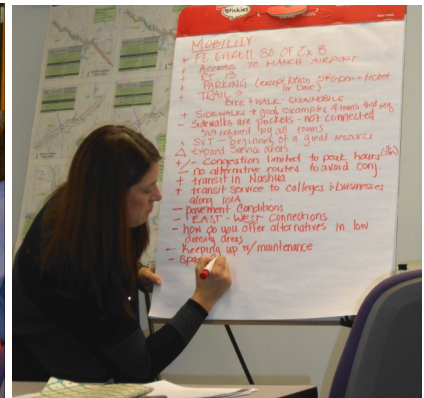




Regional Transportation Workshop



WHAT WE HEARD



On February 12, 2013 the Nashua Regional Planning Commission hosted a Regional Transportation Workshop to gather community input regarding the future of the region’s transportation system. Members of the public were invited, as well as planners, planning board members, representatives from relevant state agencies and other interested stakeholders from municipalities within the region. Participants were divided into three breakout groups where they focused on major transportation topics in the region including Mobility, Quality of Life, and System Sustainability. After a presentation on the region’s transportation system by NRPC staff members, participants brainstormed and identified *what worked* in the region, *what needed improvement*, and what the *regional needs* were related to each topic area. Staff facilitators noted this input in writing as well as in a shared spreadsheet through the use of iPads.



In a Nutshell:

Across all breakout groups and topic areas, several dominant issues emerged. Participants expressed appreciation for the area’s urban and rural balance, recreational and trail opportunities, north-south travel options and the beautiful surrounding environment. However, participants consistently expressed concern that the region was too automobile dominant and that alternative travel options were too few. Investments in east-west travel options, more coordination and communication among municipalities on transportation issues, and the need for greater flexibility in land uses to encourage mixed-use and walkable development were identified as regional needs.

MOBILITY

Workshop participants discussed the ease of movement in the region among all transportation users.

What Works:

- North-South travel options
- Relatively low congestion levels
- Souhegan Valley Transportation Collaborative
- Transit Service within City of Nashua
- Sidewalk facilities in urban areas
- Ease of access to Manchester Airport
- Parking availability
- Snow maintenance

What needs improvement:

- Concern that region is too automobile dependent
- Not enough alternative travel options
- Lack of East-west travel options
- Congestion on Route 101A
- Lack of passenger/freight rail
- Lack of Merrimack River bridge crossings
- Need for more expansive sidewalk network
- Need for sustainable source of transportation funding



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Regional Needs:

- Investments in alternative travel modes
- More sustainable sources of transportation funding
- More east-west travel options

QUALITY of LIFE

Workshop participants described different features and limitations of the transportation system and their contributions to the region's quality of life.

What Works:

- Ease of access to job opportunities/Boston area
- Ideal balance of rural and urban character
- Ease of access to recreation options/trails/open space
- Good air quality
- Ability to run errands in short trips
- Region maintains visually attractive character
- Several corridors function well, low traffic/maintain character

What needs improvement:

- Lack of alternative travel options/poor access without automobile
- Need for improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
- Need for more mixed-use and walkable development
- Lack of snow maintenance on sidewalks
- Need for more investment in passenger and freight rail
- Region's population is aging/ Need to attract more young people

Regional Needs:

- Need for better connected sidewalk/trail system across towns
- More flexible land uses to support mixed-use and planned-unit developments and master planned areas
- Allowance of smaller housing units/more density to attract young professionals
- Coordination between transportation and utility providers
- Need for regional bicycle lane/trail system

SYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY

Participants described strengths and the challenges of keeping the region's transportation system in good working order.

What Works:

- Town governments are accessible and responsive to community needs/ Aware of needs
- NRPC functions well as regional project coordinator

What needs improvement:

- Lack of necessary transportation maintenance funding
- Lack of coordination and communication among towns on transportation related issues.
- Need to better utilize technology/conservate resources
- Funding issues related to pavement/ sidewalk maintenance
- Lack of coordination and communication among towns on transportation related issues
- Pockets of congestion in region

Regional Needs:

- Keep funding issues part of public debate
- More regional cooperation and coordination
- Shift more freight to rail to preserve road conditions
- Begin planning replacements to infrastructure built during the developments booms of previous decades.