

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 5 MARCH/APRIL 2010



IN THIS ISSUE

GRANT AWARDS	
Energy Efficiency Grants Awarded to Berkshire Towns	<u>1</u>
2010 District Technical Local Assistance Projects	<u>2</u>
TRANSPORTATION	
Working to Improve Traffic Along the 7/20 Commercial Corridor	<u>2</u>
New Audit Program Targets Funding To Areas of Greatest Need	<u>3</u>
Lee Makes Progress In Implementing Regional Bike Trail	<u>3</u>
NEWS	
Wind Siting Reform Act Passes State Senate	<u>3</u>
GRANT OPPORTUNITIES	
Reminders!	<u>4</u>
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) Grant Program	<u>4</u>
CALENDAR	<u>4</u>



ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANTS AWARDED TO BERKSHIRE TOWNS

A major stimulus funding opportunity for smaller (fewer than 35,000) towns wishing to implement energy efficiency measures reaped significant rewards for Berkshire communities. The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) awards were announced by the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) in February. The Berkshires received 14 awards totaling over \$1.6 million. This stimulus-funded program will help communities implement energy efficiency and renewable energy generation projects that will reap long-term cost savings for the communities and school districts who received funding.

Town	Amount	Project
Adams	\$55,125	Solar installation on Wastewater Treatment Plant
Southern Berkshire Regional SD (via Alford, Monterey and Sheffield)	\$308,733	Thermal efficiency measures in school
Becket	\$150,000	Thermal efficiency improvements in Fire Station #2 and Ambulance Garage
Egremont	\$145,170	Thermal efficiency measures and a solar PV array at Town Highway Garage
Lee	\$62,000	Thermal efficiency measures at Central and South Lee Fire Stations
NewAshford	\$13,200	Thermal efficiency measures at Town Hall
New Marlborough	\$64,575	Thermal efficiency at Town Hall and Town Garage
Northern Berkshire SD (via N. Adams and Clarksburg)	\$300,000	Solar PV array on Drury High School
Otis	\$150,000	Thermal and energy efficiency at Town Hall and the Waste Water Treatment Plant
Sheffield	\$20,000	Thermal efficiency measures at Town Hall and the Police Department
Stockbridge	\$66,479	Solar array at the DPW building and efficiency improvements at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Interlaken Fire House
Tyringham	\$51,102	Thermal efficiency at Town Hall/Highway Garage, the Old School House, Fire Station, and Library/Post Office
Washington	\$106,120	Thermal efficiency at Town Hall and the Highway Garage
Windsor	\$137,500	Thermal efficiency at Town Hall, the Town Office Building, and the Highway Garage

GRANT AWARDS

2010 DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS

BRPC is happy to announce projects selected to receive DLTA technical assistance from BRPC in 2010.

Land Use/Sustainable Development

Selected Projects: Four projects fell under the funding category of pursuing one or more of the states 10 Sustainable Development Principles.

Bylaws

- Washington wind bylaw
- Monterey communications bylaw revisions
- Florida wind bylaw

Community Planning

- Great Barrington Master Plan assistance
- North Adams long-range planning strategy
- Becket community water system planning

Economic Development

- "Doing Business in Sheffield" permitting guide
- Dalton adaptive reuse strategy (2 sites)

Regional/Municipal Coordination: Four projects assisted collaborations of two or more Berkshire communities working towards a common purpose.

Regional Group Purchasing Program

BRPC is working with the steering committee of the program to implement a strategy to enhance service offered by the Group Purchasing Program.

Shared Service Study

BRPC is continuing a study began in FY2009 to look at each department of Lee, Lenox, and Stockbridge to identify potential shared service arrangements that could offer enhance service, cost savings, or both.

Permitting Software

BRPC is working with a number of towns to identify a permitting software option to bring into use in the county to streamline workload and improve service for all interested communities.

Adams-Savoy Energy Contract

As towns begin to see renewable energy projects in their jurisdictional limits, there is an opportunity to capture economic benefit for the host town. This study will help identify potential arrangements to reap local benefit from renewable energy projects.

Regional Economic Development Planning

BRPC will work with a number of Berkshire towns to develop an economic development strategy, paying special attention to downtown areas.

Regional Broadband Planning

BRPC will work to implement strategies to expand broadband service to underserved communities in the region.

