

495/MetroWest Suburban Edge Community Commission

Serving a SuperNexus for the Commonwealth's Economy

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ABSTRACT

The 495/MetroWest Suburban Edge Community Commission was established by the Legislature in 2015 to examine the development challenges facing suburban edge communities in the 495/MetroWest region and determine how the Commonwealth's programs and initiatives can address their needs. This narrative provides a synopsis of the development challenges considered by the Commission, documents regional constraints to growth, and identifies key findings to address these issues.



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*Prepared by 495/MetroWest Partnership
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Suburban Edge Commission*

495/METROWEST SUBURBAN EDGE COMMUNITY COMMISSION
Serving a “SuperNexus” for the Commonwealth’s Economy

NOTE: While the Commission’s meetings each had a different focus paralleling their statutory charge, the resulting discussion illustrated the inter-connected nature of all of these issues, with many concerns arising during multiple discussions. For clarity’s sake, the narrative below follows the structure of the Commission’s meeting themes, but attempts to note when issues were raised in different settings. This narrative was developed to capture the ongoing discussion around these issues, but as noted, for further background and context on these issues in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

INTRODUCTION

The Commission was created by statute in Section 30 of Chapter 119 of the Acts of 2015, with the aim of conducting “an investigation and study relative to development challenges” in suburban communities “such as needs to address transportation, water, cellular and energy infrastructure, transit services, residential development, reuse of former industrial facilities and historic mills, brownfields reclamation, downtown redevelopment and other constraints.”

The concept of establishing such a commission to provide direction on suburban development challenges first originated in an amendment to the FY15 House budget, authored by State Representative Kate Hogan, which had broad support within the 495/MetroWest delegation in the House of Representatives and was championed by House Speaker Robert DeLeo. This language was supported by the Senate in their budget deliberations led by State Senator Karen Spilka as Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, and subsequently included in the final conference committee budget. This language was signed into law by Governor Charles Baker, with appointments coming from the Governor and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito to fill the statutory categories for Commissioners representing municipal governments and key constituencies.

Throughout this process, establishing the Commission was supported by the [495/MetroWest Partnership](#)¹, a regional public-private nonprofit that was established to serve the needs of thirty-five communities in the region that mirrors the suburban focus area of the Commission. Accordingly, the Partnership worked with the legislative delegation and the Baker-Polito Administration to raise awareness of the commission, encourage applicants, and support the appointment process in order to convene the Commission.

Establishing the Commission as a means of gathering perspective from municipal, state, and private sector leaders on suburban development needs was very timely, given the 2015 release of [Opportunities for All: The Baker-Polito Strategy and Plan for Making Massachusetts Great Everywhere](#)². This plan, put forth by the Baker-Polito Administration, recognized the inter-related nature of how development is impacted by housing, transportation, water, workforce development, energy, and other issues, which is mirrored by the Commission’s statutory charge. The challenges found in the suburban edge communities may require different approaches than those used in other environments, for example, Gateway cities.

To support the Commission’s work, the Partnership selected a research partner to conduct research and data analysis. Due to strong support from the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Senate, and the Baker-Polito Administration, the Partnership utilized state funding allocated in the FY16 state operating budget to

¹ www.495partnership.org

² <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/eohed/edplan2015.pdf>

fund this research assistance. To select the research partner, the Partnership convened a Research Selection and Oversight Committee, consisting of:

- Peter Martin, Bowditch and Dewey, and Partnership's Clerk and Counsel, Chair of the Selection and Oversight Committee
- Sylvia Beville, Executive Director, Partners for a Skilled Workforce
- State Representative Hannah Kane
- William Keegan, Jr., Town Administrator for the town of Foxborough
- Chris Kluchman, Director of Land Use Management for the town of Westford
- Kristen Las, Assistant Town Manager/Economic Development Coordinator for the town of Shrewsbury
- Don Lowe, Town Administrator for the town of Bolton
- Stephanie Mercandetti, Economic Development & Grants Officer for the town of Medway and member of the Framingham Planning Board

After issuing a Request For Proposal and interviewing three finalists, the Committee unanimously selected the [Public Policy Center \(PPC\) at UMass Dartmouth](#)³ as their recommended research partner for the Partnership and the Commission.

The Commission was first convened in the summer of 2016 by Co-Chairs State Representative Kate Hogan, State Senator Karen Spilka, and Assistant Secretary for Communities and Programs at the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development Juan Vega. To reflect their focus, the Commissioners developed the body's mission statement:

The 495/MetroWest Suburban Edge Community Commission is charged with identifying the development challenges faced by our smaller suburban communities, and in keeping with the state's Opportunities for All plan, develop recommendations to leverage our local and regional strengths in working with the state to capitalize on state resources and emerging opportunities.

The Commission then held ten meetings, each with a different issue focus and with appropriate experts conducting briefings on these topics. Whenever appropriate, the PPC at UMass Dartmouth provided extensive data research and analysis to provide additional context and insights for the Commissioners.

The summary below is intended to provide an overview of the Commission's meetings and deliberations, and is structured to reflect each meeting topic while noting a general summary, specific issues raised, emerging examples, and potential concepts to explore further. Following this summary, there are more extensive materials on each issue for additional background, including the presentations made at each meeting and research and analysis from the PPC at UMass Dartmouth.

TRANSPORTATION (SEPTEMBER 2016 IN ASHLAND)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

The 495/MetroWest transportation system consists of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, as well as a variety of transit services, all of which have a critical impact on our economic development and quality of life.

As illuminated in the analysis provided by the PPC at UMass Dartmouth, our region has almost 200,000 workers commuting into the region, 181,000 residents commuting out of the region, and more than 116,000

³ <http://publicpolicycenter.org/>

commuting inside the region. The top origin points for the region's workers are Worcester (almost 15,000), Framingham (almost 13,000), and Boston (about 11,000), and the top destination of the region's commuting residents is Boston (about 33,000). With such commuting patterns, our economy depends upon the movement of workers east, west, and within the region.

The region's continued success and economic impact is contingent on maintaining an effective transportation network, including interstate highways, state routes, local roads, bridges, interchanges, and transit, through Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail, Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), and innovative municipal programs addressing first and last mile services. Our region is served by two major interstate highways in I-495 and I-90, currently the only tolled interstate in the Commonwealth, three commuter rail lines, and a number of RTAs and TMAs. Despite the variety of transportation and transit options, challenges remain. Not all 495/MetroWest communities have commuter rail service and the multitude of jurisdictional boundaries between RTAs, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and their regional planning and budgeting processes is often a barrier to comprehensive solutions to transportation and transit needs. Beyond our current public transportation system, the changing private mobility system of ridesharing services like Uber and Lyft are beginning to be felt in our suburban region.

Recognizing the connection between the economy and transportation has led to much progress in recent years, such as the state's [tollbooth demolition](#)⁴, implementation of All Electronic Tolling, the [Accelerated Bridge Program](#)⁵, the Municipal [Small Bridge Program](#)⁶, improved scheduling of commuter rail, the establishment of the state's [Fiscal and Management Control Board](#)⁷ and the [Project Selection Advisory Council](#)⁸, the [Complete Streets Program](#)⁹, [MassWorks](#)¹⁰, and [Community Transit Grants](#)¹¹. Within our region, commuters are benefitting from the [Burns Bridge project](#)¹² in Shrewsbury, \$227 Million in the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Capital Investment Plan for the [I-495/I-90 Interchange Improvement Project](#)¹³, the development of [pilot rail service to Foxborough](#)¹⁴, and the expansion of regional transit services with formation of the [MetroWest Regional Transit Authority](#) and [CrossTown Connect TMA](#).

Specific issues raised during the transportation discussion include:

- Need for additional resources on the state, regional, and municipal level for transportation initiatives
- Overcoming MPO jurisdictional boundaries to address the need for planning, design, and construction funding for regional interchanges that are choke points, such as I-495/I-290 and I-495/Route 9
- Addressing congestion and coordinated planning for regional corridors such as Routes 9, 16, 20, 109, 140, and others
- One size may not fit all as some communities have good and direct access from I-495 while others do not; Some communities want major commercial or industrial growth while others do not

⁴ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/HighlightedProjects/TollPlazaDemolitionProject.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/AcceleratedBridgeProgram.aspx> .

⁶ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/LocalAidPrograms/MunicipalSmallBridgeProgram.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.mbta.com/leadership/fmcb>

⁸ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/AboutUs/Committees/ProjectSelectionAdvisoryCouncil.aspx>

⁹ <https://www.masscompletestreets.com/>

¹⁰ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/infrastructure/massworks/>

¹¹ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/transit/CommunityTransitGrantProgram.aspx>

¹² <http://www.massdotprojectkenburnsbridge.info/> .

