



VEHICLE OWNERSHIP

While it is considered part of the “American Dream,” car ownership can have its downsides. Owning a vehicle is expensive, especially for low-income households (\$8,700 per year for a mid-sized sedan). Households with vehicles available are much more likely to use them, contributing to traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, and parking uses valuable real estate and creates conflicts among neighbors when vehicles outnumber spaces (especially in winter!)

A better understanding of current vehicle ownership patterns is critical to addressing these issues through land use regulations, improved transit, parking policy, shared vehicles, and eventually autonomous vehicles. The Massachusetts Vehicle Census, MAPC’s compendium of registration and vehicle

inspection data, indicates the average household in the region owns or leases 1.4 cars, with values lowest in the Inner Core and highest in the least densely-developed suburbs.

Meanwhile, Census data show the need to own one or more vehicles in most suburban locations disproportionately burdens lower-income households. While 27% of Very Low Income households (30%-50% of Area Median Income) in urban areas are able to live without a car, only 11% of such households in suburban areas can do so, creating severe financial constraints and mobility limitations.