MetroWest
Regional
Open Space
Connectivity Plan

Funding provided by the
District Local Technical Assistance program

Prepared for
Town of Southborough on behalf of the Communities
of the MetroWest Regional Collaborative

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This document was produced with input from municipal staff, elected officials and residents of the nine MetroWest Regional Collaborative Towns of Ashland, Holliston, Framingham, Natick, Marlborough, Southborough, Wayland, Wellesley and Weston.

We are grateful to you all for your assistance and leadership.
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Project Narrative

The MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan is a collaborative effort among the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC), Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and representatives of the nine (9) member municipalities of the MWRC: Ashland, Holliston, Framingham, Natick, Marlborough, Southborough, Wayland, Wellesley and Weston. The project was initiated by the Town of Southborough.

Phase I

Phase I of the MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan was completed in 2010. The Plan illustrates how the open space and trails in each town can become linked into an interconnected regional network, crossing municipal boundaries and connecting to other trails and open space in the surrounding communities. The plan also identifies unprotected land of potential conservation interest that would enhance the connectivity and conservation value of the existing open space.

MWRC collected open space data, including town GIS information from each of the 9 towns. This information was mapped by MAPC data services staff. MWRC subsequently met with municipal staff and officials and community representatives in each of the 9 towns to verify the open space and trails information as well as identify additional land of potential conservation interest and possible additional trails to enhance connectivity to key destinations, protect watersheds, and preserve natural habitat and wildlife corridors. MAPC further updated the individual towns open space maps and compiled a Draft MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan.

Two regional public forums were held in December 2010 to review ideas for regional open space connectivity and obtain public input. Participation for the two meetings was excellent with attendees representing all MWRC towns as well as surrounding communities and interested nonprofit organizations.

Following the public forums, MAPC updated both the individual town mapping and the MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Map to include comments and suggestions from the public forums. This mapping completed Phase I of the project.

Phase II

Phase II was completed in December 2011. With input from the municipalities, MAPC has updated its open space data base to better define ownership and level of protection and funding source of existing open space.
The MetroWest Town Open Space Connectivity Plans Produced in Phase I were also updated with data collected during the 495 Development Compact project to include Priority Preservation Areas identified by the municipalities as well as those deemed to be regionally significant Priority Preservation Areas. An updated and annotated MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan was produced to complete Phase II.

**Next Steps**

This project has provided the information and regional vision that the communities need to begin to implement this regional open space and trails system. MWRC will continue to work with the communities to make this vision a reality. However at this point the implementation is the purview of the municipalities in the context of the overall connectivity vision. Possible next steps in the implementation would include a more detailed study of the key suggested intra and inter municipality trail connections and possible acquisition/protection areas to verify physical, environmental and ownership issues. Municipalities must also verify that the identified connections and parcels of interest are, in fact, officially endorsed by town officials, staff and residents. MWRC could work with municipalities on strategies to overcome or avoid impediments to connectivity whether they be ownership, environmental, political, physical, or other issues important to local residents. MWRC could also work with the towns to look for funds to undertake further detailed study. We would help municipalities understand available implementation/funding strategies such as acquisition, easements, tax incentives, transfer of development rights, open space residential bylaws, additional environmental protection etc. Sanctioned public access to MWRA Aqueducts is currently under consideration. MWRC and MAPC will be working with the MWRA and towns on this initiative to support agreements with the MWRA, and provide preliminary design assistance for safe road crossings, signage, and restricting of vehicular access for several pilot areas.
In 2011, with inputs from municipal staff, officials and community representatives, the MetroWest Regional Collaborative met with municipal staff, officials and community representatives to update the open space database to better define ownership and level of protection and funding source of existing open space. Previous plans identified unprotected land of potential conservation interest that would enhance the connectivity and conservation value of the existing open space.

In 2010, open space data was collected from each of the 9 member municipalities. MetroWest Regional Collaborative staff subsequently met with municipal staff, officials and community representatives to verify the open space and trails information as well as identify additional land of potential conservation interest and possible additional trails to enhance connectivity to key destinations, protect watersheds, and preserve natural habitat and wildlife corridors. Following the two public forums, MAPC updated both the individual town mapping and the MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan to include comments and suggestions.

In 2011, with input from the municipalities, MAPC has updated its open space database to better define ownership and level of protection and funding source of existing open space. Previous plans were also updated with data collected during the 405 Development Compact project to include Priority Preservation Areas identified by the municipalities as well as those deemed to be Regionally Significant Priority Preservation Areas.

The MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan was funded by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s District Local Technical Assistance Program. It illustrates how the open space and trails in each of the nine (9) MetroWest Regional Collaborative member municipalities can become linked into an interconnected regional network, crossing municipal boundaries and connecting to other trails and open space in the surrounding communities. The plan also identifies unproctected land of potential conservation interest that would enhance the connectivity and conservation value of the existing open space.

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Following the two public forums, MAPC updated both the individual town mapping and the MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan to include comments and suggestions. In 2011, with input from the municipalities, MAPC has updated its open space database to better define ownership and level of protection and funding source of existing open space. Previous plans were also updated with data collected during the 405 Development Compact project to include Priority Preservation Areas identified by the municipalities as well as those deemed to be Regionally Significant Priority Preservation Areas.