

# **Southeastern Mass: *Vision 2020***

## **An Agenda for the Future**

### **June 1999 Report**

The Southeastern Mass: *Vision 2020* Project is an initiative to address uncontrolled sprawl and improve management of the rapid changes occurring in this region of the Commonwealth. The project recognizes that important choices lie ahead for the communities of Southeastern Massachusetts and that a clear vision for the future will lead to more effective decision-making. The *Vision 2020* project has been jointly administered by the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC), and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The *Vision 2020* Task Force includes regional leaders representing broad interests within Southeastern Massachusetts. A Governmental Affairs Committee discussed related planning issues at the state and regional levels.

This document summarizes the recommendations of the *Vision 2020* Task Force, but it is not the conclusion of the *Vision 2020* initiative. Rather, it provides an agenda for growth management efforts to improve the future of all communities within this region.

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*Note: The information and recommendations herein summarize extensive discussions and documents that have been prepared as part of the Vision 2020 process. For more information please see the Vision 2020 web page at [www.srpedd.org](http://www.srpedd.org).*

## Southeastern Massachusetts in the Year 2020

*Southeastern Massachusetts* is a large area in transition. It is a region of 51 towns and cities that share common challenges: managing change to ensure a high quality of life, to protect a unique environment and to enhance their economic future. A vision has emerged for Southeastern Massachusetts through this planning process to fully meet these challenges by the year 2020.

In broad terms, Southeastern Massachusetts should retain its distinctive character established by its historic past and become a region with:

- ☐ Rural areas that retain economically successful agricultural and forestry industries, and that preserve large areas of open space;
- ☐ Towns that are physically distinct, that retain individual character and that offer a high quality of life;
- ☐ Cities that are vital centers of civic and cultural life, that fully participate in the diversified economy of New England and that are excellent places to live, work and visit;
- ☐ Increased prosperity for its residents and businesses;
- ☐ A natural environment that is protected and enhanced;
- ☐ A regional infrastructure that supports regional needs through local, state and federal coordination.

This vision emphasizes the value of diversity in the communities and the economic resources set in the landscape of Southeastern Massachusetts.

Unmanaged growth will create problems in every community in land use, the environment, economic development and infrastructure and the delivery of local services. These problems will be difficult or impossible to correct. Ideally the citizens within the region should manage the economic and physical change through consensus to avoid irreversible problems. Equipped with good policies, plans, regulations and laws, communities can support actions that keep Southeastern Massachusetts a desirable place to live, work and visit.

This document expands upon this broad vision. It links specific elements of this vision to actions for managing change.

Southeastern Massachusetts retains fragile rural qualities and historic towns and cities that are threatened by the sprawl of uncontrolled development. Growth management means investment management - promoting a high quality of life, efficient use of public resources, and enhancing private investment opportunities.

## **Facts, Trends and Issues:**

### **The Pressing Need to Manage Growth in Southeastern Massachusetts**

The forces of economic change and location preferences are rapidly converting vast amounts of land in Southeastern Massachusetts into a monotonous pattern of sprawl. Long an "economic backwater" of New England, the region has emerged as one of the strongest growth areas in the Northeast. This trend is consuming open space, erasing the historic character of communities and burdening a strained infrastructure in a region that covers nearly 1,300 square miles of land and contains almost one million residents in Bristol, Plymouth and parts of Norfolk Counties.

Growth stresses the community fabric, causing problems that are difficult to resolve. The cost of these pressures and problems diminishes the overall quality of life within the region. Many communities actively seek industrial or commercial development without regard for the impact of such development on their own or neighboring towns. Agricultural land is under increasing pressure for development. Traditional town and city centers continue to decline in the face of more competitive, auto-oriented retail locations. Commuters are frustrated by long delays, and local traffic fills constricted roads. The expansion of school systems, utility systems and community services stretch budgets. Communities compete for non-residential development to help build their tax base because new housing developments frequently do not pay for the increased services they require.

But growth is not uniform. The large urban areas remain captured in long-term economic stagnation linked to the steady decline in the manufacturing sector. These cities would welcome growth. Population and income growth in the urban communities are far behind the regional or state averages. In the urban areas, the cost of maintaining a large and underutilized infrastructure consumes scarce local resources.

By looking at the facts, figures and trends within the region, the stresses posed by unmanaged growth come into clear focus. The Vision 2020 project has drawn upon

studies and data prepared by the Commonwealth, the Regional Planning Agencies, and federal census information.

## **Population, Demographics and Income**

Southeastern Massachusetts is the State's new growth frontier. By 2020 there will likely be over 200,000 new residents in the region. Between 1960 and 1990, Southeastern Massachusetts grew by more than 10,000 people per year (637,937 to 941,601 residents), or a growth rate of 46 percent. This rate is triple the rate for Massachusetts as a whole. An addition of 10,000 new residents per year requires an additional 3,500 housing units, generates 27,650 extra vehicle trips per day, consumes an additional 710,000 gallons of water per day and enrolls 2,157 new students per year.

The growth in population is concentrated in communities that increasingly serve as commuter suburbs. From Plymouth to Pembroke and from Mansfield to Middleborough, residential construction dominated by single family housing is underway. Eight municipalities gained over 3,000 new residents between 1980 and 1990. Plymouth alone gained almost 10,000 new residents. The Town of Mansfield, which is one of the fastest growing communities in Massachusetts, has more than doubled its population since 1970.

The growth in Southeastern Massachusetts is very uneven. The population of Brockton, Fall River and New Bedford grew by only 3.6 percent over the last thirty years, while the balance of the region grew by more than 80 percent. Some cities have lost population, but must continue to maintain the infrastructure designed to support a larger population.

Between 1980 and 1990, the greatest amount of growth occurred along the south shore and in towns within commuting distance of Boston. These towns will continue to grow between 1990 and 2020. As some of these communities approach build-out, however, housing costs will rise steeply. As transportation improvements increase the accessibility of the other communities in Southeastern Massachusetts, development pressures will follow improvements along rail and highway corridors. Nineteen communities within Southeastern Massachusetts have projected growth rates greater than 30 percent over the next 20 years; eleven of these communities are in the center of the region.

Income is also unevenly distributed. While the residents of a few suburban communities have extremely high average incomes, most towns and cities of Southeastern Massachusetts rank near the bottom in average income for the state and have many residents whose skills are poorly matched to growing economic sectors with higher paying jobs.

