

Executive Summary

What This Study Will Achieve: Placemaking in Maine

In this study, PACTS and six municipalities (Gorham, Portland, Scarborough, South Portland, Standish and Westbrook) explored best practices and options for community-centered planning that could over time provide transportation choices beyond automobile travel in the study area. Coordinated by PACTS, this second phase of the Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study (Gorham E-W Phase 1) was launched in September 2015.

The study focused on how to concentrate development-supportive policies into specific growth centers in order to evolve these centers into places that are highly attractive to people of all ages for living, working and recreation. We call these places ‘Centers of Opportunity’ (centers). Other benefits of intentionally growing certain places in this way are that more undeveloped land remains available for agriculture, recreation and habitat, and the cost of providing municipal services to these compact areas is reduced. These centers typically also offer increased availability of services to residents. Several of the centers studied were located on arterial roads; how to manage development in these kinds of locations, so common to Maine, was another focus of the study.

“For too long, we over-invested in the wrong places. Those retail centers and subdivisions will never be worth what they cost to build.”
Christopher B. Leinberger is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and professor of practice in urban and regional planning at the University of Michigan.

Is it a Road or a Street - A Pass-Through or a Place? While these terms are often used interchangeably, a *road* generally refers to a transportation corridor that connects two or more centers of activity; travelers on roads *pass through* on the way to work or when transporting goods or services to customers. Roads generally carry traffic at higher speeds. A *street* most often refers to a transportation facility that provides *access to places* like neighborhoods and downtowns; it is usually a lower speed facility that also supports pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders.

In discussing the advances made in our society in the early days of road building, where travel time from the country to the city was often cut in half, Chuck Marohn, P.E., Executive Director of Strong Towns, recently said, “The idea that I can get to town now in eight minutes instead of 10 minutes points out that there is a diminishing return to this approach....when roads were first built to connect two places, they were incredibly efficient....now we’ve changed what a road is....we’ve introduced elements of a “local” street into what was an arterial road. Most of our arterials are now really “stroads – street/road hybrids. When streets become roads, we lose the framework and lose the value (of both).” Further, he says, “We can’t afford to grow the way we have been; we can no longer rely on Washington or the state for dollars.”¹

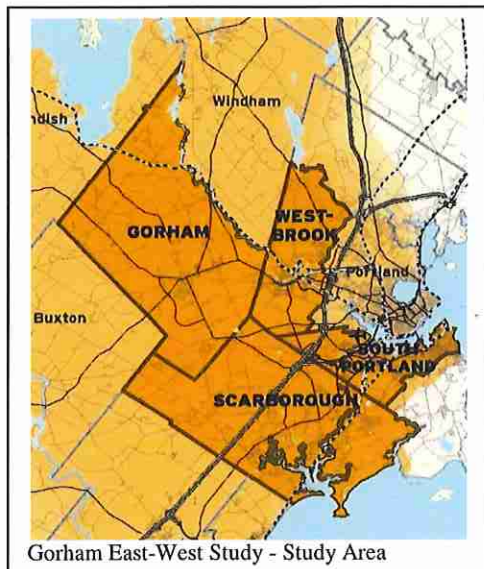
Because the practice of transforming rural roads to “streets” that include a mix of activity has caused costly conflicts, planners across the country are attempting to stem this tide with a focus on Placemaking, “a quiet movement that inspires people to collectively re-imagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community....Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, (it’s) a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value....”²

¹ The cost of Auto Orientation – Chuck Marohn; <http://www.strongtowns.org/the-cost-of-auto-orientation>

² Project of Public Spaces http://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/

Building on the Gorham East-West and Sustain Southern Maine Studies: The Gorham East-West Corridor Feasibility Study Phase 1, completed in 2012, recommended a three-pronged approach to address congestion in the study area:

- 1) Modification of current municipal land use policies that inadvertently exacerbated sprawl;
- 2) Expansion of existing transit service and new transit service to towns without transit; and
- 3) Additional highway capacity improvements: either highway widening or new roads.



Sustain Southern Maine, a GPCOG regional planning study focused in Southern Maine, created pilot programs in nine communities to test best practices of placemaking in real life by working in collaboration with developers and land owners to create new, denser development that would be attractive to residents and newcomers alike.

This Transit Supportive Development study brings the land use concepts explored in the above two studies one step closer to reality by providing communities with some of the tools to build attractive and vibrant “places” connected by (arterial) roads and ultimately served by transit. Those places are connected internally by local streets, which can serve as a better, safer, more efficient framework for capturing traveler value as opposed to using the through-road for that purpose.

The Time is Now - Public Preferences are Changing: In August 2014, PACTS conducted a transportation survey³ as part of its Long Range

Transportation Plan update: Destination Tomorrow: 2040. More than half of respondents and over two-thirds of 18-34 year olds envision themselves living in a community where schools, stores, and restaurants are within walking distance and served by public transit; one-fifth of respondents 55 or older say they would use public buses if they became unable to drive.

Other recent surveys conducted by *The Urban Land Institute*, and *The Demand Institute*, suggest that more Americans are choosing places to live that are home to people with diverse incomes, and have shopping, groceries, restaurants and transportation choices. In April 2014, Smart Growth America released its report entitled *Measuring Sprawl 2014*. It found that people in these kinds of centers:

- have greater economic opportunity,
- spend less of their household income on the combined cost of housing and transportation,
- have a greater number of transportation options available to them,
- And tend to be safer, healthier and live longer than their peers in more sprawling metro areas.

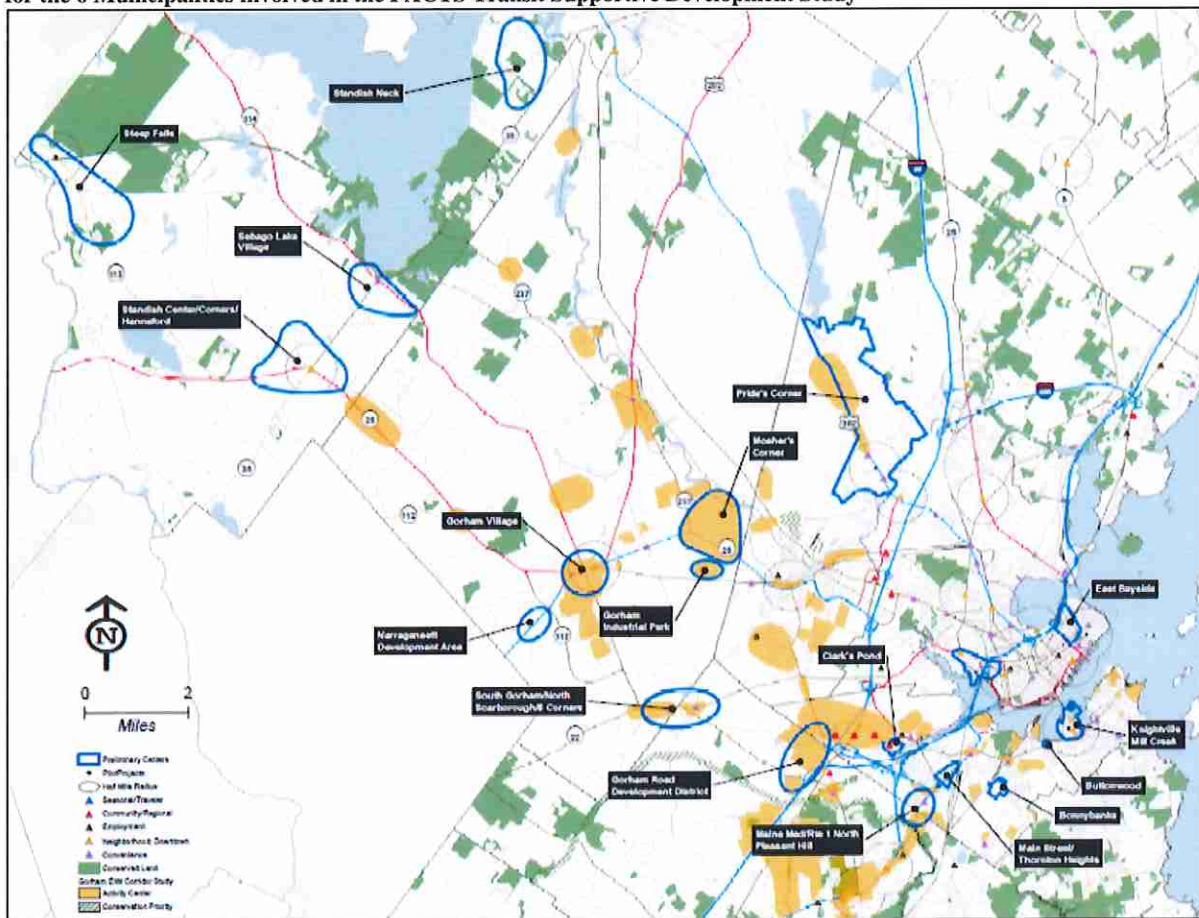
With this data in mind, there is strong market support for creating mixed-use centers that provide places for residents and workers to interact. Important to the success of these centers is incorporating the *Complete Streets* concept. Complete Streets refers to a road design that accommodates all users, not just motorized vehicles. While the design will vary depending on the primary use of the street, in general, a

³ Report to Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System, 2014 PACTS Transportation Survey, August 2014 by Pan Atlantic SMS Group - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/rbqsvszfh49mqbk/2014%20PACTS%20LRTP%20Values%20and%20Priorities%20Survey%20Report.pdf?dl=0>

Complete Street provides a balance of facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians and transit, along with automobiles and trucks. It is important to note that all modes have equal importance in a Complete Street design; shoehorning in a narrow sidewalk and/or bike lane in whatever space is left over after vehicles are accommodated does not follow the principles of Complete Streets.

Study Task Overview: In each of the six study area municipalities, several possible Centers of Opportunity (where growth could be focused) were identified. These centers were then vetted and adjusted by a group of officials from each municipality, who assessed the growth and redevelopment potential of each and chose the one that they believed had the most potential. Community outreach forums were then held in each city or town to present growth concepts, obtain a sense of the direction for the center that the municipality and residents could support and determine what was needed for implementation.

Below: Composite Map of Centers of Opportunity from Gorham East-West Phase I and Sustain Southern Maine Studies for the 6 Municipalities involved in the PACTS Transit Supportive Development Study



Next, a broad review was conducted of each municipality’s land use and infrastructure policies. These policies were compared with the public’s expressed desires for land use and infrastructure preferences at community forums. The review highlighted best practices already in place as well as areas that need improvement in order to achieve the desired development goals. For highlights, proceed to the section titled **Code, Policy and Infrastructure Variations** on page v.

A narrow fiscal analysis was undertaken for each center to evaluate the costs and benefits of status quo development compared with the costs and benefits of the center-focused development as described in this study. In addition, the existing roadway, pedestrian, bicycling, transit and utility (water and sewer) features associated with the location were inventoried for the six centers selected.

Recommendations were developed to make creating these Centers of Opportunity a reality including identification of critically needed changes to policies and ordinances affecting land use and infrastructure, in addition to fiscal and development-related tools to encourage the desired type and degree of growth for each center. These recommendations include regional and state-level actions needed to support center-focused development along with local actions.

Selected Center of Opportunity Comparisons: To provide as much instruction as possible, centers were chosen to illustrate a range of neighborhood sizes and population density. The following is a summary of the characteristics of each municipality's selected Center of Opportunity.

South Gorham/North Scarborough: The *South Gorham* and *North Scarborough* centers are both located in the congested Route 22 and 114 "overlap area", with a mix of commercial and residential land uses on this busy road. Travel delay is experienced regularly during peak travel times. The area sits atop a valued groundwater aquifer the communities are committed to protecting. Relief from congestion is desired first and foremost; addition of utilities is needed to support higher density growth. With those issues resolved, residents are interested in village style development in Scarborough and campus style development in Gorham.

