

BERKSHIRE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

Meeting of Tuesday, August 8, 2006

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

MINUTES

MPO Representatives and Alternates Present:

Ken Miller, Director, EOT Planning, Chair (designee of Secretary of Transportation
John Cogliano)

Michael Chong, Federal Highway Administration (non-voting member)

Jack Hickey, BRPC Chair

Ross Dindio, Highway District Director, MassHighway District 1 (designee of
MassHighway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky)

Bruce Collingwood, Public Works Director, City of Pittsfield (designee of Mayor
James Ruberto)

Joseph Dean, BRTA Vice-Chair (alternate for Sandra Lamb, BRTA Chair);

Philip Guy, North Berkshires representative

Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mount Washington, Southwest Berkshires alternate

Gordon Bailey, Town of Lee, Southeast Berkshires representative

Member Agency Staff Present:

Nat Karns, Executive Director, BRPC

Andrew Lenton, Transportation Program Manager, BRPC

Anuja Koirala, BRPC

Michael Hoffmann, BRPC

Bob Malnati, Berkshire Regional Transit Authority

Mark Moore, MassHighway District 1

Peter Frieri, MassHighway District 1

Mark Guenard, EOT Office of Transportation Planning

Others Present:

Bob Weitz, Town of Sheffield

Jana Hunkler Brulé, Town of Florida and TANB

Joe Scelfi, representing Berkshire Mall

Mark Siegans, representing Berkshire Mall

Jane Winn, Berkshire Environmental Action Team

1: Minutes of meeting of June 20, 2006

A motion by Joseph Dean to approve minutes of previous meeting, seconded by
Ross Dindio, was passed unanimously.

2: Amendments to the 2006-2010 Transportation Improvement Program

Andrew Lenton spoke about TIP bridge-related amendments, and remarked that
no public comments had been received on this issue.

Mark Guenard spoke about new bridge project that got brought into the TIP that has increased expenditure by \$3,837,345, and noted that this amount will be covered by the state bridge program.

A motion by Ross Dindio to approve the 2006-2010 TIP amendments, seconded by Joseph Dean, was passed unanimously.

3: 2007-2011 Transportation Improvement Program Improvement Program (TIP)
Ken Miller explained how federal legislation changed rules so that we now make a 4-year TIP, as opposed to previous practice of making a 5-year TIP.

Andrew Lenton spoke to changes to the Draft TIP that were done to make it conform to SAFETEA-LU. Mr. Lenton noted the \$1.2 million cost increase on the South Street (Dalton) project which necessitated it being added to the 2007-2011 TIP and a subsequent rearranging of TIP projects. Mr. Lenton provided MPO members with a handout that included packages of project combinations that could be utilized to use the full TIP target amount.

Ken Miller clarified for the MPO that, due to the increased costs in constructing the South Street (Dalton) project and the fact that there was no funds available in 2006 to cover this, \$1.2 million in projects need to be moved out of 2007 in the previously prepared 2007-2011 TIP. Mr. Miller noted that this was this issue presently in front of the MPO – what project(s) to move out.

Nat Karns noted that it boiled down to a choice of bumping either the Barker Road/Route 20 project or the Park Square project out of year 2007 of the TIP. Mr. Karns noted that, in either case, there would be ramifications for the remaining years of the TIP.

Andrew Lenton noted the letter of objection to the previously prepared Draft TIP submitted by the Town of Great Barrington. Mr. Lenton went on to explain the TIP option scenarios described on the handouts.

Nat Karns remarked that the MPO should move through their options TIP year-by-TIP year and inquired as to which of the two Pittsfield projects (Barker Road/Route20 and Park Square) the MPO felt should be moved out of TIP year 2007.

Ken Miller noted that, in the TIP scenario in which Route 20/Barker Road is moved out of 2007, CMAQ funds would be left unused – whereas in the scenario in which Park Square is moved out, all available CMAQ funds are used (the Park Square project contains no air quality improvement elements and is therefore not eligible for CMAQ funds).

Bruce Collingwood noted that, although the City of Pittsfield certainly wanted to see both Route 20/Barker Road and Park Square get constructed, Park Square

was a higher priority. Ken Miller asked the MassHighway staff whether there was a present sense that Park Square was at an adequate level of readiness. Ross Dindio responded that the plans were done, and that he did not foresee a reason why it couldn't be advertised by September of 2007. Mr. Collingwood noted that the only caveat in regard to Park Square was that streetscape items needed to be done. Mark Guenard noted the previous concerns EOT had about Park Square regarding right-of-way and potential Section 4(f) issues. Mr. Collingwood noted that no Section 4(f) impacts were anticipated. Mark Moore noted that MassHighway traffic staff had reviewed the Park Square plans and he didn't anticipate any problems with the plans being in conformance with Federal funding requirements. Mr. Dindio noted that, from an engineering standpoint, Park Square would be ready to go in 2007; the remaining concern was the acquisition of needed right-of-way. Mr. Dindio also noted that MassHighway may be able to bring the cost of South Street (Dalton) down about \$100,000, which could free up funds for another smaller project to get in the TIP.

