

# COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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## BRPC APPROVES NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

At the FY2009 year end meet of the Commission on August 13, the Commission voted to approve the following new Executive Committee:

**Chair: James Mullen (New Marlborough)**

**Vice-Chair: Sheila Irvin (Pittsfield)**

**Clerk: Gale Labelle (Becket)**

**Treasurer: Charles P. Ogden (Egremont)**

Thanks to Jack Hickey who provided excellent leadership over the past two years as Chair. Jack will remain on the Executive Committee in FY2010 as an at-large member.

## MEET THE NEW BRPC STAFF!

### David Daskal

Dave has over 20 years of experience in transportation planning, both as a consultant and in the public sector in Arizona and California. Dave's areas of expertise included traffic modeling and travel forecasts, traffic impact studies, fixed route bus and paratransit planning, and implementation of Transportation Control Measures for air quality attainment plans. After experiencing transportation issues in a wide variety of geographic settings, Dave believes there are no 'small problems', only the danger of small thinking about potential solutions. He looks forward to applying his skills to the challenges facing Berkshire County's transportation system.

### Brian Domina

Brian studied land use and environmental law at Pace University School of Law in White Plains, NY. He earned his law degree *magna cum laude* from Pace in May 2008. Brian is admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and joins BRPC to bring his legal background to assist Berkshire communities with Brownfield, economic development and community planning issues.

### Mackenzie Greer

Mackenzie is a recent graduate of UMASS Amherst with a dual graduate degree in Planning and Landscape Architecture. McKenzie, a Berkshire native, has prior work experience assisting the Colonial Theatre with grant development and has interned in the Pittsfield Community Development Department. is thrilled to be living and working in the Berkshires once again.



David Daskal  
Transportation Program Manager



Brian Domina  
Planner



Mackenzie Greer  
Planner

ANNOUNCEMENTS

## 2010 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM APPROVED

The Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for FFY2010 was approved by the MPO at its meeting on August 26<sup>th</sup>, following a 30 day public comment period. The 2010 UPWP is now available on the BRPC website.

The UPWP is a list, budget and description of all federally funded transportation planning work proposed to be performed between October 1, 2009 and September 30, 2010. The work is conducted mostly by BRPC staff and consultants working for BRPC under the auspices of the Berkshire MPO. The UPWP is one of several "certification" documents required under the federal law governing metropolitan transportation planning.

One important work priority included in the 2010 UPWP is a major update to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is updated every four years. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the long-range planning document for all federally funded transportation planning efforts, with a twenty year horizon and updated every four years. The RTP addresses both state and federal planning requirements. This important document guides investments in the region's transportation system to achieve system improvement and preservation goals such as congestion reduction, the design and construction of new sidewalks and bicycle facilities, improved transit service, continuation of adequate freight access, and other transportation projects. The RTP ensures that various transportation projects are consistent with the area's overall development policies and are coordinated with one another to provide an effective transportation system that makes efficient use of available funds. Over the next year, BRPC staff will be focused on a major update to this important planning document.

*BRPC Contact: Dave Daskal (x20)*

## ROUTE 7/20 CORRIDOR PROJECT GETTING UNDERWAY

BRPC has received a notification to proceed on the Route 7/20 Corridor Access Management Study. The total contract amount is \$205,000 and will be administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation.

Corridor Access Management refers to engineering and planning strategies that maintain or improve traffic flows by controlling for factors such as driveway location, dedicated turning lanes, and frontage roads. The Route 7/20 study will focus on the area between Dan Fox Drive and New Lenox Road. The main products of the study will be:

- 1) An action plan identifying opportunities and constraints for implementation of access controls and development standards, and
- 2) Preliminary designs for access control projects at high priority locations.

BRPC will be soliciting bids for a consultant to assist with the study. It is expected work on the study will be completed by the Fall/Winter of 2010.

*BRPC Contact: Dave Daskal (x20)*

## BECKET PURSUING CDBG FUNDS

The Berkshire Planning Commission and the Town of Becket are collaborating on a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for the Town with the potential to bring significant grant funds to Becket. The Town has held several meetings to provide opportunities for community members to give their input. A booth was set up at the Community Fair on July 25, and more than fifty people stopped by to learn about CDBG and provide their input. On Saturday, August 1st, BRPC and the Town will held a meeting in the Town Hall. This involved a full presentation on the grant program and a lively discussion from those present.

The Select Board appointed a nine member Task Force of Becket townspeople to work with BRPC and the Town Administrator to develop a "Community Development Strategy" which forms the core of the CDBG application. The first meeting of the Task Force was held on Monday, August 17, 2009, and will be followed by semi-weekly work sessions throughout the remainder of August and September. These are all open meetings which the public is invited to attend. Meetings scheduled will be posted on the Town's website: [www.townofbecket.org](http://www.townofbecket.org).

*BRPC Contact: Patricia Mullins (x17)*





## 2010-2013 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) approved the FFY2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at its meeting on August 26<sup>th</sup>, following a 30 day public comment period. The 2010-2013 TIP is now available on the BRPC website.

The 2010-2013 TIP includes a prioritized 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. The TIP is a requirement of the transportation planning process, as most recently legislated by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Transportation improvement projects are not eligible for federal funding unless they are listed in the TIP.

