

**BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
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**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting  
Tuesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2007, 4PM**

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office  
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives and Alternates Present:

David Mohler, EOT (designee of Secretary of Transportation Bernard Cohen)  
Peter Niles, MassHighway (designee of MassHighway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky)  
Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield (designee of Mayor James Ruberto)  
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mount Washington, Southwest Berkshire Alternate  
Thomas Szczepaniak, North Central Berkshire Alternate  
Sam Haupt, Town of Peru, TAC Chairman, (BRPC Alternate)  
Jack Hickey, BRPC Chair and Representative  
Joseph Dean, BRTA Vice Chair and Alternate  
William F. Cavanaugh, Town of Becket, Southeast Alternate

Member Agency Staff Present:

Nathaniel Karns, Executive Director, BRPC  
Alison Church, Transportation Program Manager, BRPC  
Anuja Koirala, Senior Transportation Planner, BRPC  
Mark Guenard, EOT Office of Transportation Planning  
Peter Frieri, MassHighway District 1  
Mark Moore, MassHighway District 1  
Paul Maloney, Federal Highway Administration  
Bob Malnati, BRTA  
Bo Warren, BRTA Administrator  
Jennifer Andrade, BRPC Intern  
Andrew Koziol, BRPC Intern

Others Present:

Les Beebe, Town of Tyringham Highway Department  
Peter Curtin, Town of Tyringham Selectboard  
Joe Scelsi, Berkshire Mall  
Mark Siegars, Town of Tyringham, TAC Vice Chairman  
Ron Tinkham, Baker Hill Rd. District  
Jane Winn, Berkshire Environmental Action Team  
Doug Webb, Baker Hill Rd. District  
Dana Lacasse, MassHighway District 1  
Paul Boudreau, Town of Lanesboro  
John Goerlach, Town of Lanesboro  
Gae Elfenbein, Town of Lanesboro  
Bill Prendergast, Town of Lanesboro  
Linda Pruyne, Baker Hill Rd. District

Tom Galvagni, MHD District 1  
Alan Wilcox, Town of Tyringham

**1. Minutes of meeting of July 9th, 2007**

Mr. Mohler opened the floor to questions regarding the previous minutes.

Mr. Hickey asked for clarification on the three issues raised in the TAC minority report. Mr. Siegars paraphrased the content of the minority report that he had prepared and presented at the July 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Tom Szczepaniak moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Peter Niles. The motion carried unanimously (with the abstention of Jack Hickey, who had not been present).

**2. Presentation of revisions to and Vote to Approve 2008 TIP**

Ms. Church introduced the 2008 TIP and mentioned changes that had been made to the TIP, citing that most of the changes resulted from FHWA comments received that morning. She cited that the changes were minor and included percentages of transit funding allocated, the addition of two projects from BRTA, and an addition of an appendix that summarized the public participation process, including comments received and responses that were issued. Mr. Karns emphasized that the FHWA requests for changes pertained only to the wording, not the projects themselves.

In response to a question Ms. Church asked about the earmark for the North Adams project, Mr. Maloney answered that the money can be split over multiple years.

Mr. Seigars asked for a definition of accumulated earmark. Mr. Karns explained that there are two forms of earmarks, one that is in the annual appropriations bill and one – the accumulated earmark - that is in a multi year authorization bill that is available in increments of the 5 year period of time as 1/5 of the earmark money each year.

Mr. Niles motioned to approve 2008 TIP.

Mr. Lovejoy seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

**3. Vote to Approve the 2008 UPWP**

Ms. Church mentioned the request for revisions in the document's text and then summarized the 2008 UPWP.

Mr. Lovejoy made a motion to approve the 2008 UPWP.

Mr. Szczepaniak seconded the motion.

Motion passed unanimously.

**4. Discussion of 3 Project Need Forms submitted for the bike path projects (Adams, Lenox, and Pittsfield)**

Mr. Galvagni presented the PNFs from the three towns regarding their bike path proposals. The Town of Adams is considering extending the Ashuwillticook Bike Trail north to Lime St. and, if possible, even further north; there are a series of alternatives for one section of this path. The City of Pittsfield is considering a series of alternatives for its proposed bike path. The town of Lenox sent three different PNFs for three established segments of proposed bike path.