¹³ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/HighlightedProjects/I-495I-90InterchangeImprovements.aspx>

¹⁴ <https://d3044s2alrsxog.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/fmcb-meeting-docs/2017/february/022717-proposed-foxborough-pilot-service.pdf?from=search>

- Downtowns or village centers are very important to each community whether a larger suburban setting or more rural type; but access to, circulation within, and the walkability levels tend to be less than desirable and resources to correct are limited
- Maximizing commuter rail's benefits and reach by examining:
 - Fare structure versus the cost of driving
 - Reverse commute schedules and pricing
 - Parking constraints at stations
 - Scheduling improvements, including balancing express service with overall needs on each line
 - Station improvements
 - Potentially counterintuitive patterns of commuter rail stations' use¹⁵
- Supporting innovative first and last mile connections for commuters using the commuter rail
- Offering expanded support for RTAs by:
 - Increasing operating funding from state
 - Overcoming RTA boundaries to allow interoperability, connections, shared stops, and coordinated scheduling
 - Addressing significant wait times of up to an hour as well as limited service schedules, usually lacking weekend service
 - Incentivizing innovative service models with partners
 - Allowing use of RTA enterprise funds
 - Establish an RTA seat on all of the state's MPOs
- Updating and modernizing state support of TMAs by:
 - Expanding reach and services of TMAs
 - Strengthening the state's funding of innovative TMAs and initiatives
 - Updating the funding of Transportation Demand Management programs
 - Re-examining the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's [Rideshare](#)¹⁶ requirements for large employers/developments
- Expanding state support for local roadway improvements, such as the Municipal [Small Bridge Program](#)¹⁷, [MassWorks](#)¹⁸, and [Chapter 90](#)¹⁹ roadway program, which should incorporate updated growth trends and projections, rather than relying on historical data
- Needing to financially support the design of critical municipal projects, given lack of municipal funding for design and uncertainties of transportation planning process
- Recognizing that some projects, such as Framingham's Downtown Rail Crossing, have complexities and regional impacts warranting specialized attention from the state
- Encouraging municipal participation in the state's Complete Streets program and integration of bike and pedestrian needs into appropriate roadway projects
- Expand the State's support of the Complete Streets program in terms of annual allotment of grant monies and allowing the flexibility for community to use the program to make Complete Streets improvements to select roadways that are under the jurisdiction of MassDOT
- Exploring the connection between density and zoning and the desire to encourage more Transit Oriented Developments (TOD) in the region to maximize the benefits of existing infrastructure and public transit services.

¹⁵http://www.ctps.org/data/html/studies/transit/SWAP_Transit_Feasibility/SWAP_Transit_Feasibility.html#_Toc367102556

¹⁶<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/air/programs/rideshare.html>

¹⁷<https://www.mass.gov/municipal-small-bridge-program>

¹⁸<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massworks>

¹⁹<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/LocalAidPrograms/Chapter90Program.aspx>

- Considering impacts of technology on transportation infrastructure and services, such as the Waze app leading drivers to previously underutilized local and secondary streets, the expansion of ridesharing services, and the eventual potential impacts from autonomous vehicles

Emerging examples of successful transportation strategies include:

- The state's leadership in moving forward with I-495/I-90 interchange improvement project
- [MetroWest Regional Transit Authority's](http://www.mwrta.com/)²⁰ (MWRTA) [model collaboration with the MBTA](https://blog.mass.gov/transportation/mbta/mwrta-to-oversee-framingham-commuter-rail-station/)²¹ on managing the Framingham Station
- [Worcester Regional Transit Authority's](http://www.therta.com/)²² (WRTA) [Westborough shuttle](http://www.therta.com/schedules-2/westborough/)²³ bus
- [CrossTown Connect's](http://www.crosstownconnect.org/)²⁴ [shuttle](http://www.townofmaynard-ma.gov/shuttle/)²⁵ between Maynard and Acton to the South Acton Commuter Rail station
- MWRTA's [shuttle serving Boston Scientific](http://www.mwrta.com/routes/commuter-shuttles/boston-scientific-commuter-shuttle)²⁶ in Marlborough
- [Lowell Regional Transit Authority's](http://lrta.com/)²⁷ Bus [Route 15 service](http://lrta.com/schedules/route-15-chelmsfordwestford-via-rte-129110/)²⁸ outside their member communities to IBM in Littleton

Potential transportation concepts to explore further include:

- Establishing a state-supported Regional Transportation Coordinator within the 495/MetroWest Partnership that could work with municipalities, employers, RTAs, and TMAs to overcome jurisdictional boundaries and make direct connections on transit while also advancing transportation projects with a comprehensive approach
- Allowing municipalities to establish fees on development projects for transportation improvements
- Considering municipal contribution to project costs versus design, should the project advance with MassDOT funding and overseeing design
- Utilizing the flexibility of RTA services and other shuttles to provide transit linkages to developments as needed and developing innovative public-private means of financing such services, given the limited rail transit stations in the suburbs
- Providing regional input into the state's [Commuter Rail Vision Plan](https://d3044s2alrsxog.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/fmcb-meeting-docs/2017/december/2017-12-11-joint-massdot-fmcb-commuter-rail-vision-updated.pdf)²⁹ to address regional concerns regarding commuter rail services
- Creating a small competitive grant fund to offer limited seed funding for establishing needed first and last mile service
- Providing technical assistance to municipalities and RTAs on the implementation of [Chapter 432 of the Acts of 2016](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2016/Chapter432)³⁰, which authorizes municipalities to join an additional RTA

²⁰ <http://www.mwrta.com/>

²¹ <https://blog.mass.gov/transportation/mbta/mwrta-to-oversee-framingham-commuter-rail-station/>

²² <http://www.therta.com/>

²³ <http://www.therta.com/schedules-2/westborough/>

²⁴ <http://www.crosstownconnect.org/>

²⁵ <http://www.townofmaynard-ma.gov/shuttle/>

²⁶ <http://www.mwrta.com/routes/commuter-shuttles/boston-scientific-commuter-shuttle>

²⁷ <http://lrta.com/>

²⁸ <http://lrta.com/schedules/route-15-chelmsfordwestford-via-rte-129110/>

²⁹ <https://d3044s2alrsxog.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/fmcb-meeting-docs/2017/december/2017-12-11-joint-massdot-fmcb-commuter-rail-vision-updated.pdf>

³⁰ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2016/Chapter432>

- Considering means of adapting [Bus Rapid Transit](#)³¹ to a suburban setting, potentially through roadway design, links with freight to provide financial support, and looking to models such as [CTfastrak](#)³², which links Hartford and New Britain using bus-only roadways
- Reviewing the findings of the state's [Regional Bus Network Assessment Final Report](#)³³ to consider new potential bus routes and linkages
- Considering the potential of innovative mechanisms such as [regional ballot initiatives](#)³⁴, [value capture initiatives](#)³⁵, and [public private partnerships](#)³⁶ to provide additional resources/tools to municipalities and to the region addressing transportation and other infrastructure needs

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION (OCTOBER 2016 IN MAYNARD)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

Downtowns and village centers are the hearts of our communities and frequently the most challenging areas for successful development and sustainable economic activity.

This is particularly true in our smaller communities that lack the resources and staff of cities, while also facing the challenges of older buildings, empty space on upper floors, lack of proximity to highways, limited transit, parking, and walkability, and property owners with limited access to capital. In addition, residents of their respective communities have different perceptions of small vs. large, high vs. low density, or urban vs. rural settings and the resulting potential conflict with what actions are needed to support the economic viability of a downtown. The state has recognized the need to assist municipalities with their downtown efforts through the [MA Downtown Initiative](#)³⁷, and tools such as [Business Improvement Districts](#)³⁸, [District Improvement Financing](#)³⁹, and [Parking Benefit Districts](#)⁴⁰ that have had only limited implementation in a suburban setting to date. The MassWorks program, and more recently the Complete Streets grant program, have demonstrated successful applications in the downtown setting but have their limitations including total resources available. To support cultural institutions, the state's innovative [Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund](#)⁴¹ has had tremendous success across the Commonwealth, with several case studies in our region.

Much of successful downtown redevelopment is built on encouraging the establishment, success, and collaboration of relatively individualized amenities such as restaurants, brewing companies, retail establishments, and arts and cultural institutions. But there are direct constraints, such as a lack of water infrastructure in some communities, as well as indirect constraints, such as the need for public and town meeting support. These can prove challenging for sustained municipal attention on potentially controversial issues such as zoning, permitting, parking, and liquor licensing.

Specific issues raised during the downtown development discussion include:

³¹ <https://www.itdp.org/library/standards-and-guides/the-bus-rapid-transit-standard/what-is-brt/>

³² <http://ctfastrak.com/#>

³³ <http://www.kfhgroup.com/massachusetts/MassDOT%20Regional%20Bus%20Network%20Assessment.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Regional-Transportation-Ballot-Initiatives.pdf>

³⁵ <http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/MAPCValueCaptureExecSumm.pdf>

³⁶ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/AboutUs/Committees/Public-PrivatePartnershipOversightCommission.aspx>

³⁷ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi.html>

³⁸ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/bid.html>

³⁹ http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-diftif.html

⁴⁰ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40/Section22A1~2>

⁴¹ http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/facilities/facilities_about.htm

- Needing to build on community strengths to develop individualized downtown identity
- Limited means for municipalities to encourage development of amenities, such as restaurants
- Needing strong public-private partnerships with patience and understanding to catalyze development
- Limited opportunities to innovatively use municipally owned properties to catalyze downtown development
- Importance of downtown housing on upper floors, with an eye to millennials and artists/entrepreneurial uses
- Potential value of using state tools such a Business Improvement District, but difficulty of using in a suburban setting
- Obstacles to zoning changes and updates via town meeting, in contrast to a city’s relative flexibility in updating zoning
- Value of a market analysis and coordinated public infrastructure investment such as MassWorks or Complete Streets
- Needing to encourage downtown, higher density, and mixed use development while also addressing the Commonwealth’s goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions per the [Global Warming Solutions Act](#)⁴²

Emerging examples of successful downtown strategies include:

- Encouraging eateries, as Hudson has with the Rail Trail Flatbread Company, New City Microcreamery, Less Than Greater Than Speakeasy, Medusa Brewing Company, and Mullahy’s Cheese Shop, leading to recognition by the *Boston Globe*, *Boston Magazine*, *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, *MassLive*, and other media outlets about their downtown’s regional draw
- Providing opportunities to establish performing arts venues, such as reusing former firehouses, as in Natick for [The Center for the Arts](#)⁴³ and in Framingham for their [Amazing Things Arts Center](#)⁴⁴
- Fostering strong identities through downtown organizations, such as [Framingham Downtown Renaissance](#)⁴⁵, [Franklin Downtown Partnership](#)⁴⁶, and [Natick Center Associates](#)⁴⁷
- Encouraging downtown activity through establishing [Cultural Districts](#)⁴⁸, as has been done in Marlborough, Maynard, and Natick, and is underway in Franklin
- Examining successful case studies from the MA Cultural Facilities Fund in the region, such as The Center for the Arts in Natick, [the Hopkinton Center for the Arts](#)⁴⁹, and the [Danforth Museum](#)⁵⁰
- Incorporating placemaking into downtown efforts, such as [Ashland’s Corner Spot](#)⁵¹, which allows businesses to test their viability and their market through a “pop up” model. This project was made possible by MassDevelopment’s [Commonwealth Places](#)⁵² program
- Utilizing public art into downtown redevelopment strategies, such as Framingham’s mural near the commuter rail station

⁴² <http://www.mass.gov/eea/air-water-climate-change/climate-change/massachusetts-global-warming-solutions-act/>

⁴³ <http://www.natickarts.org/>

⁴⁴ <http://amazingthings.org/about-us/history/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.fdrms.org/>

⁴⁶ <http://www.franklindowntownpartnership.org/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.natickcenter.org/natick-center-associates>

⁴⁸ http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/services/cultural_districts.asp

⁴⁹ <https://hopartscenter.org/about/mission/>

⁵⁰ <http://www.danforthart.org/>

⁵¹ https://www.patronicity.com/project/the_corner_spot#!/

⁵² <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/>

Potential downtown development concepts to explore further include:

- Using new technologies to address water constraints
- Supporting the development of market analyses by communities
- Incentivizing public infrastructure investment such as [Complete Streets](#)⁵³ when coordinated with private sector investment
- Addressing obstacles to using Business Improvement Districts, District Improvement Financing, and Parking Benefit Districts in the suburbs
- Updating municipal zoning change process via town meeting as well as modernizing the current zoning codes to enable positive developments in the downtowns or village centers

HOUSING (NOVEMBER 2016 IN ACTON)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

Residential development has a huge impact on downtown development, particularly the need for mixed use projects and innovative solutions for workforce housing in downtown settings. But in turn, a number of other municipal challenges can directly impact housing, including education, water infrastructure, zoning, and transportation.

All of these areas, as noted earlier, require public and/or town meeting support for sustained attention by municipal government. Beyond this constraint, the underlying anxieties and fears about impacts to municipal budgeting from unforeseen, misrepresented or perceived school costs frequently prevent innovative housing policies and projects, particularly in a suburban setting.

As noted in several academic analyses in recent years, most notably [The Costs and Hidden Benefits of New Housing Development in Massachusetts](#), the commonly held assumption that communities must provide services at a per-capita cost for each new resident is not the case.⁵⁴ Instead, given existing capacities, there are only marginal costs to providing those services, so new residential developments do not automatically result in significantly increased municipal costs and expanded services. Because municipal services aren't generally provided on a one-to-one basis and there are economies of scale, the cost of service delivery is more complicated than a simple cost analysis per resident suggests. Also, if new housing is developed in an already built up area, the infrastructure impacts may be minimal or at least manageable. Given these circumstances, municipal discussions about housing would benefit from focused attention and resources that could be used for public education purposes, along with innovative policies and programs. Such discussions should focus on providing education services as one component of all of the services that municipalities provide.

Statewide, Massachusetts has some of the highest home prices and rents in the nation, however, low mortgage rates are masking high housing ownership costs. Despite our innovation economy, the top three occupations projected to add the largest number of jobs by 2022 are personal care aides, home health aides, and restaurant cooks – all of which pay a mean wage of less than \$30,000 annually. Nationally, the number of renters continues to increase, and here in Massachusetts, 38% of our residents are renters. In nearly every county in the state, nearly half of households are paying more than 40% of their income in rent. Accordingly, the state has prioritized multifamily housing development, through:

⁵³ <https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>

⁵⁴ https://www.massgrowth.net/writable/resources/document/cost_benefit_new_housing_3-15-16.pdf

- [Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program](#)⁵⁵, which offers both tenant- and project-based rental subsidies
- [ONE Mortgage](#)⁵⁶ program, which increases homeownership opportunities for income eligible low- and moderate-income first-time homebuyers by combining a conventional first mortgage with a publicly subsidized second mortgage
- [40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District](#)⁵⁷ (40R) and adoption within the region by Grafton and Natick
- *Opportunities For All* legislation:
 - \$500 million increase for [MassWorks](#)⁵⁸ funding
 - \$25 million to support 40R's [Smart Growth Trust Fund](#)⁵⁹
 - [Housing Development Incentive Program](#)⁶⁰, which is limited to Gateway Cities

Specific issues raised during the housing discussion include:

- Valuing educational resources and tools for municipalities to more fully inform town meeting discussions on housing policies
- Addressing the loss of limited industrially zoned properties otherwise ill-suited for residential development to housing proposals under the state's [40B affordable housing statute](#)⁶¹ (40B) that are not supported by municipal governments (so-called "unfriendly" proposals)
- Encouraging innovative housing programs that provide rental housing and effective means of rotating uses to most needy
- Consider lessons of [40R program](#)⁶² adoption by Natick and Grafton to encourage further adoption by suburban communities
- Needing to encourage mixed use and downtown housing on upper floors, with an eye to millennials and artists/entrepreneurial uses
- Growing wait lists of seniors requesting assistance – the aging of our population could lead to need to update existing housing for accessibility
- A lack of suburban housing developments that feature duplexes and attached housing units, rather than single units and much higher density projects
- Inherent obstacles from the structure of town meeting and need for a higher-than-majority threshold vote on zoning, rather than a majority threshold
- Importance of the Community Preservation Act's impact on housing and the need for expanded matching funds
- Innovatively reusing and redeveloping existing properties, in order to minimize negative impacts on water recharge areas in open space, and using innovative practices to minimize water impacts from new housing
- Considering water and wastewater impacts, especially from state regulations regarding [wetlands](#)⁶³ and [Title V regulations](#)⁶⁴ of septic systems, on housing production with an eye towards multifamily projects
- Overall challenges of managing 40B projects on a municipal level

⁵⁵ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/rental-assistance/mrv.html>

⁵⁶ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/one-mortgage-program>

⁵⁷ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/chapter-40-r.html>

⁵⁸ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/infrastructure/massworks/>

⁵⁹ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/chapter-40r>

⁶⁰ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/housing-development-incentive-program-hdip>

⁶¹ <https://www.mass.gov/chapter-40-b-planning-and-information>

⁶² <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/planning/chapter-40-r.html>

⁶³ <https://www.mass.gov/regulations/310-CMR-1000-wetlands-protection-act-regulations>

⁶⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/septic-systems-title-5>

Emerging examples of potentially successful housing strategies include:

- Integrating residential development with retail and office projects in different settings, such as:
 - Marlborough Hill's redevelopment of a former Hewlett Packard facility with 350 residential units;
 - Northborough Crossing's integration of 382 Avalon Bay housing units
 - Westborough's Bay State Common's reuse of a former industrial site into a mixed use project with 44 housing units
 - Framingham's Staples and National Development's proposal to develop 360 units
- MAPC's support for regional cooperatives of housing authorities

Potential housing concepts to explore further include:

- Providing a state "toolkit" on housing issues with a focus on public education to assist municipalities with housing discussions, particularly in regards to 40B projects and to address misconceptions about density
- Providing a "circuit breaker" or other mechanism to assure communities of state financial assistance should qualifying residential developments cause excessive hardship to municipal/school budgeting, as called for in [The Costs and Hidden Benefits of New Housing Development in Massachusetts](#)⁶⁵
- Supporting the issuance of state regulations for municipalities to establish "starter home" zoning districts
 - NOTE: Such "starter home" [regulations were issued](#) under the 40R program and were made effective Dec. 29, 2017⁶⁶
- Incentivizing adoption of municipal zoning, permitting, and policies supporting development of multifamily housing and higher density growth where existing infrastructure can support the various demands created by residential uses
- Further supporting and incentivizing municipal adoption of housing plans
- Utilizing the flexibility of RTA services and other shuttles to provide transit linkages to developments as needed, and develop innovative public-private means of financing such services, given the limited rail transit stations in the suburbs
- Allowing fees on a municipal level for development projects for transportation; also known as [Transportation Impact Fees](#)⁶⁷
- Incentivizing 40B developments to include a percentage of workforce housing (possibly based on average income levels by municipality) in addition to affordable and market rate units
- Assisting municipalities in offering further housing options by right rather than by special permit, including accessory dwelling units, senior attached housing, and cohousing
- Updating local appeals process by limiting local zoning appeals to persons who submitted written comments during the permitting process as a means to boost housing production
- Providing further state capital assistance when communities adopt innovative municipal zoning, permitting, and practices on housing, particularly in regards to multi-family projects
- Updating the structure of town meetings regarding the need for a higher-than-majority threshold vote on zoning, rather than a majority threshold
- Updating 40R and [Compact Neighborhoods Policy](#)⁶⁸ to reflect lessons from limited suburban adoption, including considering different qualifications for suburban communities

⁶⁵ https://www.massgrowth.net/writable/resources/document/cost_benefit_new_housing_3-15-16.pdf

⁶⁶ <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/12/29/ch40r760CMR592017final.rtf>

⁶⁷ <https://mobility.tamu.edu/mip/strategies-pdfs/funding/technical-summary/Transportation-Impact-Fee-2-Pg.pdf>

⁶⁸ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/cd/ch40r/compact-neighborhoodspolicy.pdf>

WATER RESOURCES (JANUARY 2017 IN WESTBOROUGH)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

As recognized in [Opportunities for All: The Baker-Polito Strategy & Plan for Making Massachusetts Great Everywhere](#)⁶⁹, public infrastructure – including water and wastewater systems – leverages and promotes private sector investment, economic development, and job creation. Beyond the economic development connection, water infrastructure impacts residential development and is essential to the quality of life in 495/MetroWest.