BRPC Staff Contact: Amy Kacala x12



WORKING TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC ALONG THE ROUTE 7/20 COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

The segment of Route 7/20 between Dan Fox Drive and New Lenox Road is the subject of the Route 7/20 Corridor Access Management Study which recently got underway. This roadway section is considered a potential traffic chokepoint due to the large number of driveways that serve adjacent parcels. The mile-long section includes 60 driveways and curb cuts. Each of these access points represents what traffic engineers term a 'conflict' between through traffic and traffic entering or exiting the roadway, and each conflict works to slow down traffic flow and reduce road capacity. Allowing this many curb cuts on a major regional roadway like Route 7/20 is poor *access management*.

One goal of traffic engineers and planners is to keep roads functioning as efficiently and safely as possible. Access management controls are often the most cost effective means of achieving this goal. Potential low-cost access control measures include consolidating driveway locations, inter-parcel connections, frontage and service roads, and the use of medians to control locations where vehicles can turn.

BRPC, the City of Pittsfield, and the Town of Lenox have retained the consulting firm of VHB to take the lead on the Corridor Access Management plan. In addition to being traffic engineers, VHB is a firm with prominent land use planning expertise. VHB intends to work closely with planners from Pittsfield and Lenox to develop land use controls that address access management issues, and can be implemented during development or redevelopment of corridor parcels.

A key part of implementing land use and access management measures will be obtaining public input and securing public support for these initiatives. As part of the planning process, three public meetings will be held to share information and gather input and ideas. While open to the public, it is hoped these meetings will enjoy strong participation from corridor residents, businesses, and parcel owners. The first public meeting will be held 8:00 am, March 24th at the Hampton Inn & Suites, 445 Pittsfield Road in Lenox. VHB will present a summary of existing conditions in the corridor and provide an overview of the types of actions (both land use and transportation) that will be considered as potential corridor recommendations.

Further information on Corridor Access Management planning and the Route 7/20 Study can be obtained by contacting Dave Daskal, BRPC's Transportation Program Manager, at 413-442-1521 x20 (email: ransportation@berkshireplanning.org). BRPC, Pittsfield, Lenox, and VHB encourage all corridor community members to participate in the study process. We look forward to hearing from you on this topic in the coming months.



NEW AUDIT PROGRAM TARGETS FUNDING TO AREAS OF GREATEST NEED

FY 2009 marked the start of a new Road Safety Audit Program at BRPC. The safety audit is part of MassDOT's implementation of the Highway Safety Improvement Program, which helps to fund improvements at high volume accident locations. Locations where the total number of accidents ranks among the top 5% of all reporting locations (within a County or planning area) are eligible to undergo the audit process. The audit helps to determine if the location is a suitable candidate to receive Highway Safety Improvement Program funds.

The first location to formally go through this process in Berkshire County was the North Street/Lower Wahconah Street/Burbank Street intersection in Pittsfield. This busy intersection lies just south of Berkshire Medical Center where North Street forks into Wahconah Street. The Road Safety Audit was performed on Wednesday, January 27, 2010 by MassDOT, with the assistance of representatives from the City of Pittsfield, BRPC, area businesses, traffic engineers and public safety professionals.

The one-day audit included a site visit followed by a discussion of site observations and strategies to improve safety. A report was prepared by MassDOT's consultant that incorporates audit observations and analysis, and identifies several short and long-term safety improvements that the City of Pittsfield could implement at the intersection. One major finding of the audit is that the intersection is a qualified candidate to receive a Highway Safety Improvement Program funding for FY 2010.

Communities interested in learning more about accident statistics in their jurisdiction are encouraged to contact BRPC. A database of reported accidents in the County is maintained BRPC. For more information, please contact Senior Transportation Planner, Anuja Koirala, at 413-442-1521 ext. 18 or akoirala@berkshireplanning.org.



LEE MAKES PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING REGIONAL BIKE TRAIL

The Berkshire Bike Path Council has been working with Berkshire County communities to implement a bike route from Vermont in the north to Connecticut in the south. This plan consists of a major north-south spine supported by numerous local connections that feed bike traffic to and from the spine. Adams, North Adams, and Lanesborough have been out in front with implementing the bike trail, having already completed their sections of the spine in a major rails-to-trails initiative now known as the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. Now Lee has picking up the bike planning torch.

