

**BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
1 FENN STREET, SUITE 201, PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS 01201  
TELEPHONE (413) 442-1521 · FAX (413) 442-1523  
[www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org)

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting  
Tuesday, September 9th, 2008, 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)  
Gary Shepard, BRTA Administrator (BRTA Alternate)  
Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield (designee of Mayor James Ruberto)  
Jack Hickey, BRPC Chair (BRPC Representative)  
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mount Washington (Southwest Berkshire Representative)  
Thomas Szczepaniak, Town of Dalton (North Central Berkshire Representative)

Member Agency Staff Present:

Mark Guenard, EOT Office of Transportation Planning  
Paul Maloney, Federal Highway Administration  
Mark Moore, MassHighway District 1  
Peter Frieri, MassHighway District 1  
Nathaniel Karns, Executive Director, BRPC  
Alison Church, Transportation Program Manager, BRPC  
Anuja Koirala, Senior Transportation Planner, BRPC  
Christine Neumann, Transportation Planner, BRPC

Others Present:

Jana Brule, Town of Florida and Berkshire RIDES  
Jeff Cook, Cain, Hibbard, Myers & Cook, Counsel for Boston Symphony Orchestra  
Charlie Durfee, Lanesborough Fire Department  
Greg Federspiel, Lenox Town Manager  
Kimberly Flynn, Town of Lenox Selectboard  
John Goerlach, Town of Lanesborough Selectboard  
Julie Hannum, Town of Sheffield (Southwest Berkshire Alternate)  
Colleen Henry, Berkshire Mall  
Dick Lindsay, Berkshire Eagle  
John McNinch, Town of Lenox Selectboard  
Linda Messana, Town of Lenox Selectboard  
Jason Ostrander, Economic Development Specialist for Congressman John Olver  
Steve Pavlosky, Town of Lenox Selectboard  
Hon. William Pignatelli, State Representative, District 4  
Bill Prendergast, Town of Lanesborough Selectboard  
Joe Scelsi, Berkshire Mall  
Gary Schiff, Town of Lenox Planning Board  
Mark Siegars, Town of Tyringham, TAC Vice Chairman  
Joseph Szczepaniak, Town of Lanesborough (North Central Berkshire Alternate)  
Ron Tinkham, Baker Hill Road District  
Jeff Vincent, Lenox DPW  
Jane Winn, Berkshire Environmental Action Team

## **1. Introductions**

Mr. Mohler welcomed everyone to the meeting; members and those present introduced themselves.

## **2. Minutes of July 16, 2008 MPO Meeting**

Mr. Hickey moved to approve the minutes from the July meeting. Mr. Szczepaniak seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

## **3. Opportunity for Public Comment**

Mr. Mohler allowed each municipality and Mass Highway the opportunity to present information regarding the project for which they are the proponents.

A handout was provided outlining the status of several of the 2009-2012 TIP projects.

Mr. Frieri summarized the Route 2 project in Williamstown. This project would include the rehabilitation of a large concrete retaining wall near the State line that is in an advanced state of deterioration. The wall is approximately 300' long and 20' tall. Mr. Frieri noted that it is a high priority of District 1 to fix the retaining wall. The 25% design plan was submitted in July. In addition to replacing the retaining wall, the project will include road improvements along Route 2, including drainage and guardrail upgrades. The project is currently under consideration for TIP funding of \$3.5 million. At the 25% design submission, the cost was approximately \$2 million. In response to a question from an MPO member regarding the decrease in project cost, Mr. Moore clarified that a significant amount of roadway work has been removed from the project in order to specifically address the retaining wall and the immediate road surface.

Ms. Brule summarized the River Road project in Florida. This project has been on the TIP since 1998. The project is at 100% design. The Town has been in contact with the Right of Way Bureau to resolve a right of way issue. There were no questions about this project.