The suburban edge communities span eight of the Commonwealth's twenty-seven major watersheds, and its water supply comes from a combination of both surface and groundwater sources.⁷⁰

In our predominantly suburban region, water infrastructure and capacity is a significant constraint to growth and economic expansion. Several communities lack public sewer and a public water supply, meaning residents rely on individual septic systems for wastewater treatment and private wells regulated through the local Board of Health for their water supply. The majority of the region's residents rely on local public water suppliers; and only a few are served by the [Massachusetts Water Resources Authority](#) (MWRA).⁷¹

Water capacity constraints are a key factor in the region for municipalities considering economic development initiatives and future needs. The Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) put in place new requirements for municipal water withdrawals and most communities in our region are subject to WMA permit restrictions on their water supply. These initiatives reflect efforts to balance the significant growth in the area with sustainable management of environmental resources, both of which are essential to the vitality of the region. Several municipal governments in the region have raised concerns about ramifications from these water withdrawal limitations and how they may unintentionally create a more competitive environment, rather than a much-needed collaborative water management approach among neighboring communities. The implications of both SWMI and permitted water use impact growth areas like the 495/MetroWest region more significantly than other areas with less growth potential.

Stormwater management and meeting new EPA requirements is a significant area of concern for many Massachusetts communities, including those in 495/MetroWest. The lack of strong county governments combined with a strong home rule element and the noted challenges of Town Meetings, stormwater utilities are not a common tool in the Commonwealth. These same factors also make it difficult for smaller communities like those in the region to coordinate efforts to pool resources to address stormwater challenges. Stormwater needs will become more apparent and require increasing investment as our region experiences growing impacts of climate change. Higher incidence of both flooding and drought are expected, which will likely result in the need to invest in stormwater management to accommodate increasingly severe storm and repair the region's dams.

With respect to drought, the suburban edge communities span two of the Commonwealth's six drought regions. During the drought of 2016, both regions were heavily impacted; drought conditions were announced

⁶⁹ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/eohed/edplan2015.pdf>

⁷⁰ <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/eea/water/watersheds-map.pdf>

⁷¹ <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/resources/n-thru-y/wmapetitionpresentationfinal.pdf>

in June 2016 and normal conditions were not indicated until the end of 2017. In a municipal survey on water infrastructure costs conducted by the state Auditor's [Division of Local Mandates](#), only 6% of respondents indicated that they had developed formal policies related to climate change impacts on water infrastructure systems.⁷² Climate change mitigation planning raises important questions, including potentially significant impacts to stormwater management, water quality, and municipal budgets.

Despite the critical nature of water infrastructure to our communities' continued success, each water management category – Drinking, Waste, and Stormwater – is woefully underfunded, as highlighted in the [2012 Water Infrastructure Finance Commission \(WIFC\) Report](#).⁷³ Unlike transportation infrastructure, there is little federal or state grant funding available for water management and with the exception of some state grants for economic expansion, most is funded locally. The WIFC identified a \$21.4 billion funding gap for the state's water infrastructure and wastewater systems over a 20 year period and an additional estimated gap of \$18 billion in stormwater investment over the same time period. Additionally, suburban communities struggle with staffing and providing technological resources to meet new permitting requirements, such as those included in the new [Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System \(MS4\) Permits](#)⁷⁴, which have been delayed until July 2018.

Water infrastructure investment needs are growing in the region as it continues to expand demographically and economically as shown by the accompanying report by the UMass Dartmouth Public Policy Center. Infrastructure and water availability remain a potential barrier to new development, as communities in our region look to continue to grow. Many communities in the region, as permitted water users, face greater constraints on access to water than do many communities to the east of the region, or those served by the [MWRA](#)⁷⁵.

There has been a demonstrated return on investment in water and wastewater infrastructure as shown in the 2014 Study by the Collins Center for Public Management at UMass Boston⁷⁶. Every \$1 spent, generates \$2-\$14 in new taxes and \$2.62-\$6.77 in the private economy. Yet between constraints on rate increases (which remain politically unpopular) – and successful conservation programs (which reduce volume-based charges) – local departments of public works (DPWs) lack the revenue needed to make investments in their systems. While the state has recognized the value of investing in water infrastructure with programs like the MassWorks Infrastructure Grants, there are still too few resources available to communities to address infrastructure needs. The most significant state program is a low interest loan program run through the Clean Water Trust, which is overseen by the State Treasurer. However, due to currently low interest rates available through the private sector, rates offer a lesser benefit to municipalities than they have in the past. The Baker/Polito Administration has also issued Executive Order 562, which included work by MassDEP to review and update many water system regulations, some of which were duplicative and out of date. Nevertheless, more state and federal assistance is needed.

The Collins Center report highlighted the important relationship between water infrastructure planning and economic growth, noting that “where adequate infrastructure is already in place, economic development can occur quite expeditiously, but where infrastructure is inadequate or water availability in question, projects can

⁷² <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/01/wc/011717-costs-regulation-and-financing-of-mass-water-infrastructure-implications-for-municipal-budgets.pdf>

⁷³ http://www.senatoreldridge.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/WIFC_Report.pdf

⁷⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/massachusetts-small-ms4-general-permit>

⁷⁶ <https://www.umb.edu/cpm/publications>

be delayed for years, if not halted entirely.”⁷⁷ The study also reviewed the positive correlation between infrastructure investment and economic growth as well as productivity; the converse, a correlation between a lack of investment in public infrastructure and decreased labor productivity, was also identified.⁷⁸

One of the cases cited by the Collins Center was the growth of Sanofi-Genzyme, a major employer in the 495/MetroWest region. The company was able to expand its Framingham facilities due, in part, to \$14.3 million in grant funding through the MA Life Sciences Center. The grant funded efforts to upgrade wastewater infrastructure around Framingham Technology Park.⁷⁹ The expansion led to an annual increase of \$1 million in local property tax revenue, and the jobs created contribute approximately \$315,000 annually in state revenue.⁸⁰ The company has continued to grow its operations in the region, investing in facilities in Framingham, Northborough, and Westborough. The Sanofi-Genzyme project illustrates both the importance of collaboration between municipalities, businesses, and the state, as well as the clear way in which investment in water infrastructure pays dividends.

To support new technologies that could in turn sustain economic growth in suburban communities, the state’s [Clean Energy Center](#)⁸¹ (CEC) established its [Water Innovation Program](#)⁸², which together with their Water Innovation Trust aims to accelerate the commercialization of new technologies in the water market. The Trust was launched in 2015, as a partnership between MassDEP and MassCEC to provide funding for innovative water projects and to support the development of a “robust water technology test-bed network and to assisting municipal wastewater treatment plants in their efforts to adopt energy efficient and innovative water treatment technologies.” Though the number of funding opportunities have increased and diversified, there are still far too few state, federal, and local resources available for investment in infrastructure needs. A report released by the Division of Local Mandates in January 2017 reiterated the critical water infrastructure funding gap identified by the WIFC. The report also found, based on survey estimates, that although state and federal funding opportunities may be limited, municipalities may not be fully availing themselves of these options. In addition to the significant need for additional funding, this highlights the importance of state and federal outreach to municipalities to offer assistance in the water management process.

Water Infrastructure is a complicated and siloed issue that a majority of 495/MetroWest communities struggle to manage. Unlike roads and transit, the issue remains out of sight, therefore public awareness of the challenges and needs related to water is minimal at best. Without delegated authority to MassDEP to take the lead on Clean Water Act regulatory programs questions remain on how to most effectively integrate planning and watershed management within the various water withdrawal and wastewater/stormwater programs. And yet, water resources are essential to life and to continued growth – whether in housing, jobs or amenities – in the suburbs.

To maintain the region’s competitiveness, it is imperative that we are able to address long-term water resource and infrastructure needs, which will necessitate continuing to navigate the challenge of balancing economic development goals, environmental restrictions, and local budget constraints.

⁷⁷ https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1022&context=cpm_pubs

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/bitstream/handle/2452/200091/ocn795183245-2012-10-22.PDF?sequence=1>

⁸⁰ https://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1022&context=cpm_pubs

⁸¹ <http://www.masscec.com/>

⁸² <http://www.masscec.com/water-innovation>

Specific issues raised during the water resources discussion include:

- Lack of federal or state funding for water infrastructure
- No federal funds to support municipal compliance with federal stormwater regulations, unlike the funding [Environmental Protection Agency](#)⁸³ (EPA) provided for wastewater
- Municipal success with water conservation, to the detriment of their budgets
- Needing to support regional solutions, rather than create incentives for competition
- Potential for new technological solutions to water supply, wastewater treatment, and stormwater runoff, balanced with incentivizing communities to take risks on new solutions
- High costs for a small communities to invest in wastewater treatment plants
- Prohibitive connection fees for small businesses
- Needing to update population projections and impact on withdrawal permits and water use estimates
- Race to basin in SWMI – municipalities are not incentivized to work together, and could instead pursue development first to avoid being locked out of withdrawals from basin
- Water (or lack of it) should not be used to constrain the growth of Edge communities or to focus growth in only the communities served by MWRA
- Updating regulations on water reclamation and incentives to broaden usage
- Need for collective resources and standard materials for public education
- Providing resources and support for organizing stormwater utilities and other regional stormwater management solutions
- Looking to innovative examples of development-based solutions
- Obstacles and complications to sewerage particular parts of a community, as illustrated in 2011 by Sudbury's [proposal to sewer a 1.4 mile business district segment of Route 20](#)⁸⁴
- Need to update and strengthen the [State Revolving Fund](#)⁸⁵ (SRF) Loans to municipalities to meet growing needs
- Proposed [Residual Designation Authority by the EPA for phosphorus discharges in Bellingham, Franklin, and Milford](#) in 2010⁸⁶
- Petitions in 2013 to the EPA to use [Residual Designation Authority in Regions 1, 3, and 9](#) to regulate discharges from commercial, industrial, and institutional sites⁸⁷
- Implications for state and local governments from private wells for groundwater recharge, and drought management
- Addressing the low penalties rate for water bans, as a ban often does not outweigh private investment in landscaping
- Loss of DPW revenue due to water bans from drought conditions

