

City of Auburn, Maine

"Maine's City of Opportunity"

Office of Planning & Permitting

To: Auburn Planning Board

From: Douglas M. Greene, City Planner 

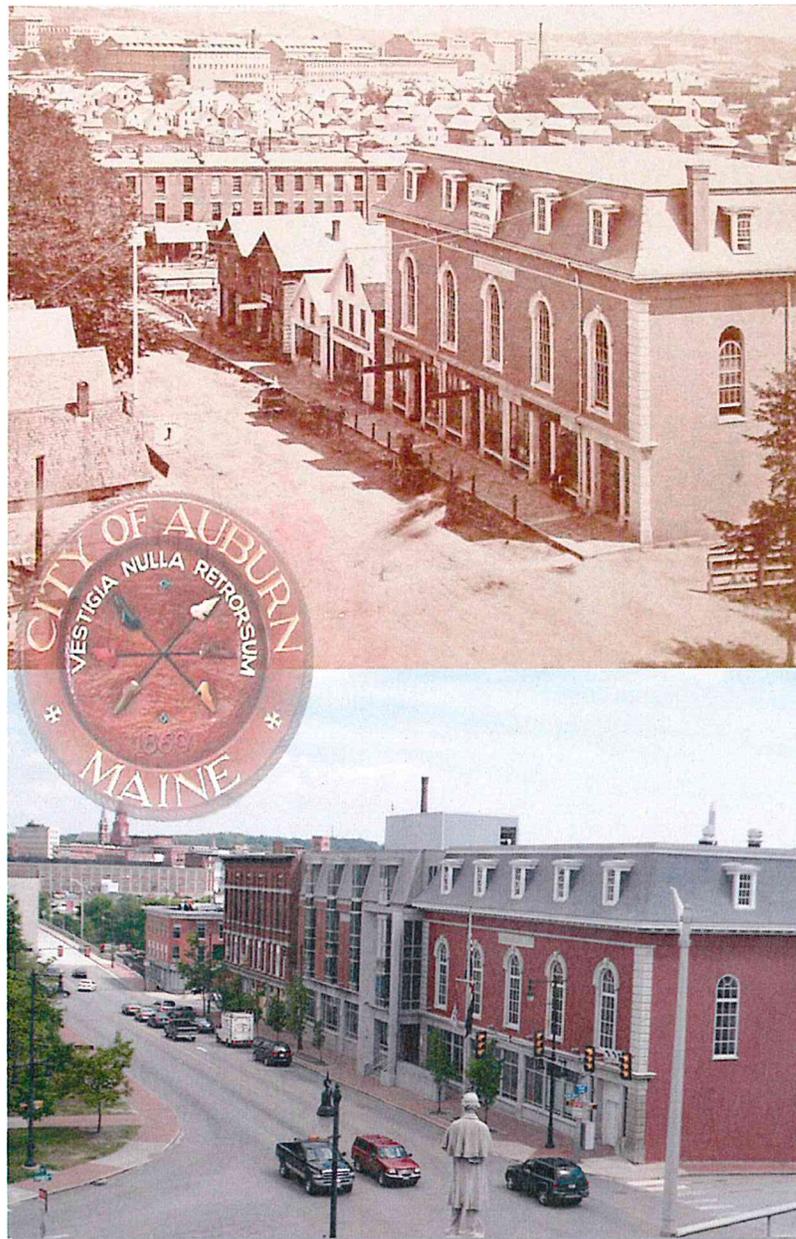
Date: May 8, 2014

RE: Revision of Comprehensive Plan Amendment on Passenger Rail Service

At last month's meeting, the Planning Board tabled taking action on changes to the 2010 Comprehensive Plan that added language regarding considering passenger rail service to downtown Auburn. Staff revised the language in the amendment as per the Board's request.

The changes made for your consideration at the May 13th meeting are highlighted in yellow.

CITY OF AUBURN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: 2010 UPDATE



For the complete 2010 Comprehensive Plan See:

[http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Comprehensive Plan FINAL Approved 4 19 11.pd](http://www.auburnmaine.gov/CMSContent/Planning/Comprehensive%20Plan%20FINAL%20Approved%204%2019%2011.pdf)

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Recreation and Environment Vision

Auburn is home to a Teen Center that provides a safe, non-judgmental, supportive environment. This center focuses on a variety of activities including arts and music, and operates a cafe for teens of all ages to enjoy. Auburn has expanded recreational amenities, including new and improved basketball courts, sports fields, and pool facilities. There are also improved, expanded, and connected sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes. There are new urban parks, including a skate park, and also a large park where students can take the family dog to play Frisbee and enjoy outdoor activities. Auburn respects and protects its natural resources. The City highlights the Androscoggin River for the recreational and tourist opportunities it provides.

