

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, NEWS

TRANSPORTATION THE MAIN TOPIC AT LYNN'S BUSINESS SUMMIT

BY THOR JOURGENSEN | February 12, 2020



Carolina Prieto, community engagement specialist 2 for MAPC, speaks about the challenges and ideas that came out of the Economic Development workshop during the Lynn City Summit last November. (Spenser Hasak)

LYNN — Transportation emerged as a top follow-up topic Wednesday for business community members discussing how to build on last November's City Summit.

Hosted by the Lynn Business Partnership (LBP) during its quarterly meeting at Eastern Bank, the discussion included members of the Greater Lynn Chamber of Commerce.

Speakers from former Lynn Mayor Thomas P. Costin Jr., who has been the face of the LBP's push for the Blue Line to Lynn for more than 25 years, to Transit Matters Director Jarred Johnson, talked about private-publicly fund transportation solutions and the need for broad discussions on transportation.

Transit Matters plans to host a springtime discussion in Lynn on ways to boost commuter rail service, including electrifying the now-diesel powered line.

"We want to bring everybody together to talk about improvements that can happen on that line," Johnson said.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council community engagement specialist Carolina Prieto guided Wednesday's audience through the main topics covered during the five-hour November summit. Attended by 240 people, the summit had its origin in similar forums initiated by the LBP 25 years ago.

Transportation, along with housing, the local economy, education, public safety, housing and local culture, dominated summit discussions that brought together city department employees and residents in face-to-face conversations and workshops.

Electrifying the commuter rail running through Lynn, reducing fares and increasing train frequency are short-term steps that can be taken.

"Bring on 21st-century equipment and you will see a complete game change in access. We can start making it happen now," Mayor Thomas M. McGee said.

Several speakers on Wednesday said the summit's ability to attract participants and engage them makes it worth repeating.

"What I saw was a diverse group. The formula you used needs to be replicated," said state Sen. Brendan Crighton.

Prieto said the summit highlighted Lynn strengths, including how different groups across the city are able to "be persistent and pull together" and forge "strong collaborative partnerships."

Summit participants also mapped out challenges, she said, including the need for more support for immigrant-owned businesses, more need for tenant protections and housing code enforcement and more language options in schools.

Next to transportation, school improvements need to be a priority in the summit's wake, said educator and entrepreneur Linda Samuels.

"Schools are why people move to cities," she said.

The City Summit summary report can be viewed on the city of Lynn [website](#).



Thor Jourgensen

A newspaperman for 34 years, Thor Jourgensen has worked for the Item for 29 years and lived in Lynn 20 years. He has overseen the Item's editorial department since January 2016 and is the 2015 New England Newspaper and Press Association Bob Wallack Community Journalism Award recipient.

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