

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
26 Central Street, Suite 34
West Springfield, MA 01089-2787
FAX: (413) 732-2593

RE: PVPC 2009 TIP
Attn: Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager

28 February 2009

Dear Gary:

I am writing on behalf of MassBike/Pioneer Valley to offer comments on the PVPC Amendments to the 2009 Element of the 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

I have three specific comments:

1. The Manhan Rail-Trail connection between Northampton and Easthampton does not appear in the TIP, but should. It will provide a crucial link between those two cities for walkers and bicyclists, will boost the local economy, will attract tourists, will take cars off the road and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, will improve public health, and will relieve congestion and strengthen the downtowns. This is a golden opportunity that we must not miss to complete the project after many years of slow progress.
2. MB/PV is delighted to see the plan to purchase 29 new buses for the Pioneer Valley Transit Agency. We urge you to add to that item a plan to equip all the buses with bicycle racks. As the success of the bike racks on the Northern Tier PVRTA lines shows, there is huge demand for the racks, they greatly increase the population with access to transit, and they work fine even in winter. The PVRTA lags behind many other transit agencies around the country in equipping all its buses with bike racks, and we have heard no satisfactory explanation for why it cannot be done here.
3. The item in Part 1C: Federal Aid Non-Target Projects labelled "Design north and southbound ramps on I-91 at Exit 19" is perplexing. I sit on the Project Advisory Committee for the Exit 19 project. That committee has met only once, in June 2008. At that meeting, MassHighway District 2 Director Al Stegemann stated that no solution to congestion and safety concerns at Exit 19 had yet been selected, that traffic studies would all be redone from scratch, and that all options were on the table, including a no-build scenario. We urge you to rename this item

something that reflects that much wider range of options as well as the larger goal of the project, such as "Exit 19 Congestion and Safety Study".

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this important document and process.

Sincerely,

James D. Lowenthal, Ph.D., President
MassBike/Pioneer Valley
www.massbike.org/mbpv
181 Crescent St.
Northampton, MA 01060
413-586-4088
james@ast.smith.edu

cc: US Rep. Richard Neal
US Rep. John Olver
Rep. Peter Kocot
Sen. Stan Rosenberg
Mayor Clare Higgins
Northampton Transportation and Parking Commission