## **Land Use**

Land use patterns are changing; land is being consumed to serve a mobile culture. Land in Southeastern Massachusetts is being consumed at a rate two and one-half times the rate of regional population growth. Between 1951 and 1985, one-third of the agricultural and open land was converted to urbanized land uses. Agricultural and open land declined from over 150,000 acres to approximately 100,000 acres. This translates to 77 square miles lost at a rate of 2 square miles per year. In the same time period, urbanized land use more than doubled from approximately 76,000 acres to 184,016 acres. By the year 2020, without changes in current development patterns, the percentage of land in Southeastern Massachusetts that is developed is liable to increase by an additional 20 percent.

The density of population varies greatly, indicating that a wide variety of land uses remain within the region. While the overall density of Southeastern Massachusetts is near one person per acre, population densities range from 0.2 persons per acre in Rehoboth to almost 8 persons per acre in New Bedford. Sprawl will diminish this variation over time.

***"Uncontrolled growth is destroying what we cherish about New England. Sprawl destroys farms, weakens towns and city centers and forces us to spend more time in cars away from our families. It reduces the choices we have, increases our taxes and pollutes our environment. And it doesn't have to be that way... But we must change."***  
**(John Bullard, Task Force Member)**

In addition to being used for new housing, open space is being converted into retail and commercial facilities on large lots with convenient highway access, where the cost of new development is relatively low. The resulting pattern of development is dependent upon people driving cars. Meanwhile, picturesque town centers and historic downtown districts continue to decline throughout much of the region.

Agricultural land is steadily being converted to other uses as landowners make reasonable economic decisions to sell their properties for substantial gain. Even specialized high-value crops are affected. Southeastern Massachusetts ranks near the top of the most productive cranberry growing regions in the world. Yet cranberry lands require large amounts of clean, low cost water in a region where supplies of this basic resource are under pressure to serve residential and other development needs.

The cities and town centers of Southeastern Massachusetts lag behind others in New England in growth and development. Disinvestment remains a significant problem for the older industrial communities of Southeastern Massachusetts. Brockton, Fall River and New Bedford have been burdened by land use and building patterns established during an industrial era not suited to today's economic needs.

## **Infrastructure: Transportation, Water, Utilities and Growth**

Transportation improvements channel development and population growth. An example is evident in the development that followed the construction of I-495 through the region. As I-495 was connected to I-95 in the 1970's, Mansfield employment jumped 163 percent from 3,329 jobs to 8,771. Since the completion of I-495 from I-95 to Taunton, the employment in that community increased 85 percent from 13,431 jobs to 24,888. Employment in Lakeville and Middleborough is projected to increase from 8,414 jobs in 1990 to approximately 17,000 in 2020. This is in part a response to transportation projects that include the opening of the Old Colony Line and Route 44 improvements.

Major changes in the transportation network have been recently implemented or are planned. The reopening of the Old Colony Railroad Line and improvements to Route 44, Route 3 and Route 24 expand access to Southeastern Massachusetts and attract new residents and businesses. Additional rail extensions are under discussion, and new water transportation links may be created soon. Over \$2 billion in state funded highway and rail transportation projects have recently been built or are being planned for Southeastern Massachusetts.

Stresses are apparent in other aspects of the region's infrastructure. Sewer extensions foster growth of undeveloped rural land because "frontage" fees and higher taxes compel owners to develop their land. There is little consideration of decentralized wastewater treatment. Nor is there a history of matching development to existing infrastructure.

***More land has been developed in Southeastern Massachusetts in the last 40 years than in the preceding 330 years, stretching back to the date the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620.(Source: SRPEDD)***

Adequate water supply and good water quality are problems throughout the region. Southeastern Massachusetts has the largest sole source aquifer in the state, the Plymouth/Carver aquifer, which needs special protection. Some communities are disadvantaged because their needs for commercial and residential water do not meet their supply. There are no regional strategies to ensure clean and sufficient water for all communities in Southeastern Massachusetts.

## **Framework for Growth: Existing Laws and Public Policies**

The problems associated with growth and development occur within a system of regulations, taxation policies, and public investment programs that reinforce sprawl and discourage urban and town center reinvestment. Current tax policies create an imbalance among communities; reliance on the property tax influences inter-community competition throughout the region for commercial and industrial development. This competition creates "winners" and "losers" and affects land use patterns, service and infrastructure costs, and tax base.

The existing legal framework in Massachusetts includes provisions that require cities and towns to grant permits for development that may not be in a community's best interests. "Approval Not Required" conditions allow many poorly suited projects to proceed with minimal community input. The broadly protected right to subdivide land translates into future development patterns that are often difficult or impossible to influence, even with zoning.

Without new and more efficient approaches to the planning and development framework, the current patterns cannot be effectively changed.

**"Mansfield grew rapidly from a small town into the community it has become because it did not have appropriate land use regulations to control the pattern of growth. Now that Mansfield has these sorts of controls, it is almost too late..."**  
(Diane Royle, Task Force Member)

## **The Vision 2020 Planning Process and its Recommendations**

The *Vision 2020* planning process grew from common problems and opportunities expressed by the region's residents at the 1997 Southeastern Massachusetts Regional *Planning for Growth* Conference organized by the Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts and three Regional Planning Agencies. The conference participants were determined to begin a regional effort to create consensus on a vision for the future of the region. The Southeastern Mass: *Vision 2020* project began in early 1998, led by the three regional planning agencies serving communities in Southeastern Massachusetts: The Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC), and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). They agreed to support a citizen-based effort to identify key issues and growth management options, and to lay the groundwork for an agenda for the future. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs provided financial support for the project.

The three Regional Planning Agencies chose a 50-person Task Force. Donald Connors, a land use and environmental lawyer and planner, was named Task Force Chair. The Task Force brought together leaders within the region to reflect economic, social and political interests and points of view on issues related to growth. The Task Force met throughout 1998 to find common ground on these issues. Models for growth management from New England and the nation were examined. Subcommittees were formed to develop recommendations for establishing sustainable patterns of growth and change. In October of 1998, a second "Planning for Growth Forum" was conducted; visions for the future of Southeastern Massachusetts were presented and debated. The input from this process provided the basis for the recommendations and concepts reported here.

The first phase of the *Vision 2020* process achieved consensus among this diverse group of Southeastern Massachusetts residents. The goal for the next phase is to implement the recommendations made by this report and to broaden the wider consensus that is necessary to achieve the vision.

