of the remaining portion of the Powwow Riverwalk in **Amesbury**, reconstruction of Route 150 in **Amesbury**, and Federal Safe Routes to School funding for the **North Andover** Middle School area.



Haverhill Parking Garage

Transit projects include funds for designing and constructing a new bus transit station in **Haverhill** on a new site adjacent to the commuter rail station, constructing an intermodal transit station in **Newburyport**, replacing buses with new buses, replacing commuter coaches with new coaches, replacing communication systems, as well as funding for operating and maintaining MVRTA service.

Projects in the 2012-2015 TIP

- Reconstructing South Main Street (Route 125 in Haverhill)
- Replacing the Bates Bridge Between Groveland and Haverhill
- Designing improvements at Massachusetts Avenue and Route 125 in North Andover
- Constructing Salisbury Rail-Trail connector to Route 1 Bridge
- Design and environmental review for Interchange Construction/Engineering on I-93 in Andover, Tewksbury, and Wilmington between Exits 41 and 42
- Designing portions of Border-to-Boston Bikeway in MVMPO region
- Continuing Operation of MVRTA regional transit services
- Constructing a new bus station in a new location in Haverhill

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region



Regional Transportation Plan (RTP): The Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization approved the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan at its meeting in September.

The RTP, the cornerstone document in the transportation planning process in the Valley, evaluates the region's multimodal transportation network and outlines the region's transportation priorities for improving that network over the next 20+ years. Any significant transportation project that is to be built in part with federal transportation funds must first appear in the RTP.

The two largest projects identified in the RTP are the reconstruction of the Interstate 93/Route 110-113 interchange in **Methuen** and the construction of a new interchange off Interstate 93 in the Lowell Junction area of **Andover** and the accompanying widening of that roadway between the Wilmington/Tewksbury line and the Shawsheen River.

Other significant roadway projects included in the approved 2012 RTP were the widening/reconstruction of a section of Route 114 in **Lawrence** and **North Andover**, reconstruction of Route 97 in **Groveland**, and the construction of the Border to Boston Multiuse Trail in **Boxford**, **Georgetown**, **Newbury** and **Salisbury**.

Key transit projects are the maintenance of the region's transit facilities, including the McGovern and Buckley Transportation Centers in **Lawrence** and the new **Haverhill** Intermodal Center, the replacement and maintenance of the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority's fixed route bus and demand-response transportation vehicle fleets and the double tracking of the **Haverhill** Commuter Rail Line.



The 2012 RTP also demonstrates that sufficient funding is expected to be available over the course of the next 23 years (the timeframe covered by the document) to maintain the region's arterial and collector roadways at their current condition.

The new, more user-friendly RTP also includes new sections on how the transportation network could be impacted by climate change and identifies strategies for changing our transportation system to make our communities more livable and better connected.

The 2012 RTP for the region is available at local libraries and at the MVPC offices in **Haverhill**, and at:

www.mvpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2012-RTP-Ch-1-Fiscal-Constraint.pdf

UPWP: In September, the Merrimack Valley MPO endorsed the region's Federal Fiscal Year 2012 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which outlines the major transportation planning studies and activities that will take place in the Valley in FFY 2012 (October 1, 2011 - September 30, 2012). This document is prepared annually by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission on behalf of the MPO.

Key analyses to be undertaken by the MVPC for the MPO in Federal Fiscal Year 2012 include traffic and safety studies at intersections in **Newburyport** (Route 1/Merrimac Street; Route 113/Route 95 Interchange), **Haverhill** (Lafayette Square), **Methuen** (Route 28/Route 213 Interchange; Marston Corner), **Newbury** (Route 1/Elm Street) and **Merrimac** (Route 495/Broad Street Interchange).



Marston Corner, Methuen

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

MVPC staff will also undertake a feasibility study for the possible reuse of the Manchester and Lawrence Branch of Pan Am Railways as a Multiuse Trail that would improve bicycle and pedestrian transportation in **Lawrence**.



M & L Rail Corridor

Carrying forward with work undertaken under the region's FY 2011 UPWP, staff will continue to identify those regional transportation facilities that might be impacted by Climate Change in the coming years. Efforts will also continue to assist local officials in implementing and the general public in understanding how they can modify the local and regional transportation system to improve the quality of life in the Valley. Key transit analyses to be completed in FY 2012 include an analysis of the feasibility of implementing Bus on Shoulder transit service in the I-93 corridor between Manchester, NH and Greater Boston (see page 14) as well as an update to the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority's Strategic Plan, a document that outlines the organization's long term goals in providing transit service in the Valley and the steps that will need to be taken to achieve these goals.

