

2018 RPAC LISTENING SESSIONS

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Regional Council of
Governments
01/11/19

LISTENING SESSION TOUR

Sessions hosted by:

- 11/1 Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission
- 11/8 STAM
- 11/14 Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
- 11/26 Martha's Vineyard Planning Commission
- 11/27 Nantucket Planning Commission & Economic Development
- 12/5 Southeastern Regional Planning & Economic Development District
- 12/6 Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- 12/11 Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- 12/12 Cape Cod Commission
- 12/13 Franklin Regional Council of Governments

DOT EXERCISE

What issues are important to address and unique challenges to rural areas?

Categories:

- Infrastructure
- Economic Activity and Workforce Development
- Public Health and Healthcare
- Education and Schools
- Municipal Capacity Constraints
- Housing

RESULTS — INFRASTRUCTURE

Top Shared Issues:

1. Transportation
2. Broadband
3. Climate Change Resiliency
4. Water/Sewer Systems

A breakdown of transportation ...

- Roads & Bridges (Franklin, Pioneer Valley)
- Public Transit (Berkshire, Merrimack Valley)
- Transportation – General (Central Mass)

Comments:

Transportation projects difficult to afford.

Need for new public transit model.

Seasonal traffic congestion impacts; need for performance standards.

Natural gas moratorium (western MA) constrains development.

Agriculture and coastal areas first to experience climate change impacts.

RESULTS — ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Top Shared Issues:

1. Support Small Business/ Entrepreneur Technical Assistance
2. Farming, Aquaculture, Cannabis Sector

Also...

- Access to workforce (Martha's Vineyard)
- Alternative energy (Berkshire)
- Arts, culture, creative economy (Franklin)
- Healthcare (Cape Cod)
- Mill building revitalization (Pioneer Valley)
- Tourism/hospitality (Nantucket)

Comments:

Need for micro-business support.

Need for childcare to allow people to get to jobs.

Need for housing for workers.

Availability and predictability of worker visas.

RESULTS — PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE

Top Shared Issues:

1. Aging Population/ Aging in place/ Isolation/ Loneliness
2. Shortage of Doctors, Access, Mental Health
3. Opioid Crisis and Unique Rural Challenges

Comments:

Limited public transportation compounds all problems.

Fragility of community health center due to funding.

Hospital (Nantucket) has to provide housing for staff.

Opioid crisis compounded by lack of doctors and treatment facilities.

RESULTS — EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

Top Shared Issues:

1. Impact on Municipal Budget; and Overall Costs and Funding Formula

Also...

- Declining Enrollment (Pioneer Valley, Southeast, Cape Cod)
- Access to Vocational Education, Continued Education, ESOL (Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket)
- Seasonal Workforce Needs (Nantucket)

Comments:

Vocational education needed for future workforce, but very expensive (10% of Windsor's municipal budget) or not accessible (Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard).

Funding needed for early childhood education.

Out of district SPED can be devastating to budget.

Charter schools in areas with declining enrollment make problems harder.

RESULTS – MUNICIPAL CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

Top Shared Issues:

1. Recruiting Boards / Committee Members
2. Staff Capacity Recruitment (general)
3. Planning

Also...

- Impacts of Protected Land (Berkshire, Pioneer Valley, Cape Cod)
- Financial Capacity Constraints (Central Mass, STAM)
- Limited Tax Base (Franklin)
- Police, Fire, EMS (Nantucket)
- 2 ½ Constraints (Pioneer Valley)

Comments:

Prevailing wage and state procurement are burdensome and expensive.

Unfunded state mandates, e.g. OSHA – consider unfunded mandate threshold.

Lack of funds for municipal building maintenance and repair.

Increasing skills and knowledge requirements for public positions.

Challenge of managing a municipality that doubles in population seasonally.

RESULTS — HOUSING

Top Shared Issues:

1. Need for All Types of Housing (senior/affordable/workforce)

Also...