Emerging examples of potentially successful water resource strategies include:

- [Intermunicipal collaboration on wastewater infrastructure](#) between Foxborough, Mansfield, and Norton⁸⁸

⁸³ <https://www.epa.gov/waterfinancecenter/effective-funding-frameworks-water-infrastructure>

⁸⁴ <http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/x549609482/Sudbury-Town-Meeting-approves-sewer-design-funds>

⁸⁵ <https://www.mass.gov/state-revolving-fund-srf-loan-program>

⁸⁶ <https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/draft-general-permit-residually-designated-discharges-milford-bellingham-and-franklin#SSFP>

⁸⁷ <https://www.epa.gov/npdes/epas-residual-designation-authority>

⁸⁸ http://www.thesunchronicle.com/news/local_news/foxboro-mansfield-and-norton-approve-sewer-deal/article_9dec520f-33bb-5757-90d1-f5decc3c4fb7.html

- Lessons from interbasin transfer and sewer integration between [Hopkinton and Milford](#)⁸⁹
- [Charles River Watershed Association's](#) study of [smart sewerage](#) in [Littleton](#)⁹⁰, Sherborn, and Wrentham⁹¹
- \$10 million in state funding for [Route 20 sewerage project](#) for Shrewsbury and Worcester, matching \$10 million from the City of Worcester⁹²
- Intermunicipal collaborations on stormwater with the [Central MA Regional Stormwater Coalition](#)⁹³, [MAGIC \(MAPC subregion\) Stormwater Partnership](#)⁹⁴, and the [Neponset Stormwater Partnership](#)⁹⁵

Potential water resource concepts to explore further include:

- Providing a state “toolkit” for collective resources and standard materials for public education
- Adjusting municipal rate setting in order to develop adequate resources
 - Decoupling conservation programs from rates
- Water Infrastructure Finance Commission Recommendations and resulting legislation on water banking and water bond bills
- Incentivizing and supporting regional solutions such as stormwater utilities
- Exploring new technology solutions, such as decentralized sewerage
- Updating and modernizing penalties and incentives for water restrictions
- Strengthening resources for the SRF programs under the [Massachusetts Clean Water Trust](#)⁹⁶
- Encouraging [water reclamation](#) for appropriate reuse⁹⁷
- Conducting a cost-benefit analysis of regulations and permits relating to water supply, wastewater treatment, and stormwater runoff
- Consider state government funding for a study to determine the long-term needs of the region’s non MWRA communities and the cost of north/south water mains to connect communities to the MWRA system for long-term availability of water for growth
- Consider the implications of MWRA expansion, such as costs, environmental impact, regulatory impact on programs such as SWMI, equity, and other implications
- Addressing lack of regulations on private wells – for both houses and commercial facilities – and integration within larger regulatory framework adjusting to water conditions
- Considering lessons from the state’s other water infrastructure awards, such as the 2013 \$6,000,000 [MassWorks grant to Ashland](#) to support water infrastructure and other needs for their Transit Oriented Development Mixed Use District⁹⁸
- Examining the impact on communities from the state’s technological efforts through the Water Innovation Program

⁸⁹ <http://www.wickedlocal.com/article/20100817/News/308179897>

⁹⁰ <http://www.metrowestdailynews.com/news/20170526/new-sewer-concept-would-make-energy-fertilizer-from-wastewater>

⁹¹ <http://www.crwa.org/smart-sewerage>

⁹² <http://www.mass.gov/eea/pr-2016/10-million-awarded-for-sewer-system-improvements.html>

⁹³ <http://centralmastormwater.org/Pages/index>

⁹⁴ <https://www.mapc.org/get-involved/subregions/magic/>

⁹⁶ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-clean-water-trust-mcwt>

⁹⁷ <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/wastewater/wastewater-reclaimed-water.html>

⁹⁸ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/infrastructure/massworks/round-results/massworks-communication2013dec.pdf>

- Considering the implications of [National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System \(NPDES\)](#)⁹⁹ delegation to state oversight, as proposed in [legislation from Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito](#)¹⁰⁰

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (FEBRUARY 2017 IN GRAFTON)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

Commercial development, although largely driven by the private sector, can be impacted by all levels of government.

On the municipal level, responsiveness and transparency can be key given the limited staffing and resources within town government. On the state level, resources and staffing are similarly limited, but there are an array of state agencies, quasi-public agencies, and resources focused on business development, most notably the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Massachusetts Office of Business Development with regional staff, MassDevelopment, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, the Clean Energy Center, the Massachusetts Life Science Center, and the MassWorks Infrastructure Grant program, among others.

While there exists a variety of programs to encourage commercial development, MassDevelopment specializes in finance programs that stimulate economic growth, job creation, and housing development. Some relevant case studies and state programs that benefit suburban communities include:

- [Site Readiness Program](#)¹⁰¹
- [Emerging Technology Fund](#)¹⁰²
- [TA Connect program](#)¹⁰³
- [Commonwealth Places program](#)¹⁰⁴
- [Military Affairs and Security Strategy Task Force](#)¹⁰⁵, with an emphasis on assisting facilities such as Natick's Soldier Research Development and Engineering Center
- [Collaborative Workspace Program](#)¹⁰⁶
- Case studies in Grafton and Franklin (Dean College) regarding student housing

Specific issues raised during the commercial development discussion include:

- The importance of zoning updates and municipal government's focus on expedited permitting to capitalize on development opportunities, due to the short business cycle of the private sector
 - Lost opportunities that never come to municipalities because of zoning/permitting – complicates time factors and risk factors for businesses, especially in communities with town meetings; vital to align zoning with development priorities
 - Upzoning and [Transit Oriented Development](#)¹⁰⁷ are key to encourage density
 - Communities could think in terms of development goals versus rules and regulations

⁹⁹ <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/wastewater/surface-water-discharge-permitting-npdes.html>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.mass.gov/governor/press-office/press-releases/fy2017/bill-seeks-federal-delegation-of-water-protection.html>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/site-readiness/>

¹⁰² <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/financing/loans-and-guarantees/emerging-technology-fund>

¹⁰³ https://www.massdevelopment.com/assets/what-we-offer/TACConnect_122016.pdf

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/commonwealth-places/>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/key-initiatives/defense-sector/masstf>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/financing/grants/collaborative-workspace-program>

¹⁰⁷ http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/mod-tod.html

- Workforce housing is critical to supporting further commercial development
- Limited municipal staffing and resources impact the development review and approval process, and volunteer Planning and Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBA) Boards, whose members may have little professional expertise on the subject
- Reviewing personal property exemptions, though one of the limited tools available to towns, it is not always a viable option
- Implementing a single municipal tax rate would offer benefits, but would not come without complications for development such as difficulty offering incentives, particularly for residential and/or mixed use projects
- Municipalities should look to capitalize on transit, highway, open space access to leverage innovative development
- Ongoing economic transition to online retailers rather than brick and mortar stores could have an impact on existing retail establishments and their associated real estate, which presents municipalities with both challenges and opportunities for subsequent development, including housing
- Water/sewer capacity is a significant constraint for development
- Challenges of commercial development in the suburbs include:
 - Preponderance of leases rather than purchases of property
 - Navigating municipal government review and approvals that lack the resources/technical assistance of cities
 - Aging commercial space runs counter to trend of updating facilities for green certification, renewable energy, amenities, integration with green space, and providing transit options
 - Securing financing to update the older commercial properties, despite lower real estate prices and rents
 - Densification of commercial facilities is ongoing; there is now a smaller footprint per employee than ever before, so employees have stations and smaller square footage overall
 - Shifting marketplace with online emphasis leaves grocery stores as anchors
- Growing need for amenity and retail development in the suburbs, as shown by successes in our region, and is linked to our highway infrastructure
- Past use of tax incentive programs led to facility investments that still are utilized in 495/MetroWest, even if facility users have changed
- The need for the business community and government to work together

Emerging examples of potentially successful commercial development strategies include:

- [Northborough Crossing](http://www.northboroughcrossing.com/)¹⁰⁸ with retail, grocery options, amenities, and housing
- Littleton's [The Point](http://www.thepoint495.com/)¹⁰⁹ with grocery, amenities, and a hotel, which benefited from a MassWorks grant with the Town of Littleton
- Maynard's [Mill & Main](http://mill-and-main.com/)¹¹⁰ redevelopment of a Civil War era mill that includes high technology employers such as Acacia and Battle Road Brewpub, and benefited from a Complete Streets project by Maynard
- Marlborough's redevelopment of the former HP site to allow high density multi-unit housing within walking distance to the office use and hotel; and the Apex mixed use commercial center on Route 20 including two hotels, office space, and restaurants within a short walk from a new multi-unit residential complex.

