

Transportation and Energy Group Report: **Making Transportation a Part of Belmont's Sustainability Goals**

December 2009

This outline presents the goals and objectives identified by the Transportation, Parking and Energy Working Group. Following the list of goals and objectives is an expanded outline, offering the group's proposed strategies which might move the Town toward achieving these goals. This document is meant to inspire not constrain discussion about these issues. The Working Group recognizes that there are many tradeoffs and decisions to be made suggested by this outline: for example increasing housing density to support our businesses and public transit services balanced with the desire to maintain our small town community atmosphere; providing parking to support robust commercial centers and the use of public transit balanced with traffic concerns and the desire to reduce auto dependency; the need to provide safe and attractive passage for pedestrians, bicycles and cars balanced with the Town's fiscal constraints and competing demands for resources. The lists of proposed strategies are not in any priority order. We hope that this document will inspire broad discussion to achieve community consensus about our directions for these important issues.

I. Transportation

Overall Goals:

- Reduce emissions
- Ensure future livability
- Maintain "small town community atmosphere" (from Vision Statement)
- Reduce congestion at school & transit drop off points, in town centers, and along key arterials
- Give people transportation choice/options
- Plan early for future trends/technologies in transportation

Objectives for Transportation:

Objective 1: Reduce Auto Dependency

Objective 2: Promote the use of public transit

Objective 3: Make Belmont a walkable community

Objective 4: Promote biking

II. Parking

Overall Goals for Parking:

- Retain neighborhood character
- Sustain vibrant businesses
- Attract business customers from outside Belmont
- Promote the use of public transit

Objectives for Parking:

Objective 1: Provide village customer parking

Objective 2: Support commuters' use of transit with parking

Objective 3: Maintain residential street character

Objective 4: Plan for non-auto parking accommodation

Objective 5: Create an overall parking management plan for the Town

III. Energy

Overall Goals for Energy:

- Reduce the Town's energy budget
- Ensure future livability
- Ensure availability of sufficient, affordable, reliable energy

Objectives for Energy:

Objective 1: Reduce solid waste collection

Objective 2: Provide incentives for reducing electricity usage

Objective 3: Encourage decentralized energy production

Objective 4: Integrate energy conservation into public school's curriculum

Objective 5: Reduce energy usage in municipal buildings

Expanded Outline:

I. Transportation

Overall Goals:

- Reduce emissions
- Ensure future livability
- Maintain “small town community atmosphere” (from Vision Statement)
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Objectives for Transportation:

Objective 1: Reduce Auto Dependency

Issues:

1. Resistance to density
2. Perception that hybrids, ethanol, hydrogen generators, etc. alone will save the environment

Proposed Strategies:

1. Promote retail serving local neighborhoods
2. Encourage delivery services as part of local businesses
3. Develop transit oriented zoning (higher density, greater use mix)
4. Establish outreach campaign to educate about emissions impacts and alternatives to the car
5. Provide zoning incentives to businesses and developers to promote alternatives to the automobile
6. Investigate requiring financial incentives to employees not to park
7. “Can’t get there from here” – provide needed non-auto connections
8. Working with businesses/business associations conduct regular street fairs with street closures
 - a. Close Leonard Street to cars periodically (expand practice of closings at Town Day and for the holiday tree lighting to once a month at least?)
 - b. Explore similar periodic road closures in Cushing Square and Waverley Square
9. Create a tele-work facility
10. Get Zip Cars in town
11. Promote carpooling among municipal employees and among residents; encourage use of new web-based ride-share programs
12. Consider possibilities for alternative forms of human and/or low powered vehicles for local travel/shopping (implications for traffic regulations?)
13. Consider what planning issues may be raised by alternative fuel vehicles (e.g. charging facilities for batteries at parking lots)

14. Charge students to park at the High School

Objective 2: Promote the use of public transit

Issues:

1. No good connections to Alewife T
2. No cross-town T service
3. If transit services are not well used they may be reduced or lost

Proposed Strategies:

1. Provide service to Alewife (consider diverting existing 128 shuttles to/from Waltham?)
2. Provide cross-town (inter-town/Arlington/Belmont/Watertown/etc) T service
3. Provide transit (train and bus) shelters
4. Provide clear identifying and directional signing for transit stations
5. Provide benches and attractive, well lit, safe waiting areas
6. Visibly post transit schedule information
7. Provide real time transit info
8. Maintain sidewalks that are primary pathways to commuter rail stations and bus stops
9. Provide commuter rail parking
10. Request more frequent and reliable transit service
11. Provide transit how to/anecdote stories on signs
12. Develop an intra-town shuttle
13. Make it pavement management policy to provide bikeways and pedestrian sidewalk paths to transit hubs