## **Overall Recommendations**

Take immediate actions at the local, regional, state and federal levels to bring a growth management emphasis to the land use and investment in Southeastern Massachusetts. These actions should include specific commitments by federal and state agencies, actions by the regional planning agencies to coordinate initiatives, and coordinated actions by local jurisdictions and non-profit organizations.

Develop a new model for implementation based upon a series of alliances and cooperative ventures to implement these recommendations. This model should include improved guidance, coordination and funding from the state and federal governments; greater leadership, support and technical assistance from the regional planning agencies; more attention to growth management issues at the local level; and greater participation in regional development issues from the private and civic sectors. A new institution to implement these policies and recommendations is not recommended.

Craft action strategies for Open Space and Natural Resources, Economic Development and Urban Reinvestment, Land Use and Housing, and Infrastructure. The assembled strategies will form a Policy Plan for Southeastern Massachusetts. These strategies should be coordinated by the joint efforts of the regional planning agencies (MAPC, OCPC and SRPEDD) and include all 51 constituent communities and other interests including state and federal agencies, business and environmental interests and other non-profit civic organizations. The strategies would be implemented through state commitments and local certification.

Take coordinated actions to protect open space and to concentrate development within the established town centers and urban areas. Create Priority Development Areas through state, local and federal actions. Expand land preservation through acquisition, aquifer protection measures, and development controls established through local regulations.

Work with the Governor and Legislature to change the legal and taxation framework that influences land use patterns. Address undesirable and inequitable results of land use laws, the impacts of taxation policies on growth, and subdivision regulations.

***The overall recommendations are expressed by the following specific visions and proposed actions regarding land use, economic development, regional infrastructure and a new planning framework for Southeastern Massachusetts.***

## **The Vision for Land Use**

Southeastern Massachusetts should retain diverse land use patterns that reinforce contrasts between rural, small town and urban places. A rural community like Rochester should remain distinct in character from a town like Middleborough, with its historic town center and outlying residential areas. The large communities and cities should offer urban choices: mixed uses, regionally attractive amenities, and the vitality that accompanies higher density development. Fall River, New Bedford, Taunton, Attleboro and Brockton each represent unique urban environments that should be reinforced as regional assets.

There must be a distinction between large open spaces and areas of concentrated development, rather than a monotonous sprawl of low density development that is economically inefficient and consumes excessive land. By increasing the diversity of land use in Southeastern Massachusetts, there will be more choices for places to live, work and play. There should be a range of residential densities - from high density urban to low density rural.

Land planning should complement long-term economic values by preserving and enhancing the attractiveness of the region's communities and the quality of life within them. The historic character of the communities in the region is a highly valued quality to be preserved by programs that restore worthy historic structures and preserve culturally significant places and landscapes.

Many communities have blighted areas due to economic change; these areas should be revitalized. Uses and businesses often need to be physically relocated and land use repositioned to attract new investment. For example, New Bedford must use the shoreside land differently than it did in the past to meet the needs of the modern fishing industry and accommodate other uses. In Fall River, the industrial use of the waterfront has declined; this part of the city has new potential to provide regional public amenities through the development of parks, visitor attractions and retail space.

Economic development must be balanced between newly built areas and reinvestment in established urban areas where infrastructure for growth already exists. This will reinforce a community's existing investments in infrastructure rather than requiring entirely new investments. The role of the regional transportation network in achieving this balance must be redefined so that access to established communities is reinforced.

Open space should be protected as an environmental resource and for watershed protection. Expanded public parks and privately dedicated open space are part of the land use vision.

## **Actions for Land Use Management**

### **Immediate Actions for Land Use Management**

**☐ Create Priority Development Areas.** The regional planning agencies should facilitate the designation of priority development areas that are well served by infrastructure, and work with the state and the communities to provide incentives to focus development in those areas.

**☐ The Regional Planning Agencies should develop model zoning regulations supporting the growth management objectives of the cities.** These zoning regulations should grant incentives (such as additional development densities) in exchange for dedicated open space.

**☐ Create a Regional Action Strategy for Land Use and Housing** through the joint efforts of the 51 constituent communities assisted by the Regional Planning Agencies, the business community and other interests including the non-profit civic community.

**☐ Revise state legislation to enable the creation of overlay districts exempt from the "vested rights" and "Approval Not Required" regulations to increase the ability of communities to direct development through clustering, site plan review and infrastructure sufficiency review.**

**☐ Enact new state legislation and regulations for special Areas of Critical Planning Concern.** The state should limit its approvals or actions within these designated areas due to special circumstances such as historic qualities, the preservation of open space, or the need to spur appropriate redevelopment, for example. By establishing special overlay areas through joint state and local action, new effective controls can be put in place.

**☐ Create new programs and expand existing initiatives to purchase the development rights of open space and agricultural lands.** These initiatives could include land bank funds similar to the programs recently instituted on Cape Cod and in the Town of Marion.

**☐ Work with the state legislature to revise or provide countermeasures to the negative effects of existing laws and policies.** Examples include "Approval Not Required" development rights and tax policies that effectively block key growth management goals and create inequitable distribution of costs and benefits.

**☒ Draft legislation for innovative land use management techniques such as Urban Growth Boundaries (special inter-jurisdictional agreements that limit growth to urban areas), expanded development impact fees and other mechanisms.**

*Land use management initiatives are already underway in many parts of the region. For example, State legislation was passed that allows the Town of Marion to set up and finance a local land bank.*

**☒ A Growth Management Strategy for Land Use and Housing should be created on a regional basis as one of the fundamental tasks for the future. Such a strategy should be created through the active participation of the communities throughout the region.**

## **The Vision for Economic Development**

The Southeastern Massachusetts economy should be competitive and diversified. It should build upon its rich natural resources and take advantage of its location and relationship to the larger New England economy. This vision includes expanded participation in high value economic sectors such as high technology. Economic self-reliance should be promoted for the region through investment rather than dependence on employment centers outside of the region. The best future for Southeastern Massachusetts requires the development of a vibrant regional economy rather than its evolution as a cluster of bedroom suburbs linked to Boston and Providence.

Southeastern Massachusetts communities have seen long periods of underemployment and low productivity. Once an international center for specialized manufacturing, the region has been slow to convert to an economy that has supported the expansion in jobs and income and educational attainment for the state. The cities of Southeastern Massachusetts rank near the bottom of average income for the state. The skills of residents are not well matched to the growth sectors of the regional economy. Reinvestment in the cities, including incentives for business relocation and expansion, paired with training and educational opportunities should be encouraged to help remedy these disparities. The economy of Southeastern Massachusetts is dominated by small and medium sized companies. The potential of small, entrepreneurial businesses should be the focus in structuring new programs and incentives.