Lowell Junction Interchange/Route 93 Widening: Work continued on the Draft Environmental Impact Study/Environmental Impact Report (DEIS/EIR) for the project that is being prepared by MassDOT. However, much of this effort was devoted to gathering the additional information that is required (i.e. wetlands delineation, right of way layout, traffic volumes, water quality impact assessments, etc.) as a result of the 2010 decision to expand the project's scope to include the widening of Route 93 through **Andover** and **Methuen** to the New Hampshire state line to provide four travel lanes and a breakdown lane in each direction on the roadway.

Another key development relating to this project was its inclusion in the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization's 2012 Regional Transportation Plan. This fiscally-constrained document (i.e. there must be sufficient funding identified to implement the included projects) includes the construction of the interchange along with the widening of a section of I-93 in the Valley.

Route 110/113 Rotary: This rotary within the interchange of Routes 110 and 113 with Interstate 93 in **Methuen** has long been the location of severe congestion during peak travel periods and has one of the highest crash rates of any location in the Commonwealth. An MPO analysis showed that during the period from 2006-2008 over 650 crashes took place along roadways and at intersections that would be improved as part of the reconstruction of this interchange.



Methuen Rotary

In 2011, the Environmental Assessment/Environmental Impact Report (EA/EIR) for the preferred alternative was approved by the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Unit. In addition, MassDOT advertised a project to signalize the Riverside Drive/Route 110 intersection, which is located just west of the existing Rotary. This is an early action item for the long-term improvement project that will address existing safety and congestion issues.

The long term improvement alternative will eliminate the current Rotary and replace it with a Single Point Urban Intersection (SPUI) with new traffic signals, new on and off ramps and the reconstruction of a section of I-93 north of the Merrimack River to accommodate four travel lanes and a breakdown in each direction in the future.

Design work on the improvements to the rotary will continue through much of 2012. While the Merrimack Valley MPO's 2012 Regional Transportation Plan identified potential funding sources that could be used to implement these improvements, it is likely that other funding options will be examined by the MPO over the next year or two.

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

Lawrence Industrial Park Rail Freight: For years, rail freight service to the Lawrence Industrial Park has been hampered by the lack of a "run around" track on the spur that services that location. This has meant that the freight provider, PanAm Railways, had to run two round trips each time deliveries were being made—once to pick up empty cars in the park and bring them back to the **Lawrence** Rail Yards and then one to bring the loaded cars to businesses. Having to provide these two round trips was not only more costly to the provider but was also difficult to schedule given the large number of passenger and freight trains that travel along the busy **Haverhill** Main Line in this area.

After years of looking at alternative options for addressing this issue, 2011 saw the identification of a solution to this problem. Through funding from the American Recovery and Rehabilitation Act, and administered by the MBTA, a new siding will be built just west of the spur's intersection with Beacon Street that will allow PanAm Railways to bring loaded cars to the Industrial Park and then bring the empty cars back to the Rail Yard in one round trip. Construction is expected to be completed in 2012.



Bus on Shoulder Transit: Traffic congestion in the I-93 corridor Manchester, NH to downtown Boston and beyond has been a fact of life for over 30 years. Actions to address this problem include the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project completed by MassDOT in 2008 and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's (NHDOT) ongoing effort to widen the roadway between the state line and Route 293.

The I-93 Corridor Transit Study, undertaken by NHDOT with the cooperation of MassDOT, was completed in 2008 and evaluated a series of measures that would improve transit services in the corridor. The one that received the most favorable evaluation was the implementation of Bus on Shoulder transit service between Manchester and Boston.

Such a service would allow the breakdown lane to be used by buses when traffic congestion in the regular travel lanes is severe. While the Bus on Shoulder concept has been employed in this country for a number of years, it is gaining greater acceptance as evidence mounts that it is an effective, moderate cost method of improving transit service and thereby reducing the number of commuters that drive alone in congested highway corridors.