Objective 3: Make Belmont a walkable community

Issues:

1. Existing pavement management policy does not include sidewalks
2. Funding
3. Need to develop picture of what areas (%) of town should be considered within “reasonable” walking distance of transit buses/trains/commercial centers

Proposed Strategies:

1. Adopt “Safe Routes to School” policies and promote walking and biking to school (which is safer than driving)
2. Preserve the town’s pleasant walking atmosphere, recognizing sidewalks and street trees as important assets
3. Fund the care, maintenance and planting of street trees
4. Provide well maintained and lit sidewalks (our sidewalks are a significant community asset enabling connections among neighborhoods and to services and amenities)

5. Make sidewalks part of road reconstruction policy – fund the maintenance and, where necessary, the reconstruction of sidewalks with pathways to schools, parks, and public transit as priorities
6. Ensure and maintain safe pathways to village centers (e.g. sidewalk path from Waverley Woods development to Waverley Square)
7. Sidewalk shoveling ordinance and enforcement needed for residential areas
8. More effective snow removal requirements and procedures needed for commercial areas to keep access open
9. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections across the rail right-of-way to improve connections between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to schools, public amenities, trails and bike paths
 - a. Construct pedestrian/bike tunnel under the tracks at the end of Alexander Ave.
 - b. Improve lighting and enhance the visibility of and maintain the pedestrian tunnel at Belmont Center station for comfortable, safe, 24 hour a day, year round use
 - c. Establish a White Street pedestrian/bicycle bridge path to connect Waverley Square and Pleasant Street
 - d. Improve as necessary and identify the Clark Street bridge as open to pedestrians and bicyclists
10. Require new development to install and maintain non-auto infrastructure
11. Improve pedestrian protection in the villages
12. Improve streetscapes (add trees, benches, open spaces for public gathering, etc.)
13. Promote use of existing trails (Habitat/McLean/Rock Meadow)
14. Create walking clubs (i.e. dog walking; walking school busses)
15. Establish interesting walks/paths in each precinct/interpretive trail signage on local history of various parts of town (model after Waverley Trail)
16. Signage leading people to open space/recreation areas
17. Enforce ordinance relating to pruning landscaping adjacent to sidewalks and at intersections
18. Ensure barrier free sidewalks
19. Establish cut through access to Leonard Street for pedestrians coming from rear parking lots

Objective 4: Promote biking

Issues:

1. Most bike routes are not actual bike facilities
2. If you build it, will they come? Need data about biking habits and population
3. Streets do not feel safe for biking? Is it safe to ride bikes on Belmont's streets? What is practical given various street widths and curbside parking conditions?

Proposed Strategies:

1. Connect bikeways to schools, commuter parking, villages and public amenities
2. Encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel to commuter rail stations, bus terminals and the Alewife Redline Station

3. Provide amenities at rail stations, including secure, sheltered bike parking accommodations to encourage cyclists to commute to train stations
4. Provide bike parking accommodations in village centers and at selected locations to support use of bus transit
5. Create off-street bikeways that connect to public transportation
6. Recognize that Belmont's streets are multi-modal pathways that must be shared by motor vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians (under state law)
 - a. Redesign streets to be shared as safely as possible by autos, cyclists, parked cars and pedestrians (bike paths or accommodations with striping and symbols wherever safe and possible; "share the road" signage; traffic calming measures; etc.)
7. Improve the number and legibility of on-street bike lanes and investigate the use of the "cheviot" symbol to indicate bike accommodations where there are no bike lanes
8. Stay current with most up-to-date bike accommodation planning to ensure highest level of safety
9. Provide bike parking/storage accommodations at "destinations" in addition to transit hubs (e.g. recreational fields and parks, trail heads, schools, village centers, etc.)
10. Conduct bike safety education for students, drivers, and the police (rules of the road, helmets, lights and safety apparel for visibility, etc)
11. Require new development to install and maintain non-auto infrastructure
12. Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections across the rail right-of-way to improve connections between neighborhoods and from neighborhoods to schools, public amenities, trails and bike paths
 - See 9. a. b. c. d. above
13. Establish a trail through Belmont that will link with the Mass Central trail in Waltham to the west and the Alewife Reservation Trail in Cambridge to the east
 - a. Determine alternate safe routes, including street crossings, for the trail – Identify missing links necessary to create the trail
 - b. Identify town-owned parcels adjacent to the commuter rail tracks that are likely to be part of the Belmont trail and retain town ownership of the parcels
 - c. Hold community meetings gathering all bikeway stakeholders to weigh costs and benefits of options for bikeway routes, determine the best option and generate support to build the trail
14. Identify safe routes/paths from neighborhoods to connecting bike path once constructed
15. Ensure bike paths are plowed
16. Investigate possibilities for a bicycle sharing program on the model of Zip Car
17. Investigate potential funding sources for bicycle infrastructure improvements