- Need for housing rehab funding (Berkshire, Pioneer Valley, Merrimack Valley)

Comments:

Rehab of existing structures can trigger ADA requirements, which make redevelopment projects too expensive.

Need for small scale development program.

Housing for seasonal workers needed.

Competition with second-home and short-term rental buyers prices out year-round workers.

RESULTS — OVER ALL

1. Need for All Types of Housing (senior/affordable/workforce)

2. Schools Impact on Municipal Budgets; and Overall Costs and Funding Formulas

3. Transportation Infrastructure — Roads & Bridges, and General

4. Broadband Infrastructure

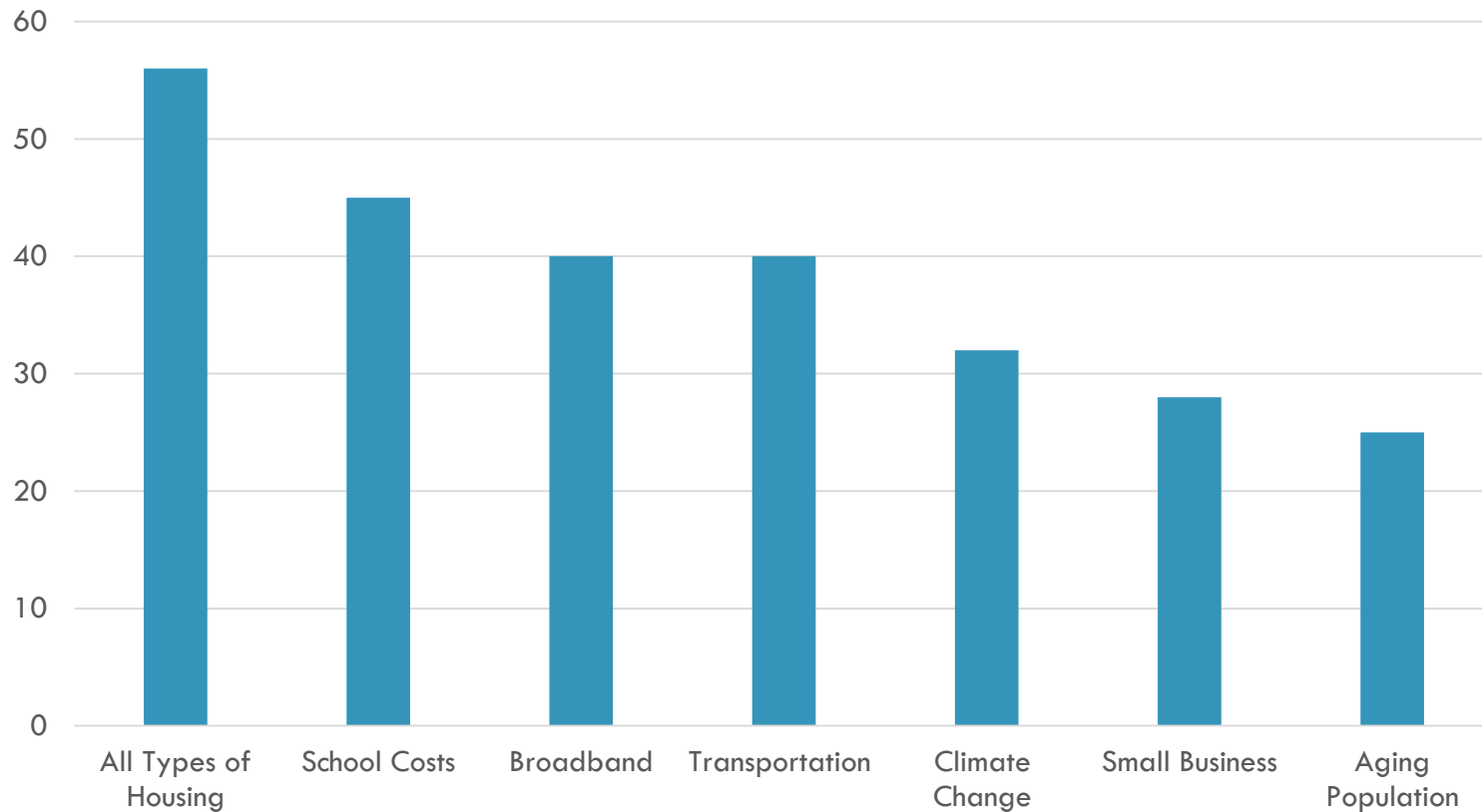
5. Climate Change Resiliency Infrastructure

