

Report from the Berkshire Transportation Advisory Committee to the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization

~ From the Meeting Held on April 3, 2008 ~

Summary of Items Discussed

- **Election of Chairman and Vice chairman for remainder of FFY 08:**

Because elections were not held in November, Mr. Hickey moved to extend the existing terms to November 8, 2008. Mr. Feigin seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

- **Presentation by Linda Walsh and Pam Prentiss from the MHD Right-of-Way Bureau:**

Ms. Prentiss presented on the importance of including Right-of-Way plans in the development of any project which would require right-of-way acquisition. A handout was provided and BRPC has extra copies. Pam Prentiss may be contacted at Pamela.prentiss@mhd.state.ma.us, (508) 929-3909.

- **Presentation by MHD regarding Pittsfield's East Street project:**

Mr. Hipius presented the development of the East Street project. BRPC has copies of this presentation. The East Street project covers the area of East St. from Lyman St. to Merrill Rd. The improvements will include increasing the number of lanes from two to four and adding 5 foot bike lanes and sidewalks, grass median and landscaping, 6 foot grass buffer between the roadway and the sidewalks and pedestrian signals. The intersection at Silver Lake will be signalized and reconfigured to a "T" intersection. The intersection at Woodlawn Ave. will also be signalized. MHD expects design to be completed at the end of 09 with construction to begin in the spring of 2010 at an estimated cost of 3 million. This project is not yet on the TIP. This project is not at 25% design and a public hearing has not yet been held. The Regional Transportation Plan has consistently identified the need to mitigate traffic congestion through Pittsfield and this project will improve regional mobility. Members of the TAC had several questions regarding this project. In response to being asked if the lights are going to be coordinated with each other and with other signals in the area, MHD representatives indicated that they believe they will be coordinated. In response to another member asking if the bike lanes could be separated from the roadway, MassHighway responded that this concept has not yet come up at public meetings and will be considered. In response to a question about the maintenance to the medians and grass buffers, MHD said that the City of Pittsfield will be responsible for maintaining the grass. Another member asked about available funding. There is engineering feasibility funding available and Mr. Karns added that this project will most likely be funding through an earmark because East St. is a critical segment of the National Highway System in the region. The TAC would like to know more about the portion of East Street from Elm Street to Lyman Street. Mr. Haupt expressed his concern that, unless there is a commitment from the City to improve the Elm St. to Lyman St. portion, the East St. project will only benefit the PEDDA site. Development of the Elm St. to Lyman St. portion is being led by the City of Pittsfield but is still in its very preliminary stages. Mr. Hickey suggested the City of Pittsfield present information regarding the challenges, costs and timeframe of the Elm St. to Lyman St. segment at the next TAC meeting.

- **Update on Status of Funding for FY 08:**

A handout was provided summarizing the funding reforms being proposed in new State legislation, many of which are similar to those proposed by the Transportation Finance Commission. Mr. Karns updated the TAC on the recommendations. It appears that the recommendations to cut expenses will be passed and the revenue recommendations will be addressed later. The Transportation Bond Bill is expected to be voted on shortly. It has been reported that the state legislature will be doing the bare minimum necessary to get the STIP and Chapter 90 funds approved and get the Bridge Renovation Program started.

Regarding the BRPC TIP, there have been no significant changes or reallocations in projects. One bridge project on Lower Valley Rd. in the Town of Washington fell off because of significant environmental impacts. This was not a funding issue. BRPC will be going into the FY08 amendment process and the MPO will be receiving materials on this at their meeting on April 16th. There will be at least one new funding category – National Highway System funding for a pavement preservation program.

- **Member Items for Discussion:**

When asked about maintenance of roads which were previously considered County roads, MassHighway District 1 responded that these roads are now maintained by the municipalities or by MassHighway. There are road inventory maps on the MHD website showing ownership.

Mr. Siegars suggested that the TAC revisit the TIP evaluation criteria. It was determined that the TAC will discuss the TIP evaluation criteria at its next meeting.

Mr. Hickey brought up an issue regarding BRTA fares which increase at Town lines. Mr. Siegars made a motion to place this issue as a priority item at the next MPO meeting. Mr. Hickey seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Karns mentioned that BRPC will be conducting traffic counts this summer and asked TAC members to consider having their communities send in requests.

- **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting of the TAC will be on Thursday, July 10th at 5:00.

Report on Issues Brought to a Motion

- The motion to extend the existing Chairman and Vice Chairman terms to November 2008 was carried unanimously.
- The motion to place the issue regarding the BRTA fares as a priority item for the next MPO meeting was carried unanimously.