

Transportation Background

4/4/15

Transportation Workshop

From Action Plan: “A workshop was held on July 30 2014 to discuss transportation challenges and potential solutions, including those specific to the Town Center.

The meeting, which was jointly held as part of a parallel planning process through MAPC’s Transportation Department, attracted approximately 30 participants, including many members of the Town Center Plan Advisory Group. Additional stakeholders in attendance included downtown business owners, Hallmark Health, social service organizations, and representatives of the Stoneham Housing Authority, Greenway Committee and Open Space and Recreation Committee.

After a brief overview presentation participants rotated through breakout groups focused on transit, bicycling, or walking. Traffic congestion and lack of transit alternatives – the area is underserved by transit compared to surrounding towns - were identified as key issues facing Town Center. This not only limits commuter options for residents and their access to jobs, it limits the consumer base for local merchants, and hurts local businesses looking to attract qualified workers from areas outside of Stoneham. For example, with few transit options, the Stoneham Theater has difficulty attracting actors from Boston. Additionally, pedestrian safety and the need to reduce fatalities also surfaced as a major concern during discussions.

At the meeting, participants identified the following needs:

- Improvements to existing MBTA bus routes, including greater frequency, longer operating hours (after 7pm) and Sunday service.
- Desire for new transit service that could include:
 - A new express bus route to Boston
 - Extending Bus Route 131, which currently stops at the Melrose town line on Franklin Street, into Stoneham Town Square.
 - An east-west shuttle bus along the Montvale Ave/Main Street/Franklin Avenue corridor connecting to commuter rail and express bus services in Melrose and Woburn.
- Improved pedestrian crossings in Stoneham Center including improved light timings in Stoneham Square, safety improvements near the Post Office and at Montvale Avenue/Main Street.
- Expanded bicycle facilities including the Tri-Town bike path, and connections (bike lanes, sharrows, etc.) to recreational amenities .”

Public Meeting

In October 2014, at a public open house, approximately 100 people visited five planning stations to provide information. From Public Open House Findings:

“Public meeting Station 1: Where do you live and work?”

At Station 1, participants were asked to locate where they lived and worked, and the mode or modes of transportation used to get to work. As shown in the following figures and charts, the meeting attracted people from all areas of Stoneham, and a few from surrounding communities.

Over 40 percent of attendees worked in Stoneham, with 20% commuting to Boston, 5% to Medford, and over a third to other areas of the region. As expected in a community with limited public transit options, the majority of attendees drove to work. However, 14 percent took public transit (bus or commuter rail), and 5% walked or rode a bike. The mode of commuting was not relevant to nearly 20% of attendees, who were either retired or were not currently working.” *(See pie chart handout.)*

“Public Meeting Station 3: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities

Many people called out lack of public transportation options as a weakness. It was one of the most commonly cited weaknesses. Below is selection of typical comments:

- ‘Traffic speeds thru too fast; not sufficient public transportation. Bus but no commuter or T....’,
- ‘Need more public transportation. A bus route to the red line would be great.’”

It was also called out as an area of opportunity:

- “Better public transportation access.

Public meeting station 4: Priorities

More public transportation choices were one of the top three (out of 12) priorities chosen at the station.”

Comments Collected in 2015

- “I was on the road to Malden the other day, and the 99 MBTA bus passed me. That bus stops and turns around at the old BMRC. Wouldn't that be a good bus to incorporate to stop at the Zoo, and possibly continue on. Maybe do a turn around down at Fallon Road. It would be nice for the new residents (once that project comes online) who may need public transportation for working purposes, as well as be a selling point for the rental company. Oh, and this bus runs till 12:30am (perplexing to me that they have a lot of ridership at this time of night, yet Stoneham # 132 does not) Things that make you go, HMMMM!

http://www.mbta.com/schedules_and_maps/bus/routes/?route=99

http://www.mbta.com/schedules_and_maps/bus/routes/?route=132”

- “Please add east-west transportation to Wakefield Commuter rail via Elm Street to your transportation cache. Helpful for commuters and seniors who come to 136 Elm Street for lunch, exercise, events at the Senior Center.”