Portland/Libbytown: *Libbytown* is a mixed-use center, hosting the Portland Transportation Center (PTC), which includes the Amtrak Downeaster and Concord Coach intercity bus line. The center is characterized by multiple zoning districts, and underdeveloped areas with substantial redevelopment potential. Metro bus routes serve the area. New development is underway after significant planning and public infrastructure investment. More infill and higher densities with decreased surface parking is envisioned; more gathering areas, better bus stops and more pedestrian connections are also desired.

South Portland's West End - Redbank & Brick Hill: *Redbank* is most similar to the Libbytown center, but has more residential and service uses with few retail options that require shopping trips out of the neighborhood. Within the center, *Brick Hill* is also a mixed use area, incorporating office and mixed residential uses in an existing campus style layout. Walking and bicycling facilities are minimal with substantial gaps. Limited transit is available. Residents are interested in growth of more local services and additional transportation options – better sidewalks and more frequent transit.

Standish/Standish Corner: *Standish Corner* has the character of a village but lacks an interconnected street network and a municipal sewer system. Formerly the center of a rural agricultural community, Standish Corner sits at the junction of two busy state roadways, Routes 25 and 35. Development has occurred on existing roads and is located primarily on and adjacent to Route 25, a popular route connecting to New Hampshire. No transit service is available to this area at this time. Standish Corner has a master plan with an associated Route 25/35 Alternative Route plan adopted by the town. An ordinance was developed to implement the master plan and roadway plan. Standish wants to determine the feasibility of the roadway plan, adjust it as needed to promote optimal mixed use development and to identify soils in the planning area that may support community septic to allow for higher density development.

Westbrook/Prides Corner: The *Prides Corner* area is the largest and least densely developed center of those looked at in this study, located at the outer edge of Westbrook's urban area. The subject of much planning in the past, its biggest challenges in terms of supporting new growth are the lack of public sewer

and relief from through-traffic on the already congested Bridgton Road (Route 302). Without an interconnecting street system and some kind of infrastructure partnership to assist with road building and utility extension, development is likely to continue stringing along Route 302, exacerbating traffic problems. Limited transit service exists. Many of the large land owners in the area are interested in developing their land, favoring a partnership with the municipality to build a street grid and extend utilities. They also would support amendments to the ordinance to permit densities in the range of 8-15 units per acre. They envision land uses that improve the area's walkability and bikability with a greater number of local conveniences.

Code, Policy and Infrastructure Variations: Each of the centers included in the study differ when it comes to achieving the desired patterns and mixes of development. Some centers have adequate public utilities to support growth; others have public water but no public sewer, while some have no utilities at all. All are plagued by some amount of growing traffic congestion. Some centers are supported by a well-developed interconnected local street network, while other have few if any network elements to help provide relief. Historically located on what were then known as "connector roads", these centers have evolved over time into communities with an entirely new character; they are in essence, hybrids of streets and roads - or 'stroads', as explained on page 1 of this Executive Summary. An analysis of the municipal planning tools being used is highlighted below:

Center-Focused Tools Currently In Use: Tools that support a center-focused development pattern being used by some of the municipalities include:

- Planning for and creating mixed use zoning districts
- Master planning (land use and local street plans, Complete Streets, thoroughfare models)
- Neighborhood multi-modal transportation and wayfinding planning
- Infrastructure improvement plans, including transit
- Form based codes, that create more flexibility in development and encourage desirable land uses
- Density/intensity bonuses to encourage developers to build more affordable housing
- Regional integrated land use and transportation planning
- Impact and/or other developer fees for funding infrastructure
- Transit Tax Increment Financing (TTIF) and traditional Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to pay for infrastructure
- Buy Local initiatives

Tools in Use That Do Not Support a Center-Focused Development Pattern: On the other hand, some municipalities do not use the tools described above and/or use other tools that do not support an efficient development pattern including:

- Overreliance on contract (lot by lot) zoning, which can create inconsistencies and can miss the opportunity to see the big picture
- Restrictions/limitations on allowing mixed use as well as inflated space and bulk standards, which encourages auto-dependent communities and big-box type stores
- Vague standards relating to New England Village character
- Overly complicated and time-consuming regulatory processes
- Lack of planning and funding to invest in infrastructure
- Lack of integration of regulatory and non-regulatory tools (i.e. economic/community development and planning)

