



Acton 2020

Community Comprehensive Plan

“Burning Issues” Forum
Getting Around Acton
March 9, 2011





Tonight

- Welcome, Information, and Presentation
- Discussion of Hypothetical Scenario – 7:30 to 8:30
- Small Group Discussions – 8:30 to 9:15
- Reconvene to Compare Notes – 9:15 to 9:30





The Planning Process





Acton 2020 Comprehensive Plan

- Phase 1 Outreach
- Goals and Objectives
- Inventory
- **Burning Issues**
- Recommended Actions
- Implementation Strategy
- Final Acton 2020 Plan





Phase I Outreach

- Phase I in 2008 developed Emerging Vision and Goals
- Input from:
 - teens, seniors, and families who only own one car and would like alternatives to travel around town
 - many other residents who expressed a desire for a less auto-oriented community





Vision: Transportation

- “If you could do one thing to improve Acton what would it be?”
 - Number one response: “Make Acton more pedestrian and bike-friendly.”
- "What are your least favorite things about Acton that you feel are important to change in the future?"
 - Among top priorities listed were: “Lack of walkability,” and “Biking and walking not safe.”





Final Goals

1. Preserve Town Character
2. Ensure Environmental Sustainability
3. Improve Connections
4. Provide More Opportunities for Community Gathering and Recreation
5. Support Inclusion and Diversity
6. Preserve and Enhance Town-Owned Assets
7. Maintain and Improve Financial Well-being of the Town





Transportation Highlights





Aspects of Transportation

- Travel Patterns
- Roadways and Traffic
- Public Transportation
- Walking
- Bicycling





Travel Patterns

- In 2000, only 21.8 percent of employed Actonians worked in Acton, 15% worked in Boston/Cambridge.
- Nearly 90% of Acton commuters drove to work, while 4.5% used public transportation
 - Higher transit share than all surrounding towns except Concord (5.2%).
- Non-commute trips typically outnumber commute trips by a 4-to-1 margin.





Auto Ownership

- In 2009 Acton residents owned an average of 2.07 automobiles and light trucks per household.
- This is in the middle of adjoining towns
 - Maynard 1.93 autos/light trucks per household
 - Carlisle 2.53 autos/light trucks per household





Roadways and Traffic

- Acton's main roads were not designed to carry today's traffic volumes.
- Traffic speed is a frequent source of complaints.
- These problems are typical of communities like Acton.
- Improvements are possible, but no simple solutions.





Public Transportation

- South Action Train Station is a major asset.
- Station improvements are at 60% design stage. (No parking expansion.)
- MinuteVan shuttle provides dial-a-ride and scheduled service.
 - Temporary federal funding will need to be replaced.
 - Potential to work with MART.
- Council on Aging shuttle provides dial-a-ride service.





Walking

- Acton has sidewalks on 40% of its road miles.
- Sidewalk Committee has developed design guidelines and sets priorities for new sidewalk projects each year.
 - Compatibility with town character essential.
- 44% of Phase 1 survey responses said lack of pedestrian/bike paths were one of Acton's "top 3" challenges.





Bicycling

- Many on-street bicycling opportunities exist.
 - However, safety improvements needed to increase on-street cycling (bike lanes, wider shoulders).
- Two major shared use paths in the works
 - Assabet River Rail Trail (Stow-Maynard-S. Acton)
 - Construction expected by 2015.
 - Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (Chelmsford-Acton-Concord-Framingham)
 - Preliminary design funded by state.
- No bicycling analog to Sidewalk Committee.





Questions and Answers





Next

- Discussion of Hypothetical Scenario
- Small Group Discussions
- Reconvene to Compare Notes





Discussion of hypothetical scenario

- Role-play by Acton 2020 Committee (from point of view of five of the Planning Goals)
- Discussion of the scenario and related issues by all





Hypothetical Scenario

- Pass override costing the average household \$250 per year for 10 years
- Use the funds to:
 - Double the extent of current sidewalks
 - Implement on-road bicycle route network
 - Substantially expand MinuteVan service
 - Implement “traffic calming”
 - Repair and maintain roads, sidewalks, trails, and stormwater drainage





Last: Group Discussions





Small Group Discussions

- Purpose: thinking together about your experience of the issues of getting around Acton.
- Mapping: what places should be better connected, and how (shuttle/bike/walk)?
- Prioritizing: What one thing would you do to address traffic and circulation?

Re-convene at the end of the evening to compare notes.