Ken Miller summarized that Pittsfield would rather have the Park Square project, but reiterated that CMAQ funds would go unutilized. Nat Karns noted that leaving Park Square in for 2007 would move the Sheffield Village Green project out, whereas the Sheffield project could be retained if the Route 20/Barker Road project was kept in 2007 instead of Park Square.

Nat Karns asked MassHighway staff, in regard to the South Street (Dalton) project, if they thought any additional CMAQ funding could be expended. Mark Moore responded that he believed a portion of the project could potentially be eligible for CMAQ funding.

Ken Miller noted that if CMAQ funding were not spent, it could likely be spent elsewhere in the state.

Bob Weitz from the Town of Sheffield noted the many years of planning that has gone into the Village Green project and that the project is half-done.

Philip Guy remarked that leaving CMAQ funding unused is bad from a regional perspective. Joseph Dean noted that he would also like to see available CMAQ funds utilized. Jack Hickey asked how much CMAQ funding would be left on the table. Andrew Lenton responded that \$100,000 would be unused and that there were no other projects for which that money could be utilized. Nat Karns remarked that it should be noted that Park Square did score higher in the TIP project evaluation.

Gordon Bailey inquired as to why Park Square couldn't be used for CMAQ funding. Andrew Lenton responded that there were no air quality improvements to the project.

In response to Gordon Bailey, Bruce Collingwood elaborated on the scope of the

Park Square project.

After a discussion about Park Square, Ross Dindio noted that the Park Square project could still remain on the same likely construction schedule as a 2008 TIP project as it would have had as a 2007 TIP project.

Gordon Bailey made a motion to approve the 2007 TIP option scenario that moved Park Square out of 2007 and kept Barker Road/Route 20 and Sheffield Village Green in for 2007. Philip Guy seconded the motion. The motion was carried with Bruce Collingwood dissenting.

Ken Miller remarked that the MPO must now address the 2008 TIP year.

Andrew Lenton discussed the option scenarios for moving Park Square into 2008: with Park Square in for 2008, either Main Road in Tyringham or River Road in Florida would have to be moved out of TIP year 2008.

MPO members discussed the readiness of both the Tyringham and Florida projects. Mark Moore provided input on this question from an engineering standpoint. Following this discussion, Joseph Dean made a motion to approve the 2008 TIP option scenario that included the Park Square and River Road (Florida) projects. Bruce Collingwood seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Ken Miller remarked that the MPO must now address the 2009 TIP year.

MPO members discussed the project readiness of the Skyline Trail (Hinsdale-Peru) project and the Main Street (Great Barrington) project. Following this discussion, Gordon Bailey made a motion to approve the 2009 and 2010 TIP option that included Main Road (Tyringham) and half of Route 183 (Lenox) in 2009 and the second half of Route 183 (Lenox) in 2010. Joseph Dean seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Gordon Bailey made a motion to approve the entire 2007-2011 TIP as defined by the per-year decisions that had been made. Jim Lovejoy seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

4: Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Ken Miller noted that the issue at hand for the MPO was to approve the 2007 UPWP.

In response to a question from Michael Chong, Andrew Lenton noted that the BRPC has never had a schedule of projects. Ken Miller remarked that BRPC should develop such a schedule.

Joseph Dean made a motion to approve the 2007 UPWP. Jim Lovejoy seconded

the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

5: South Street Alternatives Study

Anuja Koirala handed out copies of the South Street Alternatives Study Final Report. Andrew Lenton noted that the next step on this project was to get buy-in from the City of Pittsfield and MassHighway. Ms. Koirala spoke about the final recommendations of the project.

Ken Miller inquired as to the public response to the study recommendations. Bruce Collingwood noted that council hasn't endorsed the recommendations yet, but the public has voiced approval at meetings. Nat Karns noted that the project does not impact any residences and reiterated that the public liked the recommendations at meetings. Andrew Lenton noted that both the future Park Square and West Housatonic Street/Barker Road improvements were assumed as built for the South Street Study.

Mr. Miller asked what the next step was for this project. Nat Karns responded that preliminary engineering/environmental work needed to begin and that there was earmark funding available for this. Mr. Miller asked what MPO action was being sought. Mr. Karns remarked that an acceptance of findings would be appropriate.

Gordon Bailey made a motion to accept the findings of the study, pending approval by the City of Pittsfield. Jim Lovejoy seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

6: 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update

There was no information to report on additional RTP Update work. Michael Chong noted that safety provisions should be accounted for in the updated RTP.

7: Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Michael Hoffmann noted that another round of outreach had been made to all agencies and groups on the TAC invite list that had not responded to previous solicitations to have a representative on the TAC.

8: Status Reports on Planning & Design Projects of Member Agencies and Others

Ken Miller noted that this was the final MPO meeting that Andrew Lenton would be attending since he was taking a position with the City of New York. Andrew was wished well by all in attendance.

Gordon Bailey noted there is still no Southeast Towns sub-region MPO alternate.

9: Other Business

No remarks.

10: Next Meeting Date and Agenda

Nat Karns noted that the Regional Transportation Plan should be the major topic of

discussion at the next MPO Meeting.

The MPO agreed to meet next on Tuesday, October 17, 2006 from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM.