

This Discussion Paper is a work-in-progress based on previous plans, on results of forums and surveys, and on the ongoing efforts of the Transportation Work Group. Please see the last page for how you can join this conversation.

How Can We Best Get To and Around the Island?

Transportation on Martha's Vineyard faces special challenges:

- As an island, it is only accessible by boat or air;
- As a summer resort, there is a nearly five-fold fluctuation in the number of people on the Island leading to congestion, safety problems, and straining of infrastructure capacities;
- As a predominantly rural or semi-rural area, the land use pattern makes it more challenging to offer alternative means of transportation to the car.
- As a locality of unique environmental, scenic, and historic qualities, there is ongoing concern about the impact of transportation on these important features of the Vineyard.

The Island's explosion in popularity over the past generation has resulted in rapid growth that threatens the very qualities that many find so attractive. Roadway, ferry, and air traffic has generally not increased in the peak season since about 2000, although off-season and Up-Island automobile traffic is still rising. If population growth continues, the challenge will be how to avoid increasing congestion while also avoiding inappropriate engineering solutions that undermine the Vineyard's scenic beauty, so important to the Island's character and economy.

There have been many recent transportation successes:

- The Vineyard Transit Authority has grown from a limited, seasonal shuttle service transporting 71,000 people in 1997 to an Island-wide, year-round, bus service that carried 769,000 people in 2005, and over 900,000 in 2007.
- Use of Tisbury's park-and-ride tripled between 2003 and 2006, and Edgartown has just revamped its park-and-ride lots.



- Since 1997, the Steamship Authority limited summer car capacity, thereby discouraging short-term visitors from bringing cars across.
 - In the last few years, the West Tisbury created a mile of pedestrian paths beside the road and Edgartown created two miles of bike path on Herring Creek Road.
- Some facts and figures.
- The Steamship Authority carries over 2 million passengers and almost 500,000 vehicles each year. There are also close to 300,000 passenger trips on private ferries and another 250,000 by air.

- Even at the peak of summer, traffic is largely year-round residents.
- There are about 25,000 cars registered on the Island.

The 177 miles of public, paved roads, conceived for an Island of about 5000 people, now must handle more than ten times that in peak summer months. A referendum and several surveys indicated that people want to preserve the character of our rural roads and don't want to expand Island roads or build new ones; however, there

continues to be a gradual deterioration of rural character, with new curb cuts and new roadway and roadside development.

The Martha's Vineyard Regional Transportation Plan is a comprehensive look at Island transportation. It includes a detailed description of the existing situation, and outlines goals, objectives, and strategies including road improvements in specific locations. The Island Plan Transportation Work Group is focusing its efforts on several areas that are less fully developed in the plan or by other entities on the Island.

The overall goal is to reduce dependence on private automobiles and promote alternate modes of travel – bus, bicycle, and walking – for both residents and visitors.

EMERGING DIRECTIONS

The following key directions have emerged from the inquiries of the Transportation Work Group.

T1 Promote and improve the efficiency of the Island's buses, taxis, and ferries.

There are many ways in which we could better promote and improve buses, taxis, and ferries.

- Develop plans to expand bus service, especially on routes currently operating at capacity, and pursue additional capital and operating funding (e.g. additional state and federal funding, demonstration project designation, surcharge on car rentals).
- Use trip-planning software to make it possible to offer a hybrid service in low density areas, combining the best features of taxi and fixed route buses, with better service at a lower cost.
- Increase promotion of alternative forms of transportation emphasizing simplicity and environmental benefits (e.g. Island video on ferries during the summer explaining use of transit, safety of roads and biking).
- Develop programs to encourage students not to drive to school.
- Better integrate the Steamship Authority into Island transportation planning initiatives.

The key challenge is making it happen, hence the proposal to create a public-

private collaboration to improve and promote alternate transportation (see Promising Initiative below).

T2 Improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Expand and enhance a safe and efficient network of off-road bicycle paths (Shared User Paths), on-road bicycle routes, and walking trails. Make town and village areas more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Improvements might include repairing sidewalks and ensuring minimal lighting, installing sidewalks or walking paths in needed areas, widening sidewalks in areas of heavy pedestrian traffic, installing crosswalks with safety islands, installing bike racks and rest areas, and installing safety and directional signage.



T3 Minimize road congestion and improve safety without compromising road character and scenic roadside views.

The Regional Transportation Plan has outlined, and towns are working on a series of modest improvements to the road locations with the greatest safety problems and/or congestion.

- Reconstruction of Lake Avenue in Oak Bluffs to improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodation.
- Construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Barnes Road and the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road.
- Construction of a system of connector roads to relieve traffic at the State Road and Edgartown-Vineyard-Haven Road

intersection and to structure the future redevelopment of the area.

The Towns and the MVC are looking at what might be done at the Edgartown Triangle, Five Corners, and Upper State Road.

The lack of parking leads to additional traffic and frustration among drivers. Towns can continue to develop and encourage use of park-and-ride facilities to keep cars out of town centers.

There is a general concern about the excessive speed of traffic,

especially on roads that pass through neighborhoods. It seems that roads that were rebuilt a few decades ago conform to engineering safety standards seem to have the highest number of serious accidents, perhaps because the straight, wide roads induce people to drive faster. Traffic calming uses physical changes to roadway design in order to slow traffic down. Short term traffic calming techniques could include: planters to narrow roads; feedback speed signs; curb extensions, speed tables, and safety islands at crosswalks and gateways to towns as well as speed limit reductions. In the longer term, when major improvements are needed, efforts should be made to reconfigure excessively wide roads to narrow roadways, shoulders, and cleared roadside areas, and to introduce gentle curves.

PROMISING INITIATIVES

The following are some of the most promising specific initiatives that have emerged. If they prove feasible and win support, they could get underway without waiting for other parts of the plan.

Create public-private alliances to improve and promote alternative transportation, including personalized on-line itineraries, ticketing, and possibly rebranding transit. (P37)

Establish collaborations between town business associations, VTA, and citizens to deal with business-related transportation issues.

- Set up programs (education, incentives, enforcement) to have in-town retail-restaurant-bar employees use park-and-rides.
- Familiarize hospitality employees with transit system to encourage their use, and so they can encourage and assist visitors to use it. Institute rideshare promotion, car sharing, staggered and flexible work hours, telecommuting, and employer commute programs.
- Work with hotels, inns, rental agents and the Steamship Authority to encourage visitors not to bring a car for a short term visit, or to bring only one car for a longer term visit by clearly explaining the availability of alternate forms of transportation (bus, taxi, bike).
- Offer detailed trip planners, online and in key public locations, showing connecting regional and local transportation services to develop itineraries for transit trips to and from Island destinations as well as on-Island trips. Encourage sale of combination tickets.
- Consider rebranding of the transit system to appeal to visitors who are unfamiliar with or have a negative view of public transportation and transit authorities. Make it a fun, cool shuttle. This could include the name of the system, the design of buses, signs, maps, etc.

Set up programs to make town and village areas more pedestrian and bicycle friendly and to use traffic calming techniques to slow traffic in neighborhoods. (P38)

The challenge is to implement the techniques listed above (T3) is mobilizing to get it done. We should create working groups in each town to identify deficiencies with in-town pedestrian and bike facilities (sidewalks, crosswalks,

shoulders, bike racks, etc.) and locations with excessive traffic speed in neighborhoods and to outline and spearhead improvements.

Promote the use of energy-efficient vehicles. (P39)

Some of the strategies could include promoting the purchase of hybrid vehicles, Smart Cars, etc. by individuals and rental companies; arranging for better pricing through group purchasing; and encouraging dealers to offer sales and repairs on-Island. We could also explore the possibility of using Martha's Vineyard for a pilot project for upcoming alternative technologies. The fact that the Vineyard is an Island and that many cars are kept on-Island may make it the ideal location to test new technologies such as plug-in electric hybrids or hydrogen cars.



