

BERKSHIRE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

Meeting of Wednesday, August 17, 2005

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 1 Fenn Street, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MINUTES

MPO Representatives Present:

Ken Miller, Director, EOT Office of Transportation Planning, Chair (representing Secretary of Transportation John Cogliano)
Sandra Lamb, Chair, Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
Sam Haupt, Chair, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Ross Dindio, District Engineer, MassHighway District 1 (representing MassHighway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky)

Agency Staff Present:

Nat Karns, Executive Director, BRPC
Andrew Lenton, Transportation Program Manager, BRPC
Anuja Koirola, BRPC
Ethan Abeles, BRPC
Chuck MacNeil, Administrator, BRTA
Mark Moore, MassHighway District 1
Peter Frieri, MassHighway District 1
Mark Guenard, EOT Office of Transportation Planning
Bruce Collingwood, Public Works Director, City of Pittsfield

1. Minutes of meeting of June 30, 2005

Upon a motion by Sam Haupt, seconded by Ross Dindio, the MPO voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

2. 2006-2010 Transportation Improvement Program

Sam Haupt made a motion, seconded by Ross Dindio, to approve the TIP as submitted. Discussion followed. Chuck MacNeill noted that Part B did not show transit projects. The explanation is that Part B is formatted for FHWA-funded projects, although it also includes some state-funded bridge projects. Ken Miller requested that some changes be made in the arrangement of the document prior to publication. Because there are no separate state and federal formatting requirements, he said there should not be separate Parts B and C. Mark Guenard noted that the Supplemental List still contained a lot of inactive projects. It was agreed that Masshighway and BRPC staffs would work on trimming such projects from the Supplemental List before publishing the document. None of the changes discussed would affect the projects, costs or funding categories listed in the TIP. The MPO then voted unanimously to approve the motion.

3. 2006 Unified Planning Work Program

Ross Dindio made a motion, seconded by Sandra Lamb, to approve the UPWP as

submitted. Discussion followed. Ken Miller restated his earlier concern about the high amount budget for Task 1.1 – Support of the 3C Planning Process, and the smaller amount budgeted for Task 3.12 – Regional Transportation Plan Update, saying he disagrees with the concept of a perfunctory RTP update because there are still significant issues to be dealt with. Nat Karns responded that the public process for the 2003 RTP was very extensive and needn't be repeated on the same scale. Mr. Miller suggested that it could be more focused this time. There was some discussion of whether an RTP update would be needed in 2006, in light of the new legislation changing the update interval from every three years to every four years. Mr. Miller noted that that change does not take effect until July 1, 2007. It was agreed that, with the details of how that change will be introduced still unknown, it would be good to at least update the data and policies in the mean time.

4. Memorandum Of Understanding Regarding MPO Structure And Function

Nat Karns reported that there were still some unanswered questions regarding the method of designating sub-regional representatives and ensuring that those representatives think and act regionally. Ross Dindio relayed the comments of Dalton Selectman Bill Chabot, expressed at the August 10 Berkshire Transportation Forum, and also the comments of the Dalton Town Manager, to the effect that the Selectmen's Association does not have standing to elect sub-regional representatives, and that representatives elected that way might not effectively represent the sub-region. Sam Haupt suggested that selectmen with concerns like Mr. Chabot's could become more active in the Selectmen's Association to make it a more viable entity to fulfill this role. Nat Karns and Ross Dindio agreed to reach out to the towns. Ken Miller suggested that a letter be sent out from the MPO to all selectmen.

Ross Dindio made a motion, seconded by Sandra Lamb, to approve the MOU. Further discussion followed. Sam Haupt said that the Commission understands that the process needs to move forward, and hopes that future collaboration between the region and the state will be fruitful. Ken Miller said that the expanded MPO will need to meet to decide how to establish the Transportation Advisory Committee. Nat Karns mentioned the need to re-open the draft Public Involvement Plan, which had been set aside in 2002, pending MPO restructuring.

5. Member Agency Projects Status Reports

Peter Frieri presented the status of bridge, enhancement and highway projects I the 2005 TIP.

Chuck MacNeill reported on the impacts of rising fuel costs and the lack of competition in the market for providers of demand-responsive service. He added that an RFP had been issued for a broker/agent to find tenants for the Intermodal Transportation Center.

BRPC staff presented an update on the Downtown Pittsfield Circulation Study: The public meeting held on August 18 was attended mostly by those interested in

traffic calming on North Street, giving little regard to the impacts on First Street, which is forecast to go to Level-Of-Service F. A meeting is scheduled with Berkshire Medical Center officials to discuss that institution's plans for the north end of the study area. Ken Miller said that in the end, the study will have to result a professional decision.

6. Next Meeting Date and Agenda

It was agreed that the new MPO should be ready to meet by November, at which time it would need to flesh out the operating details. Meanwhile, staff-level work on those issues will continue. Ross Dindio asked who would sign the letter to the towns, and Ken Miller suggested that the letter come from the Secretary of Transportation as the Chair of the MPO.