Additional Tools to Support a Center-Focused Development Pattern: Other tools not widely used by municipalities in the study area include:

- Planning and regulating specifically for mixed uses and traditional neighborhoods
- Being more entrepreneurial, including municipalities' acquiring land for future center-based uses
- Emphasis on offering housing choices, such as multi-family, 2nd floor apartments over retail and condos in addition to single family homes
- Creating "complete neighborhood centers" on one or both sides of an arterial so that residents do not need to drive across a busy road for services
- Adopting a combination of strong incentives and reasonable requirements for developers in centers, along with,
- Streamlining the development review process in centers as compared to other parts of town making centers more attractive for developer investments
- Adopting regional Impact Fees and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) policies and programs to encourage regionally appropriate development and rural land conservation
- Planning for and making public investments in infrastructure in priority Centers of Opportunity
- Exploring and using creative partnerships and funding techniques for public investment
- Working via advocacy groups at the state level to adopt legislation to support center-focused development

A summary of each center's infrastructure characteristics was developed using available information. Characteristics considered deficiencies in terms of Complete Streets policies or accepted engineering practice were noted. In general, while roadway lane width was adequate in most instances, centers were deficient in one or more of the following areas:

- Adequate right of way to provide Complete Streets
- Sidewalks and crosswalks
- Shoulders/breakdown lanes
- Bike lanes
- Turn lanes
- Access management
- Transit accommodation
- Traffic calming
- Wayfinding signage
- Traffic control measures

Overall Barriers: In each center, barriers exist to reaching higher densities. Some are physical, some are social, and some are political. Overall, though, these barriers are largely financial.

- Lack of Public Sewer and Water:
 - only two of the six (Portland and South Portland) have sufficient sewer and water service to support anticipated higher density growth
 - one has public water but no public sewer (Standish)
 - another has some public sewer and some public water with adequate capacity to support desired growth but not without extension (Westbrook)
 - two have neither public water or sewer (South Gorham and North Scarborough)
- Public reluctance to add more development in an already traffic-congested area
- Current tax policies and public perception of who currently pays for new infrastructure

- pre 1970, municipalities partnered with developers often on a 50-50 ratio to build streets and install public utilities; in recent decades, with local budget challenges mounting, developers are expected to cover all costs often forcing their investments to serve only a small segment of the more affluent market.
- Public Transit (Bus) and Limited Ride Share:
 - Portland, South Portland and Westbrook have access to fixed route service but it is insufficient according to public feedback
 - Park' N Ride lots do not exist in all centers studied

How is the needed infrastructure paid for? A variety of funding mechanisms are available to municipalities and their partners beyond local operating and capital budgets to provide the infrastructure necessary to support growth in these centers. Examples are:

- Requiring developers to make or pay for offsite improvements which arise because of a development (impact fees/exactions)
- Requiring a payment from a developer that partially pays for an impact – (offset fees)
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF), including Transit TIFs, Special Assessment, Development, or Capital Improvement Districts
 - Tax-based tools that capture the assessed value of an area after new development and can use the increased value to make public investments in the same area or elsewhere
- Local development corporations
- Public / private grants
- Low-interest loan programs
- Pension funds
- Donations

The Financial Picture: Center-focused Development Makes ‘Cents’

Local government has financed growth over the last seven or eight decades primarily through grants, capital investment and debt. More recently, because those resources have shriveled, municipalities have relied on the private sector to finance growth. In either case, this is not sustainable.

