





3

Regional Data & Context

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About Berkshire County

Berkshire County is located in the extreme western end of Massachusetts, bordered by Vermont to the north, New York to the west, and Connecticut to the south. The county is comprised of thirty towns and two cities with a total population of just over **129,000 residents**, according to the 2020 United States Census. It has a total land area of **926.9 square miles**, making it the second largest county in land area in the Commonwealth. This affords an average population density of 139 people per square mile. This number varies widely between Pittsfield, with an average of nearly 900 people per square mile, and many areas of the county that are not inhabited at all. **Map 3-1** provides a general overview of the political and geographic makeup of Berkshire County, along with the major road network.

The county is coterminous with the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which is a more unique situation in Massachusetts. Only the Franklin Region Council of Governments (FRCOG) and the Cape Cod Commission (CCC) share a similar overlap. Despite this overlap, the Berkshire region is anything but homogeneous. The county itself is very tall and narrow from a north-south perspective, with its "height" at almost twice the distance of its "width." This means that some towns that share the same regional resources can be an hour's drive apart from one another.

Population centers in Berkshire County are generally concentrated along a central "spine" in the valleys, where rivers first powered textile mills—the region's first industries. Outside the valleys are the "hilltowns," less densely populated and at higher elevations than other parts of the region. See **Map 3-16** for a mapping of overall population density of the county.

This region of western Massachusetts is known for its high elevations, historic New England towns, pastoral landscapes, and cultural offerings that attract an international audience. The region is also familiar with the effects of de-industrialization, population decline, rural isolation and poverty, and the dichotomy of urban and rural living. These strengths and challenges define the landscape of Berkshire County in 2024.

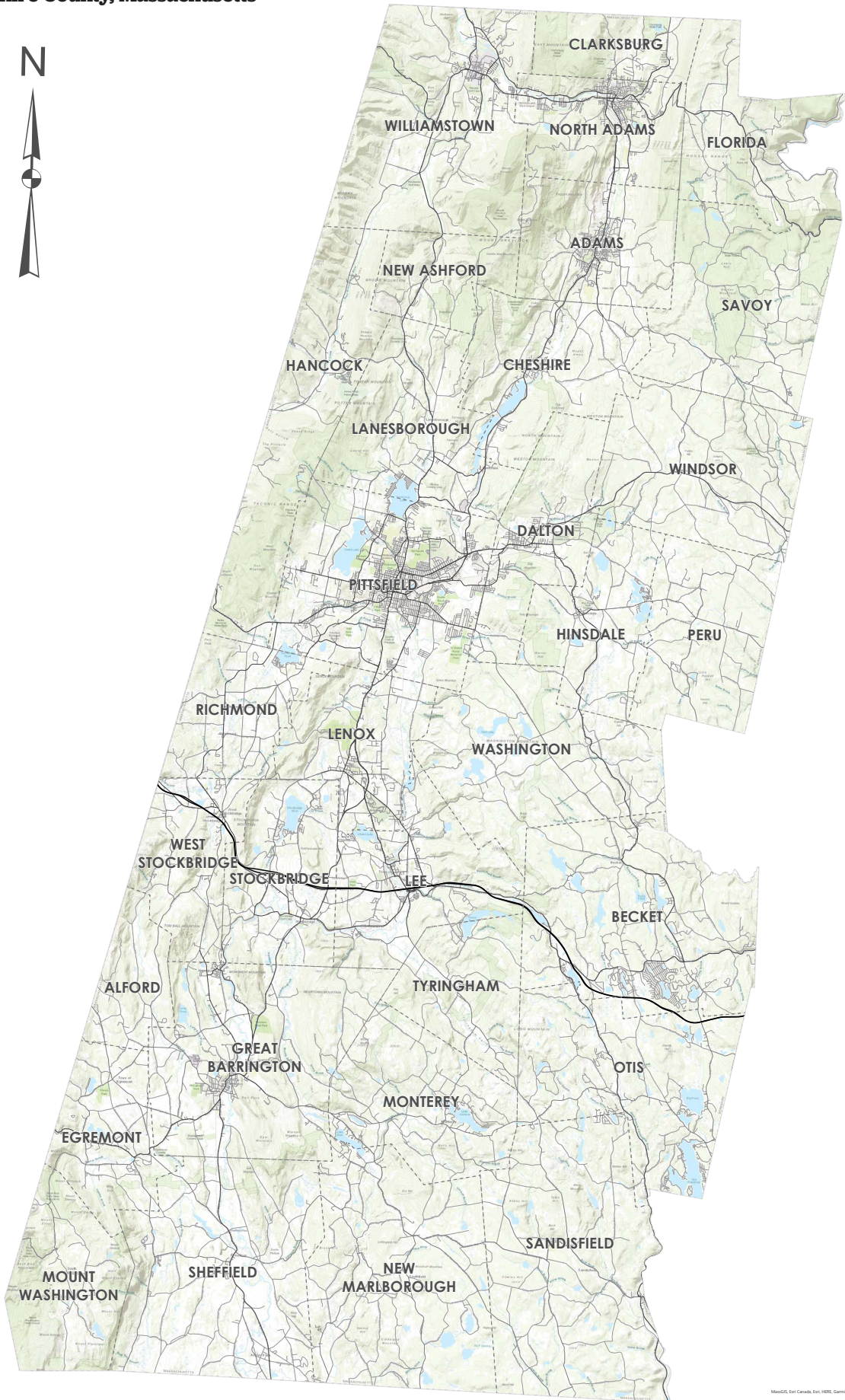
Travel around the region is mainly accomplished with personal automobiles. The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority provides fixed-route and paratransit bus service, predominantly in the more densely populated spine of the county. Connections outside of Berkshire County are made via a limited number of state highways that traverse the higher elevations of the hilltowns, east to the Connecticut River Valley and west to the Hudson Valley of New York. The Massachusetts Turnpike is the only Interstate route that serves the region, with exits in the towns of Lee and West Stockbridge.

Berkshire County experiences all four seasons to their fullest extents, with periods of cold winters and heavy snowfall, hot summers, wet springtimes, and autumn periods renowned for the vibrant foliage colors across the hills. Road maintenance is a year-round challenge, with highway crews kept busy with sanding, salting, and plowing roads in the winters, and patching potholes and repaving in the summer months. Berkshire towns also have many unpaved roads under their jurisdiction which require their own maintenance regiments. See **Map 3-2** for a map of the unpaved roads found in the region.

The story of Berkshire County in 2024 is one of a generally declining and aging population. Parts of the region remain popular as locations for second homes. See **Map 3-3** for an overview of the numbers of second homeowners in the region. Expansion of roads and infrastructure is generally not a priority of the region. Traffic volumes are generally flat or declining according to continuous count locations around the County. What matters most to residents is the reliability and maintenance of the existing road network in the region, ensuring access to resources for residents of all ages and abilities, especially those unable to drive, and transitioning to a more multi-modal and modern transportation system within our current framework.

The region's predominantly rural and low-density land use means that there will always be areas that cannot be fully served by public transportation or active transportation infrastructure (i.e. walking and cycling). As the population ages, shifts, and contracts, it is important to find opportunities to double down on what works, and focus resources on existing systems that can better support current residents and those that may move here in the future.