The Town's bike planning work began in 2009 when the Lee Selectboard authorized a special committee, the Lee Bikeway Committee, to look at potential routes in the town. To guide their planning, the Committee established a number of objectives for potential bike routes to meet, including:

- Connect to the envisioned north-south Berkshire spine trail,
- Promote local business by bringing the trail through downtown Lee,
- Market the trail as a component of recreation and economic development, and
- Connect with area schools to provide safe access for children.

BRPC worked closely with the Committee to identify nine route alternatives and then evaluated them using a number of factors including potential environmental impacts, route connectivity, and ease of implementation. The result was a preferred on-street route that combined elements of the different alternatives. Ultimately, the desire is to also implement off-street routes that connect to the on-street routes.

The Lee Bikeway Study report summarizing the analysis and findings of this effort is now available. Recommendations of the report are broken down into short- and long-term priorities. Short-term recommendations include further analysis of the preferred route to provide a clearer idea of feasibility and associated costs. Committed to keeping the momentum going, the town has already set aside \$50,000 for further engineering studies of the preferred route. Longer-term recommendations focus on design and engineering studies to explore both on-road and off-road options.

BRPC commends the Town of Lee on its vision for bikeway planning, and will continue to work with the Town and adjoining communities to assure regional coordination in bikeway planning efforts.

WIND SITING REFORM ACT PASSES STATE SENATE

In February, the State Senate passed the Comprehensive Siting Reform for Land Based Wind Projects Act (new bill number S. 2260). The bill's fate in the House is uncertain at this point. The final version to emerge from the Senate, while making some improvements from the initial bill which was opposed by BRPC, does not address most of the key issues we had with the bill, which include a lack of standards up-front, substantial impact on the ability of local governments to make their own decisions about the suitability of wind energy facilities in their communities, and granting substantial deference to a single form of energy producer, the wind power industry.

BRPC Contact: Executive Director Nat Karns (x26)

REMINDERS!

604(b) Water Quality Management Planning 604(b) Water Quality Management Planning Grant responses are due March 27, 2010.

The s.319 schedule is as follows:

- RFR will be issued on or about April 1, 2010.
- Pre-RFR meetings March 2, 2010 and March 16, 2010
- Proposals will be due on June 2, 2010

MASSACHUSETTS PRESERVATION PROJECTS FUND (MPPF) GRANT PROGRAM

Round 16 of the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) grant program has been scheduled. It is anticipated that funding will be in the range of the previous two grant rounds, Rounds 14 and 15, which were \$800,000 and \$780,000, respectively.

Administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), the MPPF is a state-funded 50% reimbursable matching grant program established in 1984 to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants must be a municipality or nonprofit organization. The program is administered in accordance with 950 CMR 73.00. Please note that grant disbursement is subject to reauthorization of the capital accounts and the availability of sufficient allocated funds.

Two MPPF workshops have been scheduled for the week of 3/8/10 at the Wistariahurst Museum in Holyoke and MHC at the Massachusetts Archives Building in Dorchester. Join a member of the MHC's Grants Division as they explain the program requirements, go over program materials, and give you the opportunity to ask questions. Workshops are free of charge and no registration is required.

Applications for the next round of grants, Round 16, are due April 9, 2010. For MPPF program information, downloadable Application/Instructions, and a listing of/directions to the upcoming grant workshops please visit the MHC's website <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/> <<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/>> or call the MHC at 617-727-8470. Limited quantities of the hardcopy version of the Application and Instructions will be made available shortly and at each workshop.

CALENDAR



MARCH

- 11 BRPC Executive Committee Meeting**
BRPC Office, 4:00 p.m.
- 18 BRPC Meeting**
BRPC Office, 7:00 p.m.
- 24 Brownfields Meeting**
BRPC Office, 10:00 a.m.
- 25 Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting**
BRPC Office, 4:00 p.m.

APRIL

- 1 BRPC Executive Committee Meeting**
BRPC Office, 4:00 p.m.
- 6 MPO Meeting**
BRPC Office, 4:00 p.m.
- 7 Conservation Commission Group**
BRPC Office, 6:00 p.m.

CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS

Minuteman Savoy Wind – Savoy.
Comments due March 12