



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

September 20, 2017

Sean Cronin
Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services
Department of Revenue
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
PO Box 9569
Boston MA 02114

Dear Commissioner Cronin,

Attached please find a summary report of the work done by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments in support of the Town of Heath's Regionalization Best Practice, developed under the Baker-Polito Administration's Community Compact Program and funded through the FRCOG's 2017 District Local Technical Assistance funds.

Through its compact with the Division of Local Services, the Town of Heath agreed to work with the FRCOG to explore the possibility of a shared mechanic. While we were not successful in finding other towns interested, as is detailed in the attached report, the FRCOG and the Town have completed the Community Compact project and moved on to explore other shared services with neighboring Towns.

Kudos to the Town for its creative approach to exploring all possible options for cross-jurisdictional sharing, and thanks to the Baker-Polito Administration for your support of municipal innovation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Linda L. Dunlavy".

Linda L. Dunlavy
Executive Director

cc: Town of Heath





Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Community Compact Regionalization Best Practice – Heath

Exploration of Shared Mechanic

FRCOG met with Heath officials last summer to talk about the concept of sharing a mechanic, for both the Highway and Fire Departments. Basic maintenance, as in most small towns, is handled in-house by department staff. Larger, more complicated repairs and maintenance work must be outsourced to local repair shops in Charlemont and Shelburne Falls. Town officials were interested to see if there was a way to share a mechanic with one or more towns to bring the outsourced work back in-house, thereby saving the time and cost of transporting heavy equipment.

After learning what the needs are in Heath, we surveyed Franklin County highway superintendents, fire chiefs and town administrators to find out if they have a mechanic on staff. If not, we asked how they handle repairs and maintenance, and if they were interested in sharing a mechanic with Heath. We also asked similar questions through the Baystate Roads list serve to find out current pay rates for municipal mechanics. There were only a few Franklin County towns with a mechanic on staff, and none with any extra staff hours available to share that mechanic with Heath. None of the towns without a mechanic were interested at the time in sharing a staff position to be hired with Heath. The main reason is that it would require them to add a part-time position to local budgets that are already stretched thin.

After collecting and analyzing the survey data, FRCOG spoke with the Chair of the Heath Select Board about the findings of the research and the lack of a sharing partner. At that time the Select Board was actively involved in discussions with neighboring towns about sharing emergency services, and they were taking on a new project to consider options for re-use of the Heath Elementary School if it were no longer used as a school. With these pressing projects on their agenda and taking up the majority of their time, and the shared mechanic project unlikely to bear fruit at the time, we decided not to pursue the project any further for now.

We will keep Heath in mind if another town expresses interest in a shared mechanic in the future. It's the kind of project that is difficult to gain traction in small towns as it requires that multiple towns, at the same moment in time, need to hire a vacant mechanic position, or are willing to increase their budgets to add a mechanic position. Achieving a critical mass of interested and willing partners is extremely difficult.