The fishing and water dependent industries along the coastline are highly specialized and important elements in the economic fabric of Southeastern Massachusetts. New Bedford remains one of the greatest fishing ports in the nation, in part because of a shift in emphasis to fish processing. The environmental quality of the rivers, bays and estuaries impacts the economic health of these industries and is a fundamental part of the economic vision for the region. Availability of shoreside land for water dependent uses is also critical to the future of many of these uses.

Agricultural industries must be recognized as valuable economic resources. The region must find means to accommodate continued and expanded agricultural use by regulating environmental quality and discouraging conversion of agricultural land to sprawl-type development.

Protecting and enhancing the quality of life are key actions for future prosperity. A high quality of life both supports the tourism trade and acts as an incentive for residents and businesses to relocate to Southeastern Massachusetts. The region must include a broad range of housing opportunities near jobs as part of the emphasis on quality of life. Actions should focus reinvestment in city and town centers as well as creating new employment centers.

The Vision 2020 project supports continued and consistent application of Executive Order 385 Planning for Growth as a guide to economic development. E.O. 385 requires state agencies to act in a manner consistent with sustainable development principles and with regional and local planning. Southeastern Massachusetts businesses should be active participants in growth management, helping direct public infrastructure investment and shaping development policies.

*It is important to understand that establishing a growth management plan does not imply "no growth". Rather, a regional growth management plan is a way of fostering desirable growth and development and directing that growth to the long-term benefit of the entire community.*

## **Actions for Economic Development**

### **Immediate Actions for Economic Development**

**☐ Create a direct incentive for development in designated Priority Development Areas. In concert with the land use planning initiative to promote target areas for investment, the state and local communities should increase expenditures and incentive programs to encourage private investment. As in other states where such programs are successful, the provision of streamlined permitting, incentives and subsidies should be linked to actual investment and expansion commitments from the private sector.**

**☐ Establish a state policy linking priority funding of infrastructure improvements to areas designated for concentrated growth, through the recommendations of the regional planning agencies and the regional action strategies. This policy should subsequently be linked to the results of the Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan that will be developed.**

☐ **Create a Regional Action Strategy for Economic Development through the joint efforts of the 51 constituent communities assisted by the Regional Planning Agencies, the business community and other interests including the non-profit civic community.**

☐ **Support redevelopment of urban sites. Fund and staff regional information programs that provide cost evaluations of brownfield sites and promote urban reinvestment through technical studies and marketing support. As part of this effort, the Regional Planning Agencies should provide technical support and the state should direct funding to promote creative use of urban renewal mechanisms to reconfigure and redevelop blighted areas of communities. Promote additional "brownfields" funding to subsidize the redevelopment of former industrial sites and undertake actions to develop these sites.**

☐ **Develop and promote cultural and recreational amenities that enhance the quality of life in order to attract and retain businesses. A concerted effort led by the tourism and business interests should be undertaken to improve the amenities available within the region.**

☐ **Promote agriculture and marine-related business, and other businesses that rely on natural resources as economic activities through local zoning, taxation policy, state and federal expenditures and public information.**

☐ **Use inter-municipal agreements to achieve growth management objectives. Inter-municipal agreements may promote the equitable distribution of the costs and the benefits of new development among communities through tax sharing. These agreements allow cities and towns to share the financial costs for expanding basic services and the revenues from increased economic activity. They also allow communities to retain the desired community character by reducing inter-municipal competition for revenue generating activities and encouraging development to occur where it is most wanted and appropriate.**

☐ **Promote education and training - State agencies, the business community and educational institutions of Southeastern Massachusetts should combine resources to improve the education and work skills of the adult population to make the quality of the labor pool in the region more attractive to a range of employers.**

## **The Vision for Natural Resources and Open Space**

Natural resources, agriculture and undeveloped landscapes in Southeastern Massachusetts represent fundamental components of the economy and culture of the region. These natural resource systems include wild rivers, undeveloped stretches of coastline, hundreds of ponds, extensive farm and forestry lands and the nationally significant Plymouth pine barrens. The region is home to an abundance of wildlife, including healthy fisheries, deer populations, backyard foxes and bird life of national significance and local enjoyment. The region has among the highest densities of rare and endangered species of plants and animals in New England.

In spite of its rapid growth and the integrity and extent of its natural resources, the region has received less state open space funds than almost any region in the Commonwealth during the last twenty-five years. It is among the few regions of the state that does not have a major federal wildlife conservation facility. Statewide and national conservation organizations own comparatively little land in the region, particularly among the interior towns. Remaining open land, especially along the coastline, is under constant and increasing development pressure.

Effective water supply planning is essential to the region's environmental, agricultural and economic health. Increased commercial and residential water demand will increasingly conflict with the needs of agriculture and the cranberry industry. Unmanaged competition for limited water supplies could forestall economic development where it is desired, and severely degrade natural resources that are dependent on adequate pond depths and stream flows including the region's unique coastal plain pond species.

Open space contributes to the quality of life of many residents of the region and defines the character of many towns. It plays a key role in tourism and is an amenity for attracting businesses to the region. Renewed urban open space can retain and attract people to the region's older cities. As the population grows, new outdoor recreational amenities will be needed.

Agricultural land remains an important component of the region's economy and also serves open space and wildlife functions. Cranberry bogs and open fields define the character of many of the region's communities. Development pressures threaten land that has been in agriculture for hundreds of years.

The Vision 2020 project endorses the policy goals and recommendations contained in "The View from the Borderland", produced by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Land Protection in October 1998. The Task Force calls on state and municipal governments and non-profit agencies to plan for and protect our natural, cultural and agricultural heritage.