Transportation Vision

Citylink bus service maintains affordable fares and provides new routes to and from schools and parks. Roads in Auburn are kept in good condition by an improved road maintenance program. The City has invested in sidewalk development, expanded the network of designated bike lanes, and improved connections to trails - all contributing to safe pedestrian and bike connections throughout the City. [A downtown multi-modal transportation hub connects pedestrians, bicyclists, bus and rail passengers to their destinations.](#)

Economic Vision

Auburn is a City that offers a variety of well-paid, skilled jobs and provides ample educational opportunities for local residents to attain these jobs. Auburn has a low tax rate. Auburn's retail development focuses on teen-centered amenities such as youth clothing and music stores.

B. LAND USE POLICIES

Chapter 2 of the 2010 Update of the Comprehensive Plan sets out a Future Land Use Plan to guide where and how growth and development should be accommodated over the next decade. The Future Land Use Plan shows, in a general sense, the desired pattern of future land use and development in the City.

The Future Land Use Plan reaffirms a central policy of prior of land use planning in the City, namely, that development in Auburn should grow out from the core and from older established neighborhoods. This policy was originally set forth in the City's first comprehensive plan over a half century ago and has continued to guide the City's land use planning since then. It is based on the fact that growth out from the downtown core and older established neighborhoods allows for the most efficient utilization of city services. This plan discourages "leapfrog" development in the outlying sections of the city where city services are not now available. The effect of continuing this longstanding policy is to guide most new development into the area south of Lake Auburn and Taylor Pond, and north of the Maine Turnpike.

4. Historic and Archeological Resources

- Update the historic preservation standards including standards for non-historic buildings in the Historic District
- Adopt a renovation code for older buildings including historic structures as part of the building code

5. Recreation (and Open Space)

- Explore the feasibility of developing a consolidated sports field complex to replace existing marginally useful facilities
- Assure continued public access the Androscoggin and Little Androscoggin Rivers with improved facilities
- Assure continued public access to Taylor Pond
- Expand protected open space and rural recreational activities

6. Population

- Continue to provide a range of housing opportunities, so that Auburn continues to have a diverse population

7. Transportation

- Improve traffic flow and safety on the major road network (Center Street, Turner Road, Minot Avenue, etc.)
- Enhance the gateways to the City (Washington Street, Riverside Drive, Minot Avenue); including improved standards for development along these roads
- Provide additional access to the community, including improved Turnpike access, and a New Auburn connector road to future industrial areas
- Develop a western connector route, using existing roads, to link Exit 75 to the Mall area and communities to the west
- Explore the creation of a one-way traffic loop in downtown New Auburn in conjunction with the New Auburn Village Center concept
- Discourage the use of local/residential streets by through/cut-through traffic
- Develop a safe, interconnected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- Enhance the existing freight intermodal facility and create a passenger rail intermodal facility at the airport for a Portland to Montreal rail service including the possibility of passenger rail and air service
- Create a downtown Multi-modal transit facility that includes bicycle, pedestrian, bus and passenger rail service.
- Improve transit services including the local bus system

G. TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

PURPOSE

The Transportation section establishes objectives and strategies for the implementation of a safe, efficient, and effective multi-modal transportation network that supports the needs of all users and the goals of the City land use plan.

BACKGROUND

The heaviest demand on the transportation system is generated by commuters to work. Much of that demand occurs in peak travel hours in the morning and evening. Over the years the locations of employment centers in and around Auburn have changed. Jobs are no longer only located in the downtown core in mills, shops, offices, and retail stores.

Instead, employment has been dispersed to the north around the malls, to the south in industrial parks near the Turnpike interchange, as well as some staying in downtown. Many Auburn residents work in Lewiston, where the largest employers in the region are located. Many people employed in Auburn and Lewiston live in growing nearby suburban towns. Auburn is unavoidably part of a regional transportation network.

The transportation network is affected by the presence of a natural barrier, the Androscoggin River. The River separates the two largest employment centers, Lewiston and Auburn. Traffic between the two communities is channeled to four bridges that cross the River.

Connections to other cities in Maine and New England are limited. Access to the one nearby section of the regional expressway system, the Maine Turnpike, is five miles from downtown Auburn and seven miles from the malls north of downtown. With the exception of those employers located in the industrial parks near the Turnpike interchange, connections from the Turnpike to the employment and business centers of both cities are poor and need improvement.

