

# Route 128 Central Corridor Plan





## ROUTE 128 CORRIDOR PLAN

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The 128 Central Corridor Coalition was founded three years ago by Selectmen from Burlington, Lexington, Lincoln and Weston and the Mayor of Waltham, who entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The intent of forming the Coalition was to work collaboratively to seek creative ways to ensure corridor mobility and improve the capacity for sustainable economic development while respecting and protecting local roadways and their character.

The Route 128 Central Corridor Plan addresses the impacts of increased traffic volumes and seeks to reduce single occupancy trips while preserving quality of life and ensuring mobility. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council provided technical assistance in collecting data, preparing maps and compiling the Plan. The 128 Central Corridor Coalition would like to acknowledge the following for their support, assistance and provision of data during the preparation of the 128 Central Corridor Plan:

- TransAction Associates, Inc.
- Waltham Chamber of Commerce
- 128 Business Council
- 128 Corporate Alliance

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### Executive Summary

Constructed between 1936 and 1956, Route 128 is the major circumferential interstate highway (I-95) ringing Greater Boston, which stretches from Gloucester in the north to Canton in the south. The portion of Route 128 reviewed for this corridor plan is a 12.6 mile segment between I-90 and Route 3 North, through the communities of Weston, Waltham, Lincoln, Lexington, and Burlington, known as the Route 128 Central Corridor.

The region is a major employer in Massachusetts, home to some of the nation's premier technology companies. Located in close proximity to major roadway networks, area universities, Hanscom Air Force Base, and other economic drivers, this area continues to be a magnet for high-technology and supporting industries. However, with the rapid growth of the high-technology industry along Route 128 from the 1960s to the present, the area has increasingly experienced traffic congestion that will discourage future economic development and degrade the quality of life for residents and commuters. Today, the entire corridor greatly exceeds the existing roadway capacity, and even minor accidents or adverse weather can cause significant delays.

Driving the congestion problem is the fact that over 80 percent of commuting happens by automobile, with the vast majority of those trips taken by single-occupant vehicles. The high wage and high skilled jobs located in the corridor are drawing commuters from across Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and even Rhode Island. In fact, nearly 80 percent of the workers employed in the five communities live outside of the corridor. Compared to other regions with high employment in Massachusetts, workers commute some of the longest distances to access the Route 128 Central Corridor.

Future job growth, necessary for continued economic vitality, threatens to exacerbate these traffic problems. According to forecasting prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), over the next twenty years it is anticipated that population within the corridor will increase by 13,500 and employment will grow by over 8,600 jobs, generating between 100,000 and 200,000 daily auto trips.

Additionally, the five corridor communities have identified approximately fifty developments that have been either recently completed or proposed for completion over the next decade, with the potential to create thousands of new jobs. All these developments combined have the potential to increase trips by 77 percent in addition to existing traffic conditions. Additional congestion on Route 128 is highly likely to constrain economic development.

In response to these concerns, the five municipalities and MAPC have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to establish the Coalition which has created a unique working group that includes local elected officials, businesses, planning organizations, developers, and landowners. The purpose of the working group is to reduce traffic congestion by identifying transportation investments, transportation management solutions, and land use policies that support sustainable economic development and encourage multi-modal transportation.

The initial product of this working group is the 128 Central Corridor Plan (Plan), which identifies ideas to improve the corridor over the course of five sections. The first summarizes the key short-term and long-term recommendations that the communities wish to pursue immediately. The second section inventories the existing transportation system and land uses in the corridor communities, while the third identifies the likely population and employment growth. The fourth section goes into more detail on the

roadway reconstruction and roadway management needs, the transit improvements, additional Transportation Demand Management (TDM) ideas, and land use concepts that can encourage walking, cycling, and public transit. The fifth section identifies ideas to fund the recommendations and broader concepts outlined in the Plan.

Finally, this Plan recognizes at the outset that many of the ideas and recommendations identified here need further analysis and evaluation. The Route 128 Central Corridor Coalition has developed this Plan to educate the public, engage decision makers, and set priorities for the region.

### **Community Vision**

The Route 128 Central Corridor Coalition is working to ensure the continuation of sustainable economic development and quality of life by improving mobility along the corridor. The Route 128 Central Corridor Coalition is working to achieve the following goals:

- Move more travelers on Route 128 with less congestion, decrease the number of single-occupied vehicles.
- Reduce the number of accidents and improve response time to those that do occur.
- Minimize cut-through traffic and design the local roadway system to allow all users to get around safely and efficiently.
- Improve the Route 128 corridor to facilitate alternative transportation, with an emphasis on public transportation. Provide residents and employees in the corridor with transportation choices. Make walking, bicycling, and taking transit available for almost all trips into, out of, and along the corridor.
- Ensure that land use patterns in the corridor support transportation goals while also being consistent with local goals. Concentrated development supports transit service and can encourage walking and biking. The corridor's transportation system must provide proper site design that will promote walking, biking, and transit use.

If this corridor plan is successfully implemented there will be:

- A reduction of hours of congestion on Route 128, and on the local roadway network;
- A reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the corridor;
- A reduction in accidents in the corridor; and
- An increase in the number of transit, walk, and bike trips in the corridor.