## **Actions for Managing Natural Resources and Open Space**

## **Immediate Actions for Managing Natural Resources and Open Space**

- ☐ Increase state, federal, and non-profit open space funding and acquisition within Southeastern Massachusetts. State agencies, with support from the legislature, need to take rapid action to protect critical natural resources and provide for the year round outdoor recreational needs of an expanding population, from hunters to bird watchers. Statewide and national non-profits should increase their acquisitions, purchase of development rights and programming in the region's interior communities.**
  
- ☐ Develop a Natural Resource Inventory and Plan that incorporates scientific data and community needs in identifying high value natural, recreational, agricultural and historic resources and establishment of priorities for protection. Creation of this plan should involve non-profit organizations, regional planning agencies, the State Watershed Initiative, educational institutions, and local citizens and officials.**
  
- ☐ Encourage locally-initiated and regional water supply plans that incorporate the needs of agricultural water users and water-dependent natural resources even as they prepare for increased residential and commercial use of aquifers and surface waters. The state, through its Watershed Initiative, should take the lead in creating and funding such integrated water supply planning. State support for infrastructure investments and environmental approvals and grants should be linked to coordinated water supply planning. Communities need to take action to meet future water needs by buying aquifer lands now.**
  
- ☐ Increase use of zoning and site plan review by municipalities as a tool for natural resource protection where land cannot be protected through purchase. Provide incentives for developers to conserve natural resources.**
  
- ☐ Encourage municipalities to pass local land bank initiatives under pending statewide enabling legislation.**
  
- ☐ Encourage municipalities to incorporate regional land protection priorities and inter-municipal projects in their acquisition agendas. Consider devoting a portion of land bank funds for regional resource protection projects.**
  
- ☐ Increase protection of the region's rare and endangered species habitats through state, municipal and non-profit land acquisition and coordination and through improved site plan review.**
  
- ☐ Encourage economically productive farming and farmland preservation by providing business and estate planning advice for farmers and cranberry growers**

and by increasing the amount of working farmland under agricultural preservation restrictions.

**☒ Develop strategies for protecting historic and archeological sites, including creation of an inventory of sites, increased funding for preservation and rehabilitation and development of a toolbox of adaptive reuse techniques for municipalities and historical commissions.**

*The Mattapoissett River Water Supply Advisory Committee includes the towns of Acushnet, Fairhaven, Marion, Mattapoissett and Rochester. It was established to manage the watershed and water supply for the member communities. The Committee was originally set up through a memorandum of agreement which was later formalized by the state legislature. Recent legislation allows the committee to collect a surcharge for the purchase of land for watershed protection.*

## **The Vision for the Regional Infrastructure**

The regional infrastructure is composed of the transportation network, communications systems and utilities that serve the 51 communities of Southeastern Massachusetts.

In the past, decisions about infrastructure development have not considered regional growth associated with the implementation of public investments. This is true of highway, transit, sewer, and water systems which were often extended or improved to serve non-local goals.

Expanded transit opportunities should support intensive use of land, particularly in town centers, employment centers and urban reinvestment areas. This should include rail and bus transit initiatives. Transit should serve as a growing substitute for automobile traffic, consistent with both local and regional growth management goals. Water transportation links should increase between Boston and south shore communities.

Highway and roadway capacity should be planned using regional and local growth management goals. Capacity should expand to improve the quality of life and serve concentrated housing and employment center development. Stronger transportation links between the cities and towns within the region will help support economic development. Capacity should not be increased where it encourages new development in areas designated for low density development. Where conflicts among communities exist, reviews of transportation projects by the Regional Planning Agencies should be allowed to determine a balanced approach. State and federal expenditures must respect the conclusions of the regional reviews.

The expansion of new sewer and water utilities can influence development patterns by unintentionally encouraging growth. This potential growth needs to be considered before

new water and sewer extensions are implemented. Approvals should be linked to town, city and regional growth management priorities.

Southeastern Massachusetts needs excellent connections to the regional, national and international markets to support its economic success. Protection and expansion of rail, air and marine cargo links are fundamental to this vision. Telecommunications and fiber optic networks are a priority in Southeastern Massachusetts, as these networks are often preconditions for the expansion and relocation of many businesses in today's economic climate.

Economic competitiveness can be enhanced where utility costs are lowered through regional cooperation. Inter-jurisdictional approaches can help ensure adequate water supply distribution systems and wastewater treatment. Efforts to lower the cost of electricity in the region are also important to improve regional competitiveness.

## **Actions for Growth Management: The Regional Infrastructure**

### **Immediate Actions for Managing the Regional Infrastructure**

**☐ Provide coordinated regional review of highway and transit projects through a formal agreement between the Commonwealth and the Regional Planning Agencies. The Regional Planning Agencies' mandate as Metropolitan Planning Organizations should be expanded beyond federal transportation funding priorities to include the review of all transportation projects.**

**☐ Direct state and federally funded projects to include specific assessments of regional growth management impacts and to prioritize spending. This action should directly support growth in designated Priority Development Areas; protect areas designated for low-intensity development and connect housing to jobs within the region. This includes directing state and federal expenditures to improve transportation connections to Priority Development Areas. These expenditures should enhance economic potential and reduce reliance on the automobile. Improvements should expand the locations that allow for the transfer between transportation modes in town and city center and at concentrations of employment.**

**☐ Create a detailed Regional Action Strategy for Infrastructure through the joint efforts of the 51 constituent communities. The strategy should link transportation and transit investment to sound economic goals.**

☐ **The three Regional Planning Agencies should incorporate the Vision 2020 goals into the year 2000 regional transportation plans that require state and federal certification.**

☐ **Promote inter-jurisdictional solutions to improve and expand the utility infrastructure. This effort must begin by a regional evaluation of the existing regional infrastructure sufficiency relative to growth management objectives. "Buildout" methods of analysis that establish water needs based on projected land use should be used as a common basis for water supply and wastewater planning. Projected costs and problems with service or expansion need to reflect the goals of individual communities and projected regional growth patterns. Expanded use of decentralized water and sewer systems may be appropriate for some communities. Communities should use zoning and land acquisition to protect water supplies.**

☐ **Support and provide high technology infrastructure such as fiber optics, microwave and other technologies. The Commonwealth and local communities should work with the providers of high technology communications to ensure systematic expansion of this infrastructure into Southeastern Massachusetts.**

☐ **Focus state and federal funding of wastewater treatment that supports concentrated development patterns. In the past, availability of funding has often led to dispersed patterns of development and extended (and expensive) wastewater treatment systems. By prioritizing spending on concentrated development patterns through effective local zoning and other actions, the infrastructure development can support growth management.**

☐ **Employ Title 5 Management Districts to solve existing waste disposal problems where expansion of sewer lines would promote sprawl. The Title 5 regulations provide for a useful mechanism for local and inter-jurisdictional management of sewer and septic issues.**

***SRPEDD and the Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA) conducted a recent survey to analyze bus routes, employment and the locations of welfare recipients to improve access of welfare recipients to employment centers to help implement welfare to work programs and expand economic opportunities in the region.***

## **The Vision for a New Planning Framework**

Directing growth to best benefit the communities of Southeastern Massachusetts requires a better framework for planning. Planning and development decisions are made within a

current framework of public policy, regulations, public investments, development law and taxation. This framework does not allow communities to meet common goals of economic diversity, open space preservation and concentrated development areas.