Much of the travel demand in the region takes place in automobiles and light trucks, often with only one occupant. One way to reduce congestion is to reduce the reliance on travel by single occupant vehicles.

Transportation Goals:

Goal G.1: Auburn manages the number of vehicle trips during peak hours to better utilize the capacity of the existing road network.

Goal G.2: Auburn has a well-designed—and functioning road network that safely and efficiently moves all manner of users (cars, buses, bikes, and pedestrians) through the community while preserving the integrity of established residential neighborhoods.

Goal G.3: Auburn remains a **transportation multi-modal** hub providing access to rail, air, truck, and transit amenities.

One of the recurring themes in the Comprehensive Plan is the interaction between land use and transportation. This Plan seeks to divert vehicles from residential neighborhoods onto the principal traffic arteries and connector streets, where they can move efficiently. This is achieved in part by locating employment centers where they will not adversely impact nearby residential neighborhoods, and in part by insuring that major streets carry traffic efficiently so that cars are not tempted to seek shortcuts through residential neighborhoods.

VISION

Auburn's transportation network of roads, sidewalks, and bike lanes along with rail, air, and mass transit systems provide all users with safe and efficient movement throughout the community and beyond.

The road network is safe and efficient and accommodates drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. A hierarchy of roads ensures that traffic moves through the community on designated routes, providing appropriate access and suitable traffic flow. It also protects the integrity of established residential neighborhoods and gives priority to pedestrians, cyclists, and transit (bus, rail, etc.) in the densely built-up areas of the City, such as New Auburn and Downtown Auburn. Major roads efficiently move traffic through the community to significant local and regional destinations. Collector roads provide links within Auburn that alleviate traffic congestion and serve the needs of additional traffic created by community and regional growth areas. Local roads provide safe and attractive neighborhood access for all users – drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The community supports long-range transportation planning to alleviate congestion and to provide for greater regional access. Such planning focuses on the connections between land use, transportation, and public transit development; and seeks to push through-traffic out of established neighborhoods and downtowns to make walking and biking more inviting. Such planning involves the Maine Department of Transportation, the Maine Turnpike Authority, and other local and regional transportation agencies. It seeks to ensure appropriate turnpike development, ready access, and road infrastructure redevelopment projects that meet the needs of the community and the region.

Auburn prides itself on its role as a regional intermodal hub that includes high-volume rail and airfreight service. Auburn seeks to implement regional passenger/commuter hub options to expand bus, rail and air travel opportunities that connect Greater Lewiston-Auburn north to Montreal, east to Augusta and south to Portland and Boston.

G.3 TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Goal G.3: Auburn remains a multi-modal hub providing access to rail, air, truck, and transit amenities.

As a transportation service center, the City plays an important role in regional and state efforts to expand and improve rail, air, and truck services. The *Comprehensive Plan* supports continued City, regional, and state efforts to expand and enhance freight and passenger intermodal facilities. This includes continued support for existing rail and air facilities, and the promotion of passenger service. The *Plan* also acknowledges the City's strong ties to the turnpike, and seeks to ensure that Auburn is well positioned to benefit from local and regional turnpike development projects.

Auburn plays an integral role in regional traffic and transit services that goes beyond the services of its intermodal facility. The *Plan* encourages the City to work closely with Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) to promote regional and long-range traffic studies, ensure that Auburn streets can continue to adequately support local and commuter traffic, and provide feasible options for regional mass transit (including passenger and commuter bus, rail, bus and rideshare programs).

Objective G.3.1:

Support the development of additional transportation infrastructure to promote continued growth in and around the Auburn freight intermodal facility, and support the siting and construction of a passenger intermodal-multi-modal facility at in the Auburn/Lewiston downtown area. Airport.

Strategies to achieve this objective:

Strategy G.3.1.a:

Support the recommendations of the ATRC Long Range Transportation Plan to promote rail industry growth including:

- i. Expanding the high-speed passenger rail designation from Auburn to the western Maine border.
- ii. Working with New Hampshire and Vermont to extend the high-speed passenger rail designation to the border with Canada.
- iii. Upgrading the lines to support heavier loads to keep up with the demand of the Foreign Trade Zone
- iii-iv. Incorporate the passenger multi-modal facility (Auburn Downtown Transportation Center) into the redevelopment planning of Downtown Auburn and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Strategy G.3.1.b:

Support Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) and ATRC studies to determine the feasibility and desirability of realigning the I-95 interchange (Exit 75), for the purpose of better accommodating truck traffic into and out of the industrial park area.