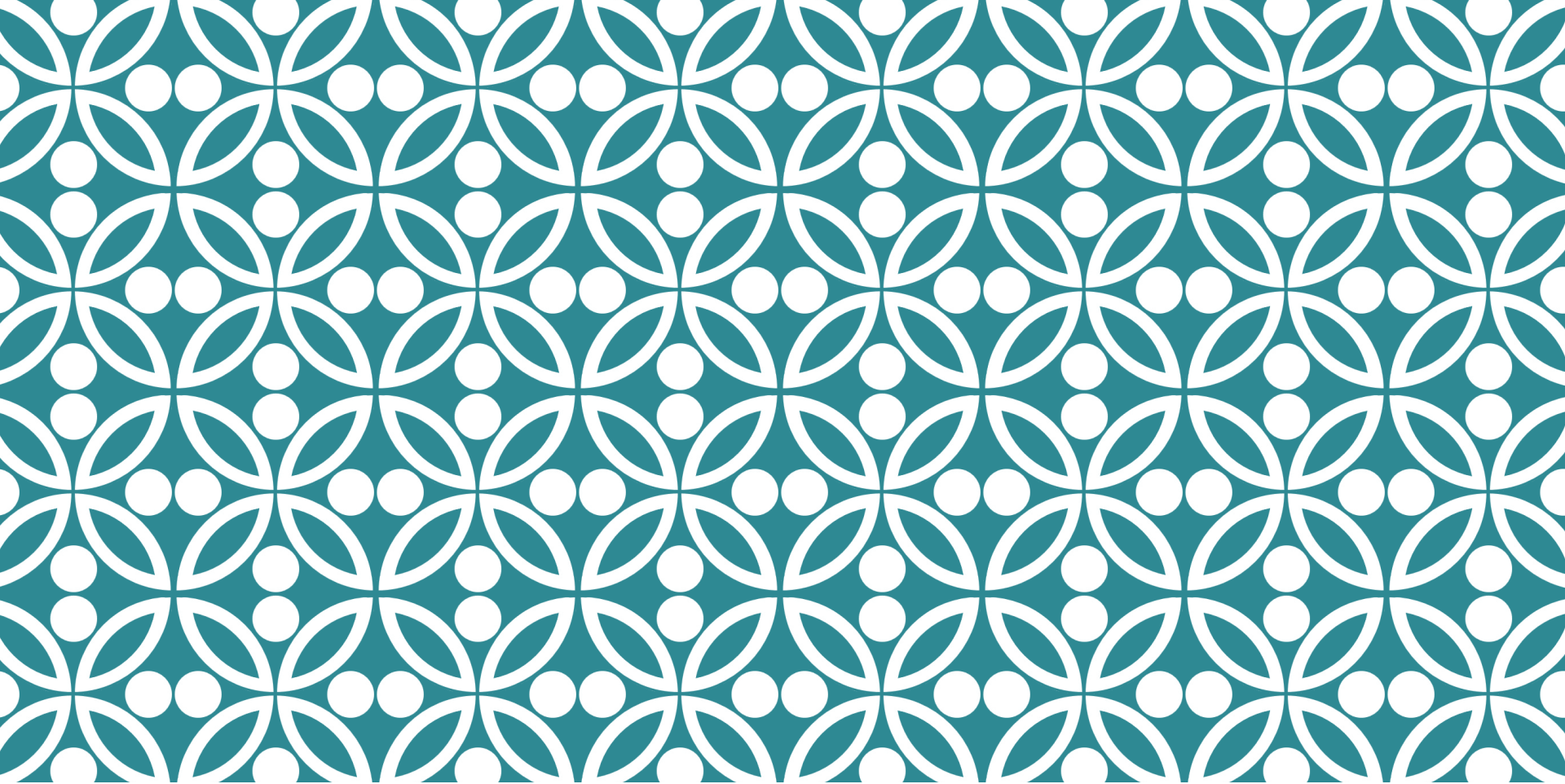
6. Support Small Business/ Entrepreneur Technical Assistance