Town	Number of New School Enrollment			Potential Annual School Enrollment Costs		
	Current	Center	Change	Current	Center	Change
Gorham	474	406	68	\$ 6,114,574	\$ 5,239,993	\$ 874,581
Scarborough	1743	1439	303	\$ 21,822,850	\$ 18,023,089	\$ 3,799,761
Portland	1464	992	472	\$ 19,808,256	\$ 13,421,234	\$ 6,387,022
South Portland	824	608	215	\$ 11,798,354	\$ 8,711,374	\$ 3,086,980
Standish	376	337	39	\$ 3,784,484	\$ 3,389,820	\$ 394,663
Westbrook	857	650	207	\$ 11,412,560	\$ 8,660,944	\$ 2,751,616

This study included a quantitative fiscal analysis to identify the areas of potential municipal savings that exist for center-focused growth compared to the current sprawling pattern of growth. A *Center pattern of growth* includes compact, mixed-use areas designed to receive a larger share

of anticipated growth within a municipality, making amenities available to more people, particularly within walking distance. The *Current pattern* of growth reflects the historic sprawl pattern.⁴

Potential savings in education and public works costs - two of the most expensive cost centers in municipal budgets - were evaluated using available municipal data to reflect the commonly acknowledged benefits of compact or managed development patterns (for example, more full service neighborhoods; walking, cycling and transit options; lower public service costs; more open space; better environmental quality etc.)

School Children and School Costs: Looking at overall housing growth projections and adding municipal input, the total number of single-family and multi-family housing units were estimated for each center. Education costs for Current pattern and Center pattern were based on a per student cost in each municipality (total education costs/school enrollment). Using data obtained from a 1999 American Housing Survey⁵, and further corroborated in a March 2007 study⁶, suggests that the number of school aged children for single family homes is 64 children per 100 units of housing and 21 (29 in the 2007 study) per 100 units of housing for multi-family homes. Therefore, the number of school children is assumed to be less in these centers because the proportion of multi-family to single-family will be greater in the Center pattern than in Current pattern. Population per household data⁷ shows that a higher percentage of multi-family housing can result in lower household populations and less demand on public schools than single-family housing.

Targets for the amount of single-family and multi-family growth that would take place in each center were developed by municipal representatives, based on overall growth projections and recognizing their desire to increase the diversity of housing types in these centers.

Figure 5.1C – Comparison of Miles of New Municipal Roads and Potential Municipal Highway Maintenance Cost Savings Current vs. Center by Municipality

Town	Number of New Municipal Road Miles			Potential Annual Highway Maintenance Costs		
	Current	Center	Change	Current	Center	Change
Gorham	27.42	5.19	22.23	\$ 194,608	\$ 160,686	\$ 33,923
Scarborough	101.56	18.38	83.19	\$ 1,807,534	\$ 1,427,001	\$ 380,533
Portland	74.84	16.33	58.50	\$ 1,872,767	\$ 1,040,426	\$ 832,341
South Portland	45.56	8.71	36.85	\$ 769,462	\$ 512,975	\$ 256,487
Standish	22.11	4.15	17.96	\$ 117,013	\$ 102,386	\$ 14,627
Westbrook	47.04	9.31	37.73	\$ 499,380	\$ 344,810	\$ 154,570

The potential annual school enrollment cost savings for each municipality range from approximately \$395,000 per year (Standish) to \$6,400,000 (Portland). Schools with larger enrollments generally tend to have the highest potential cost savings.

⁴ The fiscal analysis performed does not measure all impacts of the proposed center development (i.e. administrative, recreation, cultural) nor does it evaluate potential capital costs. A qualitative list of fiscal considerations is also included following the results of the fiscal analysis.

⁵ 1999 American Housing Survey (Washington, DC), U.S. Bureau of the Census and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1999 .

⁶ Overcoming Opposition to Multifamily Rental Housing , by Mark Obrinsky and Debra Stein, Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University

⁷ 2009 Housing and population data, PACTS region, Gorham East-West Corridor Study

New Road Construction and Maintenance Costs: Increasing density and the ratio of multi-family to single-family housing units in the Center pattern is anticipated to reduce the number of dead-end local road miles constructed and maintained in the future. Estimates for miles of new municipally maintained roads for Current and Center patterns were based upon an average suburban style roadway frontage (200' per single-family unit and 40' per multi-family unit). These averages were then reduced for the Center pattern based on proposed density increases (five times for single-family and two times for multi-family).