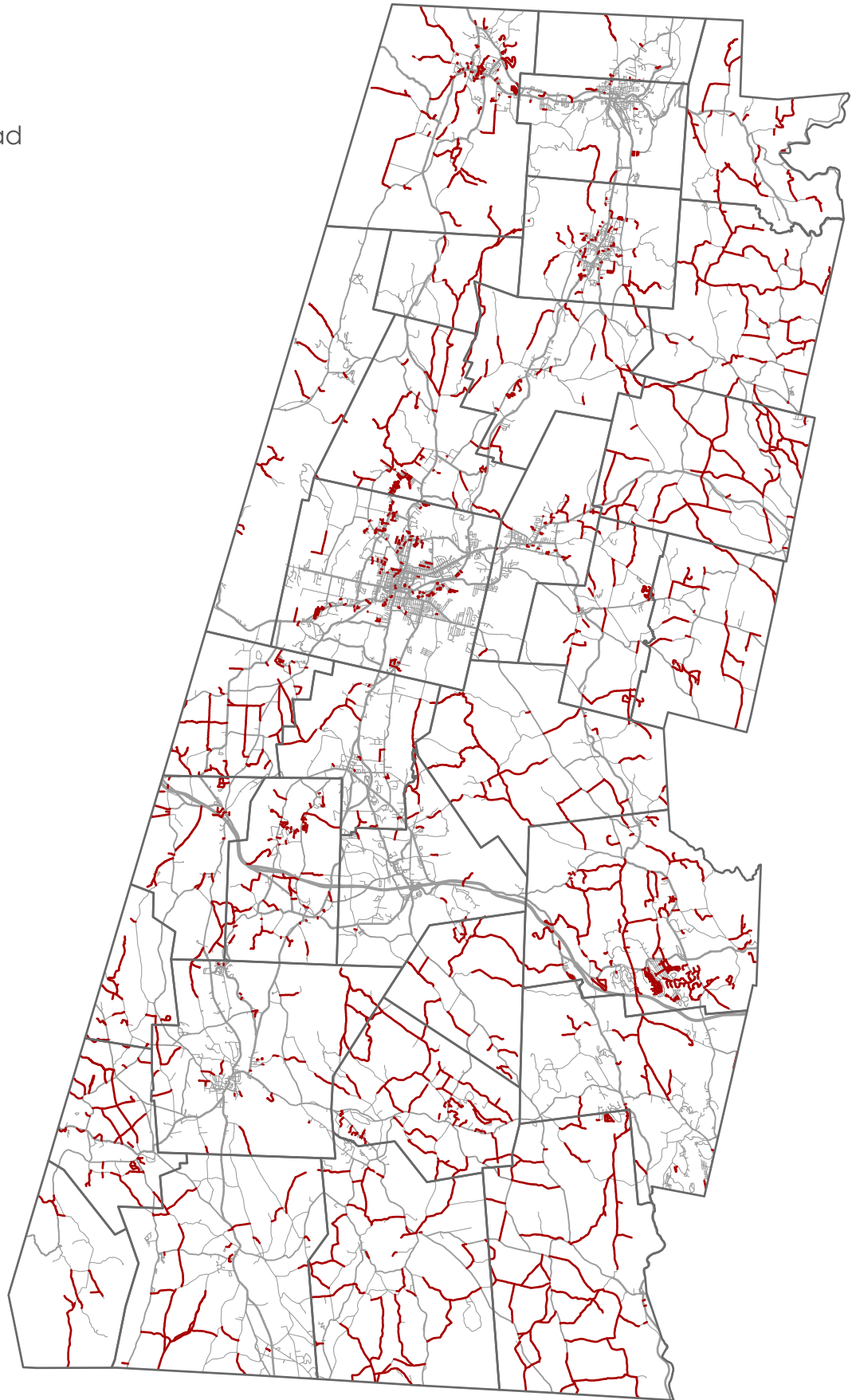
Map 3-1: Berkshire County, Massachusetts



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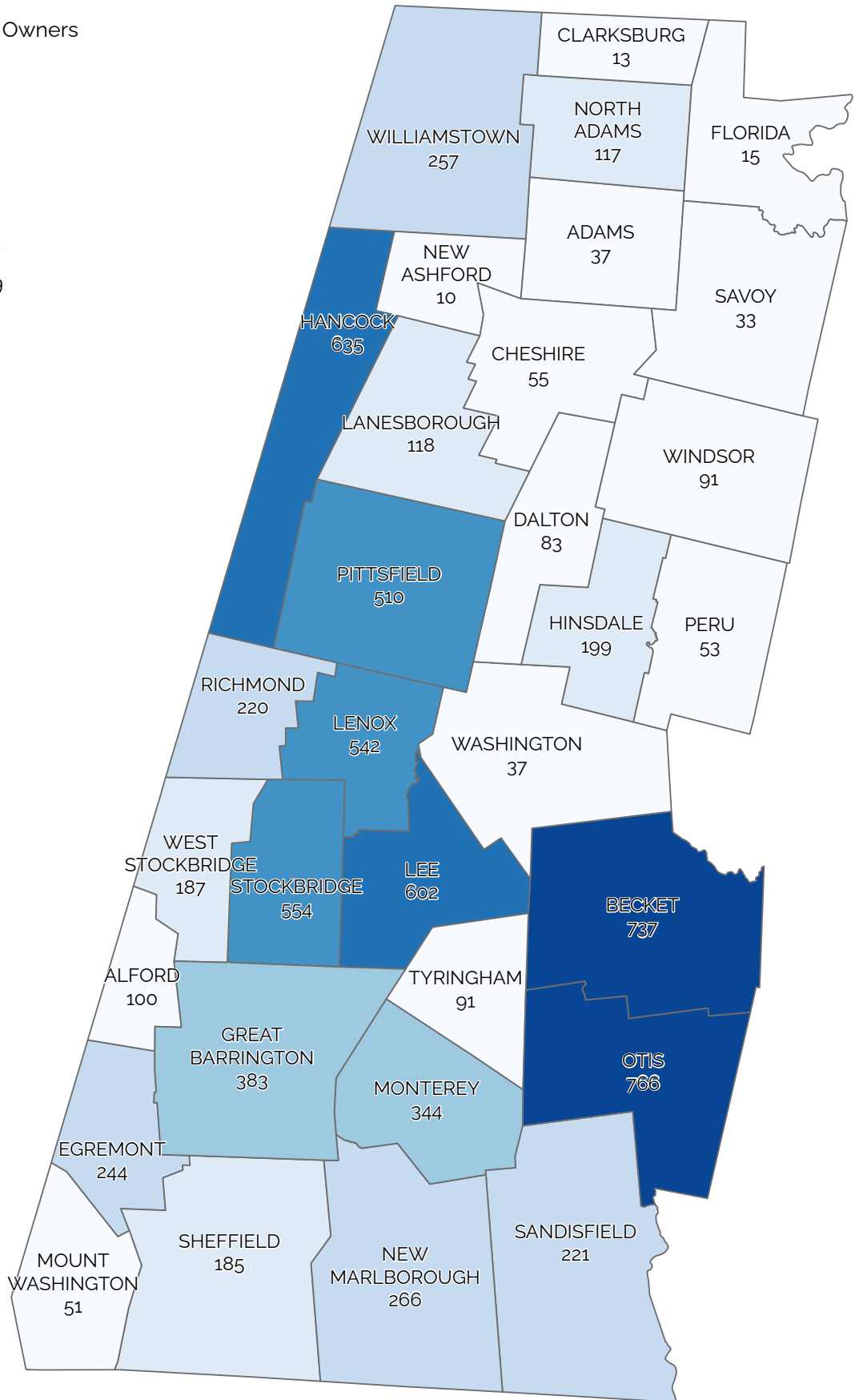
Map 3-2: Unpaved Roads in Berkshire County

— Unpaved Road



Map 3-3: Number of Second homeowners per town in Berkshire County

Second Home Owners



Socioeconomic Data & Projections

POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Understanding the region's future transportation needs begins with understanding current and future population characteristics. Investments can be better targeted and supported by a foundational understanding of how the region's population is reasonably expected to change over the 20-year planning horizon.

The major population traits that are measured and projected include age, sex, and race. Population cohorts can include one or more of these traits to form a combined group that is tracked over time. For instance: white males age 20-24, or black females age 55-60. More general cohorts such as all people aged 20 to 24, or all females aged 55-60 can also be considered.

There are three major factors that change a population count over time:

- ◆ Birth rate
- ◆ Death rate
- ◆ Migration rate

Creating a reliable socioeconomic projections model involves gathering past trend data and contemporary findings for the above three factors. Applying rates between different cohorts will then provide overall projections for a given geographic area, such as a city, county, state, or nation.

The overall population of Berkshire County is expected to trend downward between 2020 and 2050. The number of households in the region will also decline, in turn (see **Figure 3-5**). By 2050, the Berkshire population is expected to decline by about 6.5%, in comparison to the state's overall population growth projected at 3.4%. The average household size is projected to be virtually unchanged: from 2.26 persons per household in 2020 to 2.25 persons per household in 2050.

Household Income

Western Massachusetts is comparatively less wealthy than other parts of the Commonwealth. The median income for Berkshire County is \$60,749, compared to over \$89,000 as an average for Massachusetts. In 2020, over two-thirds of

Berkshire County's household incomes fell below the state median. Based on projections to 2050, it is expected that around 40% of households in Berkshire County will earn \$35,000 or less, in 2013 dollars plus inflation over 37 years. See **Figure 3-8** for a visual representation of household income proportions of Berkshire County. The majority of jobs in Berkshire County are expected to be in lower-wage sectors like hospitality, food, and personal care.

Aging Population

Projections indicate that the cohort of Berkshire residents over age 65 will be increasing through 2030, and then begin to decline starting in 2040. This can mainly be attributed to the Baby Boom generation reaching the end of its average life expectancy. While the number of residents age 65+ will rise and then fall as a whole, the proportion of residents age 65+ is projected to plateau and remain fairly stable through 2050, as the population of Berkshire County overall declines and older populations my age in place. **Figure 3-4** to the right illustrates the expected percentages of residents over age 65 against the full Berkshire County population, with the trend line of the total county population superimposed.

LABOR FORCE TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

In addition to the residential population, it is prudent to count and project the number of employment opportunities and commuters who will be utilizing the transportation network. The labor force participation rate considers cohorts of working age, different levels of educational attainment, and living outside of group quarters such as dormitories or military installations.

