15

Recommended Projects

2020 Regional Transportation Plan
15 Recommended Projects

As part of the development of the Franklin Regional Transportation Plan, regional needs and priorities for a 20 year horizon (from 2020 through 2040) were identified. Recommended projects were developed based on these identified needs and priorities. This chapter contains a summary of the recommended projects. These recommendations were identified during an extensive public participation process that included outreach, informational meetings and input sessions throughout Franklin County. In addition to the public input that was received, transportation staff conducted research and analyzed transportation-related regional data to identify transportation trends and needs. The findings and trends that shaped the recommended projects are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Overall, an interest in public transit, walking, bicycling, and more environmentally sensitive options was expressed strongly and frequently throughout the public participation process. The need for improved public transit in the region was by far the most frequently expressed comment during the public participation process. Many individuals expressed a desire to take public transit for economic (to save money) and/or environmental reasons (reduced emissions/better for the environment), but are unable to do so because of limited routes and/or schedules. The continued support and enthusiasm for bicycling in Franklin County for both transportation and recreational purposes was confirmed during the public input sessions. An interest in increased resiliency and the threat of climate change was also a frequent theme in the public’s comments.

The safety of the roads in Franklin County was also a strong theme. The great strides that have been made to make the roads in Franklin County safer were acknowledged. However, the fact that there are additional improvements that could be evaluated and possibly implemented was recognized – in particular with how vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists can share the road safely. Specific recommendations for additional safety evaluations are detailed in the plan and in this chapter.

The rural and scenic character of Franklin County remains an important consideration as road and bridge projects are planned and implemented. The scenic and natural resources of the area should be taken into consideration when improvements are designed so that they can be implemented in a context sensitive manner and in a way that not only protects the environment, but enhances it.
The many Scenic Byways that run through the area make Franklin County a special place and help bring tourism and economic development to the region. As a result, the needs of tourists and the unique requirements of a scenic byway should be taken into consideration during any transportation project planning.

Regional demographic figures show that Franklin County’s population is aging. Future transportation planning should take this into consideration. The transportation needs of senior citizens should be considered.

Additional high-speed broadband service that is currently being planned and implemented in the region will also have an impact on the county’s transportation needs in the future. Improved internet access will allow more people to have the option of working from home. In addition, the arrival of broadband may attract new businesses and residents to Franklin County, which could increase the number of vehicles on the roads as people may choose to live in more remote parts of the region.

**Top Recommended Projects**

The FAST Act requires that all recommended projects with a total cost of $20 million or greater, or that are regionally significant for air quality conformity purposes, be included in the Regional Transportation Plan. The Franklin County region does not have any projects of this magnitude recommended for the twenty year planning horizon. However, there are many projects that are a priority for the Franklin County transportation network.

The following is a listing of the twenty-five top transportation recommendations to be pursued through 2040. The recommended projects are not listed in a ranked, prioritized order, but instead represent the most important projects to the region. The projects are being listed to highlight their importance. The map at the end of the chapter shows the location of the recommendations.

**Top 25 Transportation Recommendations for Franklin County**

**Public Transit**
- Advocate and support regional expanded passenger rail service between Greenfield and Springfield.
- Plan for east-west passenger rail service between Franklin County and Boston.
- Increase frequency and extend bus service hours during evenings and weekends.
• Expand fixed bus service routes throughout the county, including to the North County towns of Bernardston and Northfield.
• Create a microtransit service program for the region.
• Create additional park and ride lots throughout Franklin County.
• Continue to support the funding and construction of a new FRTA Operations and Maintenance Facility.

Safety Improvements
• Advance the planned Route 2 East Safety Improvements in Farley, Erving Center, and Gill/Greenfield.
• Explore safety concerns at the intersection of Route 5/10 and Christian Lane in Whately.
• Reconstruct intersections and improve traffic flow on Route 2 west at the Big Y Shopping area in Greenfield.
• Continue supporting, the funding, and use of the small bridge program to replace structurally deficient bridges in small communities.

Major Highway Projects
• Rehabilitate the General Pierce Bridge in Greenfield/Montague.
• Resurface roadway, construct pedestrian and transit accommodations, and create safety features on Routes 5/10 in Whately and Deerfield.