In his capacity as the spokesperson for the Baker Hill Road District, Mr. Siegars summarized the Route 7 - Route 8 Connector Road (Mall Road) project. The Route 7 - Route 8 Connector Road has been owned by the Baker Hill Road District since 1989. It is a legal public way, paid for by a public taxing district. The Route 7 - Route 8 Connector Road is the only heavy truck road between Route 7 and Route 8 and between Dalton Avenue in Pittsfield and Route 2 in Williamstown/North Adams. The Route 7 - Route 8 Connector Road carries an estimated average daily traffic of 6,400 vehicle trips. The project will require full depth reconstruction and has been designed to meet MassHighway standards. The cost of the project has been reduced by \$4 million over the past three years. The final Right of Way plans have been submitted. The layout plans have been submitted and reviewed. Mass Highway is currently reviewing the 100% design plan. Mr. Siegars provided copies of the economic analysis done for this project as well as letters of support from the Lanesborough Select Board, Lanesborough Police Department, north county ambulance services, and area businesses. According to the economic analysis, this road supports \$1.2 billion worth of retail business located within four miles of the road. Further, 88% of the County's largest employers are located within eight miles of the road. There will be a \$1.2 million savings by using a detour on Partridge and Swamp Roads. The detour will be in place for seven months and will include improvements at the Partridge Rd./Summer St. intersection. By using the detour, the timeframe for the project will be reduced by one year. Mr. Siegars indicated that the Baker Hill Road District has received a commitment from the State for a \$3 million earmark for this project and that the District is in active discussion with Congressman Olver to obtain the remaining balance. In response to a question from an MPO member, Mr. Siegars explained that the final engineering estimate of the project is \$7.8 million. With the addition of a 25% MassHighway contingency, the final cost of the project is estimated at \$9.3 million.

Mr. Collingwood summarized the South Street Improvement Project in Pittsfield. Survey work is currently being done. A consultant is on board. The City plans to have a 25% design hearing for the South Street project early in the Spring of 2009.

Mr. Collingwood also commented on the status of the Park Square Streetscape Project and the West/Center Street intersection project.

There were no questions about any of these projects.

Mr. Federspiel summarized the status of the Route 183 project in Lenox. Mr. Federspiel wished to emphasize that the project has not been stalled. The project has been under active design for the past three years. The project has considerable public support from Lenox residents and business owners. The Town of Stockbridge has also indicated their support of the project. The project has been on the TIP since 2005. When the project was rescheduled to FY

2010 and 2011, the Town of Lenox slowed down work on this project to match the TIP timeline. Internally, the Town is at the 75% design phase. The formal 25% design plan will be submitted to MassHighway. The Town is on target to have this project fully designed by next year and to begin construction in 2010. Town of Lenox voters approved \$1.5 million in Town Funds. The Town has also submitted a PWED grant application in the amount of \$1 million. The Town will also apply for \$500,000 from the STRAP program. Mr. Federspiel indicated there is the potential for significant private investments as well. Mr. Federspiel noted that the Route 183 project is approximately 1.5 miles long and will include road resurfacing and drainage improvements as well as the construction of sidewalks and bicycle lanes, which will greatly improve pedestrian access and safety for adjoining neighborhoods and between the Lenox Village and Tanglewood. The project will also include the reconfiguration and reconstruction of the West St./Walker St./Main St./Old Stockbridge Road intersection to a more conventional "T" design. This will improve the functionality and safety of the intersection as well as allow for a significant increase in "green space" and pedestrian utilization. Route 183 carries approximately 5,500 – 6,000 cars on a typical day. This estimate is higher during peak periods. The Route 183 project is part of the Town's major Village Improvement Project which involves sidewalk improvements and the reconfiguration of parking within the Village, installing period street lighting and new way-finding signage as well as the construction of new gateways to the Village.