Employment Projections

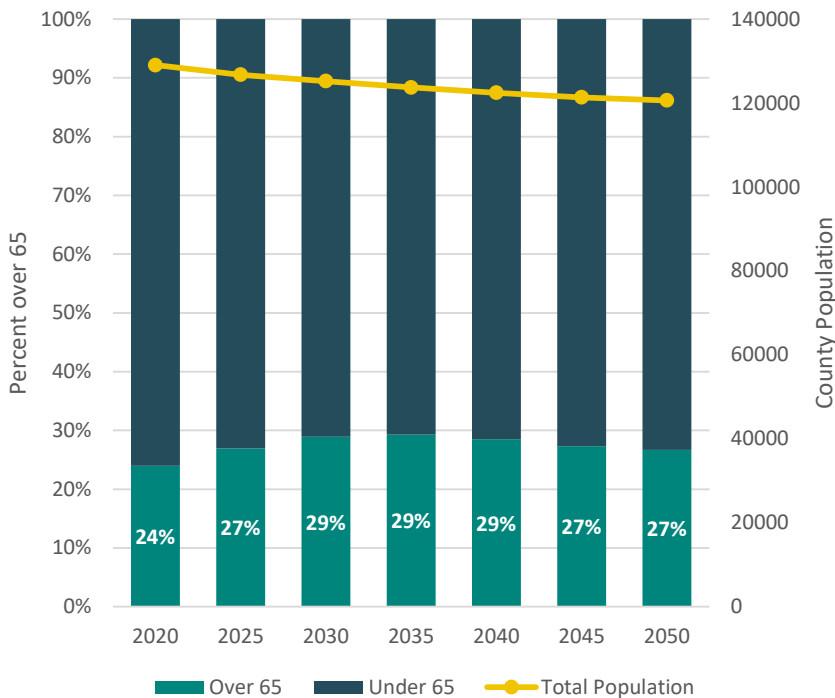
Figures for employment in the region are important for projecting transportation needs in the future, for several reasons.

An upward or downward projection in employment trends for towns will help to signal rush hour travel demand, especially between towns that may have high disparities between residential and workplace populations. Towns that have an increase projected for workplace sector numbers can reasonably expect to have more commuter traffic to those new employment opportunities. The reverse can also be said for municipalities with

a projected decrease in employment numbers. For Chapter 90 formula purposes, changes in employment figures may have a proportional impact in funds allocated to a municipality. More information about this road maintenance funding program can be found in **Chapter 4, Goal 1a**.

Finally, trends in employment sectors can help predict how land use patterns may change over time, and how demand could be met by planning in a sustainable way for facilities to meet those trends, such as new mixed-use and transit-oriented developments that can accommodate office, financial, institutional, and service sector jobs and the like.

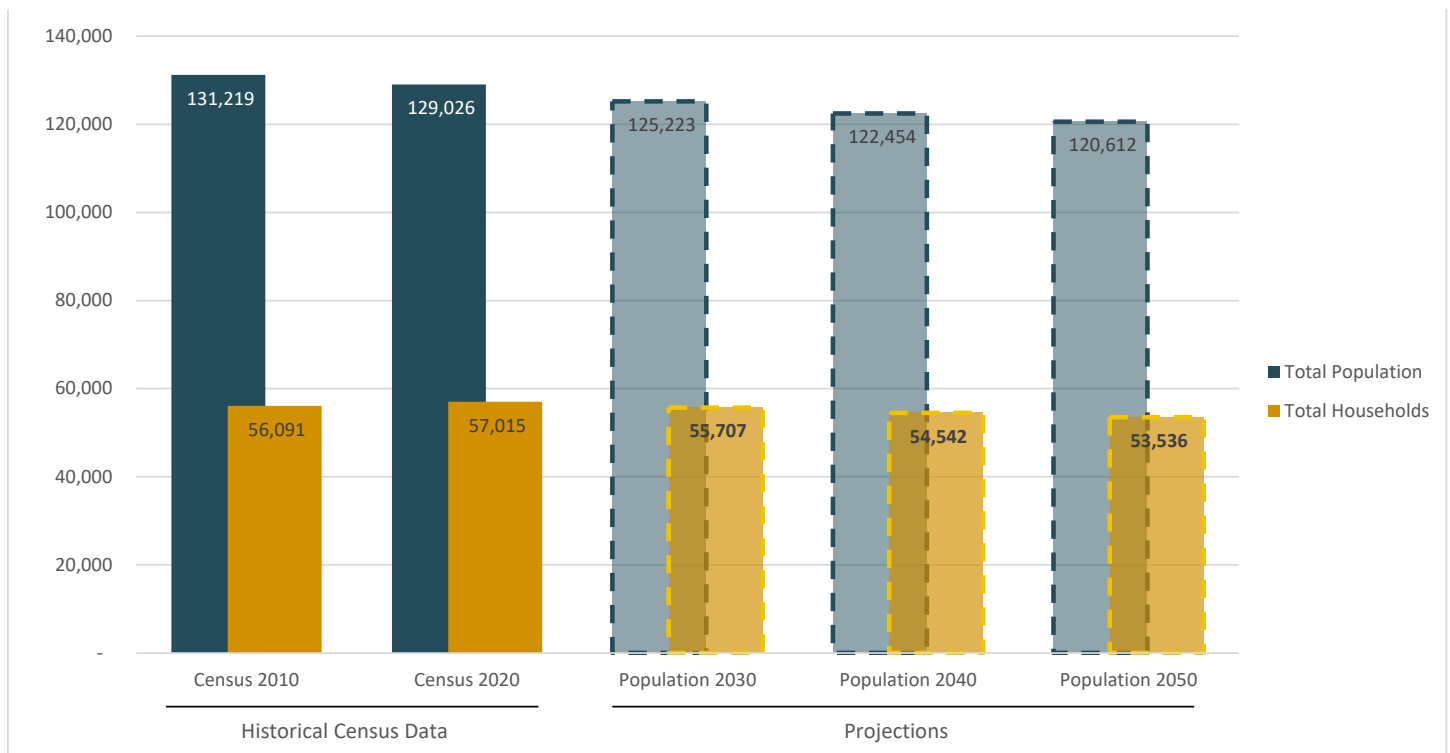
Figure 3-4: Trends in population aging in Berkshire County

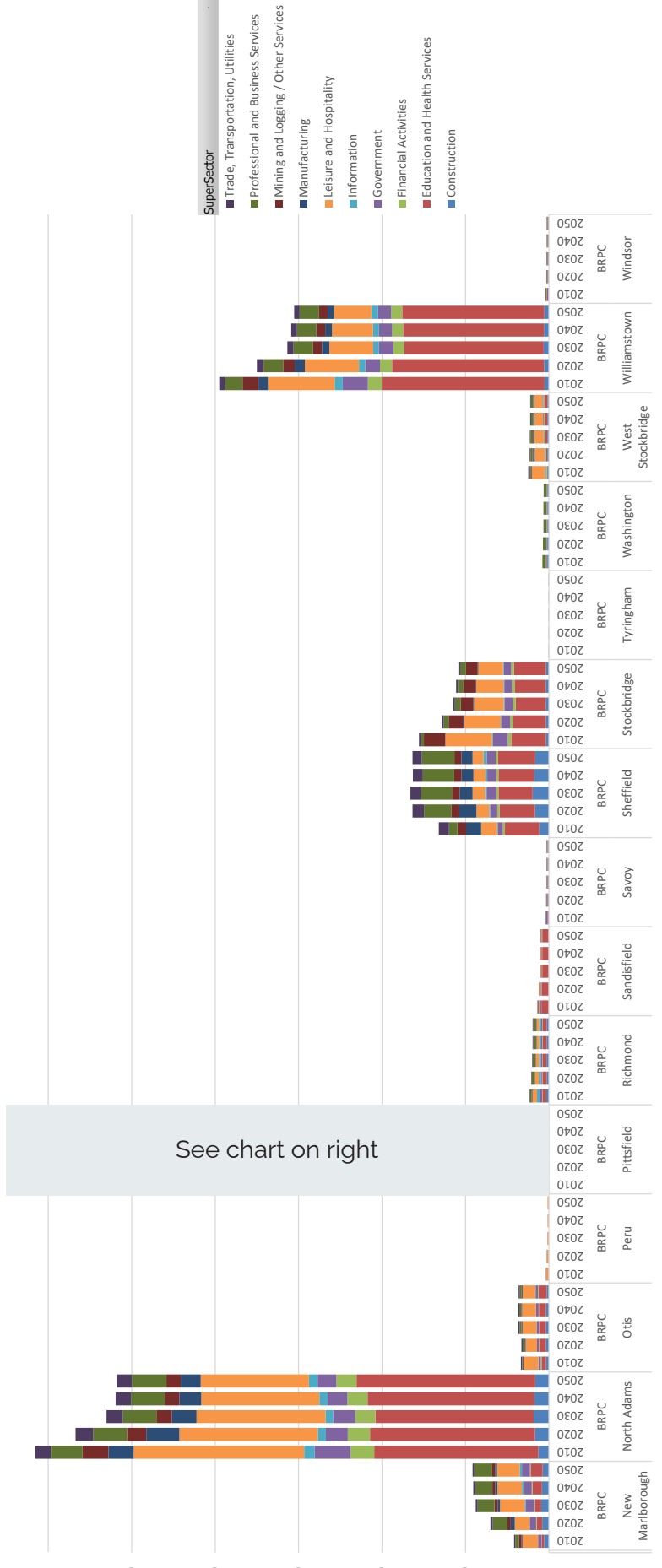
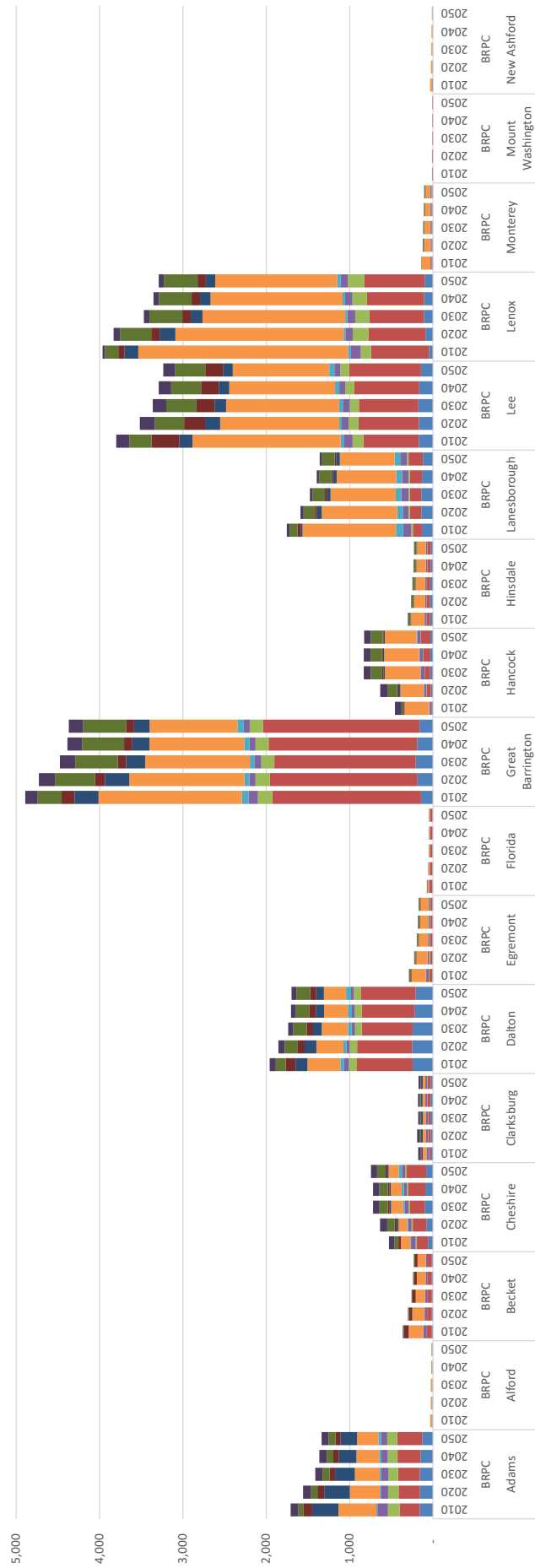


