



MEMORANDUM

TO: Essex Planning Commission Members

FROM: Regina Mahony, CCRPC

DATE: June 28, 2013 – Updated August 26, 2015

RE: Informal Town Plan comments

When I met with you back on March 28th I indicated that I would be following up with comments on your Town Plan. Here are the comments:

1. Excellent and thorough Economic Development chapter. I'd recommend that the Essex Economic Development Committee take a look at the Bristol Downtown Community Partnership and some of the private community investment tools that they've been able to help organize. Carol Wells is the Executive Director and would be a great resource.
2. The Natural Resources & Recreation chapters are excellent – the Town has done a great deal of inventory work, and has prioritized the significant resources to protect. Has the Town been able to implement some of the regulatory goals called for in this section?
3. The entire plan is consistent in its goal of concentrating growth inside the sewer service area – almost every chapter reinforces this policy and this makes the Plan particularly effective in meeting state goal §4302 (1). Especially strong is the Town's Residential Development Phasing Policy that attempts to achieve 80% of growth in the sewer service area.
4. There are helpful cross references throughout every chapter of the Plan, making the Plan truly comprehensive.
5. The Energy chapter is a great first step in energy planning. In addition, the energy goals in the Transportation, Housing and Natural Resource chapters make it clear that the Town is working towards a cross-sector energy planning approach. In developing the Energy Plan, and updates to the Town Plan, consider including Greenhouse Gas Inventory data (available at the Town level from CCRPC), and refer to the Climate Action Plan's municipal guide appendix for specific energy actions (in draft form at the moment but we can get it to you when you are ready for it). **Specific energy actions have been added, but not Greenhouse Gas Inventory Data.**
6. While the protection of agricultural land is a strong policy throughout many chapters of the plan, the plan could be strengthened by having specific goals, objectives and strategies to support and encourage the industry itself (beyond just land protection) as described in the sub-goals of §4302 (9). Specifically, the plan could be strengthened by drawing a connection to the health benefits of local food production and specific ways to help encourage these industries – including processing and distribution infrastructure. **Done**
7. The wealth of data contained in the Plan is impressive and helps explain what is happening in the Town. Because the Plan was written before the 2010 Census data was available, updating the data where appropriate would help strengthen the Plan. **Done**
8. The transportation chapter is quite extensive and comprehensive, though some information could be updated. There are numerous references to the CIRC Highway, and we suggest that these statements be reconsidered in light of the CIRC Alternatives projects. In addition, the "conflicts in functional

classification” section is quite thorough, however it could be strengthened by including a discussion on how TDM and other measures can to some degree address current traffic issues in addition to simply trying to reduce congestion (because reducing congestion can in turn attract motorists back to the system, which then creates more congestion). TDM won’t solve the issues, but it can be one part of the solution. More specific transportation chapter recommendations include: **The transportation section and associated goals and polices of the plan has been updated in a comprehensive way.**

- Consider adding “transit service” to item number 1 at the top of page 8-1.
- Has the Highway Transportation Management Plan been updated?
- There is a lot of gray area in functional classes – it may help to include a chart to help explain this concept to the reader. Two options are included below.
- It may be helpful to explain or define what access management is in the first paragraph on page 8-3.
- Consider adding “unpaved” to the last sentence within “Minor (Local) Roads” on page 8-6 to describe the 7.4 miles of road.
- Consider adding that the intersection improvement for VT Route 117/Sand Hill Road referenced on page 8-7 is underway.
- Would it be possible to identify the segments identified in #1 on the top of page 8-8?
- Consider indicating that the projects referenced in the second bullet in the middle of page 8-8 (Rte 117 bypass lane and new traffic signal at Rte 15/Sand Hill) are underway; and the Gentes Road Bridge is complete (we think it might be).
- The Plan includes a great transit narrative – but it could use some updating. Consider updating the CCTA ridership data on page 8-8 (and check map reference – it appears that the title may not be correct), as well as the route information (for example the Jeffersonville Commuter bus will soon be started).
- Consider revising the Greyhound section on page 8-10 to say: “Lines connect from Montreal, via Burlington to Boston, Massachusetts. Megabus connects Burlington to both Boston and New York City.”
- The map referenced under Section 8.2 appears to be Map 6 on the website.
- Consider updating Table 8-9 as needed – use inflation factor to revise cost estimates.
- Consider setting a firmer goal rather than “regularly” update the Highway Transportation Management Plan in Objective 8.2.2 – perhaps every 5 years?
- Consider adding the following to Objective 8.2.3: “and CCRPC’s 2008 Route 15 Corridor Study”.
- Consider adding to the end of Objective 8.2.4 “...and expand as appropriate.”
- References to the MPO in Strategy 8.3.1.1 (and .2) should be changed to CCRPC and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan should be changed to the ECOS Plan – in addition to reconsidering the CIRC Highway objective (also Objective 8.4.2). Also change MPO to CCRPC in Strategy 8.3.3.1 and Goal 8.7.
- Consider adding carshare as another option under Strategy 8.3.3.2.
- Strategy 8.3.3.4 - Change Transportation “Enhancement” to Transportation “Alternatives”; and add “CCRPC sidewalk program” as a funding option.
- Strategy 8.3.4.2 – replace “CCMPO (Pedestrian Policy and Sidewalk Plan), CCRPC” with “CCRPC Regional Ped/Bike Plan”.

- Consider adding “i.e. Complete streets” to Strategy 8.4.3.3.
9. Statutory changes made in the 2013 Legislative session include two flood resiliency requirements, one goal and one element. These requirements become effective July 1, 2014 – so depending on your timeframe you’ll want to include these. A number of organizations are working on guidance for this so stay tuned for more information. In the meantime, the All Hazard Mitigation Plan (County wide plan with an Annex for Essex), and additional FEH language can be used to help meet these requirements. Dan Albrecht provided the Town with proposed FEH language in August, 2012. I’ve included the language below. **A flood resiliency section and goals have been included.**
10. Is the Town going to review whether the population growth rate of 205 persons per year is still the appropriate cap? **This is still the targeted growth rate.**
11. The water supply section in Chapter 6 refers to “static pressure” and high pressure and low pressure zones. If this level of information is going to be included in the plan, I’d suggest a quick sentence explaining why this information matters to the reader. For example, which is preferable - low pressure or high pressure? Does one of the other indicate that an improvement is needed in the water supply system to improve or relieve the static pressure? **This has not been added.**

I hope you will find these comments to be helpful as you update your Town Plan. Please let me know if you have any questions, or would like any further information.