Extend the network of off-road bike paths. Improve the safety of existing off-road bike paths and on-road routes. (P40)

Prepare and implement a plan to complete the missing links in the network of off-road bike paths connecting the main population centers – central Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and Vineyard Haven – to each other and with the State Forest. Improve the safety of existing off-road paths and on-road routes by installing barriers

in medians, widening shoulders (within overall pavement width), improving pavement markings and safety signage.

Improve taxi regulations, training, quality, and dispatching. (P41)

Standardize taxi regulations and rates among towns. Improve driver training and quality standards. Set up coordinated dispatching system using trip-planning software to promote higher vehicle occupancy (reduce empty one-way trips), to improve service, lower costs to users, and improve driver/owner revenue.

Address problems at the Island's most dangerous and congested road locations. (P42)

Continue to address problems at the Island's most dangerous and congested locations. Emphasize traffic management over major physical modifications (more roads, wider roads, traffic lights) that would degrade the character of the Island.

NEXT STEPS

You are invited to give your comments!

This fall, the Work Group will revise this document based in part on the feedback received during the summer. It plans to focus its efforts looking at the feasibility of Promising Initiatives identifying what entities could implement them.

You can be part of this effort by joining more than 500 Vineyarders who are in the Network of Planning Advisors or have joined Work Groups on topics of interest to them.

THE ISLAND PLAN

The Island Plan is charting a course to the kind of future that the Vineyard community wants and is outlining a series of actions to help us navigate that course. It breaks new ground while incorporating the best lessons of the present and the past. It is not something to wait for, but something to work with, now and in the future.

The planning process began in 2006. The summer of 2008 is time for the second mid-course correction, to get feedback from the broader community on the ongoing work of the Steering Committee and Work Groups.

Presently, there are seven other Work Groups: Built Environment, Energy & Waste, Housing, Livelihood & Commerce, Natural Environment, Social Environment, and Water Resources.

The Steering Committee is coordinating the overall effort, and is outlining options with respect to Development and Growth.

USEFUL RESOURCES

The following documents are available on the website and from the MVC. Many are also available in town libraries.

- **Regional Transportation Plan:** This document, adopted in 2007, gives an overview of transportation on the Island and outlines goals, objectives, and strategies.
- **Transportation Improvement Program:** The TIP describes upcoming transportation improvements planned for the Island.

GET INVOLVED

PARTICIPATE IN THESE FORUMS!

All forums are at 7:30 pm

- **Transportation**
Monday, July 14 Katharine Cornell Theatre, Tisbury
- **Built Environment**
Monday, August 4 Union Chapel, Oak Bluffs
- **Development & Growth**
Wednesday, August 27 Agricultural Hall, West Tisbury

The Island Plan is a community effort to confront the issues that will shape our future. Here are some of the ways you can join in.

- **FORUMS:** Come to the Transportation Forum on July 14. There will also be a forum on the Built Environment, as well as a forum dealing with Development and Growth on August 27.
- **WEBSITE:** The Island Plan website offers you many ways to give your input or to find more useful information including:

- A feedback survey about these proposals,
- A survey about Development and Growth.
- Discussion papers about the other topics,
- A way to join the Network of Planning Advisors and Work Groups, or to get on the mailing list,
- Background documents, results of forums and surveys, meeting minutes, etc.

Much of the same information can be viewed at Island public libraries or obtained directly

from the MVC.

The Chair of the Transportation Work Group is Jeff Parker. The Work Group currently has 80 members. The primary staff contact for the Transportation Work Group is Mark London 508-693-3453 ext 11 or london@mvcommission.org

The Island Plan is an initiative of, and is coordinated by, the Martha's Vineyard Commission.