In general, workforce numbers in Berkshire County trend downward between 2020 and 2050. Individual sectors may be projected to grow in certain municipalities, such as the education and health services sector in Pittsfield. This growth does not offset the shrinkage in other sectors, however, and the city's employment base is expected to drop by approximately 1,700 workers by 2050.

Based on the employment figures provided by the UMass Donahue Institute and MAPC, the major employment centers of Berkshire County can be clearly seen. The municipalities with the highest numbers of jobs show the highest bars in the charts in **Figure 3-6**. The City of Pittsfield is presented as its own chart in **Figure 3-7**. The towns of Adams, Dalton, Lanesborough, Williamstown, and the City of North Adams host most of the employment

Figure 3-5: Historic and projected population trends in Berkshire County. Source: UMass Donahue Institute





See chart on right

opportunities in northern Berkshire County.

In southern Berkshire County, Lee, Lenox, Great Barrington, Sheffield, and Stockbridge have the highest employment figures.

All major employment centers with the exception of Sheffield are projected to see decreases in workforce between 2020 and 2050. As noted, this impact could be felt in the number of commuter trips taken to these municipalities, along with changes in funds allocated to towns for road maintenance via Chapter 90. Finally, as employment figures drop, there could be a need for adaptive reuse of former workspaces that may downsize. The land-use and trip-demand changes from these adaptations should be considered from a sustainability and smart growth lens.

As the future of work focuses more on remote and hybrid job offerings where possible, this could signal

Figure 3-8: Proportions of Household Incomes in Berkshire County, 2010-2050. Source: UMass Donahue Institute

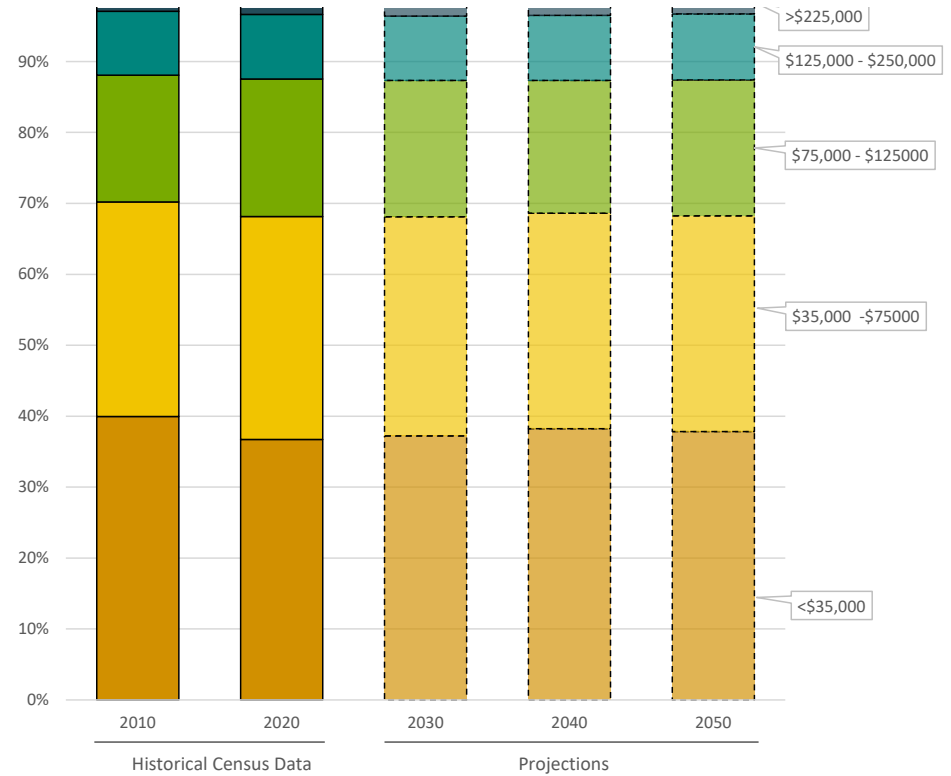
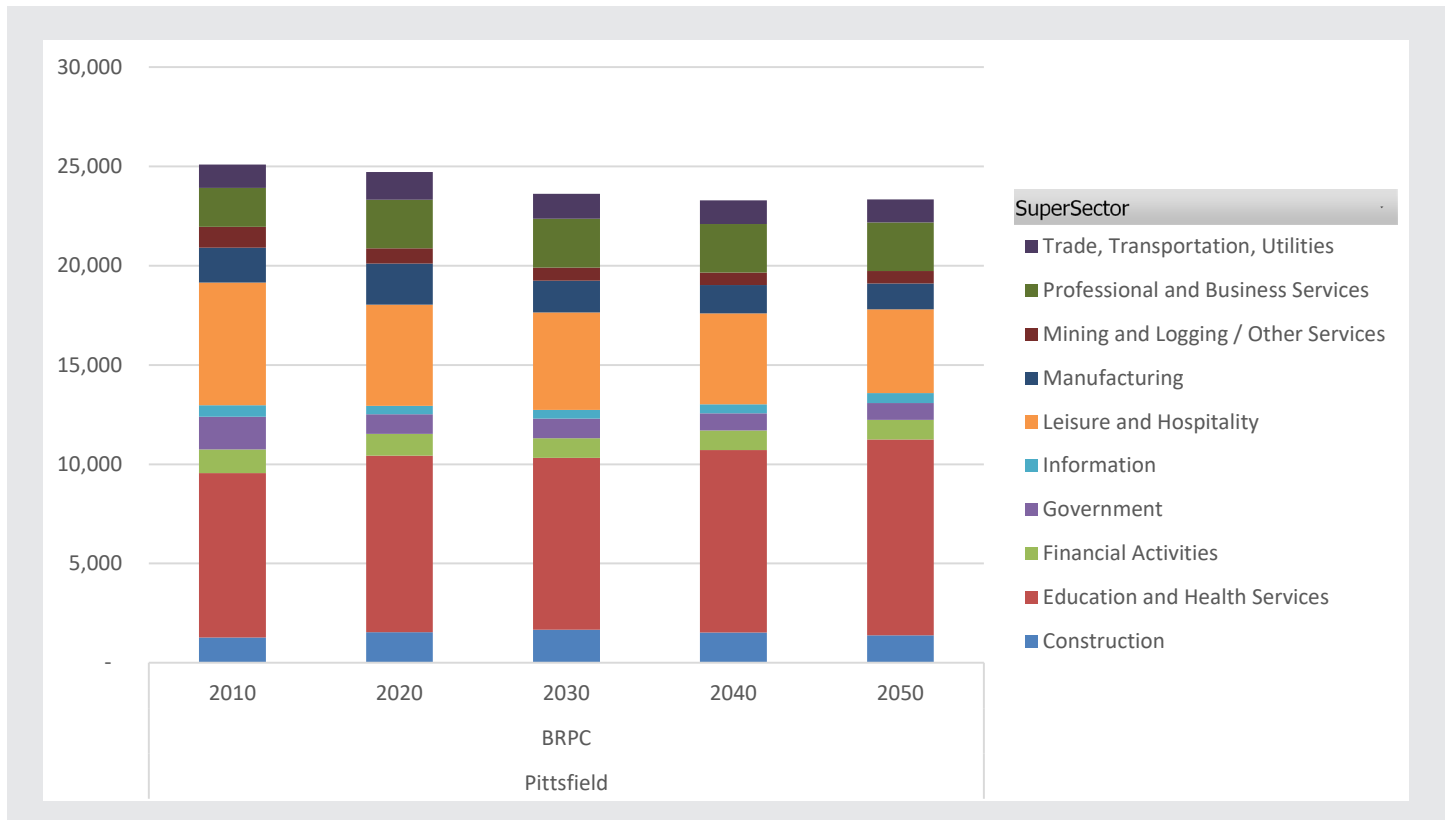


