

Expedited Permitting Law Adopted

In the final days of the legislative session, the General Court passed and the Governor signed into law House Bill 5207, which establishes programs at both the State and local levels to develop expedited permitting for important projects. Funding is appropriated in the bill to assist localities interested in clarifying and improving their local permitting processes and standards for key sites or areas. Funding is also provided to each of the regional planning agencies to provide local technical assistance. This is the first time, at least in several decades, that the State has directly supported regional planning agencies with funding. The Commission will receive a briefing on the new law at the September 21st BRPC meeting.

Contact: Nat Karns

Invitation to State Senate Candidates

The State Senate candidates have all been invited to attend the September 21st BRPC meeting, with at least one of the candidates confirmed at this point. The Commission will provide them with key issues for the Berkshires in regards to community and economic development, environmental protection, housing, land use planning, and transportation. While two days after the primary election, we hope that the remaining candidates will address these issues during the campaign and afterwards.

Contact: Nat Karns

Low Impact Development

BRPC is promoting Low Impact Development (LID) in the Berkshires, and is looking for demonstration projects. LID creatively decreases the overall footprint of development, limits the amount of impervious surface area, preserves natural features, and ultimately decreases and treats storm-

water runoff at its source. BRPC will provide LID engineering services to two new development projects, which will serve as LID models and prototypes. A grant from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust will



pay for the engineering services of Steven Roy, an expert in LID design, and the developer will be responsible for all the permitting and construction costs. In addition, BRPC will assist two municipalities in amending their bylaws to incorporate LID design criteria and sponsor a training session in Berkshire County, targeting local engineering/consultant firms and municipal permitting authorities. If you know of a project that could serve as a LID demonstration project for communities and developers, we would like to hear from you.

Contact: Lauren Gaherty

Adams Zoning Project

With funding provided through a Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to the Town of Adams, BRPC staff prepared proposed zoning bylaw revisions for the Town. Proposals were provided to the Community Development Director covering several sections of the Zoning Bylaw, specifically:

- Creating a new truly mixed use zoning district covering the entire downtown area with clearer standards for developments in that area
- Updating the definitions section
- Revising the Town's parking standards and driveway requirements and standards
- Creating an Open Space Residential Development bylaw to replace the old cluster development provisions
- Revising the residential densities allowed throughout town to better reflect existing densities and development patterns

- Revising the Town's multi-family development standards
- Creating a new townhouse development bylaw

We will continue to work with the Town in the coming months to revise these proposals as they move through the review and approval process.

Contact: Nat Karns

Lee Downtown Redevelopment Study

The Town of Lee, in cooperation with the Lee Community Development Corporation and Lee Chamber of Commerce, has formed a Downtown Task Force to study community needs and downtown redevelopment opportunities. The Task Force is charged with investigating impediments to development and ways to encourage business growth. A first step includes a parking study, conducted by BRPC, to investigate parking conditions, turnover and occupancy



Main Street, Downtown Lee

rates. In addition, BRPC is conducting a traffic study on Housatonic and Main Streets to clarify traffic flow and congestion concerns. It is anticipated that these reports will be completed by September 2006. The Task Force plans to use these traffic studies as way of understanding existing conditions and clarify if transportation improvements are crucial to successful downtown redevelopment. The Task Force held their first community outreach meeting on August 10th highlighted by a downtown walking tour and visioning session. The Task Force will continue to hold community meetings through the Fall to gather public input. A final report detailing physical and regulatory improvements is due late Spring 2006.

Contact: Joellyn Warren

Upcoming Events

September 6	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC
September 21	Full Commission Meeting	7:30 p.m.	BRPC
October 4	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC
October 24	CPTC Course, "Site Plan Review"	7:00 p.m.	BRPC
November 1	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC

Route 2 Access Management Study

BRPC staff is working on an access management study to improve conditions on the Route 2 (Mohawk Trail) corridor between downtown North Adams and Williamstown. Access management is a way to preserve safe and efficient traffic operations on a roadway through the coordinated application of physical improvements, land use control measures and design standards.

An access management study for this section of Route 2 was a major recommendation of the 2002 *Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Plan*. During the public outreach conducted for the *Byway Plan*, many residents and property owners along the Route 2 corridor between North Adams and Williamstown voiced their concerns about the increase in traffic congestion and delays. Concerns about the increasing difficulty of turning in and out of driveways and side streets were voiced as well. The objective of the access management study is to mitigate these existing concerns and safeguard the corridor from a future worsening of such conditions.

BRPC staff will work with representatives from North Adams, Williamstown, and MassHighway, along with community groups and local businesses, to evaluate existing access conditions in conjunction with current land use and zoning in the corridor. The study will provide engineering designs and cost estimates for improvements to top priority sites identified by analysis, so that municipalities can develop sufficient designs for construction.

Contact: Michael Hoffmann

2007 UPWP

The 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) approved by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) August 8 describes the work, budget, and funding sources for transportation planning to be performed during the one-year period beginning October 1, 2006. Most work will be performed by BRPC staff in cooperation with appropriate agencies. Highlights of the 2007 UPWP include the following:

- Lee Area Traffic Study;
- Regional Transportation Plan Update;
- Route 7/20 Access Management Plan and Design, Lenox and Pittsfield;
- Route 2 Access Management, North Adams and Williamstown;
- Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Facilities Improvements;
- Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Multi-Use Path Feasibility Study and Preliminary Design, North Adams to Williamstown;
- Central Berkshire Community Transit Study

Contact: Tom Matuszko

Volunteer Opportunities

We are seeking volunteers to help out with work in the office. If you would be willing to spend some time assisting us with administrative tasks, please contact Joyce McGuire at 413-442-1521, ext. 13, or jmcguire@berkshireplanning.org

Clearinghouse Reviews

South Street Reconstruction ENF (Dalton)
Churchill Estates Subdivision (Pittsfield)

TIP Update

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on August 8 endorsed the 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a \$47.7 million list of bridge, highway and transit projects to be implemented in the region over the next four years, within the limits of available federal funding. In addition to basic road and bridge restoration projects, the TIP includes intersection improvements at Route 20 and Barker Road in Pittsfield and Route 8 and Friend Street in Adams, reconfiguration of traffic around Park Square in Pittsfield, Scenic Byway improvements on Reservoir Road in North Adams and on the historic Mount Greylock access road, beautification of the Sheffield Village Green and a \$10 million, multi-year reconstruction of the Hadley Overpass on Route 8 in North Adams. On the transit side, highlights include a hybrid electric engine for one of the new buses to be acquired by the BRTA, and funding for vehicles and services for north county senior citizens, disabled residents and workers in need of access to jobs not served by the BRTA.

Due to a combination of funding constraints and rising costs, some road projects that had been listed in previous versions of the TIP had to be eliminated from the four-year program. These include upgrades of East and South Streets in Pittsfield and Main Street in Great Barrington, reconstruction of Tyringham Road in Lee and repair of a retaining wall along Route 2 in Williamstown.

Contact: Anuja Koirala