Road maintenance costs were estimated by dividing total municipal public works costs⁸ by the estimated number of lane miles of locally maintained roads for each municipality⁹. The potential cost savings assumes that new road miles in the Center pattern will be concentrated and interconnected providing for more efficient flow of maintenance activities vs. the Current pattern that supports numerous dead end streets often built miles apart that require redundant public works efforts. The concentration of road miles under the Center pattern will improve highway maintenance costs as well emergency response times.

The number of new municipally maintained road miles can potentially be reduced from approximately three miles (Standish) to 33 miles (Portland). Miles of potential new municipal roads may be overstated for more urban communities (Portland, South Portland) as many new housing units will likely be accommodated in existing neighborhoods. This is also true for those communities who do not accept new roads to maintain.

Other Benefits: There are potential economic, societal, and environmental benefits as part of the Center pattern of compact, mixed use development, such as:

- Reduced vehicle traffic congestion and vehicle miles traveled
- More pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods
- More public transit/rideshare options
- Reduced air and water pollution
- More open space preservation opportunities; more habitat preservation
- A wider range of housing options
- Reduced public service costs and improved public safety response times
- New England village-style development pattern with retail, services and community gathering
- Creation of centers that are attractive to educated younger workers

In summary, investing in the development of more compact centers can benefit municipalities both fiscally and socially. Collectively for the six municipalities, it has been determined that annual savings are over \$21M for school and highway maintenance costs. These municipal cost savings can be redirected to other public costs that may be associated with developing compact centers, such as extension of sewer/water, and construction of local connector streets. The social benefits to compact development include quality of life improvements for residents, preservation of open space, more transit and rideshare opportunities, and increased vitality of local businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

This region is poised to develop attractive and interconnected centers that will not only support traffic flow for through-travelers but will also optimize local, internal trips as part of a more compact mixed-use pattern of development. Center-focused development also has the potential to attract the educated

⁸ Total Public Works budgets for each municipality were divided by total road miles maintained. It is acknowledged that each Public Works budget contains varying items, resulting in a range of municipal costs

⁹ Locally maintained road miles provided by MaineDOT

workforce necessary to support a healthy economy, while allowing seniors to age-in-place cost-effectively. Maine's home rule is an asset here, as it allows municipalities to promote or support the tools that work for them.

PACTS and the municipalities most directly affected by this plan should undertake a prioritization effort and incorporate the most important strategies into annual planning work programs.

Overall Needs: Each of the centers have deficiencies that, once addressed, could make them places attractive to higher density and transit supportive development:

- Address existing vehicle congestion
- Adopt policies to create Context Sensitive / Complete Street to augment transit and pedestrian / bicycle services
- Create (public and private) gathering places
- Encourage consistent, center-appropriate zoning designed to attract financially feasible development
- Adopt incentives for partnerships with developers to support infrastructure needs

Role of PACTS and GPCOG should be to incentivize municipalities that:

- Plan for and regulate mixed uses and traditional neighborhoods with more housing options
- Create "complete neighborhood centers" on one or both sides of busy arterial or collector roadways
- Are more entrepreneurial –
 - purchase land for center-focused development,
 - adopt development incentives,
 - streamline codes and processes,
 - make public investment in infrastructure in centers,
 - form public/private partnerships and
 - use creative funding techniques
- Support regional Impact Fees and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs
- Work together through advocacy organizations at the state level to adopt legislation (and funding) to support center-focused development

With municipalities' support (through comprehensive plans), **PACTS and GPCOG should:**

- Pursue Regional Capital Improvement Planning – (beyond transportation)
- Facilitate a regional Transit TIF development strategy in Centers
- Facilitate the exploration and use of other creative partnerships and funding techniques
- Explore utilizing Cumberland County bonding authority to make infrastructure investments
- Adopt and manage a regional Impact Fee and TDR program
- Explore and compile development standards that can readily be regionalized (Best Management Practices for drainage, road cross sections, access management, road bed construction specifications)
- Plan for and make public investments in infrastructure using criteria favoring municipalities that focus their public investments in mixed-use centers as recommended in PACTS Regional Transportation Plan.

The Full Report outlines specific recommendations for each center and provides more details on overall recommendations.