Figure 3-6 (left): Workforce projections for Berkshire County municipalities (excluding Pittsfield) - 2010 - 2050
Figure 3-7 (below): Workforce projections by supersector for Pittsfield, MA - 2010-2050



a change in how we think about commuting and economic development in the region. Workforces may be more diffused throughout a region working from home, rather than concentrated in one office or central business district at predictable times of the day. Conversion of office buildings to mixed-use or residential will also have impacts on the trip generation, parking demand, and peak hours of travel in some neighborhoods.

Environmental Justice

According to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), Environmental Justice (EJ) is “based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment. EJ is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits.”

The purpose of the Environmental Justice policy is to ensure that projects undertaken and policies enacted in the Commonwealth do not have a disproportionately negative impact on Environmental Justice-designated populations. These populations are shown to have been historically disadvantaged and subjected to forms of environmental racism and discrimination. EJ populations are highlighted throughout the Commonwealth in areas where their density or concentration within Census Block Groups exceed a given threshold. There are four EJ population groups that are tracked by EOEEA:

- ◆ The annual median household income is not more than 65 per cent of the statewide annual median household income;
- ◆ Minorities comprise 40 per cent or more of the population;
- ◆ 25 per cent or more of households lack English language proficiency; or
- ◆ Minorities comprise 25 per cent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 per cent of the statewide annual median household income

Beyond the categories listed above for EJ communities, MassDOT Transportation Planning also designates statewide Regional Economic Justice Plus (REJ+) communities. These Census block groups are considered to be additional areas of attention for transportation planning purposes when framing new policies and projects in the Commonwealth. REJ+ communities must already qualify for one or more of the “traditional” EJ community designations listed above. Taken together, EJ and REJ+ communities comprise the areas of Berkshire County where supplemental resources and analysis of the impacts of transportation plans and projects should be strongly supported. The factors considered for REJ+ communities include the following data points:

- ◆ Car ownership: Percent of households without an available vehicle \geq MPO 75th percentile
- ◆ Disability: Percent of households with one or more persons with a disability \geq MPO 75th percentile
- ◆ Age: Percent of individuals aged 65 or older \geq MPO 75th percentile

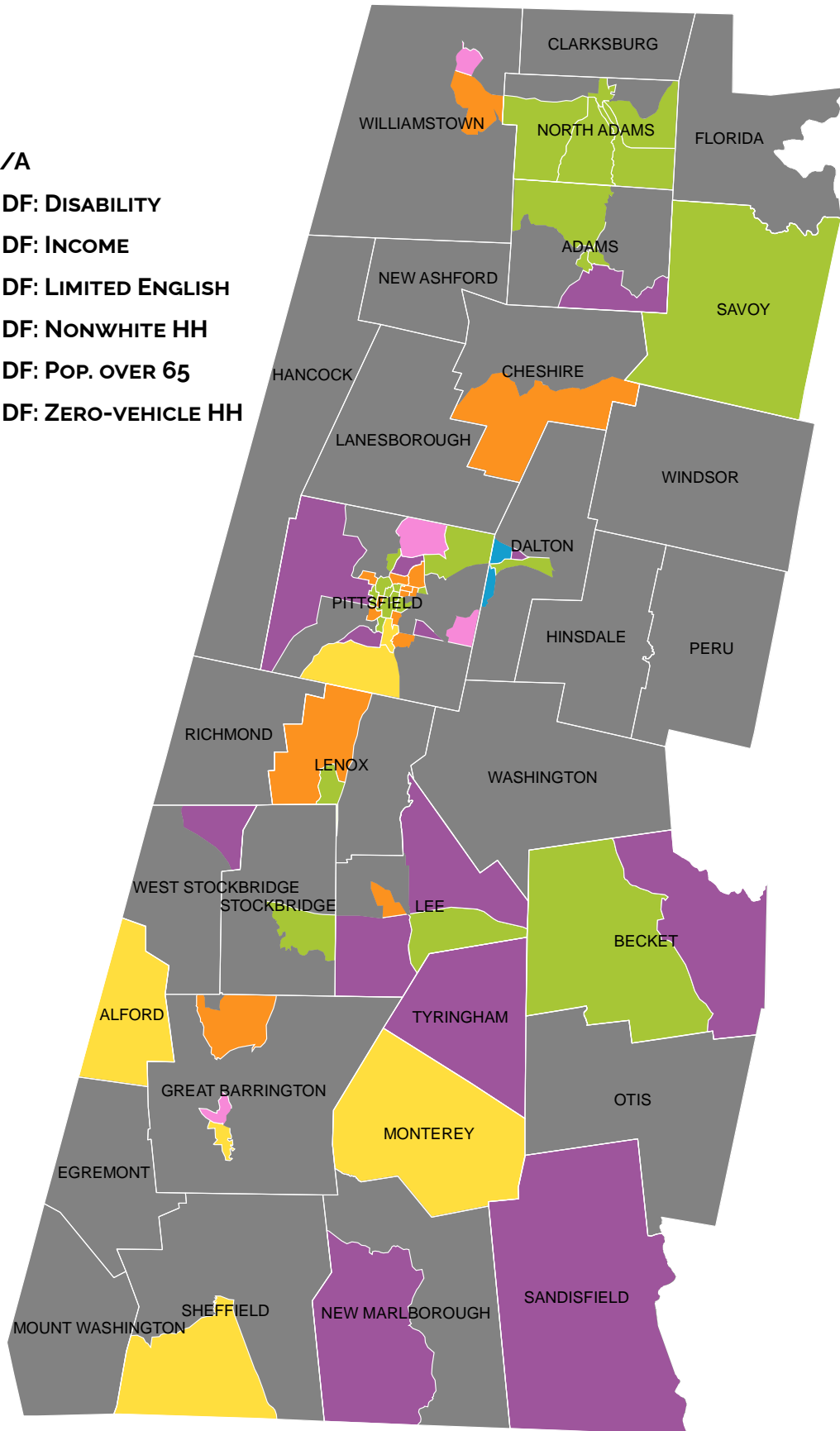
Map 3-9 to the right illustrates all EJ and REJ+ communities that have been identified in Berkshire County. The colored Census block groups have been found to exceed at least one of the thresholds previously described in this section. The block groups are colored according to the Most Determinant Factor (MDF) found to exist in the group. That is to say, there may be other less prevalent EJ determining factors not shown.

To ensure that all people can fully participate in the planning process and have access to transportation services, the RTP outlines a number of items that support Environmental Justice and Title VI considerations. The Berkshire MPO adopted a Title VI Plan in June of 2014 that provides the framework for how BRPC complies with anti-discrimination laws as part of our transportation planning. Our Title VI plan outlines how the Berkshire MPO meets Title VI requirements stemming from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Environmental Justice compliance. Key elements of the Title VI Plan include establishing a Title VI Coordinator for BRPC, increasing opportunities for all individuals to be involved in the BRPC’s planning and programming processes, procedures for filing complaints, and augmenting outreach efforts to Title VI and Environmental Justice populations.