In 2011, the Merrimack Valley MPO included a task in the region's Federal Fiscal Year 2012 Unified Planning Work Program to further investigate the application of this Bus on Shoulder concept in the I-93 Corridor from New Hampshire south to Greater Boston. It is believed that the findings and recommendations from its analysis could facilitate the consideration of implementing this concept in other congested travel corridors in Massachusetts.

National Highway System Intermodal Facilities Inventory: Late in 2011, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission conducted a National Highway System (NHS) Intermodal Facilities Inventory in support of improving intermodal connections in the Valley. An intermodal connection involves switching between modes of transportation during a trip and usually requires a facility at which to make the change between means of transportation, (for example from a car to a train). Intermodal travel and connections are an important element of many goals and objectives of both the Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy, founded on "smart growth" principles, and the similar Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) "Green DOT", sustainability initiative.



Newburyport

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

Assessing the condition of existing intermodal facilities and the condition of the roadways connecting these facilities to the National Highway System is the focus of the report. The physical condition of the major public intermodal facilities in the region, including, commuter rail; commuter, regional, and local bus; and park-and-ride facilities were inventoried. Recommendations were made to address any issues or needs identified during the inventory.

Route 28 Traffic Congestion Study: The Study found that roadway improvements made in conjunction with the opening of the new Lowe's at Stateline Plaza had significantly reduced congestion on Route 28 in the vicinity of its intersection with Hampshire Road just north of the state line in Salem, NH and at the new driveway to the plaza onto Route 28.



Intersection Route 28/Rosewood Drive

It was also determined that smaller improvements could be made to traffic flow in the corridor by making minor modifications to the traffic signal at the intersection of Route 28/Rosewood Drive/Village Mall Driveway. Further improvements, such as the creation of a center turn lane between the signal at Rosewood Drive and the state line, would prove costly given the relatively narrow right of way in that section of the corridor.



Winthrop Avenue, Lawrence

MVPC Completes Intersection Safety Studies for the Region: In 2011, MVPC transportation staff completed safety studies at three intersection locations within the Merrimack Valley Region that have some of the highest number of reported crashes within the region, according to the state-wide crash database, which is maintained by the state's Registry of Motor Vehicles. Two of the locations are in **Lawrence**, including Route 114 (Winthrop Avenue and Parker Street) at Andover Street and Route 28 (Broadway) at Water and Canal Streets, and the other location is in **Methuen** at Route 113 (Pleasant Valley Street) at Milk Street and the Loop Driveway.

2011 Traffic Volume Counts: This past year MVPC collected Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) data at 103 locations throughout the 15 communities in our Merrimack Valley region. There were 17 locations selected by Mass DOT with the remaining counts taken from the annual, two, and four year cycles determined by MVPC. Additional Turning Movement Counts (TMC) were taken in the town of **Newbury** and several locations in the cities of **Lawrence** and **Methuen**.



These counts are to be used by MVPC for a number of purposes including maintaining the regional traffic model and the measurement of traffic growth in the region. This information is also requested on a regular basis from developers and other private sector interests for use in decisions on business locations and development. An updated history of all traffic counting data will be available online in early 2012.

Promoting the Orderly Development of the Region

For the latest traffic data, please see the "Transportation Data Viewer" on our website:

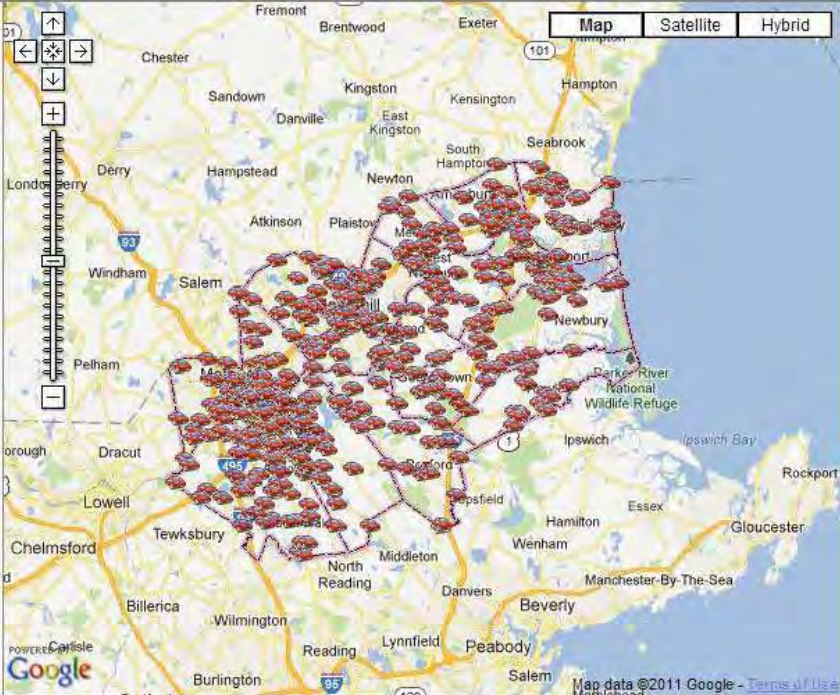
www.mvpc.org/programs/transportation/interactive-transportation-map/