Action Plan Recommendations

Timeframes have been attached to the recommendations, but they are guidelines only, nothing mandatory about them at all. Yellow highlighting indicates Recommendations that may benefit from discussion with MBTA.

“Goal 4: a more robust convenient and efficient multi-modal transportation system to better connect Stoneham Square residents and businesses.

4a) Improve local mobility and access to transit for residents, employees and customers.

- Work with the MBTA to extend service on the 132 beyond 7 PM, and to add a stop for the stone zoo and other recreational amenities in the Fells (Year 2).
- Develop and adopt a complete streets policy that requires street design and construction to accommodate all users including cars, transit, bicyclists and pedestrians (Year 3)
- Work with MBTA to extend the 325 express bus from Maldon into Stoneham Square (Year 2).
- Study the feasibility to develop a local shuttle serving the east west corridor (Montvale, Main St., Franklin) through Stoneham Square, connecting it to express bus service in Woburn and commuter rail service via the Melrose Highland Station (Year 2).
- Identify funding to conduct a parking study to improve convenience and accessibility of parking your parking management strategies (Year 1).

4b) Ensure a safe pedestrian environment throughout Stoneham Square to encourage foot traffic and to better support local businesses.

- Repair existing crosswalks and add additional crosswalks where needed most to insure pedestrian safety (Year 2).
- Ensure sidewalks are in good condition both within the primary study area (e.g. in and around Stoneham Square in town common), but also along entrance corridors in the secondary study area that connect to residential neighborhoods. (Conditions very along these corridors.) (Year 2.)
- Improve snow removal in key areas (Year 1).

4c) Promote and increase access to bicycle amenities and facilities.

- Ensure the Tri-Community Bikeway is fully funded and built (Year 2).
- Create a bike plan for the town of Stoneham (Year 3).
- Identify priority locations for the placement of bike racks in Stoneham Square to encourage cyclists to stop at local businesses (Year 4/5).

Open House Summary

Meeting attendees provided feedback to the planning team through a series of topical “stations” where specific input was sought through participatory exercises. A summary of each station and findings obtained is provided below.

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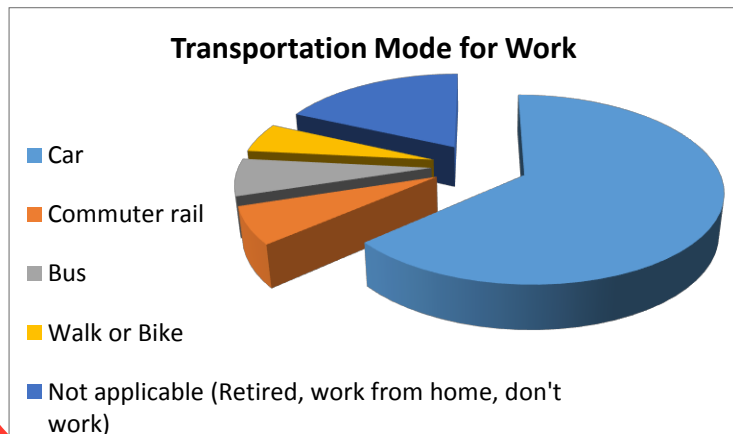
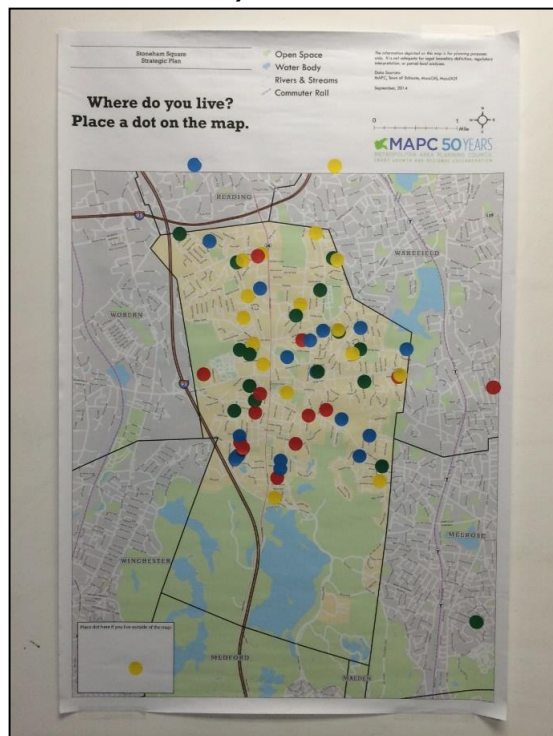
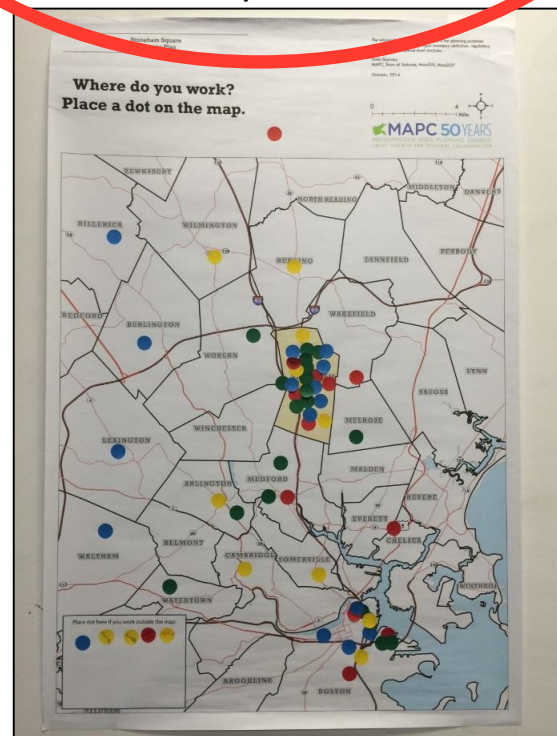