Map 3-9: Regional Environmental Justice Plus (REJ+) communities in Berkshire County (via MassDOT)

REJ+

- N/A
- MDF: DISABILITY
- MDF: INCOME
- MDF: LIMITED ENGLISH
- MDF: NONWHITE HH
- MDF: POP. OVER 65
- MDF: ZERO-VEHICLE HH



Travel in the Region

Data on how people get around Berkshire County comes in many forms. How travelers get to their destinations, how long it takes, how far they travel, and what roads they travel on are all important data points to consider. In terms of the number of people traveling, most Berkshire continuous count locations demonstrate a flat or decreased traffic volume over the past five years. It is difficult to definitively post a trend due to the steep declines in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) during the travel restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Most of the observed increases in traffic volumes recently reported by traffic count locations are simply returns to existing traffic volumes, as travel re-opened over the course of 2021 and 2022.

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) AND VOLUME TRENDS

The aggregate number of miles traveled by all vehicles in a given area is defined as Vehicle Miles Traveled, or VMT. VMT is typically expressed year-over-year and can be aggregated nationally or across certain jurisdictions. **Figure 3-10** illustrates the long-term trend of VMTs year-over-year in the United States. VMT can be affected by the number of vehicles on a road, or the distance each vehicle travels. For example, ten vehicles that travel ten miles each would constitute 100 VMT. Two vehicles traveling 50 miles each would also constitute 100 VMT. VMT is a useful metric for getting overall trends for how much Americans are traveling. An increasing VMT rate translates to more tires and more wear and tear on the roads. Higher VMTs also translate to higher risks of crashes, as more vehicles are on the road

for longer periods of time. This is sometimes referred to as potential "exposure" to crash risk.

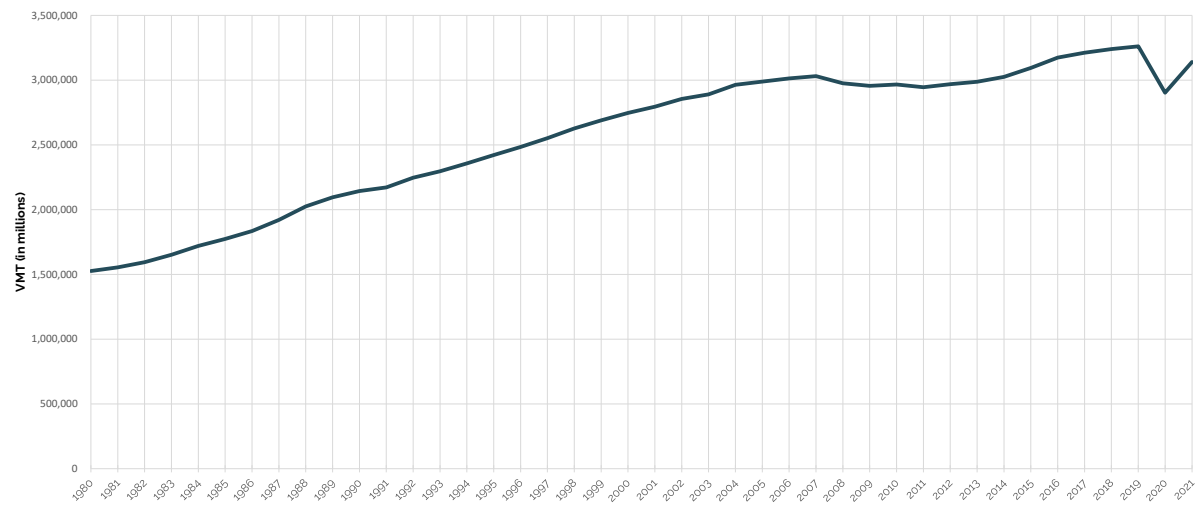
For Berkshire County, VMTs are aggregated by MassDOT through a combination of physical vehicle counts and a mathematical travel demand model. As with traffic volumes in general, VMTs were affected by travel restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Counts are available for Berkshire County in the years 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021. Data for 2022 is not available at the time of writing. The VMT totals for Berkshire County by year are summarized in **Figure 3-11** below. The counts are expressed in millions of VMTs.

Traffic volumes are collected in many areas of the region, in order to get a sense of general trends in travel patterns and wear and tear on the roads. At the time of writing, there are 16 continuous count locations in Berkshire County that regularly collect traffic volume data. Traffic volumes can fluctuate day-to-day, depending on the day of the week, time of year, or whether a special event or detour is taking place. While daily traffic counts can be useful when looking at a specific intersection or corridor, continuous counts are generally normalized to a measure of Average Annual Daily Traffic, or AADT. This provides an average number of vehicles expected to pass this counting location on any given day, and is simply the total number of vehicles counted in a year divided by 365. The AADT data for continuous count locations in the Berkshires are summarized in **Figure 3-12**.

Figure 3-11: Berkshire VMT data per year (MassDOT)

Berkshire County VMT data					
Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
VMT	4.256 M	--	3.986 M	3.391 M	3.703 M

Figure 3-10: Annual Vehicle-Miles Traveled (VMT) in the United States, 1980-2021



COMMUTING MODE-SHARE

The means of travel to work is collected by the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). This survey utilizes a sample of a given area's population to draw trends and patterns more frequently than the full 10-year Census. As such, margins of error are typically wider, especially for towns with small populations like in the Berkshires. For all Berkshire towns and cities, driving alone is the predominant form of journeys to work. Working from

home is also emerging as a trend after the travel and gathering restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Working from home has historically been higher-reported in some parts of Berkshire County with the predominance of agricultural and family-run businesses. The town with the highest reported rate of working from home was New Marlborough at 34% of the working population. The percentages of commuting mode-shares by town are presented in **Figure 3-13**, utilizing the most recent ACS 5-year estimates last gathered in 2021.

Figure 3-12: Continuous traffic count locations in Berkshire County with latest AADT observations

Loc ID	Community	Functional Class	Rural or Urban	On	Approach	At	LRS ID	Latest AADT	Latest Date	5-year Trend*
1	Pittsfield	(3) Other Principal Arterial	U	CHESHIRE ROAD		S.OF LANESBORO T.L.	SR8 NB	15975	6/10/2023	Decreasing
1171	Sheffield	(3) Other Principal Arterial	R	SOUTH MAIN STREET	AT	CONNECTICUT STATE LINE	US7 NB	5854	6/10/2023	Decreasing
1178	Lanesboro	(4) Minor Arterial	R	WILLIAMSTOWN ROAD	NORTH OF	BAILEY ROAD	US7 NB	4418	6/5/2023	Flat
1179	Lenox	(3) Other Principal Arterial	U	VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY	SOUTH OF	Route 7A	US7 NB	19500	5/31/2023	Decreasing
1181	Sandisfield	(4) Minor Arterial	R	SOUTH MAIN STREET	SOUTH OF	ROOSTERVILLE ROAD	SR8 NB	3671	6/10/2023	Flat
1182	Windsor	(3) Other Principal Arterial	R	BERKSHIRE TRAIL	EAST OF	SAVOY HOLLOW ROAD	SR9 EB	4052	6/7/2023	Decreasing
1183	Sheffield	(3) Other Principal Arterial	R	ROUTE 7	SOUTH OF	GREAT BARRINGTON T.L.		6200	6/10/2023	Flat
125	Savoy	(5) Major Collector	R	MAIN ROAD	WEST OF	PLAINFIELD T.L.	SR8A-L NB	1633	6/10/2023	Flat
140	Clarksburg	(5) Major Collector	R	RIVER ROAD		VERMONT STATE LINE	SR8 NB	2715	6/10/2023	Flat
155	Great Barrington	(5) Major Collector	R	MONTEREY ROAD	WEST OF	Monterey T.L.	SR23 EB	2965	5/2/2023	Decreasing
162	North Adams	(3) Other Principal Arterial	U	HOWLAND AVENUE	AT	ADAMS	SR8 NB	13937	6/10/2023	Flat
189	Stockbridge	Collector	R	ROAD	SOUTH OF	Lenox T.L.	NB	2689	6/10/2023	Flat
1950	Hancock	(5) Major Collector	R	HANCOCK ROAD	NORTH OF	NEW YORK STATE LINE	SR43 NB	3904	6/9/2023	Increasing
2	Lee	(3) Other Principal Arterial	U	CHAPEL STREET		E.OF JCT.OF RTES.20 & 102	US20 EB	6720	6/10/2023	Decreasing
40	Lenox	(3) Other Principal Arterial	R	Rtes. 7 & 20	NORTH OF	RTE.7A JUNCTION		23115	6/10/2023	Decreasing
AET01	Lee	(1) Interstate	U	MASS TURNPIKE	WEST OF	STOCKBRIDGE	I90 EB	33174	6/9/2023	Increasing

*Difference between 2018 and 2022 volumes, disregarding decreases incurred in 2020

Data source: MassDOT Traffic Data Viewer

Figure 3-13: Means of travel to work by percentage of total commuters (US Census Bureau)