Merrimack Valley Planning Commission Transportation Viewer

Legend

- Traffic Count Locations
- High Crash Locations
- Municipal Boundaries

Search for traffic count locations by street name:
Elm
 Exact match



Merrimack Valley Planning Commission Transportation Viewer

Legend

- Traffic Count Locations
- High Crash Locations
- Municipal Boundaries

Search for traffic count locations by street name:
Elm
 Exact match

More Info

Address of the clicked point: 577-599 Main St, Haverhill, MA 01830, USA
[less info..](#)

[Address](#) [Traffic Count](#) [Crash Location](#) [Streetview](#)





Coordinating Activities in the Region

Regional GIS Service Provider: 2011 should be noted in the MVPC record as a very significant year for the GIS Program. During the past year, MVPC was successful in creating a formal working relationship with the State's Geographic Information System (GIS) office, MassGIS. Though a competitive application process, MVPC was awarded designation as the Regional GIS Service Center for northeastern MA. This three-year designation (with extension for a possible 4th year) represents the successful culmination of nearly ten (10) years of lobbying and persistence to establish more direct channels between MassGIS and regional planning agencies. As a result of this formalized designation, MVPC can now contract directly with MassGIS without going through an elaborate procurement process – thereby creating a much more efficient mechanism through which projects can be initiated between the state and MVPC.

Evacuation Route Mapping: Working collaboratively with the Northeast Homeland Security Regional Advisory Council (NERAC) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), MVPC's GIS Program has been developing an evacuation planning template that will enable the coordination of local plans on a region-wide scale to assist local, mutual aid and regional emergency responders in the event human evacuation within, from or through any NERAC community becomes necessary.

In meeting with local Emergency Management Directors (EMDs), Fire Chiefs, Police Chiefs and other emergency response personnel in the region, MVPC was able to map the primary evacuation routes for each of the 15 cities and towns in the MVPC region. During the meetings with local officials, MVPC also reviewed and confirmed the locations of infrastructure critical to the operation of each community as well as traffic control points and the locations of special populations.

Parcel Mapping Initiative: MVPC's GIS Program continued to provide property parcel update and mapping services to member communities during 2011 with the Town of **Groveland** being the most recent community added to the program. Working with local assessor offices, MVPC's GIS Program updates the property parcel datasets and produces the official assessor maps for 11 of its 15 communities.

Local Technical Assistance/Information Technology: A series of smaller mapping and data analysis projects for member communities were also completed during 2011 using Local Technical Assistance (LTA) time and through direct contract. For example, working with the City of **Amesbury**, a GIS analysis was completed that calculates the distance between the three public schools in the community and each specific address. In **Boxford**, a GIS project was completed resulting in the production of a map showing all undeveloped large parcels with the potential for housing solar energy facilities.



Coordinating Activities in the Region

GIS staff continued to assist the Eight Towns and the Great Marsh (8T&GM) program in mapping the locations of the invasive plant, phragmites. Other work completed was the production of an updated Zoning map for the Town of **Salisbury**.

The GIS Program continued to manage the agency computer network in 2011 and assists in the management of the commission's internet website. The commission's website can be accessed by visiting: www.mvpc.org

Municipal Information Mapping Access Program: During 2011 MVPC's GIS Program continued to expand the functionality of its Municipal Information Mapping Access Program (MIMAP) for communities in the region. Eleven of the fifteen municipalities in the region are using MIMAP to access the wealth of GIS data archived at MVPC—the Towns of **Andover** and **Groveland** being the latest additions. Working with its consortium of MIMAP communities, MVPC has also invested in the development of a mobile version of MIMAP. Having the ability to access robust GIS data using mobile devices will help improve efficiency and the timely delivery of services for a variety of municipal functions. Early in the first quarter of 2012, MVPC anticipates the release of an updated desktop version of MIMAP and the mobile version capable of operating in both the Android and iOS operating system environment.

