

### III. Geographic Context

To develop a blueprint for the future of the study area, it is necessary to understand both the geography and a certain amount of the area's demographics. Wellesley, on the eastern boundary of the MetroWest subregion, is bordered by Newton on the east, Weston on the north, Dover and Needham on the south, and Natick on the west. Wellesley is largely a residential bedroom community located in MetroWest. Located just 13 miles west of Boston, Wellesley provides easy access to all points via the MBTA commuter rail, nearby I-95 and I-90, and Route 9.

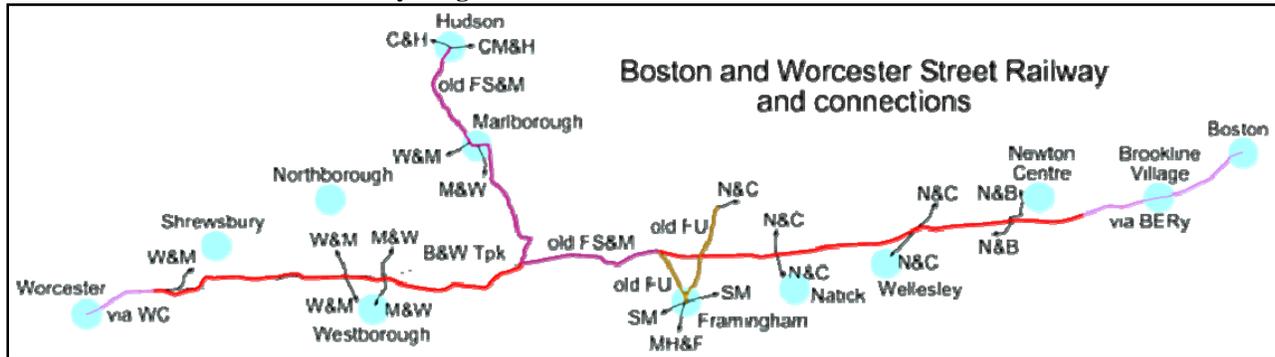
Wellesley and Surrounding Area - Figure G1



Route 9, a major east-west state highway, bisects the study area and divides the Town of Wellesley. Between Worcester and Boston, Route 9 follows the path of the 19th Century Worcester Turnpike, opened in 1810. From downtown Boston, Route 9 runs through Brookline, Newton, and into MetroWest (Wellesley, Natick, Framingham, Southborough) where it has been dubbed, “Main Street MetroWest”. It continues through Westborough, Northborough, Shrewsbury, and into Worcester. It follows Worcester's city streets and then heads west through Leicester, Spencer, East Brookfield, Brookfield, West Brookfield, Ware, Belchertown, Pelham, Amherst, Hadley, Northampton, Williamsburg, Goshen, Cummington, Windsor, and Dalton,

finally ending at Pittsfield. Along with US 20 to the south and Route 2 to the north, Route 9 is a main alternative to the Massachusetts Turnpike/I-90 toll road.

**Boston & Worcester Street Railway - Figure G1**



From 1903 to 1932, the Boston and Worcester Street Railway ran mostly via Route 9. The main line, built by the Boston and Worcester Street Railway, was an interurban streetcar line partly on the old Boston and Worcester Turnpike (now Route 9) and partly on private right-of-way. A predecessor to today's highways, the B&W Street Railway was chartered November 16, 1901, and the first section, from the Newton/Brookline line at Chestnut Hill to Framingham Junction, opened May 12, 1903. Streetcars last operated on June 10, 1932, after which buses took over as a result of a major reconstruction of Route 9, making it the heavily traveled highway it is today.

MetroWest is a dense, diverse, congested and highly successful hub of economic activity. This activity generates jobs, demands for housing, pressure to develop open space and lots of traffic.

**Key Issues Facing Wellesley and the MetroWest Region – Figure G2**



In 2001, the state predicted that there are 19,000 acres of developable land in the MWGMC subregion. If developed, that would add 239 miles of new roads, 50,000 more people, almost 50 Million additional square feet of commercial/industrial building space and 19,000 more units of housing. Roughly translated, that would be 320,000 additional vehicle trips.

The MetroWest region has been growing despite the fact that many other locations in Massachusetts have been losing population and jobs. The MetroWest/495 area is home to six of the ten largest public employers in the Commonwealth. It has been and is predicted to continue to be one of the strongest economic engines in Massachusetts. Figure G3 below shows some of the new growth in the MetroWest region.