Municipality	Total Commuters:	Car, truck, or van - drove alone:	Car, truck, or van - carpooled:	Public transport (excluding taxicab):	Walked:	Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means:	Worked from home
Adams	3,817	81%	10%	0.4%	2%	0.9%	6%
Alford	193	63%	21%	3.1%	2%	1.6%	9%
Becket	1,135	78%	8%	1.0%	3%	1.1%	9%
Cheshire	1,473	87%	4%	0.0%	4%	0.0%	4%
Clarksburg	907	84%	11%	0.1%	1%	0.0%	3%
Dalton	2,977	82%	12%	2.3%	0%	0.4%	3%
Egremont	872	74%	5%	0.2%	2%	0.0%	18%
Florida	386	85%	10%	0.0%	0%	0.0%	5%
Great Barrington	3,543	63%	7%	0.5%	11%	2.1%	17%
Hancock	365	87%	4%	0.0%	0%	3.6%	5%
Hinsdale	838	94%	5%	0.0%	0%	0.0%	0%
Lanesborough	1,588	73%	17%	0.6%	6%	0.0%	4%
Lee	2,927	89%	3%	0.4%	2%	0.0%	5%
Lenox	1,987	78%	0%	2.1%	1%	0.9%	18%
Monterey	359	77%	0%	1.1%	1%	7.2%	14%
Mount Washington	90	59%	23%	0.0%	2%	0.0%	16%
New Ashford	135	82%	4%	0.0%	1%	1.5%	11%
New Marlborough	709	56%	3%	5.6%	1%	1.0%	34%
North Adams	5,980	73%	8%	1.1%	11%	0.4%	7%
Otis	777	79%	3%	2.6%	1%	0.0%	14%
Peru	458	88%	9%	0.0%	1%	0.2%	2%
Pittsfield	20,895	79%	9%	2.1%	3%	1.1%	6%
Richmond	797	81%	10%	0.0%	1%	0.0%	9%
Sandisfield	430	73%	6%	0.0%	1%	0.0%	20%
Savoy	325	91%	5%	0.0%	2%	0.9%	1%
Sheffield	1,808	74%	12%	0.0%	4%	1.5%	8%
Stockbridge	694	60%	0%	0.9%	20%	0.0%	19%
Tyringham	300	69%	8%	1.7%	8%	1.0%	12%
Washington	254	79%	3%	0.8%	2%	1.2%	14%
West Stockbridge	605	76%	3%	0.0%	0%	0.0%	21%
Williamstown	3,647	42%	4%	0.7%	36%	3.0%	14%
Windsor	574	78%	9%	0.0%	0%	1.2%	11%

Data source: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2017-2021

ROAD JURISDICTION

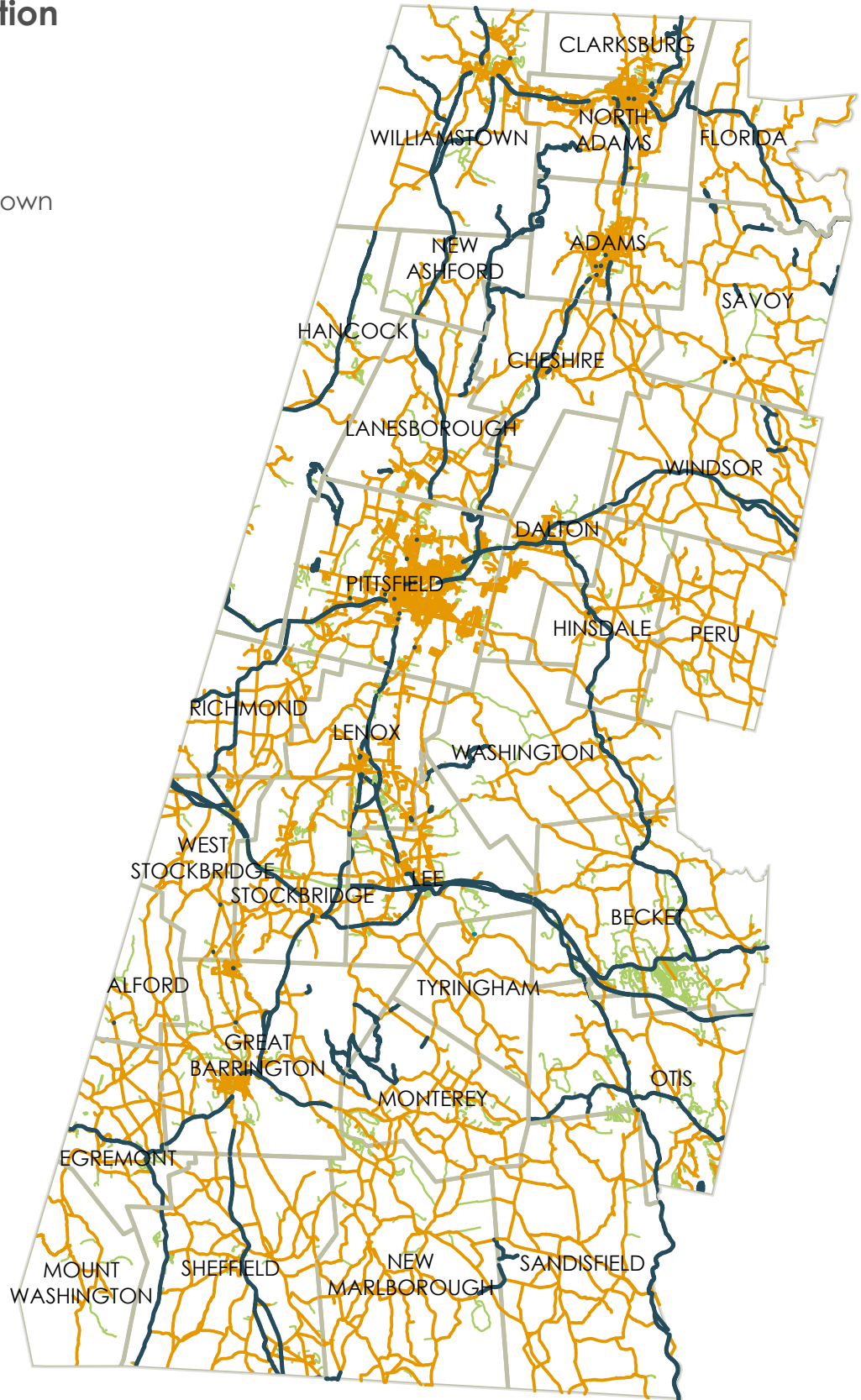
When driving, walking, or cycling in Berkshire County, one will almost certainly be traveling on a road with either local or state jurisdiction. The jurisdiction, or ownership, of a road lays out who is responsible for maintenance, improvements, upgrades, or other work on the road. To the traveling public, the jurisdiction of a road is not of immediate concern. Usually the only indication that a

road is under MassDOT jurisdiction would be the presence of mile marker signs alongside the roadway at regular intervals. Travelers may also notice "State Highway Begins/Ends" signs near certain junctions in the region. These also indicate where a road transitions from MassDOT to local jurisdiction or vice-versa. It is also possible for a road under state jurisdiction to not have these indicators. **Map 3-14** provides an overview of the State and Municipal jurisdiction roads in Berkshire County.

Map 3-14: Road jurisdiction in Berkshire County

Road Jurisdiction

- State
- Municipal
- Private/Unknown



This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, BRPC or the municipality may have supplied portions of this data.

Prepared in cooperation with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the U. S. Department of Transportation. The views and opinions of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission express herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation or the U. S. Department of Transportation.

While it may not be important in day-to-day travel what the jurisdiction of a certain road is, for long-range planning and decision making, it is imperative to know who owns a certain road, so that the right partners can be brought in to solve the problem. Locally-owned roads are maintained by a municipality's highway or public works department. MassDOT-owned roads are maintained by the agency's Highway Division, with support from other entities like the Office of Traffic Safety, Bridge Engineer, and local District offices.

Of the approximately **1,867 miles** of accepted streets and roads in Berkshire County, **1,589 miles (85%)** are under the jurisdiction of local municipalities, and **278 miles** are under MassDOT jurisdiction.

Depending on the jurisdiction of a given road, different resources for funding and technical assistance may be available for road construction. Roads that are under the jurisdiction of municipal highway departments are eligible to be funded by the Chapter 90 program, which is a state funding mechanism to distribute resources to each town and city based on its population, local road mileage, and workforce. Chapter 90 funds can only be used on local roads, and cannot be directed toward projects on state DOT jurisdiction roads. The Complete Streets program is another example of funding that can only be directed toward locally-administered roads. The Municipal Pavement Program is a unique resource that targets locally-administered roads with a state or national numbered route. MassDOT administers this program and prioritizes roads for the program with its own ranking model.

Projects that are on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) listing may be under either local or state DOT jurisdiction. Projects may qualify for the TIP if they are eligible for federal aid. See **Goal 1a - Maintain Pavement Conditions** for more information about what makes a road federal-aid eligible.

Finally, some road improvement resources are only directed toward roads that are under MassDOT jurisdiction. This includes any improvement or maintenance projects for Interstate highways. Most bridges beyond 20 feet in span length are under the jurisdiction of MassDOT, and are maintained with a separate pool of funding. See **Goal 1b - Maintain Bridge Conditions** for more information about bridge improvement programs in the region.

