

Acton 2020



## **PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON TRANSPORTATION**

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

7:00 p.m.

Acton Town Hall

Room 204

### ***Purpose:***

*To hold a public workshop with the purpose of gaining a better understanding traffic and circulation by inviting resource people and the public to discuss some of the key issues important to Acton's future. Also to further understand the variety of viewpoints and people's concerns regarding this issue.*

## **AGENDA**

- 7:00 – 7:30 Welcome and Introduction (including PowerPoint presentation)
- 7:30 – 8:30 Discussion of Hypothetical Scenario
- 8:30 – 9:15 Small Group Discussions including mapping and prioritization exercises
- 9:15 – 9:30 Reconvene as Large Group  
Next Steps

**This public workshop is part of a three-part series.  
If you are unable to attend the other two, please let us know if you  
have any “burning thoughts” regarding the other “burning issues.”**

**Eat, work, shop: What’s good business for Acton?**

Thursday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>/ 7:00-9:30pm/ Acton Town Hall

Do Actonians want to live in a more self-contained community, with enough of our own retail establishments and industry to reduce the need to drive to employment, entertainment, recreation, and shopping venues? Or do we prefer to let other towns host the businesses we patronize and

instead emphasize the more rural and/or bedroom-community characteristics of the town? If economic development is pursued, what kind should be encouraged and where should it be located? We need your input as we assess and prioritize economic development in Acton.

**Your Comments:**

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**Where, how much, what kind, for whom?: Housing in Acton**

Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>/ 2:00-4:30pm/ Acton Town Hall

Every new housing development built in Acton seems to generate discussion. Some people feel that we need more housing of a certain type, e.g., affordable housing, 55+ communities, more dense housing, less dense housing. Others are of the opinion that any more housing will overtax town resources - especially the schools and water &

sewer systems - and will cause more traffic. Many residents express concern that additional development has potential negative impacts on our town character (e.g., that it will gobble up open space or that it will not be designed to fit in with Acton’s historic character). Help us think through what the right balance is for Acton.

**Your Comments:**

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**Other Burning Issues?**

Are there any other “burning issues” you feel are important to address in Acton’s future?

**Your Comments:**

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## HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIO

Let us suppose the following (this is not necessarily a real scenario and some of the facts have been stretched in order to dramatize issues):

To go beyond recent initiatives in sidewalks, rail trails, and bus shuttles, the Town is proposing an increase in local property taxes-- \$250 on average for every Acton household -- to pay for investments in transportation facilities and services in the form of a special override.

Funds would be used to:

- double the extent of current sidewalks
- implement an on-road bicycle route network
- substantially expand the MinuteVan service
- implement traffic calming projects throughout the Town
- repair, reconstruct, and maintain Town-owned roads, sidewalks, trail infrastructure, and associated stormwater drainage.

Some of the Town's paths would be upgraded in order to make them more accessible to persons with disabilities and others who could then use them. In order to complete the sidewalk network the Town will have to obtain temporary and permanent easements from property owners who abut the sidewalks. Some residents are likely to deny requests for construction easements and the Town may need to explore eminent domain as an alternative strategy.

<b>VITAL STATISTICS:</b>		
Special Override of \$1.84 million per year for 10 years	Increase in average residential property tax bill of <b>\$250 per year (for 10 years)</b>	\$1.54 million for capital and \$0.3 million for operations
<b>Public Transportation:</b> Town-wide shuttle service centered on Kelley's Corner with two loop routes Covering West Acton, South Acton, Town Hall area, and Great Road	Funding would cover purchase of vehicles, operating expenses, signs, shelters, and also incorporate dial-a-ride and paratransit services	\$350,000 per year
<b>Sidewalk Projects:</b>	Approximately 4 miles per year	\$800,000 per year
<b>On-road bicycle improvements:</b>	Up to 8 miles per year plus intersection modifications	\$150,000 per year
<b>Traffic calming projects:</b>	As determined in project planning and design process	\$150,000 per year
<b>Road maintenance and repair:</b>	As needed	\$390,000 per year
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,840,000 per year</b>

## PROJECTED HYPOTHETICAL IMPACTS

### ***Fiscal impact***

\$250 per year (for 10 years) for average homeowner based on a tax rate impact is approximately \$0.52 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.

### ***Environmental impact***

Improvements to public transportation, walking, and bicycling facilities can lower automobile use and therefore reduce carbon and other emissions. Some increase in stormwater runoff, offset by new drainage improvements. (For example, unmitigated increased runoff could affect some habitats such as that of the blue salamander.)

### ***Traffic impact***

Increased walking, bicycling, and use of public transportation will lower vehicle use. Traffic calming and on-road bike lanes may lower vehicle speeds.

### ***Impact on town character***

There will be some change in appearance of streets and rural roads; Sidewalk Design Guidelines and input from Sidewalk Committee would limit these impacts. The design should be sensitive to important features such as mature street trees and historic stone walls.

### ***Property impacts***

Some easements will need to be acquired from property owners; eminent domain may be necessary in some instances.

### ***Impact on sense of community***

Providing more facilities for walking/ biking and public transportation may result in increasing opportunities for spontaneous encounters thereby strengthening social connections and the overall sense of community in neighborhoods and in the Town overall.

### ***Impact on health of residents***

Providing alternatives to car travel may also result in making Actonians more fit as they will have additional opportunities to make exercise a part of their everyday life (if they choose to utilize these facilities). Physical activity has also been shown to be beneficial to mental health.

Additionally, improvements to the road network including traffic calming measures will increase the safety of Acton's residents.

**SMALL GROUP EXERCISE (45 minutes)**

Brief Introduction and description of small group exercises

*You will be asked a couple of questions, next you will be invited to participate in a mapping exercise and finally you will be asked to prioritize action steps.*

**Questions**

1. A. How often to you walk, bike, or car pool around Town?

<i>What?</i>	<i>How often</i> <i>Every day</i> <i>Every week</i> <i>Every month</i> <i>Never</i>	<i>Where?</i>	<i>Why?</i> <i>(exercise, to get to a specific destination, good for the environment, other)</i>
Walk			
Bike			
Car Pool			

B. What are reasons that you choose not to (walk/bike)? (Do you feel safe? Is it pleasant, is there enough to look at, to do along the way?)

**Mapping (30 minutes)**

2. Think about what activities/locations you would like to be better connected. Use a color-coded piece of yarn to show these connections (e.g., bike, walk)

- Sidewalks**
- Bike lanes**
- Bike paths**
- Unpaved paths/trails**
- Other?**

3. Additionally, use color-coded sticky dots to indicate the following:

- Critical bus stops for an expanded town shuttle**
- Locations where it currently feels unpleasant/unsafe to walk/bike**
- Locations where you think it would be good to have a “walking/pedestrian oasis”<sup>1</sup>**

**Prioritizing Action Steps**

4. If you could do one thing to address traffic and circulation issues in Acton, what would it be? PRIORITIZE WITH DOTS: After all participants have added their thoughts to the list, give each participant 5 dots. They may not use more than 3 on any one item.

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<sup>1</sup> A place with seating, bike parking, trash receptacles, and drinking water nearby.