By accessing MIMAP, an easy-to-use and innovate web-based mapping application, specific addresses can be located and information such as assessor records, building permits, board of health records and orders of conditions from conservation commissions can be quickly queried. Each deployment of MIMAP is customized for the individual municipality, which enables other datasets and maps, including oblique images from Pictometry, to be readily displayed.

For more information about MIMAP, visit our website at:

www.mvpc.org/programs/gisinformation-technology/web-based-mapping/

City of Newburyport, Massachusetts
Municipal Information Mapping Access Program (MIMAP)

Base Map | Zoning | Utilities | 2008 Aerials | Pavement Manag | Size |

Scale 1" = 57 ft

Owner	Address	Lot Size
CITY OF NEWBURYPORT	INN ST MALL	45738

1 selected | To Mailing Labels | To Spreadsheet

Property | Building | Conservation | ZBA

Permit Number D-2008-0024
Permit Type Display Sign
Year 2008
Permit Date 07/08/2008
Approval Date 07/10/2008
Street Address 12 State Street
Zoning District B2
Application Type Sign
Use Retail

Coordinating Activities in the Region

MVPC has extensive experience in helping its member communities plan for their future. Clearly well planned communities produce a well-planned region so MVPC has used its expertise to help communities coordinate their planning actions. Through technical assistance and technology MVPC has undertaken the following activities:

Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation: The MVPC completed two major trail planning reports this year. The **Merrimack River Reconnaissance Planning Study** was completed in partnership with the Essex National Heritage Commission and in cooperation with the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, the Merrimack River Watershed Council and the communities that abut the river from the New Hampshire border to the ocean. The study, undertaken at the encouragement of the Merrimack Valley communities, was a strategic planning project focused on *re-imagining* the Merrimack River Trail as one of the region's outstanding recreational assets: a 50-mile long bicycle and pedestrian trail along the Merrimack River. Recommendations include both off-road trail and on-road connections in order to achieve a contiguous trail. And just as important as trail development, the report recommends that the trail be better promoted and more prominently marked so residents and visitors will more easily enjoy all that it has to offer.



Clipper City Rail Trail, Newburyport

The MVPC also completed the **Georgetown Branch Shared Use Path Feasibility Study**. This study was initiated as a result of discussions between officials in the City of **Haverhill** and the Towns of **Georgetown** and **Groveland** to explore the potential of extending the Bradford Rail-Trail further east of the Basiliere Bridge on or adjacent to the former B&M Railroad **Georgetown** Branch. The extended path (approximately 5.5 miles) would link a variety of neighborhoods at the local level and with the Merrimack River and Border to Boston Trails that are in various development stages.

The design process has begun for the **Border to Boston** trail. In November, the communities of **Salisbury**, **Newbury**, **Georgetown** and **Boxford** along with MassDOT, MVPC and the design team selected by MassDOT to complete this work held

an open house in **Boxford** inviting the public to provide their insights into what they would like to see included as part of the trail design. More meetings will be held as the project makes its way through the design process. MVPC is housing the project web page at: mvpc.org/programs/transportation/border-to-boston-trail



Salisbury Eastern Marsh Trail

We are also pleased to report that the creation of a safer connection between the Old Eastern Marsh Trail in **Salisbury** and the Clipper City Rail Trail in **Newburyport** is underway. To address safety issues for people who would need to cross busy Route 1 to use both trails, MassDOT's engineering team designed an alternative that takes advantage of the right-of-way on either side and underneath the Gillis Bridge in **Salisbury** to create a connection that also lets people enjoy the beauty of the river. The project has been advertized for construction and work is expected to commence in Spring 2012.

Coordinating Activities in the Region

MVPC Transportation and Livability Information Sessions: Livability has always been important to any community's residents, businesses and other constituents and now it is becoming increasingly important to transportation planners and funding agencies. From the transportation perspective, livability is often defined as having multimodal access to good housing, shopping, recreation, public facilities, medical and municipal services. It is also defined being able to interact with friends, family and the public, and an individual's perception of personal and public safety that influences mobility. In 2011, the MVPC worked to stimulate its constituents' understanding of livability, to recognize local and regional livability strengths and challenges, and to generate ideas for specific transportation projects that can preserve and improve community livability. *Transportation and Livability* workshops were held in the towns of **Salisbury** and **Georgetown** and additional sessions will be held in other MVPC communities in 2012.