Land Use

Transportation and land use are inherently linked, as demand for trips on a road changes based on the intensity and function of land parcels served by the road. Prior to widespread adoption of automobile use, land development was clustered around areas of commerce or natural resources. As more consumers acquired cars in the 20th century, land that had historically been unsuitable for development was subdivided and sold, with new roads built out to these developments. These developments were not planned with transit use or walkability in mind, and today they still prove difficult to reach without a car.

In Berkshire County, the vast majority of land remains undeveloped, with many acres permanently protected. Large conservation areas like the Mount Greylock State Reservation, October Mountain State Park, Beartown State Forest, Clarksburg State Forest, and many other lands held publicly or privately create the natural landscape that the Berkshires are renowned for. Currently less than 10% of the land within Berkshire County is developed. **Figure 3-15** below summarizes the proportions of different land uses in the region.

Figure 3-15: Land Use in Berkshire County as of 2016

Land Use Category	Acres	%
Bare Land	2320.6	0.38%
Commercial	1471.2	0.24%
Cultivated	31930.4	5.20%
Deciduous Forest	299292.8	48.70%
Developed Open Space	25747.9	4.19%
Evergreen Forest	165676.4	26.96%
Forest	25.5	0.00%
Grassland	12699.4	2.07%
Industrial	670.9	0.11%
Mixed use, other	288.4	0.05%
Mixed use, primarily commercial	22.0	0.00%
Mixed use, primarily residential	360.7	0.06%
Open land	664.5	0.11%
Wetland	41842.8	6.81%
Recreation	15.2	0.00%
Residential - multi-family	1437.3	0.23%
Residential - other	49.4	0.01%
Residential - single family	4772.2	0.78%
Right-of-way	7335.3	1.19%
Scrub/Shrub	3166.8	0.52%
Tax exempt	2566.3	0.42%
Water	12220.5	1.99%

Growth in the region boomed following World War II and continued into the 1990s. During this time, residential development exploded in the form of new neighborhoods and housing. According to the Sustainable Berkshires Plan, prior to 1950, most residential units in the Berkshires were built in lots less than 0.25 acres. Between 1950 and 1974 most residential units were built on lots .25-.50 acre. Since 1975 this trend changed significantly with many homes built on lots greater than 5 acres. Since 2000, 33% of the residential units built in Berkshire County have been built on lots greater than 5 acres. Based on zoning, most homes since 1975 have been built in 1-2-acre zoning districts, even though the actual lot size is over 5 acres. Thus, new housing development is increasingly focused on very-low density development at the periphery of higher density city and village centers. However, our region has seen development pressure largely subside since the early 2000's. Nearly all new housing units in the region since the early 2000's have been in the form of single-family large lot homes in rural areas. The majority of respondents to the Transportation Community Survey reported a desire or vision of living in a detached home on a larger lot, indicating a rural land use and lifestyle is likely to remain popular.

Considerations for historic redevelopments

Redevelopment of former industrial and commercial properties presents a contemporary challenge for traditional transportation planning practices. Mill buildings that have been converted to residential or mixed use present new types of travel demands that the towns where they are situated have not previously seen. When the mills were originally in use, they were large attractors for workforces and commerce. The mills were dense uses of land, but had their heyday before the time of widespread automobile use. Mill workers typically walked to work and lived in worker housing nearby. Now, this paradigm is flipped, where workers are living in the mills and working elsewhere, but also will very likely have a car for transportation. Developers involved with large-scale mill and industrial redevelopments are highly encouraged to coordinate with the Berkshire MPO and MassDOT to conduct traffic impact analyses and implement effective mitigation measures.

Considerations for commercial strip zoning

Zoning is the codification of land use, and signals the priorities that a municipality has for its

land. A major challenge being faced today in the transportation-land use paradigm is where and how to site commercial land uses. Historically, the "Main Streets" of towns and cities served as their commercial centers. As economies of scale grew during the post-WWII years of population growth, commercial outlets like supermarkets, department stores, and shopping centers looked to occupy cheaper parcels of land outside of city centers in order to grow. The rise of automobile ownership made it possible for consumers to access this land. As more high-intensity land uses like big-box retail, entertainment centers, and strip malls sprung up on cheap land along formerly rural highways, their regional draw brought unprecedented levels of traffic to the surrounding roads. Traffic engineers in turn, widened the roads, installed new traffic signals, and raised speed limits to help move traffic through the area. These areas have become the commercial strip zones that define postwar American suburbs, and are also host to some of the most dangerous roads in the nation.

Commercial strip zones in the Berkshires include areas in several municipalities:

- ◆ Dalton Ave and Merrill Road in Pittsfield
- ◆ Pittsfield-Lenox Road in Pittsfield and Lenox
- ◆ Howland Avenue in Adams
- ◆ Stockbridge Road in Great Barrington
- ◆ Route 2/Mohawk Trail in Williamstown and North Adams

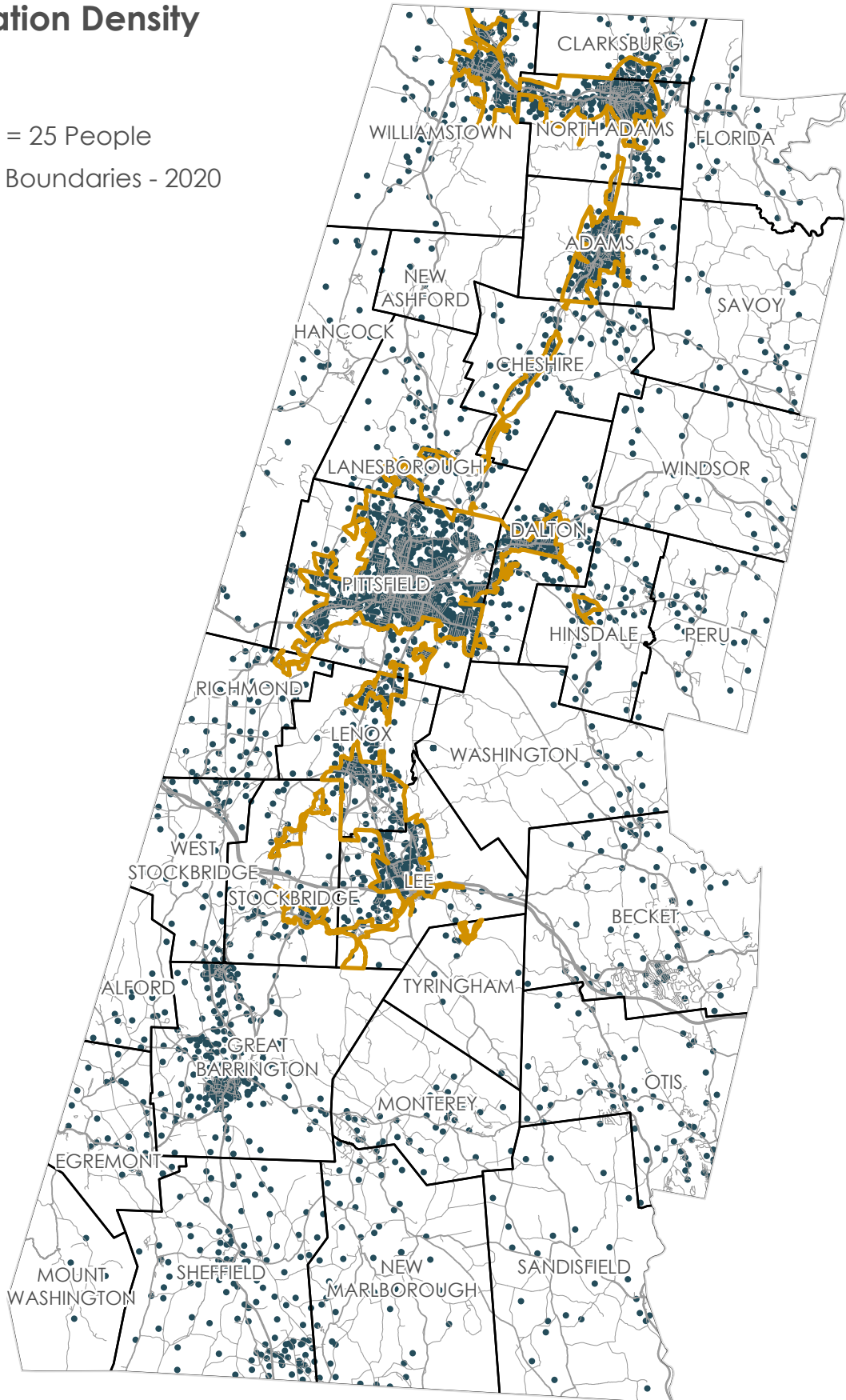
If more commercial land development is to take place on these routes, care should be taken to plan more safety interventions, such as increased access control. This is discussed further in **Objective 4a - Adopt the Safe Systems Approach**.

Maintaining the historic and rural land use of the Berkshires is a priority for many residents. Achieving this will require consideration of how to optimize our transportation system to support our historic town centers and how best to regulate land use and subdivisions to reduce vehicle miles traveled and preserve natural spaces.

Population Density

• 1 Dot = 25 People

▭ Urban Boundaries - 2020





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