

South Hadley Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)

Transportation Subcommittee

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Draft: July 11, 2008

South Hadley should seek to provide its residents with a range of convenient, safe, affordable, low-environmental-impact, and attractive options for circulating within the Town and throughout the region. A flexible, multi-modal system that supports not just automobiles, but public transportation, bicycles, and pedestrians, at a minimum, and which is integrated with the rest of the region's transportation infrastructure, will serve Town residents well and will help maintain South Hadley's attractiveness as a community in which to live and work.

South Hadley's current infrastructure compels citizens to rely upon private passenger vehicles for the majority of their transportation needs. Housing is spread out geographically, and often some distance from common destinations: shops, schools, etc. Overall, automotive transportation is fairly well served by South Hadley's network of main arteries and local streets. Some routes may experience high peak volumes, but traffic is seldom slowed significantly. While there is a deferred maintenance backlog for the town's streets, primary ways tend to be safe and well-marked.

Unfortunately, alternatives to private passenger vehicles are limited for Town residents. Public transportation –the bus– is limited in scope and frequency. There are no easy connections with airports or train stations. Beyond the main thoroughfares, and even on some main thoroughfares, sidewalks are limited and/or in need of upkeep. There are no dedicated bike lanes, and many roads lack wide enough shoulders, clear of debris, to make biking safe.

South Hadley's reliance on private passenger vehicles comes with costs, including:

Economic burden on households to own, maintain, and fuel enough vehicles to meet household members' personal and professional travel needs

Economic, land, and infrastructure resources devoted to supporting automotive circulation: parking lots, gas stations, road and bridge repair, houses requiring multi-car garages, e.g.

Vehicular congestion

Air and noise pollution

Broader economic, political, and environmental impact of petroleum production and consumption

It goes without saying that the Town should keep its roads in good repair and seek to minimize vehicular traffic on an ongoing basis. However, with the above factors in mind, South Hadley should give equal or greater priority to supporting alternatives to the personal motor vehicle for its residents. The Town should invest in the necessary infrastructure, build public awareness, and consider various incentive programs.

In particular, the Town should invest in:

Sidewalks – Many of South Hadley’s roadways were laid out with little consideration for pedestrian safety and convenience. A rational program of sidewalk improvement and construction on existing ways should be developed. Subdivision regulations should be reviewed to assure appropriate sidewalks and bike lanes in new developments.

Bike lanes: By providing bike lanes on both primary and secondary ways the Town can connect neighborhoods and resources within South Hadley (Schools, Center/Falls). The Town should coordinate with PVPC to provide bike-friendly linkages with neighboring towns, many of which, such as Granby and Amherst, are promoting their own bicycle networks. Bike lane design should anticipate the likely use of battery or small motor driven personal vehicles for local area transportation. Destinations throughout the town should provide convenient, safe bike storage facilities.

Public Transportation – Public transportation to work, school, libraries, shopping facilities, and regional transportation hubs (train, bus, airport) should make personal motor vehicles a choice, not a necessity, for most South Hadley residents and employees. South Hadley should work with the PVRTA and other transportation providers to make public transportation as convenient, accessible and desirable as it once was in our region. The Town should support the regional initiative to expand passenger rail service along the I-91 corridor.

A thoughtful, attainable transportation plan will tie in neighboring communities and will consider the transportation demands of the larger region.