To submit questions or comments about the MVPC Livability and Transportation Information Sessions, contact Anthony Komornick, MVPC Transportation Program Manager at MVPC. Telephone: 978-374-0519 or email, akomornick@mvpc.org

Small Business Growth Seminar: MVPC participated in this seminar sponsored by the Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union and the City of **Lawrence**. Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio highlighted the small business resources available from the Commission ranging from the Merrimack Valley Means Business Website, to the EDA revolving Loan Fund and the EPA revolving Loan Fund for Brownfields cleanup.



Brownfields: Nearly 100 public officials and economic development stakeholders from across the Merrimack Valley region gathered at Northern Essex Community College to participate in the Northeast Regional Brownfields Coalition forum. "Brownfields: Assessment to Redevelopment and Everything in Between" was jointly planned and developed by MassDEP, MassDevelopment, EPA, EOHEd, the Planning Office of Urban Affairs and MVPC. This interactive forum presented case studies highlighting the use of best practices to successfully assess, restore and redevelop contaminated properties during financially troubled times. In addition MVPC Director Dennis DiZoglio was asked to present at the EPA Brownfields Grant Recipient conference in Worcester this year.

Citizen Planner Training: MVPC's Citizen Planner Training Program enjoyed another successful year in 2011. Residents volunteer their time to sit on various boards and commissions, evaluate proposals, interpret regulations and statutes, and render decisions that guide the future of the community. Government can be complex for the average citizen with overriding statutory standards, multiple board jurisdictions, and diverse and sometimes competing public policies. To help these volunteers deal with these issues this program allows officials and volunteers on Planning Boards, Conservation Commissions, Zoning Boards of Appeal, Historic District Commissions and Boards of Health to be more familiar with legal and permitting requirements. The training program covers the open meeting law, conflict of interest, public record keeping, statutory responsibilities, cooperation and coordination of public entities and bodies and streamlines permitting.

Coordinating Activities in the Region

Business Improvement Districts (BID's): In April 2011, MVPC invited Frank Barrett of Suffolk University, who helped plan the recently approved Boston BID, to speak to the region's Planning and Economic Development Directors regarding Business Improvement Districts, and MVPC offered assistance and advice to any community thinking of creating a district. BID's are special districts in which property owners vote to initiate, manage, and finance supplemental services above and beyond the baseline of services already provided by their local city or town government. To finance these services, a special assessment is levied on property owners within the district. BID's seek to remedy the cyclical nature of downtown revitalization efforts and fund services that are needed to make downtowns economically viable.

MassWorks Infrastructure Program: In August 2011, MVPC sponsored a MassWorks Lunch and Learn session conducted by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development – Massachusetts Permit Regulatory office. The webinar was designed for communities interested in learning more about the MassWorks online application process and to become familiar with the tools for applying. In the MVPC region, grant awards went to **Amesbury and Haverhill.**



Census Data Workshop: MVPC hosted a census data workshop in May 2011 at Northern Essex Community College. The workshop titled "How to Access Census Data and What the new Statistics Mean for Our Region" featured a step by step presentation on how to access the latest data. In addition, Dennis DiZoglio, MVPC Executive Director unveiled the region's 2035 long range population and employment forecast and discussed its implications for our region's economy, housing market, and municipal resources.

Implementation Strategy

Promoting Redevelopment and Growth

Protecting the Region's Environment

Prioritizing Transportation Investments

Plan Efficiently

Develop Responsibly

Promote Regionally



Cooperating Through Regional Collaboration

Encouraging member communities to cooperate and jointly work together has always been a responsibility of MVPC but it has become a priority in these trying fiscal times. Instigated by a weak economy and limited financial resources communities have embraced the idea of forming alliances to identify ways of working together. MVPC has been at the forefront of this trend by supplying the administrative and technical support needed to identify and analyze potential collaborations. The Commonwealth has recognized this new priority and resources have been provided to MVPC to support this effort. With the support of the regional legislative delegation District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funds have been provided to do the preliminary planning necessary to understand and implement these activities.