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.northboroughcrossing.com/>

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.thepoint495.com/>

¹¹⁰ <http://mill-and-main.com/>

- CenTech Park in Grafton and Shrewsbury, a 121 acre technology park that benefitted from a state grant for construction of a connector road to Route 20
- Support of MassDevelopment’s Collaborative Workspace Program in establishing Maynard’s [Revolution Factory](#)¹¹¹ to provide accelerator, pre-accelerator, maker space, and venture lab facilities in region
- Support from Emerging Technology Fund to Acacia Communications in Maynard
- Support from Commonwealth Places Program to [Ashland](#)¹¹² and [Maynard](#)¹¹³

Potential commercial development concepts to explore further include:

- Building on the state’s [Collaborative Workspace Program](#)¹¹⁴ to support Revolution Factory and other incubator/co-working space initiatives, such as those supported by [Framingham State University](#)¹¹⁵ and [Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine in Grafton](#)¹¹⁶
- Incentivizing public infrastructure investment such as Complete Streets when coordinated with private sector investment
- Addressing any obstacles to using Business Improvement Districts, District Improvement Financing, and Parking Benefit Districts in the suburbs
- Opportunity for new technologies to address constraints such as water reclamation
- Recognized need by MA Life Sciences Center for regions to have a “wet lab” facility to catalyze and support entrepreneurial life science efforts
- Updating the structure of town meetings to allow for more expeditious decision-making
- Incentivizing mill redevelopment, especially large abandoned mills, such as Hopedale’s Draper Mill, which closed in 1979 and is 1 million square feet
- Examining case studies of smaller communities in region – Northborough, Littleton, and Hopkinton – that have experienced highest change in commercial assessed values

INDUSTRIAL and EMPLOYMENT (March 2017 IN BOXBOROUGH)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

Our region hosts one of the largest employment centers outside of Boston – a “supernexus” that is very important to the state’s innovation economy. The diversified regional economy includes a range of different clusters that depend upon a highly skilled workforce at high compensation levels, with versatile applicability across industries.

The state’s focus on encouraging key industrial growth has historically been carried out through the [Economic Development Incentive Program](#)¹¹⁷, which is a tax incentive program created in 1993 to foster job creation and stimulate business growth. Participating companies meet pre-qualifications to be considered for local property tax incentives as well as state tax credits, with the entire state program having a limit of \$20 million annually.

¹¹¹ <http://www.revfactory.com/>

¹¹² https://www.patronicity.com/project/the_corner_spot#!/

¹¹³ https://www.patronicity.com/project/maynard_honey_bee_meadow#!/

¹¹⁴ <http://www.mass.gov/governor/press-office/press-releases/fy2017/collaborative-workspace-program-awards-announced.html>

¹¹⁵ <https://www.framingham.edu/the-fsu-difference/centers-and-institutes/entrepreneur-innovation-center/about-us/index>

¹¹⁶ http://vet.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/tbtc_flyer.pdf

¹¹⁷ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/bd/econ-development/>

Feedback from our high-technology employers shows their confidence, as well as their favorable view of the quality of our educational system, our high standard of living, role as a technological hub, and availability of venture capital. Their concerns include the need to improve public transportation, particularly creating suburban connections with commuter rail, addressing energy issues such as cost, reliability, and access to alternative energy sources, housing costs, tax burdens, and streamlining regulations and permitting. On an international level, there is much attention being paid by high-technology employers to the “Smart Cities” movement, which is integrating information and communication technology to municipal planning and infrastructure investment.

Specific issues raised during the industrial and employment discussion include:

- Employers’ need for a top pipeline of skilled people, which is impacted by:
 - Access to transportation infrastructure and services, a particular challenge in the suburbs
 - Costs and availability of housing, across all types, including workforce housing
 - Millennials’ interest in living in downtowns and mixed use buildings with amenities, which is complicated by their limited ability to take on significant housing costs
- Need for municipal decision making and permitting to be streamlined, transparent and predictable
- Fostering innovative thinking within government, including the municipal level
- Discussion on technology’s potential to help small municipalities address their common vision for growth without scale advantages of cities
- Importance of thinking as a region and to innovative use of new technologies to address issues like transportation and water constraints
- Culture/arts are critical to quality of life and appeal to millennials and others, but not key direct economic drivers
- Regional industry clusters are innovation-based, and thus an economic driver and attractant on their own
- Some smaller communities’ dependence on residential tax base, without much diversification, poses long-term negative implications

Emerging examples of potentially successful industrial and employment strategies include:

- MassDOT’s emphasis on infrastructure investment and scheduling adjustments to accommodate high technology employers’ needs at Littleton station
- [Commonwealth Compact’s](#)¹¹⁸ state investment in encouraging innovative thinking on a municipal level
- CrossTown Connect TMA’s was founded by member communities to develop innovative transportation solutions in the region
- Use of EDIP within the region to support high technology and growth companies, such as Acacia Communications in Maynard

Potential industrial and employment concepts to explore further include:

- Potential of shuttles and Bus Rapid Transit to address transportation needs
- Encouraging multi-municipality coordination of development projects across boundaries
- Need to identify large development parcels in the region, particularly those suitable for industrial development
 - NOTE: MassDevelopment made an award to the 495/MetroWest Partnership under their Site Readiness Program to carry out such an inventory in FY2018

¹¹⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/community-compact-cabinet>

- Conduct outreach on pending EDIP regulations to provide municipal governments with guidance and assistance on utilizing evolving program
- Consider the potential of innovative mechanisms such as [regional ballot initiatives](#)¹¹⁹, [value capture initiatives](#)¹²⁰, and [public private partnerships](#)¹²¹ to provide additional resources/tools to municipalities and to the region addressing transportation and other infrastructure needs
- Incentivize regional solutions to water needs, such as stormwater utilities, wastewater facilities, and innovative water supply mechanisms
- Providing technical assistance to municipalities aspiring to Smart Cities' standards of data connectivity and technology

ENERGY (April 2017 IN SHREWSBURY)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

Energy issues affect employers and communities of all sizes and are important in the current era of innovative energy policies.

The Commonwealth has led the way on encouraging innovative energy practices, particularly through recent legislation on energy diversity. The new programs that are underway include significant new requirements for utilities to secure long term contracts for clean energy through offshore and onshore wind, hydroelectric, and other Class I renewable resources. Other programs include the [Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target \(SMART\) Program](#)¹²² to promote cost-effective solar development and the [Energy Storage Initiative](#)¹²³, which aims to make the Commonwealth a national leader in the emerging energy storage market.

In September 2017, [Massachusetts was ranked #1 in energy efficiency](#)¹²⁴ for the seventh year in a row, with our 2016 – 2018 plans featuring the most aggressive energy efficiency goals in the country. Transportation is also a concern from an energy standpoint, as it is a key contributor to greenhouse gas emissions; as such, the state's Department of Energy Resources' [MOR-EV program](#)¹²⁵ has reserved and issued more than [\\$5 million in rebates and incentives since June 2014](#)¹²⁶.

On a community level, the Commonwealth's [Green Communities program](#)¹²⁷ has provided over \$65 million in clean energy grant funding since the program began in 2010. A majority of our region's municipalities are Green Communities and over 64% of state residents live in a Green Community.

Within the private sector, our large employers and developers have undertaken significant efforts in water reuse, energy efficiency, recycling, alternative energy, and other sustainability efforts. More specifically, the clean energy sector now makes up over 100,000 jobs in Massachusetts, contributing \$11.8 billion to

¹¹⁹ <http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Regional-Transportation-Ballot-Initiatives.pdf>

¹²⁰ <http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/MAPCValueCaptureExecSumm.pdf>

¹²¹ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/AboutUs/Committees/Public-PrivatePartnershipOversightCommission.aspx>

¹²² <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/development-of-the-solar-massachusetts-renewable-target-smart-program>

¹²³ <https://www.mass.gov/energy-storage-initiative>

¹²⁴ <http://aceee.org/press/2017/09/aceee-state-energy-efficiency>

¹²⁵ <https://mor-ev.org/>

¹²⁶ http://files.masscec.com/2016%20MassCEC_IndustryReport_Full_Web.pdf

¹²⁷ <http://www.mass.gov/eea/energy-utilities-clean-tech/green-communities/>

Massachusetts' Gross State Product, according to [the 2016 Massachusetts Clean Energy Industry Report](#).¹²⁸ Over eighty research teams have benefited from \$3.65 million in grants from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's [Catalyst Program](#)¹²⁹ to test feasibility of new technology, and raised over \$150 million in total financing.

Specific issues raised during the energy discussion include:

- Municipal leadership is key to the state's evaluation and commitment of resources
- Recognizing that initial investments will allow municipalities to save money, which will save residents money as well
- Communities that host energy facilities, such as Hopkinton, face inequitable costs from infrastructure, security, and development restrictions
- Past discussions of potential natural gas pipelines illustrated the need for a more coordinated review process by municipalities, state, and federal authorities
- Potential opportunities for integrating compressed natural gas
- High technology employers requiring consistent, reliable energy without fluctuations
- Impact of energy costs on multistate and international companies' facility siting decisions and consideration of the region for investment
- Need for energy storage and implications for state, municipalities, and private sector

Emerging examples of potentially successful energy strategies include:

- Energy issues critical to region's high tech employers
- Case studies of Green Communities' projects from within the region
- Number of [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design](#)¹³⁰ (LEED) certified buildings in 495/MetroWest region like Sanofi Genzyme in Framingham and Red Hat in Westford
- Sustainable practices by regional employers and developers such as Patriot Place Energy Conservation and Solar Installation
- The application of [Energy Stretch Codes](#)¹³¹ in building new development

Potential energy concepts to explore further include:

- Identifying any corresponding municipal actions in zoning, permitting, and other areas to support the state's Energy Storage Initiative
- Adopting compressed natural gas and electric vehicles for public and private transportation providers
- Taking advantage of energy efficiency programs and opportunities on the state and federal levels
- Establishing municipal level task forces on energy issues:
 - Efficiencies
 - Short and long term operational plans
 - Short and long term capital plans
 - Identify infrastructure key to resiliency (due to climate change)
 - Innovative energy practices
- Considering potential use of anaerobic facilities in appropriate developments

¹²⁸ <http://www.masscec.com/2016-massachusetts-clean-energy-industry-report-0>

¹²⁹ <http://www.masscec.com/catalyst>

¹³⁰ <https://new.usgbc.org/leed>

¹³¹ <http://www.mass.gov/ocabr/government/oca-agencies/dpl-lp/opsi/consumer-prot-and-bus-lic/license-type/csl/stretch-energy-code-information.html>

- Needing strategies to engage tenants in improved energy practices when leasing space in mixed use developments
- Incentivizing state and municipal review and adoption of new technologies on water and energy
- Limiting green space losses from inland wind and solar farm projects

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT & SKILLS BASE (MAY 2017 IN FRANKLIN)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

Workforce skills are a critical advantage and one of the top reasons for our region’s competitiveness—they fuel our ongoing growth across industries.