Coordination requires detailed blueprints for action among the community, state and federal levels. These blueprints are called Strategies for Action. There must be separate, but related, strategies for Open Space and Natural Resources, Economic Development and Urban Reinvestment, Land Use and Housing, and Infrastructure. Together, these elements must be assembled as a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan. This should be done through a participatory process that involves all communities, interested citizens and levels of government.

There is a need for consistency among federal, state, and local plans and actions. The Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan and its constituent strategies should be the basis for directing state and federal spending and regulatory priorities. The Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan should be officially adopted and supported by the actions of state and federal public agencies. The Policy Plan should be the basis of local consistency requirements for the comprehensive plans and zoning regulations of the cities and towns within Southeastern Massachusetts. The Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan strategies should be updated on a five-year cycle. State incentives and funding of capital investments including infrastructure improvements should be contingent on findings of consistency between the local planning directions and the regional consensus for growth management.

There should be increased opportunities for review and input focused specifically on growth related issues. This will require a new level of cooperation among the three Regional Planning Agencies that work with the communities of Southeastern Massachusetts. This cooperation should be formalized through a Joint Powers Agreement.

The entire approach to local comprehensive planning needs to be revised at the state level so that towns and cities are able to adopt and implement plans that are connected to zoning, capital improvement plans and other implementation mechanisms.

The *Vision 2020* process should focus legislative review of land use policy and economic implications of property taxes. There is a need to find ways to reduce the impacts of pre-established development rights for subdivisions and for projects that meet existing zoning standards. Current approaches effectively prohibit towns or cities from protecting open space through low-density zoning. There are profound problems with the taxation policies that create an incentive for all communities to compete for commercial development and shun new housing geared to families. With the current approach for raising revenues, local capital investment needs within many communities cannot be supported within budgets that must direct the largest proportion of the tax dollars to annual expenditures such as education and general municipal services.

*While planning tools have been established to help control aspects of growth, they have often proved to be ineffective, reactive "brakes" in the face of short-term market forces and the existing legal framework for land use decisions. Tools to direct growth are scarce and not available in most communities.*

## **Actions to Create A New Planning Framework**

### **Immediate Actions for Creating a New Planning Framework**

- ☐ Provide immediate state and federal funding support for the development of the Strategies for Regional Action. This effort should be led jointly by the three Regional Planning Agencies with the extensive support and involvement of all 51 communities, citizens, and business and interest group representatives. This initiative should begin immediately with a Coordination Program to facilitate the regional process, and include the preparation of both an Open Space and Natural Resources Action Strategy and an Economic Development Strategy.**
  
- ☐ Establish a new Steering Committee for Regional Growth Management to implement the *Vision 2020* agenda. This group should include town and city officials, state agency representatives and representatives from the private sector including business interests and non-profit organizations. Continuity with the *Vision 2020* program should be attained through continued participation of some Task Force members.**
  
- ☐ Convene a region-wide meeting of the senior elected and executive officials of all 51 communities to discuss the fundamental principles for regional cooperation to be used as the basis for the Strategies for Regional Action.**
  
- ☐ Prepare Strategies for Regional Action focused on Land Use and Housing, and on Infrastructure. These elements should be prepared subsequently and as a complement to the other strategies and reflect priorities that are established for employment centers and the desired patterns of open space and natural resource protection.**
  
- ☐ Complete a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan and provide for adoption by local jurisdictions. The four Strategies for Regional Action, when completed, should be assembled and included in a comprehensive Regional Policy Plan for Southeastern Massachusetts. This policy plan should be adopted by the Regional Planning Agencies and presented to all 51 cities and towns for local endorsement. Similarly, the state and relevant federal agencies should endorse the Policy Plan and commit to priority actions based on its specific recommendations.**

☒ **The state should implement a consistency requirement among regional, state and local plans and regulations, including zoning and capital expenditures. This requirement should link state economic incentives and capital expenditures to findings of consistency with local and regional plans.**

☒ **Initiate a review by the legislature of development laws and regulations. The goal of this effort should be to reform the legal framework, or provide counteracting measures for provisions that are not consistent with more balanced growth. This process should overhaul the state's local comprehensive planning regulations. Complete consideration of the impacts of tax policies and land use laws and regulations must be undertaken as part of a statewide initiative.**

*The MAPC and the MEPA unit of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs have an agreement that allows coordinated review of designated areas.*

## **Expanding Planning Resources**

New planning resources are needed if growth is to be managed in Southeastern Massachusetts. There is a fundamental need for accessible, shared information regarding growth management and economic enhancement among communities. There is a significant need for human resources in the form of additional professional assistance to help evaluate key problems and implement solutions. Finally, there is a need for practical assistance for the individuals on the boards and commissions charged with making growth management decisions within their communities.

In many Southeastern Massachusetts communities, the ability to manage growth has been inhibited more by the lack of resources than any unwillingness to direct local land use, infrastructure and economic directions. Planning boards and zoning boards of appeal work overtime, processing development proposals and subdivision requests. Town meetings are occupied with long debates on school funding, zoning and capital investment decisions. Many communities have no professional planning assistance, and the members of various boards, commissions and elected officials have little time to coordinate their day-to-day activities, much less establish a truly coordinated plan for future actions.

A shared Southeastern Massachusetts growth management database should be developed. This information base should be practical and include recent community open space and land use planning, infrastructure development and economic development actions. Models of successful zoning and comprehensive planning should be established and communicated. Failed initiatives should also be evaluated and presented.

Shared land data through Geographic Information Systems technology is fundamental to effective land management. This resource should be expanded and shared.

Additional staffing is required with particular emphasis on expansion of the professional resources within the Regional Planning Agencies and within the cities and towns of Southeastern Massachusetts. The Regional Planning Agencies should be charged with an expanded mission to create model growth management techniques such as zoning for local adoption, and for undertaking an extensive education and support effort with local planners, boards and commissions. The Regional Planning Agencies should also be provided with adequate resources to service this expanded mission.