Mr. Lovejoy asked for an explanation of what constitutes a bike path. Mr. Galvagni responded by saying that it would be a separate path, isolated from the road in Lenox. In Pittsfield and Adams, since there is a wide range of alternatives, it is not known whether the facility would be an on road facility or a separate path.

Mr. Szczepaniak asked where the money for the new bike paths would come from; and Mr. Hickey further asked about federal funding possibly available to help with the cost of the bike paths. Mr. Galvagni said, amongst other possible sources, CMAQ money could be used. Mr. Karns reiterated that bike paths could be eligible for CMAQ funding since they are classified as projects to improve congestion/air quality (if they are not strictly recreational) and mentioned enhancement funding as a possibility. Mr. Seigars said that another source of funding for bike path projects is the forest highway program.

Mr. Karns concluded the discussion by emphasizing that an evaluation process of the bike path projects will be necessary in advance of the allocation of earmark money.

**5. Discussion of CMAQ allocations and allowable projects**

Mr. Frieri conducted a presentation on the topic of CMAQ funding. CMAQ eligible projects include, but are not limited in scope to: transit; ride sharing; traffic flow improvements, including intelligent transportation systems and improvements to signalization; demand management; and pedestrian/bicycle facilities.

**6. Status Reports on Planning and Design Projects of Member Agencies and Others**

Mr. Frieri said that with the exception of the bridge in North Adams, which is at 75% design, all bridges in the county are at 100% design, including the Sandisfield Bridge, which had been inadvertently listed at 25%. He said that Park Square has had 25% design review.

Mr. Mohler welcomed Mr. Warren as BRTA's Interim Administrator.

Mr. Malnati spoke about the three new buses in service, while noting that the hybrid bus is not yet in service. Mr. Warren announced that the hybrid bus will be showcased this Friday.

Mr. Karns cited that the 2<sup>nd</sup> working group meeting had been held related to the Lee Traffic Study and suggested that an increased participation from Becket and W. Stockbridge would benefit not only the study but also those communities. He also cited that with the transportation staff shortage over time, there was not as much opportunity for advancement of special studies in the region. He also acknowledged the efforts of the BRPC interns over the summer.

Mr. Szczepaniak made clear his support for the aforementioned bike paths, citing that the existing Ashuwillticook trail had greatly enhanced the quality of life in the Berkshires.

Mr. Cavanaugh expressed his concerns for the lack of funding for Berkshire County road repairs, using Becket's Washington Mountain Road as an example. He cited what he perceived as a need to write a strong letter to the appropriate powers that be. Mr. Hickey commented that he wasn't sure that a letter with harsh words and/or strong language would be useful since the inadequacies in funding have already been made clear and suggested that instead of writing a letter to the "powers that be", MPO members should go back to their communities and encourage involvement in the TAC and other grassroots efforts and involvement.

Mr. Lovejoy stated that in order for improvements to be made, people must be willing to pay (i.e. increased taxes); he cited the tendency of people to elect the politicians who promise no tax increases.

Mr. Karns cited the intent of the Transportation Finance Commission to release recommendations on how to improve the State's transportation financial condition.

Mr. Hickey told Mr. Cavanaugh that he would take to the next TAC meeting a solicitation of opinion as to advocacy of county wide support for increasing taxes in order to improve the condition of the infrastructure.

**7. Other Business**

Mr. Haupt cited a letter drafted by BRPC staff to the Town of Florida that will formalize the commitment that the MPO has towards their River Road project. The letter states that it is the intention of the MPO to fund the Florida project in 2009.

Mr. Mohler mentioned the State's commitment to safe infrastructure, citing a round of in depth bridge inspections following the recent Minneapolis bridge collapse.

In response to Mr. Karns asking if it was appropriate to file an administrative adjustment request to get the Williamstown Route 43 bridge out to bid in FY2007, Mr. Mohler said "yes."

**8. Next Meeting Date and Agenda**

The next meeting was set for October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at 4:00 PM.

Mr. Dean moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 PM. The motion carried unanimously.