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Old Colony Crossroads Collaborative update: Fastest growing region in the Commonwealth

October 27, 2010 - Spotlights

The Old Colony Crossroads Collaborative (OCCC) is an emerging regional economic development group in the northern portion of southeastern Mass. that includes 27 communities and associated organizations along I-495 South and Rte. 24 North (greater Attleboro to greater Plymouth and greater Brockton to greater Taunton). This area, the fastest growing region in the Commonwealth, anchors a burgeoning economy with the potential to expand and attract more businesses and create even more jobs. The OCCC membership is a regional team of community, chamber of commerce, education, and business representatives that seek to optimize and realize the area's potential. Coordination of the OCCC is carried out by Dr. Diana Jennings at the Office for Regional Outreach at Bridgewater State University (BSU).

The Old Colony title was chosen because of its historic significance; its connection to the Old Colony Planning Council; Old Colony Commuter Rail; Old Colony Historical Society; and other similar agencies and organizations throughout the region. Crossroads was added to recognize the region's superior transportation system between Rte. 24, I-495, and Rte. 44 east especially.

The university supported collaborative organization model was selected to encourage communities in the region to lessen their parochial individual nature and work together to improve the region as a whole. The region receives planning support from the Old Colony Planning Council and the Southeastern Planning and Economic Development district.

A regional demographic summary is being updated for the now 27 proposed communities utilizing the 2010 Census which will note the value in numbers of the effort to create a regional entity focused on economic development. This focus might take the form of sharing technical resources, lending expertise, exchanging ideas, co-operative marketing, establishing a portal website, and collaboration on infrastructure, transportation, and other regional issues.

With the additional communities, the new summary will show the area has a growing population of over 500,000 (2000 census); 200,000+ housing units; a workforce of 300,000+; over 40 industrial/office parks; 17 colleges/universities; over 10 hospitals; high school graduation rates of 84.5%; and the top employment sectors are retail trade, manufacturing, health care/social assistance, and accommodation and food services. This will be refined with 2010 census statistics as they are reported.

In light of the state administration's goal of working with regional economic development organizations (REDOs), the group continues to be enthusiastic about the collaborative and voted to advance the OCCC as a regional applicant, and participate in regional and state economic development activities. The first of which will be participation in the Economic Development Summit on November 9th sponsored by "Connect" the partnership of colleges and universities in southeastern Mass. Post Summit OCCC will utilize the Connect Economic Impact Report to

continue to engage state and regional legislative leaders and especially interact with the regional chambers of commerce to develop a regional economic development plan. When the economy improves the collaborative members feel new and existing companies will continue to find available space and building opportunities in OCCC communities. The OCCC region offers companies the advantage of lower business operation costs, a trained and productive work force, and excellent transportation access throughout southern New England.

Adapted and updated from a press release issued from the Institute for Regional Development at BSU.

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