Mr. Cook provided a letter in support of the Route 183 project from the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) as well as copies of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Economic and Community Impact Study prepared by Mt. Auburn Associates. Mr. Cook explained that Tanglewood is used by the surrounding communities throughout the year for various events. The BSO has been working with the Town of Lenox for approximately two years to establish a connection to the municipal sewer system in coordination with the road reconstruction project. The BSO has incurred engineering and legal fees and expended significant staff time developing this project. Mr. Cook explained that most of Tanglewood's sewage is handled through a tight-tank system which requires the tanks be pumped on a daily basis, with the sewage being trucked to the Stockbridge treatment plant. Concerts in the Shed frequently involve 8-10 truck loads the following day. The tight tank system is operated under a permit issued by DEP which requires BSO to explore every opportunity to connect to the municipal sewage treatment facility. The Route 183 project has been the first real possibility to do this. Further, Tanglewood is in the process of developing a Master Plan, which will involve the restoration and improvement of buildings, roadways and parking areas as well as upgrading the bathroom facilities and improving accessibility.

In response to a question from an MPO member, Mr. Federspiel clarified that the Town has held three public meetings and plans to hold a 25% design hearing in late fall or early winter of this year. In response to another question from an MPO member regarding the revised scope, Mr. Federspiel clarified that the project started out as a footprint project in 2003-2004 and was put on the TIP afterward. The project was originally just a 10 foot sidewalk project, but public preference has changed the design to include a narrower sidewalk and bike lanes. Because of changes to the scope of the project, the Route 183 project will now be considered an improvement project, rather than a preservation project.

Mr. Pavlosky emphasized that the Town of Lenox has continued to work on this project in good faith based on an agreed schedule of phasing the project over four years. He also noted that Route 183 is not only the main road to Tanglewood, but that many other facilities, such as the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health, Lenox Morris Elementary School, the Berkshire Country Day School and a handicapped housing facility located on Route 183 also would benefit from this project.

Mr. Szczepaniak asked who the MPO delegate from Lenox is. Ms. Church noted that the South East region and the North region delegates and alternates have not been in regular attendance at MPO meetings and that caucuses have been set for early October for both the South East and the North regions to appoint new MPO delegates. The South East region MPO caucus will be held on October 9<sup>th</sup>. The North region MPO caucus will be held on October 16<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Pavlosky noted that Lenox plans to participate in the South East caucus and intends to offer their representation on the MPO.

Mr. Szczepaniak noted that the County received only \$4.3 million to allocate. Mr. Hickey agreed that the process is not meant to pit one town against another, but that the real issue is lack of funding. The County has over \$80 million worth of projects.

#### **4. Vote to Approve 2009 UPWP**

Ms. Church said that the only comments received came from FHWA. Based on suggestions made by Mr. Maloney, the names of the delegates were added to the signatory sheet, which had previously only listed their titles. The summary of the budget on page 34 was updated to include a detailed breakdown of the federal and state

allocations. This information was also added to the specific budgets listed at the end of each task. Mr. Hickey moved to approve the UPWP with the changes. Mr. Szczepaniak seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The signatory sheet was signed.

## **5. Update on Status of Air Quality Determination and estimate of schedule for public release of FY 2009-2012 TIP**

Ms. Church explained that BRPC staff has prepared an amendment to the 2007 – 2010 TIP in order to move 2009 projects from the 2009 TIP into year 2009 of the 2007 – 2010 TIP, which has been approved. A handout was provided summarizing the changes. The following projects will be moved to the 2007 – 2010 TIP: Main Road rehabilitation project in Tyringham, River Road project in Florida, North Adams CMAQ and HSIP project, Hadley Overpass reconstruction project in North Adams and all of the earmark projects including the Lenox bike path project from the Lenox High School to Crystal Street at Woods Pond, the extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail north to Lime Street in Adams, the Downtown Roadway and Streetscape improvement project in North Adams, Phase II of the Downtown Streetscape improvement project in Pittsfield, the Mount Greylock Scenic Byway project in Lanesborough, the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Historical Preservation project in North Adams and the Route 7/20 Corridor Access Management project in Pittsfield/Lenox. This amendment will allow these projects to move forward without waiting for the CMAQ determination.

Mr. Mohler explained that EOT does not have a timeline in place to have the 2009 – 2012 STP approved by FHWA or FTA before the end of the calendar year. The 2009 STP cannot be approved before approving the CMAQ determination. Thus, the existing 2007 STP will be amended so that 2009 projects of the 2009 draft TIP can continue to move forward. The 2009 – 2012 TIP will eventually be adopted. Mr. Mohler clarified that all the MPOs throughout the State are under the same constraints.

