

Meeting Notes
Wellesley Rail Trail/Bike-Pedestrian Alternative to Autos Meeting
20 September at the Wellesley Main Library

The Wellesley Planning Board and Trails Committee hosted an open meeting on Alternative Transportation Modes on Wednesday, September 20, 2006. There were over 20 attendees consisting of members of Town Boards and Committees and biking and trails enthusiasts from Wellesley and surrounding communities. Topics presented By the Metropolitan Planning Council (MAPC) included regional bicycle and pedestrian transportation; ride sharing, rail to trail conversion, and other Transportation Demand Management (TDM) services. The MAPC Power Point Presentation is posted on the Wellesley Planning Board Web Site.

The MAPC was requested to assist Wellesley by providing an over view of their planning and program efforts in bike and pedestrian enhancements. The MAPC, of which Wellesley is a member, provides technical support and research in conjunction with a variety of planning projects and issues. In its transportation planning role MAPC coordinates and implements the following programs: Enhancement Programs Transportation Demand Management, Suburban Mobility Program, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Massachusetts State Trail and Greenway Programs, Scenic Byways, and the Safe Routes To School Program. MAPC works with the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) to assist the planning efforts of the 101 communities in the Greater Boston Metropolitan Region.

Currently the MAPC, funded by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), is updating the Regional Bicycle Plan. A major goal of this effort is to improve facilities and safety for bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the region.

The Massachusetts Pedestrian Transportation Plan was discussed. That plan focuses on Downtown, Village Center, Commercial Strip development, Transit Access, Trail, and Roadway prototypes. MAPC supports its use as a guide for developing a more pedestrian inclusive transportation network throughout the Commonwealth. A goal is to encourage and accommodate walking in village centers, downtowns, and via multi-use trails with links to public transportation and shopping as well as to playgrounds, parkland and riverfronts.

Upon a motion by the Planning Board the Wellesley Town Meeting has adopted a zoning program in the Lower Falls area that provides incentives to business property owners to improve their property. In return for development zoning incentives, pedestrian and bicycle amenities, contribution to pedestrian access to the Charles River and Department of Conservation and Recreation Park Land, and general enhancement of the pedestrian experience in Lower Falls is required. Described at the meeting were tools for the further development of the Lower Falls Rail ROW and pedestrian planning generally in the Town, to include safe and comfortable contiguous walkways for pedestrians are a vital part of the transportation network.

The Wellesley Natural Resources Commission formed the Bike Trails and Walkways Study Committee in 1992. The committee launched studies to connect neighborhoods and schools with safe walking and bike trails, provide a rail trail from Lower Falls to Riverside, use the town's aqueducts as trails, and implement a trails network. Their mission is to provide a user-friendly trail system that encourages residents to enjoy the open spaces, parks and conservation land in Wellesley. They have succeeded in creating and enhancing the many trails that course through every section of our town.

The MAPC addressed suggestions for implementing the Lower Falls Design Concept Study. The Planning Department commissioned the "Lower Falls Concept Design Study" in 2003. This project established a schematic plan for the development of the former rail bed and bridge into a linear park, trail, and Charles River crossing. The study is incorporated into our newly completed 2007-2017 Comprehensive Plan, presented to Town at a meeting of the Board of Selectmen..

Scott Walker was the principal speaker and represented MAPC at the meeting. Scott has been a Transportation and Land Use Planner since June of 2005 at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, greater Boston's Regional Planning Agency, where his primary responsibilities are pedestrian and bicycle planning. Scott represents the Mass. Association of Regional Planning Agencies on the Mass. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board. His contact information is provided below:

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