Our region is exceptionally well-educated, with 75% of residents having at least some college experience compared to 64% on the state level. Despite this enormous competitive strength, the region does have some challenges related to its workforce.

Some growing industries are highly dependent upon aging workers and need to incorporate technical training for their successors. Such transitions create a situation where five generations could be working alongside each other in the workplace, with ensuing complications. Providing physical access for qualified candidates to jobs can be a barrier, given the region’s limited public transportation services. Such transportation issues can be complicated by the cost of living in the region, especially for public sector employers and workers in lower wage occupations or working multiple jobs.

The state has concentrated on workforce development issues, not just through an emphasis in its *Opportunities for All Plan*, but also through the state’s Workforce Development Plan under the *Workforce Investment Opportunity Act*, and such programs as the Governor’s [BizWorks Team](#)¹³², [Workforce Training Fund](#)¹³³, [Workforce Skills Capital Grants](#)¹³⁴, [Workforce Competiveness Trust Fund](#)¹³⁵, and [Advanced Manufacturing Training Program](#)¹³⁶.

Most notably, Governor Baker created the [Workforce Skills Cabinet](#)¹³⁷ comprised of the Secretaries from the Executive Office of Education, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, bringing together their knowledge, perspective, and resources in an effort to close the skills gap in Massachusetts. The Cabinet is aligning state and regional policies and programs to improve workforce skills, job readiness, and vocational and other educational opportunities to meet the present and evolving needs of employers, while soliciting input from key constituencies.

The Skills Cabinet has established the [Regional Workforce Skills Planning Initiative](#)¹³⁸ to bring together regional teams of educators, members of the workforce, and economic development professionals to create a statewide blueprint for growth strategies. Through this initiative, the seven regional groups are conducting

¹³² <https://www.mass.gov/mass-bizworks>

¹³³ <http://workforce.massbudget.org/workforce-training-fund>

¹³⁴ <http://www.mass.gov/edu/government/executive-office-of-education/grant-information/massachusetts-skills-capital-grant-program-.html>

¹³⁵ <http://commcorp.org/programs/workforce-competitiveness-trust-fund-wctf/>

¹³⁶ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/advanced-manufacturing-training-program.html>

¹³⁷ <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/workforce-skills-cabinet>

¹³⁸ <http://www.mass.gov/governor/press-office/press-releases/fy2017/workforce-skills-cabinet-kicks-off-regional-initiative.html>

analyses of labor market data and developing a Labor Market Blueprint on priority sectors and occupations while encouraging collaborations on a regional level.

Specific issues raised during the educational attainment and skills discussion include:

- Importance of vocational schools
- Need to address complications from aging workforce and challenges from retirement, i.e. institutional loss of knowledge and skills
- Need to project changing occupation needs of employers, and align higher education and workforce system
- Considering the career ladder approach to address lower skilled workers and provide long term opportunities
- Addressing the need for “Soft Skills” programs for job applicants
- Loss of immigrant workers due to federal policies
- Cost of childcare can be prohibitive for those wanting to enter the workforce
- Aligning transit options with employment centers in the suburbs, particularly first and last mile solutions
- Filling municipal staff positions

Emerging examples of potentially successful educational attainment and skills strategies include:

- Success of the Workforce Training Fund
- Ongoing focus and investment in state’s technical schools
- Aligning public higher education with employer needs, such as through Framingham State University’s World of Work and Mass Bay Community College’s strategic analysis of the market
- CrossTown Connect works across RTA boundaries but still can’t connect those services
- Lowell RTA’s service outside their service area to Littleton’s IBM facility but not to rail station
- Focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) workforce issues by the [Massachusetts STEM Advisory Council](#)¹³⁹ and in our region by the [MetroWest STEM Education Network](#)¹⁴⁰
- [Establishment of a new Biotechnology MBA program by Framingham State University](#)¹⁴¹

Potential educational attainment and skills concepts to explore further include:

- Building on the state’s [Regional Workforce Skills Planning Initiative’s](#)¹⁴² regional data analysis and identification of key occupations and industries. The Partnership served on the Boston Working Group and shared the Commission’s deliberations; the resulting [regional blueprint](#)¹⁴³ mirror those of UMass Dartmouth’s Public Policy Center for the Commission in identifying computer and math occupations as priorities.
- Need for higher education curriculum to reflect employer input and needs
- Using the healthcare industry model as an established way of training workers to the benefit of both employers and employees
- Potential value of innovative partnerships with private employers as well as public employers such as RTAs on Commercial Drivers Licensing
- Need for soft skills workforce training as well as hard STEM skills

¹³⁹ <http://www.mass.edu/stem/home/councilmembers.asp>

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.metroweststem.com/about/>

¹⁴¹ <http://www.milforddailynews.com/news/20171227/framingham-state-launches-new-biotech-mba-program>

¹⁴² <https://www.mass.gov/regional-workforce-skills-planning-initiative>

¹⁴³ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/greater-boston-regional-workforce-skills-planning-initiative-regional-blueprint>

- Providing outreach and support for the region’s new career center operator through the region’s prevailing Workforce Investment Board, [Partnerships for a Skilled Workforce](#)¹⁴⁴

TELECOMMUNICATIONS and SALES TAX COLLECTIONS (JUNE 2017 IN WESTBOROUGH)

Note: For further background and context on this issue in the 495/MetroWest region, please refer to the appendices for the meeting presentations and other briefing materials.

As discussed by the Commission relative to industry, employment, and downtowns, telecommunications is an essential element for successful development in today’s economy.

Our region is fortunate to far exceed the state on every indicator of broadband connectivity. For instance, statewide, 43 percent of households have two broadband providers while 55 percent of households have only one such provider; the opposite trend occurs in 495/MetroWest, as 88 percent of households have two or more broadband providers, and only 11 percent have one such provider.

The state is focusing on integrating broadband connectivity with educational access, which benefits our future workforce, existing employers, and overall economic development. The [Digital Connection Initiative](#)¹⁴⁵, a state initiative with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, provides consultants and interested school districts with the opportunity to work together for assistance with [E-Rate](#)¹⁴⁶, a federal program that provides technology discounts for schools and libraries. [Digital Connections](#)¹⁴⁷ is a program using state bonds to cover non-discount project costs. Massachusetts is one of only eleven states with a qualifying State Matching Program that will increase an applicant’s federal discount rate for special construction.

On the private sector side, telecommunications companies are shifting to 5G, which uses a different spectrum band that does not propagate well. Accordingly, there is a new focus on using “small cell” tower technology in high demand areas, rather than a more conventional cell tower approach, which has an existing governmental review process for siting issues. In Massachusetts, Verizon’s strategy is to work directly with municipalities on individualized approaches to siting, so those governments are looking to precedents of electrical or building permits.

On sales tax collections, the region has clear municipal leaders – including Framingham, Natick, and Westborough – indicating that those cities and towns are retail centers for the region. This dynamic also has transportation implications for the region, particularly for our roadway network and transit limitations. The data collected between 2004 and 2014 shows the communities of Hopkinton, Southborough, Sudbury, and Wrentham experienced the largest change in sales tax collections, demonstrating their retail developments over that time period.

Specific issues raised in the telecommunications and sales tax discussion include:

- Need for more cell tower coverage to handle increasing demand, particularly along commuting corridors and with use of new technologies such as Waze
- Ongoing transition from copper to fiber services

¹⁴⁴ <http://www.pswinc.org/>

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2017/dcpsg/>

¹⁴⁶ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/odl/funding/e-rate/>

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.doe.mass.edu/grants/2017/dcpsg/>

- Ever-increasing demand for wireless coverage and capacity, given trends to full-time connectivity
- Importance of telecommunications to downtown development and assuring employers of connectivity
- Growing concerns of consumers and governments on data privacy
- Issues associated with net neutrality
- Transition to building out small cell and distributed antenna wireless systems, with potential implications on the federal, state, and municipal levels of government
- Increasing applications for placement of telecommunications equipment in public rights of way on state and municipal infrastructure, such as light poles
- Legislation proposed in other states to govern public pole placement, while, instead, in Massachusetts, discussions take place on a municipal level
- Ongoing discussions among state agencies about potential public procurement issues resulting from the placement of private equipment on public infrastructure, with similar questions from municipal government
- Limited resources and staffing in suburban communities to address telecommunications issues
- With sales taxes, the potential implications from the region hosting so many retail headquarters, such as BJ's Wholesale Club, Staples, TJX, and Cumberland Farms.
- The implications for the region's transportation network to address access to communities with strong sales tax collections and retail amenities
- Potential lessening of pressure on the region's transportation network by encouraging further retail/amenity developments activity in other communities
- Ongoing transition to internet sales and the potential effects on the region's development

Emerging examples of potentially successful telecommunications and sales tax strategies include:

- Verizon has one of two research and development facilities in the nation in Massachusetts, one of eleven "small cell" testing sites in Brockton, and is working on small cell siting with three 495/MetroWest communities: Framingham, Franklin, and Wrentham.
- Importance of new retail and amenity developments with strong transportation access, such as Littleton's The Point, Northborough Crossing, and Highland Commons in Hudson and Berlin.