Pedestrian and Bicycling
• Design and implement safety and infrastructure improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians on Turners Falls Road connecting Greenfield and Turners Falls.
• Design and implement safety and infrastructure improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians on Leyden Road in Greenfield.
• Replace the Schell Bridge with a bicycle and pedestrian bridge across the Connecticut River in Northfield.
• Implement Complete Streets projects throughout Franklin County.
• Plan and implement a bikeway to connect the downtowns of Athol and Orange.
• Plan and implement an Erving-Wendell Bike Path to connect Erving Center with Farley and Ervingside without having to travel on Route 2.
• Construct a sidewalk to Buckland Recreation Area and Mohawk Trail Regional High School and Middle School along Route 112 and North Street in Buckland.
• Install trailblazing signs on the Franklin County Bikeway.
Scenic Byways, Community Development, & Environmental Protection

- Purchase conservation restrictions, agricultural preservation restrictions or land in fee from willing land owners to permanently protect important areas along the Scenic Byways.
- Continue to support and fund the construction of additional electric vehicle charging infrastructure around the region.
- Assist municipalities with assessing transportation infrastructure most at risk to climate change and plan for upgrades and replacements that are designed to handle future storm events.
- Design and install a prefabricated pedestrian bridge to connect the Turners Falls Canal District with parking, bike path, and downtown Turners Falls.

View of Canal District in Turners Falls with Connecting 5th Street Bridge
Top 21 Transportation Recommendations for Franklin County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Public Transit</td>
<td>Support regional expanded passenger rail service between Greenfield and Springfield.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>Expand rail and public passenger rail service between Franklin County and Boston.</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Improve fixed bus service routes throughout the county, including in the North County towns of Bernardston and Northfield.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Public Transit</td>
<td>Create multimodal transit service plan for the region.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Public Transit</td>
<td>Support additional pick and ride lots throughout the county.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Public Transit</td>
<td>Continue to support the funding and construction of a new ATEC Operations and Maintenance Facility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Safety Improvements</td>
<td>Implement safety improvements in Franklin County.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Major Highway Projects</td>
<td>Rehabilitate the General Pierce Bridge in Greenfield/Montague.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Major Highway Projects</td>
<td>Construct roundabouts, structural and pedestrian accommodations, and create safety improvements on Route 2 in Montague.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Pedestrian and Bicycling</td>
<td>Implement Complete Streets projects throughout Franklin County.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Pedestrian and Bicycling</td>
<td>Construct a bikeway to connect the intersections of Blackstone and Greenfield.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Pedestrian and Bicycling</td>
<td>Construct safety improvements for bicyclists/pedestrians on Turners Falls Road connecting Greenfield and Turners Falls.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Pedestrian and Bicycling</td>
<td>Implement safety improvements for bicyclists/pedestrians on Leyden Road in Greenfield.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Pedestrian and Bicycling</td>
<td>Construct a sidewalk to Mohawk Trail Regional High School and Middle School along Route 112 and North Street in Buckland.</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Pedestrian and Bicycling</td>
<td>Continue implementation of trailblazing signs along the Franklin County Bikeway.</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Public Transit</td>
<td>Support and fund the construction of additional electric vehicle charging infrastructure around the region.</td>
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<td>Assist municipalities with assessing transportation infrastructure most at risk to climate change and plan for upgrades and replacements that are designed to handle future events.</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>Scenic Byways, Community Development &amp; Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Continue to support and fund the construction of additional electric vehicle charging infrastructure around the region.</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Scenic Byways, Community Development &amp; Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Implement nature-based solutions into transportation projects whenever feasible to manage stormwater runoff in a more resilient manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Scenic Byways, Community Development &amp; Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Continue to provide funding for transportation improvement projects along the Scenic Byways.</td>
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**Categories:**
- Public Transit
- Safety Improvements
- Major Highway Projects
- Scenic Byways, Community Development & Environmental Protection
- Pedestrian and Bicycling

**Sources:** Map produced by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department. GIS data sources include MassDOT, MassGIS and FRCOG. Depicted boundaries are approximate and are intended for planning purposes only, not to be used for survey.