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Recommended Priorities



2024 Regional Transportation Plan

15 Recommended Priorities

As part of the development of the *Franklin Regional Transportation Plan*, regional needs and issues for a 20 year horizon (from 2024 through 2044) were identified. Recommended priorities were developed based on these identified needs. This chapter contains a summary of the recommended priorities for the region, which 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 priorities 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 seniors should be considered.

Top Recommended Projects

The BIL 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, programs, and policies that are a priority for the Franklin County transportation network.

The recommendations in the Franklin Regional Transportation Plan provide the framework for transportation projects in the county. It is from this Plan that projects are chosen to be designed, funded, and implemented. Further, the Franklin Regional Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) sets specific tasks that have been identified through the recommendations generated for this Regional Transportation Plan for development of projects to eventually be included for funding and implementation in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The following is a listing of the twenty-five top transportation recommendations to be pursued through 2044. The recommended projects are not listed in a ranked, prioritized order, but instead represent the most important priorities to the region. They 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

- Plan and advocate for east-west and Northern Tier passenger rail services 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 and to neighboring Hampshire County.
- Expand the FRTA Access microtransit service program for the region.
- Create additional park and ride lots throughout Franklin County.
- Advocate for a fare free fixed route transit system.

Safety Improvements

- Implement safety improvements at the intersection of Route 47 and 63 in Montague.
- Advance the planned Route 2 East Safety Improvements in Farley, Erving Center, and Gill/Greenfield.
- Continue supporting, the funding, and use of the small bridge program to replace structurally deficient bridges in small communities.
- Explore safety improvements on the Route 2 corridor in Shelburne.

Major Highway Projects

- Resurface roadway, construct pedestrian and transit accommodations, and create safety features on Routes 5/10 in 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.
- 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.
- Support efforts to improve bicycle and pedestrian access on Route 116 in Sunderland.

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.
- Increase accessibility to outdoor recreation sites and promote outdoor recreation in the region.
- Support connections to the Turners Falls Canal District Gateway with vehicle and bike parking, improved pedestrian and bicyclist access.
- Increase public transit connections from Amtrak to destinations throughout the county to provide improved “last mile” transportation options for visitors.
- Develop infrastructure to support recreational tourism and enhance the region's assets, including parking, wayfinding, and directional signage.



Bike Parking with Bus at the JWO Transit Center