The TIP includes the rehabilitation of a retaining wall on Route 2 in Williamstown in 2010, improvements to Route 183 in Lenox in 2010 and 2011, improvements to South Street in Pittsfield in 2011 and 2012, and to Main Street in Great Barrington in 2013, as well as the continuation of the \$10 million, multi-year reconstruction of the Hadley Overpass on Route 8 in North Adams, which began in 2009. Also include in the TIP is the construction of a 1.2 mile northerly extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail in Adams and the construction of a bike trail in Lenox along Housatonic Street from Woods Pond to the Lenox High School, in 2010. These two projects are being funded through a federal earmark.

On the transit side, highlights include the introduction of minibuses and the replacement of several paratransit vehicles. Some of these projects will be funded through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).

*BRPC Contact: Anuja Koirala (x18)*

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[www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org)  
and follow the "Newsletter"  
link.



## ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CONSERVATION BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

The Mass. Dept. of Energy Resources will soon issue guidance on applying for funding from the EECBG program. Approximately \$12 million in competitive grants will be made available to towns and cities to fund renewable energy projects, such as solar PV, and thermal efficiency projects for oil-heated buildings. The source of the funds is the federal stimulus package, so projects that are "shovel ready" will be most competitive. Municipalities can apply for up to \$150,000. We expect a short application process, so if you have a possible project, do your homework now so you'll be ready to apply. Regional school districts are eligible to apply, but the application must be submitted by one of the member towns. We will keep you informed as the grant program develops. Fact sheets about the program can be found on the BRPC website. Please contact the BRPC to learn more or if you need assistance pulling your project together for the application.

*BRPC Contacts: Lauren Gaherty (x35) or Amy Kacala (x12)*

## COMMONWEALTH CAPITAL PROGRAM

The Governor's Commonwealth Capital (CommCap) policy for FY2010 has been released. CommCap uses state funding as an initiative for communities to work towards achieving the state's sustainable development principles. In place since 2005, the program awards points for a variety of different land use and planning activities, and community scores are used as a factor when considering awards for several different programs, including drinking water supply protection and public works economic development grants. Communities considering grant applications this fiscal year should make sure that an updated application has been filed. Enter 'Commonwealth Capital Massachusetts' into your favorite search engine to access this year's guidance, prior year scores, and an updated application form.

*BRPC Contact: Sarah LaValley (x28)*





GRANTS AND TRAININGS

MASSACHUSETTS ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST  
FY11 GENERAL GRANTS

The Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET or the Trust) seeks proposals from communities and non-profit organizations for projects that will restore, protect, and improve water and water-related resources of the Commonwealth. The general grants program accepts proposals for programs and initiatives that address threats to the health of the state's water bodies and watersheds. The goal of this MET program is to encourage development of new approaches and ideas and to spur innovation among grantees or partnering organizations. To achieve these outcomes, the Trust seeks proposals that would: improve water quality or quantity, conserve aquatic or marine habitat and species, reduce runoff pollution, mitigate the effects of climate change on water resources, promote human health as it relates to water resources, and/or other efforts consistent with the Trust's mission.

Contact: William Hinkley (617) 626-1045 [william.hinkley@state.ma.us](mailto:william.hinkley@state.ma.us)

RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT PROGRAM

The Recreational Trails Program provides grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000 on a reimbursement basis for a variety of trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects throughout Massachusetts. It is part of the national Recreational Trails Program, which is funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Funds are disbursed to each state to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. Recreational Trails grants are 80-20 challenge grants. In other words, 80% of the project costs are reimbursed to grantees, but at least 20% of the total project value must come from other sources.

Contact: Amanda Lewis (413) 586-8706 ext. 19 [amanda.lewis@state.ma.us](mailto:amanda.lewis@state.ma.us)

CITIZEN PLANNER TRAINING COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOPS

Two Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) courses will be held at BRPC this fall. CPTC workshops are offered around the state on a variety of topics to help provide planning board and zoning boards of appeal with the background needed to make informed decisions. The first workshop, "Chapter 40B/ Comprehensive Permits" will be held Thursday, October 15 at 7:00. A second workshop, "Introduction to Local Economic Development Planning" is still being finalized. Brochures will be sent to all planning and ZBA mailboxes in mid-September. 'On-demand' trainings are also available. More information about CPTC can be found at [www.umass.edu/masscptc/](http://www.umass.edu/masscptc/)

BRPC Contact: Sarah LaValley (x28)

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

17 Commission Meeting \*  
BRPC Office 7:00 pm

\*New Delegate and Alternate Orientation to immediately precede the meeting of the full commission. Orientation will begin at 5:45 pm.

OCTOBER

1 Executive Committee Meeting  
BRPC Office 4:00 pm

7 Brownfields Committee Meeting  
BRPC Office 11:00 am

Berkshire Conservation Commission  
Group  
BRPC Office 7:00 pm

15 40B/Comprehensive Permitting CPTC Course  
BRPC Office 7:00 pm

29 5th Thursday: Green Communities Act  
TBD 6:00 pm

CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS

Berkshire Wind Power Project  
NPC. Comments submitted Aug. 21,  
2009.