Potential energy and sales tax concepts to explore further include:

- Lessons from the "small cell" testing in Brockton and the siting discussions with three communities in 495/MetroWest
- Incorporating results of state's discussion about [30B Uniform Procurement Act](#)¹⁴⁸ into guidance for municipal governments and/or municipal utilities addressing similar questions
- Developing model practices and technical assistance for suburban communities prioritizing upgrades to their telecommunications infrastructure
- Encouraging suburban school districts to utilize state support for telecommunications needs
- Consideration of Single Sales Factor Formula for state's retail headquarters which could result in increased tax revenue. Single Sales Factor was the focus of legislation filed in previous sessions to support state's retailers, which are disproportionately located in 495/MetroWest, with BJ's Wholesale Club, Staples, and TJX headquarters in our region.

KEY FINDINGS & NEXT STEPS

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/chapter-30b-history>

As befitting such an inter-related and comprehensive discussion on development, the Commission's deliberations have identified a wide range of issues with implications for municipal government, the Commonwealth, and the private sector.

While all of these issues affect suburban development, it must be noted that, **in particular, (1) providing transportation system improvements, (2) addressing water supply, wastewater treatment, and stormwater, and (3) developing innovative workforce housing** would have a deep and immediate impact in resolving some of our key regional constraints to growth. Additionally, these three areas often overlap, where actions taken to address one issue may have impacts or benefits on another. Some clear priorities for action have emerged, leading with those issues:

Transportation:

- Overcoming Metropolitan Planning Organization jurisdictional boundaries to address the need for planning, design, and construction funding for regional interchanges that are choke points, such as I-495/I-290 and I-495/Route 9
- Supporting innovative first and last mile connections for commuters using commuter rail, by:
 - Updating and modernizing state support for Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) and Transportation Management Associations (TMAs)
 - Establishing a state-supported Regional Transportation Coordinator within the Partnership that could work with municipalities, employers, RTAs, and TMAs to overcome jurisdictional boundaries and make direct connections on transit while also advancing transportation projects with a comprehensive approach
 - Providing input into the state's Commuter Rail Vision Plan to address regional concerns with commuter rail operations, scheduling, linkages with shuttles, and other issues
 - Creating a small competitive grant fund to offer limited seed funding for establishing needed first and last mile service
- Providing technical assistance to municipalities and RTAs on the implementation of [Chapter 432 of the Acts of 2016](#)¹⁴⁹, which authorizes municipalities to join an additional RTA as well

Water:

- Considering successful case studies of inter-municipal cooperation with state support on innovative solutions, such as \$10 million in state funding for [Route 20 sewerage project](#) for Shrewsbury and Worcester, matching \$10 million from the City of Worcester¹⁵⁰
- Providing a state "toolkit" for collective resources and standard materials for public education
- Adjusting municipal rate setting in order to develop adequate resources, with a goal of decoupling conservation programs from rates
- Studying long term water needs of the area and potential solutions for supply including regional utilities
- Supporting the Water Infrastructure Finance Commission recommendations and resulting legislation on water banking and water bond bills
- Incentivizing and supporting innovative regional solutions, such as storm water utilities
- Incentivizing state and municipal review and adoption of new technologies on water
- Updating penalties and incentives for water restrictions

¹⁴⁹ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2016/Chapter432>

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.mass.gov/eea/pr-2016/10-million-awarded-for-sewer-system-improvements.html>

Housing:

- Considering the Governor’s [Housing Choice Initiative](#) as well as [related legislation](#) and capital funding, including new resources for municipalities to address housing needs and related legislation updating the process of Town Meeting approvals of certain zoning and housing measures¹⁵¹
- Providing a state “toolkit” on housing issues with a focus on public education to assist municipalities with housing discussions, particularly in regards to projects falling under the 40B affordable housing statute and addressing misconceptions about density
- Providing a “circuit breaker” or other mechanism to assure qualifying communities of state financial assistance for residential developments that may cause excessive hardship to municipal/school budgeting, as called for in [The Costs and Hidden Benefits of New Housing Development in Massachusetts](#)¹⁵²
- Supporting municipal adoption of new state “starter home” zoning districts
- Addressing obstacles to using 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District and [Compact Neighborhoods Policy](#)¹⁵³ to reflect lessons from limited suburban adoption (examples are Grafton & Natick), including the consideration different qualifications for suburban communities
- Incentivizing adoption of municipal zoning, permitting, and policies supporting development of multifamily housing

As well as priorities in:

Downtown Revitalization:

- Encouraging downtown activity through establishing [Cultural Districts](#)¹⁵⁴, as has been done in Marlborough, Maynard, and Natick, and is underway in Franklin
- Incorporating placemaking into downtown efforts, such as [Ashland’s Corner Spot](#)¹⁵⁵, supported by MassDevelopment’s Commonwealth Places program
- Incentivizing public infrastructure investment, such as Complete Streets when coordinated with private sector investment
- Addressing obstacles to using Business Improvement Districts, District Improvement Financing, and Parking Benefit Districts in the suburbs

Commercial Development:

- Addressing obstacles to using Business Improvement Districts, District Improvement Financing, and Parking Benefit Districts in the suburbs
- Recognizing the need by MA Life Sciences Center for regions to have a “wet lab” facility to catalyze and support entrepreneurial life science efforts
- Exploring obstacles to mill redevelopment and incentivizing successes, especially with large abandoned mills, such as Hopedale’s Draper Mill, which closed in 1979 and is 1 million square feet

Industrial and Employment:

- Encouraging multi-municipal coordination of development projects across municipal boundaries

¹⁵¹ <https://www.mass.gov/housing-choice-initiative>

¹⁵² https://www.massgrowth.net/writable/resources/document/cost_benefit_new_housing_3-15-16.pdf

¹⁵³ <http://www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/cd/ch40r/compact-neighborhoodspolicy.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/services/cultural_districts.asp

¹⁵⁵ https://www.patronicity.com/project/the_corner_spot#!/

- Need to identify large development parcels in region, particularly those suitable for industrial development
 - NOTE: MassDevelopment made an award to the 495/MetroWest Partnership under their Site Readiness Program to carry out such an inventory in FY2018
- Conducting outreach on pending EDIP regulations to provide municipal governments with guidance and assistance on utilizing evolving program

Energy:

- Identifying any corresponding municipal actions in zoning, permitting, and other areas to support the state’s Energy Storage Initiative
- Adopting use of compressed natural gas and electric vehicles for public and private transportation providers
 - NOTE: The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and MassDOT are currently in the midst of conducting listening sessions and accepting comments on [potential greenhouse gas reductions in transportation](#)¹⁵⁶
- Establishing municipal level task forces on energy issues:
 - Efficiencies
 - Short and long term operational plans
 - Short and long term capital plans
 - Identify infrastructure key to resiliency (due to climate change)
 - Innovative energy practices
- Consider potential use of anaerobic facilities in appropriate developments
- Incentivizing state and municipal review and adoption of new technologies on energy

Educational Attainment and Skills:

- Building on the state’s [Regional Workforce Skills Planning Initiative’s](#)¹⁵⁷ regional data analysis and identification of key occupations and industries. The Partnership served on the Boston Working Group and shared the Commission’s deliberations; the resulting [regional blueprint](#)¹⁵⁸ mirror those of UMass Dartmouth’s Public Policy Center for the Commission in identifying computer and math occupations as priorities.
- Ensuring higher education curriculum and capital planning to reflect employer input and needs
- Providing outreach and supporting for the region’s new career center operator through the dominant Workforce Investment Board, [Partnerships for a Skilled Workforce](#)¹⁵⁹

Telecommunications:

- Identifying lessons from the “small cell” testing in Brockton and the siting discussions with three communities in the region
- Incorporating results of state’s discussion on 30B Uniform Procurement Act into guidance for municipal governments and/or municipal utilities addressing similar questions
- Developing model practices and technical assistance for suburban communities prioritizing upgrades to their telecommunications infrastructure

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.mass.gov/transportation-listening-sessions>

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.mass.gov/regional-workforce-skills-planning-initiative>

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/greater-boston-regional-workforce-skills-planning-initiative-regional-blueprint>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.pswinc.org/>

The Commission will take action on these issues across different levels of government and with key constituencies. Thanks to the foresight and collaborative leadership of the House and Senate delegations, led by Representative Hogan and Senator Spilka, and with the full support of the Baker-Polito Administration, the FY2018 state budget includes some funding for the 495/MetroWest Partnership to continue supporting and advancing the Commission's work. Such ongoing state support for this work is crucial to advancing appropriate solutions to these suburban development needs, and is much appreciated by the Partnership and the 495/MetroWest region.

With the state leadership involved in this Commission and the support of the Baker-Polito Administration, findings that can be actionable by state agencies will be brought to their attention directly, while items needing legislative attention will be addressed by our delegation. On a municipal level, the Commission's report will be shared throughout the region through the work of the Commissioners, legislators, and the 495/MetroWest Partnership, in order for local governments to take action as needed. Through the Commission's deliberations, key stakeholders in suburban development have been directly involved, and therefore further direct outreach will be conducted to such groups, including regional planning agencies and subregions, chambers of commerce, municipal economic development committees, transit providers, developers, environmentalists, and advocacy organizations.

Throughout this extended dialogue, the Commission will highlight successful examples and solicit ideas, suggestions, and best practices on how to address the suburban development issues identified in this report. Our intention is to review and analyze submissions for practicality, coordination with *Opportunities for All*, effectiveness, cost, and other factors. This extensive solicitation and analysis will result in identifying both short and long term strategies to address the challenges, with specific recommendations for municipalities, state, and private sector.