## **Improving the Tools to Manage Change**

- ☐ Create a coordinated internet-accessible Growth Management Information Center. This effort should be led jointly by the three Regional Planning Agencies with the extensive support and involvement of the Commonwealth and the 51 communities of Southeastern Massachusetts.**
  
- ☐ Increase the availability and usefulness of the Commonwealth's and the Regional Planning Agency's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in developing land use policies and decisions. Update the database of information and provide additional professional assistance to communities throughout the region, leading eventually to the inclusion of city and town land use and infrastructure information into a coordinated mapped information resource.**
  
- ☐ Increase community planning capacity through expanded technical assistance by the Commonwealth and the Regional Planning Agencies and increased funding of local planning positions by the Commonwealth, towns and cities. One method may be expert "circuit rider" planning support to complement other actions by the Regional Planning Agencies to bring planning expertise to Southeastern Massachusetts communities.**
  
- ☐ Expand the basis for Regional Planning Agency funding to provide growth management support and expanded local planning assistance. This may require legislation at the state level and approval at the local level.**
  
- ☐ Increase state support for regional planning capacity through additional funding of grants, programs and direct services such as matching grants for multi-jurisdictional growth management initiatives, additional resources for the Geographic Information System directed to improved information on Southeastern Massachusetts communities and other activities.**
  
- ☐ Expand programs that create model zoning regulations that are responsive to the different sizes, goals and needs of Southeastern Massachusetts communities. Regulations should be geared to encourage economic development in concentrated areas; other regulations should address the need to preserve open space and low-**

density characteristics of the region. These regulations should include case studies of communities that have implemented similar measures and have passed legal review prior to distribution. The Regional Planning Agencies should support the adoption of these regulations through expanded direct professional assistance to local planners and relevant boards.

☐ Support regular programs to assemble officials and professionals on a subregional basis concerned with common growth management issues. The Regional Planning Agencies should take the lead in identifying an expanded network of communities and individuals and in establishing agendas for sharing problems and solutions.

*The SRPEDD web site includes a model zoning bylaw page which has been averaging about 100 "hits" per week.*

## **Implementation**

The Southeastern Mass: *Vision 2020* project has established a growth management agenda for the future. Fulfilling this agenda will require the coordinated efforts of all levels of government along with the active participation of citizens, businesses and interest groups that have a stake in the future quality of life and long-term economic success of the region.

There is a clear and urgent need to initiate immediate actions. But the complex task of long-term growth management also depends on the creation of broadly accepted strategies built on knowledge and participation of the communities, public agencies, and constituencies.

### **The Next Steps...**

**1. Establish a Steward for Growth Management. A Steering Committee for Regional Growth Management should be established as the successor to the Vision 2020 process and as stewards of regional growth management. This group should consist of representatives selected from city and town governments, representatives of business and interest groups, and state agencies. Supported by the three participating Regional Planning Agencies, this group should advance the agenda for planning and develop specific strategies for growth.**

**2. Complete a Joint Powers Agreement. The three participating Regional Planning Agencies (SRPEDD, OCPC and MAPC) should enter into a Joint Powers Agreement to provide for future coordination on all growth management issues as they affect the Southeastern Massachusetts region.**

**3. Promote a New MEPA Protocol.** The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs should establish a new protocol for determining projects that will have a regional impact on the growth and development of Southeastern Massachusetts. For qualifying projects (expansion of capacity for a state highway through the region, for example), the three Regional Planning Agencies should be directed to provide reviews of the projects for consideration by the proponents and EOE. Executive Order 385 is a state policy directive that supports those projects that are both environmentally responsible and economically beneficial. The fulfillment of the goals of Executive Order 385 should explicitly be addressed and be a criteria for approval of all state actions deemed to have regional importance.

**4. Federal Agency Actions.** As part of any Environmental Impact Statement for projects in Southeastern Massachusetts, lead federal agencies should continue to solicit the coordinated input of the Regional Planning Agencies and carefully document the regional growth impacts of actions as part of the environmental review process.

**5. Funding of Open Space Acquisition.** Due to its status as the fastest growing region in the state, Southeastern Massachusetts should receive additional funds for the acquisition of development rights and properties in critical locations throughout the region.

**6. Funding of Regional Strategies for Action.** Local state and federal sources should fund a Regional Coordination Program and parallel Action Strategies.

**7. Target Reinvestment Areas.** The state should work closely with the Regional Planning Agencies and the communities of Southeastern Massachusetts to create a consolidated approach to establishing Priority Development Areas. This approach would focus existing incentive and capital expenditure programs to expand the effectiveness of concentrated development. As part of this process, the state should formally establish a policy to link priority funding of infrastructure improvements to areas designated for concentrated growth.

**8. Growth Management Zoning and Subdivision Practices in Towns and Cities.** Effective growth management zoning and subdivision ordinances could be adopted for immediate application in many communities. For example, these techniques may include overlay zones to direct and concentrate development, conservation zoning and cluster zoning ordinances. Encourage the expanded use of the site plan review approach to protect open space and ensure a consistent community.

**9. Leadership Convention for Regional Growth Management.** A gathering of the leaders (Mayors and chairs of Boards of Selectmen) of all 51 communities in Southeastern Mass should be convened to review and establish the fundamental principles for future cooperation and to guide the development of a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan.

# **Strategies for Action and a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan**

The *Vision 2020* project calls for the creation of a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan, created and endorsed by all constituent communities. Endorsement of this Plan would acknowledge the local benefits of new strategies and the opportunities provided by sub-regional cooperation to help guide the planning and development decisions of participating communities. Adoption would help trigger state actions directed towards individual communities that support the Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan. This plan would help guide state actions in Southeastern Massachusetts, including accelerated regulatory reviews, the implementation of development incentives and the direct investment of public funds in projects and infrastructure. Such a plan must be carefully assembled over time to achieve both the level of consensus and the specificity of detail that will make it a useful product.

Developing a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan should not stop the establishment of pragmatic strategies that address pressing growth management problems. The *Vision 2020* project calls for the development of four Strategies for Action. These will be composed of the following:

**A Strategy for Open Space and Natural Resources**

**A Strategy for Economic Development and Urban Reinvestment**

**A Strategy for Land Use and Housing**

**A Strategy for Infrastructure**

These strategies should be developed individually and the recommendations immediately put into effect. The cumulative conclusions would be assembled and combined to create the Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan, which would be augmented with other recommendations to help serve the growth management goals of the participating communities. The Open Space and Natural Resources and Economic Development Strategies should be prepared first, closely followed by the Land Use and Housing Strategy and the Infrastructure Strategy.