Strategy G.3.1.c:

Support the implementation of the 2006 Airport Master Plan Update to ensure appropriate development of airline freight services.

Objective G.3.2:

Promote appropriate local and regional mass transit opportunities.

Strategies to achieve this objective:

Strategy G.3.2.a:

Continue to study the establishment feasibility of passenger rail service in Downtown Auburn and or passenger air and rail service at the a passenger-intermodal facility at the airport, paying particular attention to determining the market need for such a facilities y, and how such a facilities y would be accessed.

- i. If passenger rail-service is viable at this-these locations, ensure that the development of a passenger facility includes adequate parking to meet projected demand-, and that the facility provides adequate public transit connections to the downtown and other significant community destinations.

Strategy G.3.2.b:

Work with regional and state agencies to assess the potential for the expansion of passenger rail service from Portland to Auburn, and at some future time from Brunswick to Auburn via Lewiston. Also, encourage the state to work with SLA to upgrade rail lines and expand the current high-speed line designation from Auburn to Canada, as a step towards establishing passenger rail service from Auburn to western Maine and into New Hampshire and the Canadian provinces.

Strategy G.3.2.c:

Expand, as necessary, the local fixed-route bus service.

- i. Encourage the expansion of night and weekend bus service to provide residents and visitors with increased mobility and access to community destinations.
- ii. Encourage efficient routes that link residents to major employment centers in and around Auburn, such as the industrial parks.
- iii. Work with ATRC, as well as Lewiston and surrounding communities, to support the Lewiston Auburn Transit Committee (LATC) in its efforts to establish public/private partnerships and other creative financing mechanisms to fund additional bus service.

- ~~iv.~~—vi. Plan for the interconnection of rail service in downtown Lewiston-Auburn and at Exit 75/Airport with the local bus system to provide a seamless transit system that reduces reliance on single-occupancy vehicles to access major residential and commercial areas in Auburn.

Strategy G.3.2.d:

Continue to participate in regional commuter transit programs.

- i. Support the recommendations of the AVCOG 2005 Regional Transportation Assessment report to promote efficient transit in and around Auburn, including recommendations for expanded park and ride facilities; and for the linking of local, regional fixed-route, and semi-fixed route services.
- ii. Promote participation in GOMaine and other regional commuter service programs by maintaining adequate park and ride facilities, and by educating the residents on ride share services and programs.
- ii.iii. Develop, promote and implement a commuter bus program to Portland that will be located at the Downtown Transit Center.

1. PARKS AND TRAILS

Strategy B.1.a:

The City should support efforts in Turner to the north and Durham and Lisbon to the south to establish the Androscoggin Riverlands. Where feasible, the City should support efforts to link riverfront parks and trails to the project as a means of establishing a regional riverfront recreation network. The City should work towards creating public access along the length of its riverfront including trails, parks, boat launches, picnic areas and other public gathering points striving to enhance and preserve this natural resource.

Strategy B.1.b:

The City should encourage the development of a regional trail and bicycle network and work with the Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) to ensure, where feasible, that trail developments provide connections to regional networks as defined in the *2008 ATRC Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*.

2. CULTURE

Strategy B.2:

Auburn should expand its partnership with Lewiston and its regional neighbors to promote and enhance culture opportunities and around the county and encourage arts and cultural events and activities.

C. TRANSPORTATION

As a transportation service center, the City's inter-modal facility plays an important role in regional and state plans to expand and improve rail, air, and truck services. The Comprehensive Plan encourages continued development of this important economic resource. It looks to support City, regional, and state plans to expand and enhance the existing rail and air facilities and explore the potential of adding passenger service. The plan also acknowledges the City's strong ties to the turnpike and the potential for additional turnpike development to ensure that Auburn retains its role in providing regional truck transportation services.

In addition to the intermodal facility, Auburn plays an integral role in regional traffic and transit services. The Plan encourages the City to work closely with Androscoggin Transportation Resource Center (ATRC) to promote regional and long-range traffic studies, ensure that Auburn streets can continue to adequately support local and commuter traffic, and provide feasible options for regional mass transit including [passenger rail](#), bus and rideshare programs.