II. Parking

Overall Goals for Parking:

- Retain neighborhood character

- Sustain vibrant businesses
- Attract business customers from outside Belmont
- Promote the use of public transit

Objectives for Parking:

Objective 1: Provide village customer parking

Issues:

1. Insufficient availability on key shopping streets
2. Employees occupying key customer spaces
3. Resistance to any parking on residential streets
4. No on-street parking overnight (ostensibly to avoid multi-family density? Also public safety departments' preference and long tradition)

Proposed Strategies:

1. Increase convenience for customers; maximize front door parking supply
2. Improved parking signing
3. Promote shared parking in and around village centers
4. Explore possibilities for public leasing and management of private parking spaces to expand shared parking possibilities
5. Manage parking supply better through pay structure; treat customer parking as a business asset

Objective 2: Support commuters' use of transit with parking

Proposed Strategies:

1. Promote mixed use development of properties near rail stations to create vibrancy and support access and comfort and safety improvements to stations
2. Identify areas at the edges of village centers for permitted commuter parking
3. Create safe, attractive walking connections to promote more remote parking for stations
4. Provide bike parking accommodations at stations
5. Study changing location of commuter rail stations – Consolidate to one on Pleasant Street with parking accommodation? Move Belmont Center station to commercial area on Brighton Street to serve areas of both Belmont and Cambridge with potentially more room for parking accommodation?

Objective 3: Maintain residential street character

Proposed Strategies:

1. Consider a strategy that modifies time limit parking to improve availability of parking spaces
2. Consider establishing residents only parking on residential streets near village centers

3. Consider a policy of enabling as an option fee-based permits for commuters/employees in designated areas agreed to by a majority of residents, with the revenue directed to funding neighborhood improvements

Objective 4: Plan for non-auto parking accommodation

Proposed Strategies:

1. Include bike rack standards and minimums in all sidewalk projects and require them for all new development
2. Install sheltered, secure bike parking accommodations at transit stops
3. Install short-term bicycle racks in village centers
4. Install bike parking accommodations at schools, parks and other public destinations
5. Consider future parking issues to be posed by alternative fuel and small sized vehicles and motorized bikes

Objective 5: Create an overall parking management plan for the Town

Proposed Strategies:

1. Study parking utilization
2. Involve the business community
3. Evaluate on and off-street parking regulations and supply
4. Establish staff responsibility for coordinating and overseeing parking planning
5. Adopt policies which support the goals outlined above and create an overall plan to implement strategies to achieve them
6. Pursue land-use and development choices that will support a “park once” strategy

III. Energy

Overall Goals for Energy:

- Reduce the Town’s energy budget
- Ensure future livability
- Ensure availability of sufficient, affordable, reliable energy

Objectives for Energy:

Objective 1: Reduce solid waste collection

Proposed Strategies:

1. Increase residential recycling
2. Increase commercial recycling
3. Increase recycling by staff, students and all users of town and school buildings
4. Promote composting

5. Promote reuse by establishing community “swap” events and by encouraging residents to participate in Freecycle
6. Adopt a by-law requiring the salvage and recycling of building demolition debris

Objective 2: Provide incentives for reducing electricity usage

Proposed Strategies:

1. Time-of-use metering and pricing
2. Investigate pros and cons of becoming a “Green Community” with a goal to apply for the designation within one year if it is in the best interest of the Town
3. Promote BMLD’s energy audits and conservation incentive programs
4. Use regulations to promote energy efficiency best practices in construction and renovation, including e.g. siting considerations, increased density to reduce average energy use, and the ability to take advantage of decentralized energy production

Objective 3: Encourage decentralized energy production

Proposed Strategies:

1. Establish zoning norms for alternative energy equipment/installations
2. Explore and provide incentives for local energy generation, both public and private (residential and commercial)

Objective 4: Integrate energy conservation into public school’s curriculum

Proposed Strategies:

1. Review science curriculum for integration
2. Identify conservation measures in the school buildings and use them as teaching tools
3. Organize environmental/energy fairs or other events – engage the school community in the organization

Objective 5: Reduce energy usage in municipal buildings

Proposed Strategies:

1. Explore feasibility of new ESCO project and or in-house energy audit and infrastructure up-grade program
2. Establish energy conservation procedures for all staff and users of municipal buildings
3. Install energy saving upgrades (e.g. awnings on the south facing windows of all municipal buildings; heat recovery ventilation systems)
4. Establish administrative oversight and responsibility for energy use issues, including e.g. energy audits for all buildings, usage data gathering, reporting and continuing to keep current with developing energy conservation technologies