7. Aging Population/ Aging in Place/ Isolation/ Loneliness

RESULTS — OVER ALL

Cumulative Green Dots



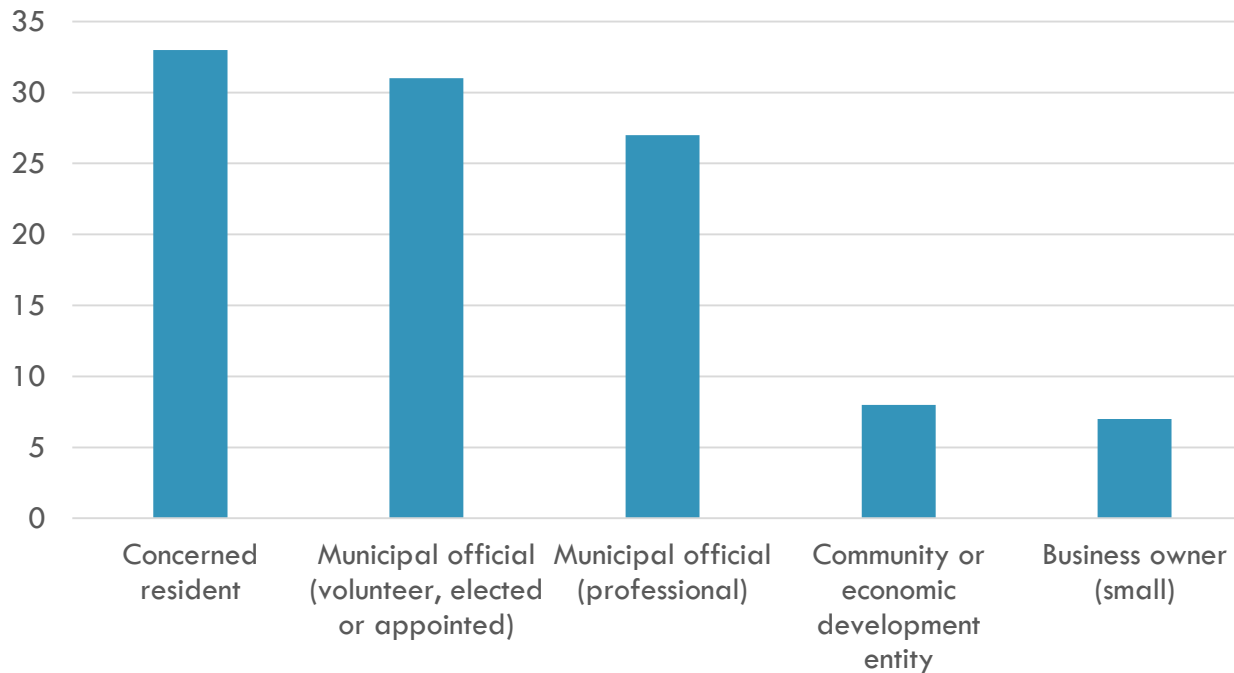


MA RURAL POLICY PRIORITY SURVEY RESULTS



HOW WOULD YOU BEST DESCRIBE YOUR ROLE OR POSITION?

Survey Responses



127 total responses

Selections with less than 5 responses:

- Public health or health care advocate
- Other non-profit
- Housing advocate
- Sole Proprietor
- Education-related org.
- Business related org.

WHAT ARE YOUR COMMUNITIES TOP THREE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES?