Formed in 2007 the Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition comprised of **Amesbury, Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, Newburyport, North Andover** and **Salisbury** has been focusing on promoting collaboration and joint problem solving. MVPC provides administrative support and a forum for the Coalition. This year the Coalition continued its joint purchasing and collaboration efforts between the member Departments of Public Works. The DPW subcommittee of public work officials also held meetings on Federal Reflective Sign Requirements, pavement management, stormwater management, reverse auctions, MVPC's interactive traffic viewer and computerized maintenance management software (CCMS). The Coalition plans on submitting a grant application next year for Commonwealth Community Innovation Challenge funds to implement a region-wide CCMS program.

The Coalition's Merrimack Valley Energy Management Program continues to be very effective. The program administered by the MVPC offers technical assistance thru Peregrine Energy Group to communities to help them develop energy management strategies and energy conservation programs. One of the efforts pursued under this program in 2010 was the regional procurement of an Energy Services Company (ESCO) to implement energy conservation improvements on public buildings. ESCOs perform these energy conservation improvements like replacing boilers, chillers, lighting, windows etc. and use the cost savings from these improvements to pay for the upgrades. In 2011 six communities entered into an Investment Grade Audit Agreement with Ameresco Inc. the selected ESCO Company: **Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen, Merrimac, North Andover and Salisbury**.

Another effort explored in 2010 was the development of solar energy farms on closed landfills in the region. This concept has been coined turning "Brownfields" into "Brightfields". There are over 160 acres of landfills in the region and currently nine communities: **Amesbury, Andover, Boxford, Haverhill, Georgetown, Newbury, Rowley, Salisbury and West Newbury** are considering the opportunities. MVPC engaged Meridian Associates to conduct a fatal flaw analysis on the various landfills to determine if they are suitable candidates for renewable energy. In 2011 MVPC put under contract the Meister Consultant Group to assist communities interested in renewable energy projects; whether on landfills, Greenfields, Brownfields or roof tops on municipal buildings consider their options, develop potential RFPs, evaluate proposals and negotiate contracts for Power Purchase Agreements. The Coalition also explored purchasing energy collectively to save money during 2011.



National Grid, Haverhill

Cooperating to Address Common Challenges

A new initiative this year was the creation of a Regional Inspectional Program. The Coalition advocated for a pool of qualified inspectors to be available to augment municipal inspectional services when needed. MVPC solicited proposal and have created a team of inspectors for use by member communities.

Again this year as an extension of this alliance MVPC reached out to the smaller communities in the region: **Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Merrimac, Newbury, Rowley and West Newbury** and invited the Town Administrators and Finance Directors to consider participating in some of the regional solution ideas being put forth by the Coalition.



We also continued to hold quarterly meeting with the community planning directors from the region. Collaborating together the directors have discussed common planning issues and have shared experiences in an effort to provide “peer” assistance.

This year we also continued to meet with the Regional Legislative Delegation to talk about the important issues facing the region and how the legislature can help deal with these issues. Discussion during the meeting focused on energy, economic development and transportation priorities.

Whittier Bridge Working Group: With the plans to reconstruct the Whittier Bridge over the Merrimack River advancing the communities affected by this project: **Amesbury, Newburyport and Salisbury** formed a working group with the State Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to deal with the impacts associated with this significant project. MVPC was part of the working group and was an active participant in helping the communities plan for this pending project.



David Cash, EEA

Regional Planning Day: This annual MVPC event focused on clean energy. The Keynote speaker was Undersecretary David Cash from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). Secretary Cash presented the clean energy plan for the Commonwealth. MVPC highlighted energy efforts in the region that complement the Commonwealth’s plan and a panel of energy experts discussed how the communities can begin to organize and prepare energy strategies. Attendees also heard about the EDA grant to develop local energy strategies and a regional clean energy plan. To help communities get started with their energy efforts a panel of state, local and utility officials reviewed what communities can do to organize their plans.