A Coordination Program will tie together all the *Vision 2020* initiatives. The preparation of the Strategies for Action and Policy Plan will require this oversight and coordination through a process of technical support and policy discussion. Simultaneously, the expansion of planning resources must be supported. The Southeastern Massachusetts effort to support statewide reviews and revision in the planning framework must be coordinated through this program.

## **A Strategy for Open Space and Natural Resources**

The Strategy for Open Space and Natural Resources would catalogue the special environments that require enhancement and protection. This strategy would then prioritize the environments in terms of value and establish criteria and standards for protection that can be applied through local, state and federal actions. The strategy would link open space and natural resource preservation to critical issues of water supply and promote specific actions for groundwater protection. The strategy would identify new mechanism to purchase and preserve land, and set a timetable and budget targets for implementation.

## **A Strategy for Economic Development and Urban Reinvestment**

The Strategy for Economic Development would create a specific program for economic development and identify the sectors of competitive advantage for the region. This strategy would identify Priority Development Areas to receive coordinated government funding or incentives, while establishing specific criteria that would trigger the availability of these supports. The strategy would address special regional industries such as cranberry cultivation and fishing, and establish the regulatory and investment actions needed to support them. The role of the regional infrastructure would be established as a factor in influencing economic development.

## **A Strategy for Land Use and Housing**

The Land Use and Housing Strategy would create a framework to support communities that seek to concentrate development where infrastructure and access to transportation exists. This element would identify and establish specific mechanisms for potential use by towns and cities to promote chosen development densities. Regional approaches to historic preservation would be identified. This would include prioritizing the Areas of Critical Planning Concern that would form the basis of state-certified districts. These areas could receive special regulatory treatment and incentives to preserve the desirable characteristic within participating communities. Strategies to ensure diverse housing opportunities would also be created.

## **A Strategy for Infrastructure**

The Strategy for Infrastructure would define the balance between improved transportation to support economic activity and commuting, and constricted access that is supportive of low density development and a higher quality of life for some communities. It would identify specific infrastructure priorities for utilities, transit and roadways, and define

regional initiatives to extend alternate modes of transportation. This approach would define criteria that will guide specific future state and federal decisions on infrastructure expenditures, approvals and incentives. All of these recommendations would be linked to the site specific strategies for open space, land use, and economic development.

Each Strategy would be created with substantial technical support and coordination and the active involvement of representatives from all 51 communities. Each element would be overseen by a special committee of highly qualified individuals from the region. Each element will take about 18 months to fully complete. In each case, the Strategy would build upon the substantial amount of information and experience that has already been gained by individual communities, Regional Planning Agencies and government agencies through their work in Southeastern Massachusetts. There should be an ordered sequence of effort. The Open Space/Natural Resources Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy should be initiated immediately. The other two should follow and be based on the conclusions of the first two efforts.

### **So What Can I Do?**

The success of growth management in Southeastern Massachusetts is directly dependent upon the commitment of individuals and of the constituent communities. It will be built upon the recognition that growth management strategies will serve economic self-interest and improve the quality of life within all participating communities. There is much to do.

### **Citizens should...**

- ☐ Bring the growth management agenda to the attention of their local agency representatives, planning board members and local elected officials.
- ☐ Get involved - participate in growth management information programs and public discussions.
- ☐ Participate through interest groups with special concerns, from business and environmental associations to watershed alliances and historic societies.

### **Businesses should...**

- ☐ Participate in the growth management planning process.

- ☐ Assist in defining public investments and policies to encourage appropriate business expansion and development.
- ☐ Participate in programs to expand education, training and job opportunities throughout the region.

### **Interest groups should...**

- ☐ Bring the growth management agenda to the attention of the group leadership and designate participants in the advocacy and planning processes.
- ☐ Contact municipalities and encourage their involvement.
- ☐ Participate directly in the committees and advisory groups that will be a fundamental part of the creating the Growth Management Strategies for Action and the future Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan.
- ☐ Establish and communicate a set of policy recommendations to guide the group's positions on specific growth management initiatives.

### **Towns and Cities should...**

- ☐ Delegate specific responsibility to qualified and interested board members and municipal agency representatives to participate in the Southeastern Massachusetts growth management initiatives.
- ☐ Provide direct resources to expand planning efforts locally.
- ☐ Examine new zoning, subdivision and other infrastructure and land control methods, and implement models which support local goals.
- ☐ Undertake information gathering and public information programs through media and other means to expand local understanding of key local growth management issues and to discuss possible solutions.

### **Regional Planning Agencies should...**

- ☐ Organize and staff the ongoing Growth Management Strategies and Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan.
- ☐ Be responsible for the Coordination Program through a Joint Powers Agreement.
- ☐ Contribute to growth management-based reviews of federal and state projects with significant regional impacts.
- ☐ Create and distribute model zoning regulations and model comprehensive plans and distribute them.
- ☐ Maintain an internet-accessible database on growth management for Southeastern Massachusetts.
- ☐ Improve the regional information base through additional documentation and distribution of Geographic Information System (GIS) data.

### **State Agencies should...**

- ☐ Commit to consistency of actions with regional growth management policies.
- ☐ Help fund the effort to create Growth Management Strategies and a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan.
- ☐ Improve the regional information base through additional documentation and distribution of Geographic Information System (GIS) data.
- ☐ Create an agreement between the MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act) unit of EOEPA and the Regional Planning Agencies to provide for increased review of projects with significant regional impacts.
- ☐ Ensure that transportation-related funding of the Regional Planning Agencies supports studies of regional growth implications related to highway and transit projects.

### **The State Legislature should...**

- ☐ Fund additional land and development rights acquisition.
- ☐ Provide funding support for the development of specific Action Strategies and a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan, including the necessary coordination efforts.
- ☐ Support programs and fund initiatives that serve to concentrate development and preserve land in appropriate locations as determined through regional consensus.
- ☐ Initiate a process to examine the negative implications of tax policies and land use legislation on managed growth and stewardship of the environment, and create new mechanisms to counteract the negative effects.
- ☐ Provide a revised legal and regulatory framework for the preparation of local comprehensive plans and provide for consistency requirements between local, regional and state plans and policies.

### **Federal Agencies should...**

- ☐ Commit to consistency of actions with regional growth management policies.
- ☐ Help fund the efforts to create Growth management Strategies and a Southeastern Massachusetts Policy Plan.