Proposed Development in MetroWest - Figure G3

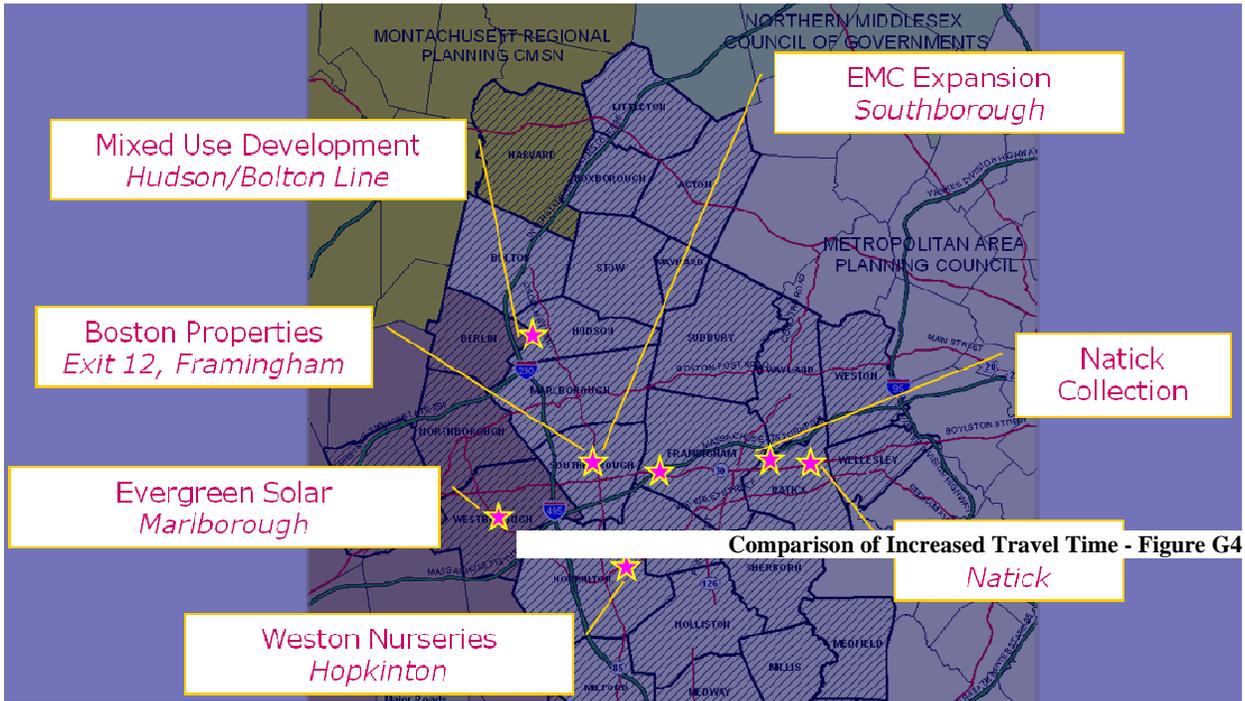
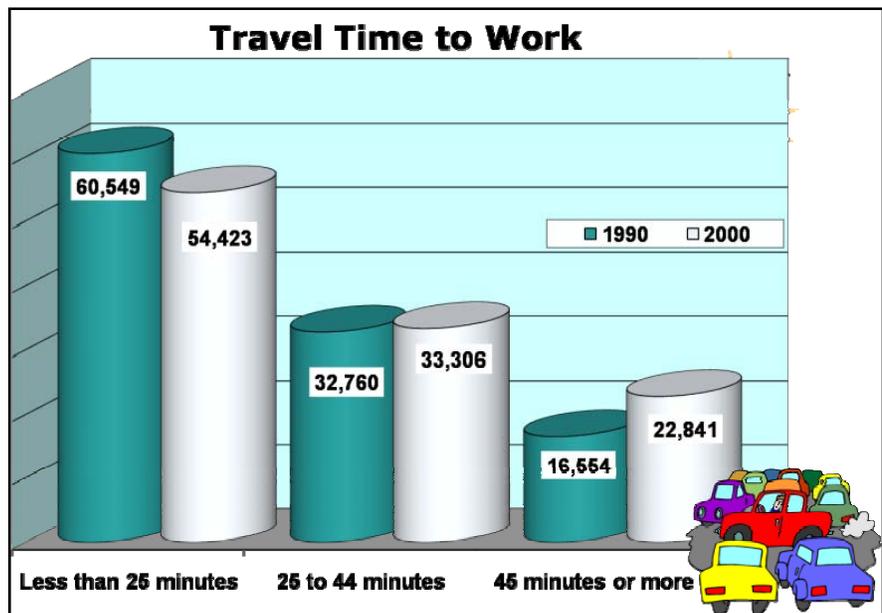


Figure is courtesy of Senator Karen Spilka

In a 2005 traffic count performed by the Statewide Traffic Data Collection section of the Massachusetts Highway Department, there were 59,500 vehicles counted on Route 9 east of Route 27 in the Natick portion of the study area, and a count of 49,700 was reported in Wellesley west of Route 16.

MAPC Executive Director, Marc Draisen, was recently quoted by the Globe, “Certainly there's going to be more development on Route 9, and we'd like to see if we can figure out ways to mitigate it in advance”.

Because we're growing and we've carved out a place for ourselves in the Massachusetts economy, it is no wonder that we're spending much more time commuting to our



jobs. It is has been reported that vehicle miles and vehicle hours increase twice as fast as population and jobs.

In addition to the Wellesley West Gateway Study effort covered in this report, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the MetroWest Growth Management Committee (MWGMC) are launching a \$50,000 study of Route 9 from the Route 128 interchange in Wellesley to the Shrewsbury-Worcester line. The analysis will focus on the traffic impact of current and projected construction development, and offer building and development scenarios. The MetroWest legislative delegation, led by Sen. Karen Spilka, is spearheading a complementary effort by lobbying the Executive Office of Transportation to put a comprehensive infrastructure improvement program for Route 9 in next year's capital budget. The overburdened Route 9 corridor is a main focus of MWGMC and MAPC, and a forum is being planned for early winter 2008.