After the event Alix Driscoll from the **Andover** Conservation Commission commented that the Regional Planning Day event was *“an excellent symposium on energy and how to understand the issue. This is very important as Sun Gen Mark Andover, LLC (solar developer) is before the town board’s right now to seek permits for a large solar array on 18 acres off Interstate 93.”*

Green Communities ~ Conserve Energy
Develop Renewable Energy Sources ~ Implement Energy Projects

Administration and Finance

Distribution of Fiscal Year 2011 Funds: MVPC's operating funds for FY2011 supported a broad range of planning and technical services in the following six major functional areas:

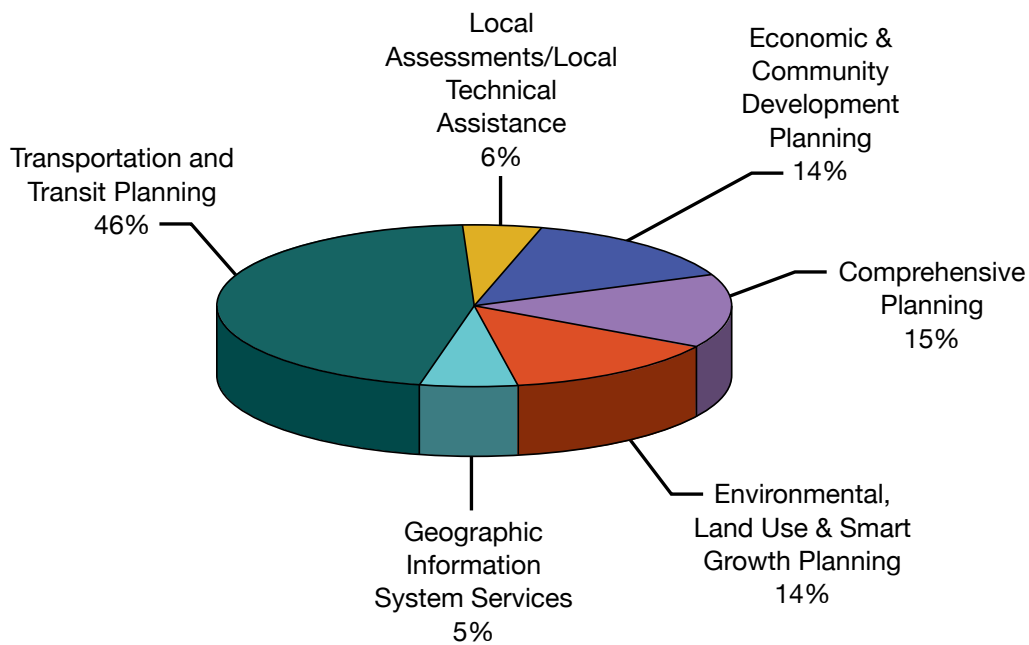
- Transportation & Transit Planning (46%)
- Local Assessments & Local Technical Assistance (6%)
- Economic & Community Development Planning (14%)
- Comprehensive Planning (15%)
- Environmental, Land use & Smart Growth Planning (14%)
- Geographic Information System (GIS) Services (5%)

Five of these six service areas accounted for 94% of the agency budget, and were derived from a variety of largely *non*-local sources, including state and federal grants, as well as contracts with selected non-profit organizations and businesses that support MVPC's mission.

Only 6% of the budget was derived from local assessments to our member communities. These local funds were used by MVPC as match to leverage the 94% of outside funding brought into the region by the commission staff.

Independent Audit: The independent audit is in progress. Unaudited statements show MVPC expenditures to be within the budget and the fund balance remains positive.

Funding Areas in Fiscal Year 2011



MVPC Professional Staff

Administration

Dennis A. DiZoglio, executive director
Jenifer Dunlap, financial administrator
Nancy Lavallee, office administrator

Environment

Alan Macintosh, assistant director/environmental program manager
Peter Phippen, environmental planner/coastal resources coordinator (8T&GM)

Transportation

Anthony Komornick, transportation program manager
Mary Kay Beninati, senior transportation planner
George Burnham, senior transportation engineer
Jim Terlizzi, senior transportation planner
Daniel Ovalle, field services specialist
Elizabeth Goodrich, senior transportation planner
Todd Fontanella, senior transportation planner

GIS

Jerrard Whitten, GIS/IT manager
Steve Lopez, GIS specialist
Jeff Normandin, GIS Technician

Community and Economic Development

Mike Parquette, comprehensive planning manager
Ted Semesnyei, economic development coordinator
Eugene R. Amiss, revolving loan fund manager (retired)



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Serving the communities of:

Amesbury Andover Boxford Georgetown Groveland Haverhill Lawrence Merrimac Methuen
Newbury Newburyport North Andover Rowley Salisbury West Newbury