Figure: Home and Work Locations of Participants

Question: Where do you live?



Question: Where do you work?



COMPLETE STREETS:

FUNDAMENTALS

The streets of our cities & towns are an important part of our communities. They allow children to get to school & parents to get to work. They bring together neighbors & draw visitors to neighborhood stores. These streets ought to be designed for everyone – whether young or old, on foot or on bicycle, in a car or in a bus – but too often they are designed only for speeding cars or creeping traffic jams.

Now, in communities across the country, a movement is growing to **complete the streets**. States, cities, & towns are asking their planners & engineers to build roads that are **safer, more accessible, & easier for everyone**. In the process, they are creating better communities for people to live, play, work, & shop.

What are Complete Streets?

Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed & operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, & public transportation users of all ages & abilities are able to safely move along & across a complete street. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, & bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time & make it safe for people to walk to & from train stations.

What do Complete Streets policies do?

Creating complete streets means transportation agencies change their approach to community roads. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners & engineers to routinely design & operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better & safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, & bicyclists – making your town a better place to live. The National Complete Streets Coalition has identified the elements of an ideal Complete Streets policy to help you write one for your town: www.completestreets.org/elements

What does a “complete” street look like?

There is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets; each one is unique & responds to its community context. A complete street may include: sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable & accessible public transportation stops, frequent & safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, & more. A complete street in a rural area will look quite different from a complete street in an urban area, but both are designed to balance safety & convenience for everyone using the road: www.completestreets.org/manytotypes



Charlotte, NC Department of Transportation

Why do we need Complete Streets policies?

Incomplete streets – those designed with only cars in mind – **limit transportation choices** by making walking, bicycling, & taking public transportation inconvenient, unattractive, & too often, dangerous. Changing policy so that our transportation system routinely includes the needs of people on foot, public transportation, & bicycles means that walking, riding bikes, & riding buses & trains will be **safer & easier**. People of all ages & abilities will have more options when traveling to work, to school, to the grocery store, & to visit family.

Making these travel choices more convenient, attractive, & safe means people do not need to rely solely on automobiles. They can replace congestion-clogged trips in their cars with swift bus rides or heart-healthy bicycle trips. Complete Streets **improve the efficiency & capacity** of existing roads too, by moving people in the same amount of space – just think of all the people who can fit on a bus or streetcar versus the same amount of people each driving their own car. Getting more productivity out of the existing road & public transportation systems is vital to **reducing congestion**.