Chapter 2). As such, the primary focuses of the City's capital investment needs are:

1. Maintaining and upgrading the City's existing infrastructure and equipment
2. Modernizing public facilities to improve the efficiency of providing public services including consideration of shared services and consolidation
3. Providing the infrastructure needed to support continued economic growth

The City's annual CIP addresses the first two categories of capital investment needs and covers all or most of the potential capital needs of these types related to the policies of the Plan. The current CIP does not address the funding of some of the activities related to long-term economic growth due to both the nature and timing of these activities. In many cases, these projects involve public/private partnerships and/or the use of outside funding such as grants or loans. The following projects will need to be considered in future CIPs at the appropriate time:

- Extension of public water and sewerage and other utilities to serve the Hackett Road/Witham Road industrial area including the possible use of TIF funding
- Construction of a connector road to provide improved access to the Hackett Road/Witham Road industrial area
- Extension of the public water and sewerage systems to accommodate additional development in the Turnpike/Airport/~~Multi~~ Intermodal Facility industrial areas
- Improvements in access to the Maine Turnpike including the possibility of an additional interchange
- Improvements to the rail system
- Development and implementation of a plan for the redevelopment of the New Auburn Village Center including extension of the Downtown TIF District
- Investment in improvements in the downtown areas of Auburn and New Auburn

Policy Reference	Activity	Primary Responsibility
Ch1-E.1.1.a	Recreation – fund improvement of existing park and recreation facilities	Recreation Director
Ch1-E.1.2.d	Recreation – improve existing access points to rivers	Recreation Director
Ch1-E.1.3.b	Recreation – continue to provide public access to Taylor Pond	City Manager & Council
Ch1-G.2.1.a	Transportation – improve Center Street/Turner Road traffic management	Community Services Department & AVCOG
Ch1-G.2.2.a	Transportation – improve Minot Ave. traffic management	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.2.2.c	Transportation – improve Minot Ave. rotary	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.2.8.a	Transportation – install traffic directional signage	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.2.9.b	Transportation – extend Main Street streetscape improvements	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.2.12.b	Transportation – install traffic signage to discourage use of local streets by through traffic	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.3.1.a	Transportation – promote rail industry growth <u>including downtown or airport passenger rail service.</u>	Community Services Department
Ch1-I.2.2.b	Economic development – ensure the capacity of utility services and expand as necessary	City Manager & Council
Other Actions (Short Term)		
Ch1-A.1.2.f	Lake Auburn – designate “Responsible Management Entity” for septic system maintenance	City Manager & Council
Ch1-A.1.2.g & Ch1-A.1.4.f	Lake Auburn – establish an owner/resident educational program	LAWPC
Ch1-A.2.1.a & Ch1-A.2.2.f	Taylor Pond – establish a property owner information program	Planning and Permitting Department & Taylor Pond Association
Ch1-A.2.1.b	Taylor Pond – control invasive species	To Be Determined
Ch1-C.1.2.c & Ch1-C.2.1.b	Emergency services & public works – use alternative fuels in emergency service	Police & Fire Chiefs

Policy Reference	Activity	Primary Responsibility
Ch1-D.1.1.b	Historic – develop City Historic Resources List	Planning and Permitting Department
Ch1-D.1.3.a	Archeological – develop City Archeological Resource List	Planning and Permitting Department
Ch1-E.1.1.b	Recreation – assess viability of developing a consolidated sports field complex	Recreation Director
Ch1-G.1.2.a	Transportation – develop program to work with large employers to explore transportation demand management	Planning and Permitting Department
Ch1-G.2.1.d & Ch1-G.2.2.d & Ch1-G.2.3.b	Transportation – establish streetscape and site design criteria for the major road corridors	Planning and Permitting Department & Planning Board
Ch1-G.2.3.a	Transportation – assess improvements to the Washington-Southbound/Rodman intersection	Community Services Department & AVCOG
Ch1-G.2.4.a	Transportation – develop standards for appropriate development along Riverside Drive	Planning and Permitting Department
Ch1-G.2.5.a & Ch3-C.1	Transportation – pursue the construction of a new Turnpike interchange	City Manager & Council
Ch1-G.2.5.b	Transportation – study the viability and feasibility of New Auburn connector	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.2.7.b	Transportation – study impacts of increased traffic from western communities	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.2.9.d	Transportation – study feasibility of Downtown New Auburn one-way loop	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.3.1.b	Transportation – support study of realigning the Exit 75 interchange	Community Services Department
Ch1-G.3.2.a & Ch3-C.2	Transportation – study the establishment of passenger air and rail service at the Intermodal facility	Planning and Permitting Department & Economic Development Department
Ch1-G.3.2.a & Ch3-C.2	Transportation – assess the potential for <u>the establishment expansion</u> of passenger rail service <u>into downtown or to the airport.</u>	Planning and Permitting Department & Economic Development Department
Ch1-H.1.1.a & Ch1-H.1.1.b	Community development – support development of neighborhood plans and their adoption as part of the Comprehensive Plan	Planning and Permitting Department