Complete Streets are particularly prudent when communities are tightening their budgets & looking to ensure long-term benefits from investments. A well-balanced transportation budget can incorporate Complete Streets projects with little to no additional funding, accomplished through re-prioritizing projects & allocating funds to projects that improve overall mobility. Many of the ways to create more complete roadways are low cost, fast to implement, & high impact. Building more sidewalks & striping bike lanes has been shown to create more jobs than traditional car-focused transportation projects.

What are some of the benefits of Complete Streets?

Complete streets can offer many benefits in all communities, regardless of size or location. The National Complete Streets Coalition has developed a number of fact sheets: www.completestreets.org/factsheets

Complete Streets improve safety. A Federal Highways Administration safety review found that streets designed with sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, & treatments for disabled travelers improve pedestrian safety. Some features, such as medians, improve safety for all users: they enable pedestrians to cross busy roads in two stages, reduce left-turning motorist crashes to zero, & improve bicycle safety.

Complete streets encourage walking & bicycling for health. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention recently named adoption of Complete Streets policies as a recommended strategy to prevent obesity. One study found that 43% of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels; among individuals without safe place to walk, just 27% were active enough. Easy access to transit can also contribute to healthy physical activity: nearly one third of transit users meet the Surgeon General's recommendations for minimum daily exercise through their daily travels.



Don Burden, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

Complete Streets can lower transportation costs for families. Americans spent an average of 18 cents of every dollar on transportation, with the poorest fifth of families spending more than double that figure. In fact, most families spend far more on transportation than on food. When residents have the opportunity to walk, bike, or take transit, they have more control over their expenses by replacing car trips with these inexpensive options. Taking public transportation, for example, saves individuals \$9,581 each year.



Don Burden, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

Complete Streets foster strong communities. Complete streets play an important role in livable communities, where all people – regardless of age, ability or mode of transportation – feel safe & welcome on the streets. A safe walking & bicycling environment is an essential part of improving public transportation & creating friendly, walkable communities. A recent study found that people who live in walkable communities are more likely to be socially engaged & trusting than residents of less walkable neighborhoods. Additionally, they reported being in better health & happier more often.

How can I get a Complete Streets policy adopted in my community?

Advocating for Complete Streets means working with your neighbors & local policymakers, including elected officials & government staff. Ways to start the conversation include talking about:

- schools that have no sidewalks out front,
- bus stops that are not accessible for people in wheelchairs,
- missing crosswalks by the grocery store,
- no safe routes to bicycle to work, &
- other particularly problematic & unsafe streets.

Work together to identify ways to make these places safer & more attractive & present your ideas to others. Make your case & show examples of what your streets could like.

The National Complete Streets Coalition's website has many resources to help. Modify & use the introductory presentation in your community, show it at PTA & neighborhood association meetings & to your local chamber of commerce. The website also has information on finding other local advocates, developing a good policy, & effectively implementing that policy. Check them out at www.completestreets.org

The National Complete Streets Coalition offers **interactive full-day workshops** led by national experts to help communities establish a common vision for their streets; develop a Complete Streets policy that builds on local expertise; & implement Complete Streets policies by identifying ways to change the transportation decision-making process: www.completestreets.org/workshops

Need transportation planning & engineering professionals who are ready to help design & construct complete streets? Our Complete Streets Partner firms can offer the expertise & dedication you need: www.completestreets.org/help

National Complete Streets Coalition Steering Committee:

AARP • Active Living by Design • Alliance for Biking & Walking • America Bikes • America Walks • American Council of the Blind • American Planning Association • American Public Transportation Association • American Society of Landscape Architects • Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals • City of Boulder • Institute of Transportation Engineers • League of American Bicyclists • National Association of Area Agencies on Aging • National Association of City Transportation Officials • National Association of REALTORS • National Center for Bicycling and Walking • Ryan Snyder Associates • Safe Route to School National Partnership • Smart Growth America • SvR Design Company • Transportation for America