Mr. Hickey motioned to release the amendment for a 30 day public comment period. Mr. Szczepaniak seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Federspiel asked for clarification on when the 2009 TIP will be released. Mr. Mohler indicated that the 2009 TIP should be released within the second quarter of the federal fiscal year (i.e. sometime between January and March of 2009).

There was a brief discussion about reporting accidents to the statewide database. Mr. Karns explained that federal funding comes in various categories. One new funding category is for highway safety projects. If communities are not reporting accident information to the statewide accident database, BRPC doesn't have good numbers on which to identify safety projects. The statewide database includes data for intersections as well as road segments. Mr. Karns strongly recommended that communities encourage their local police departments to report accidents to the State. Data reported by state police officers has been consistently good. Mr. Mohler suggested that communities report accidents to the RMV on a regular basis, as well as to BRPC. MassHighway uses information from the RMV to develop its list of high accident location clusters.

Because of changes in the scope and cost of several projects, Mr. Niles suggested that the MPO may need to revisit the 2009 draft TIP. Mr. Hickey agreed that it would be in everyone's best interest to take the 2009 draft TIP back to the TAC for reconsideration. Mr. Siegars, in his capacity as vice chairman of the TAC, added that the TAC would welcome the opportunity to take the new information and reconsider its earlier recommendation. He suggested that the TAC should also focus on how the CMAQ funding will be allocated. Mr. Niles also noted that communities should try to leverage other funding for their projects.

Mr. Niles moved to rescind the 2009 – 2012 draft TIP funding decision and send it back to the TAC for consideration. Mr. Hickey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Mr. Frieri briefed the MPO on 2008 TIP Bridge and Highway projects (see handout).

### Bridge Projects:

- A Right of Way Certificate was issued on 9/4/08 for the Egremont bridge project on Route 41. The botanical survey for this project has been completed. This project still needs a NHESP (Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program) sign-off before a dam permit can be issued. MassHighway anticipates that this project will be advertised before the end of the fiscal year.
- The Hadley Overpass project in North Adams has been advertised as of 5/17/08. The contract was awarded to J.H. Maxymillian, Inc.

- The Hungerford bridge project in Pittsfield has been advertised as of 5/10/08. The contract was awarded to Petricca Construction Company.
- The Norfolk Road bridge project in Sandisfield has been advertised as of 6/21/08. Bid opening began 8/19/08. The contract award is pending.

#### Highway Projects

- MassHighway has received the final PS&E as of 9/3/08 for the Park Square traffic improvements project in Pittsfield. A Right of Way Certification was issued for this project on 7/30/08. This project cleared the environmental review section as of 7/17/08. This project has been advertised as of 9/6/08.
- The Tyringham Main Road reconstruction project has been advertised as of 7/19/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 9/16/08.
- The PS&E for the West St./Center St. signal and intersection improvement project in Pittsfield is currently being prepared by the Fuss & O'Neill. This project cleared the environmental review section as of 7/24/08. The Right of Way Certificate for this project is expected within one week from today's date.

#### Non-Target Projects

- The PS&E for the Reservoir Road improvement project in North Adams is currently being prepared by Maguire Group, Inc. The design waiver (shoulder width and vertical profile) for this project was approved on 6/30/08. This project cleared the environmental review section as of 7/17/08.
- The City of North Adams and MassHighway will execute a design agreement for the Downtown Roadway and Streetscape improvement project this fall. The remaining earmark funds will be expended on construction in 2009.
- The South Street Streetscape enhancement project in Pittsfield has been advertised as of 7/26/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 9/23/08.
- The National Highway Preservation project to resurface Route 7 in Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge has been advertised as of 6/28/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 9/9/08.

### **7. Other Business**

Mr. Karns updated the MPO that the Metro North commuter rail has been doing an environmental impact study of extending commuter rail on the Danbury line north to New Milford. A series of public meetings has been held. The scope has been expanded to study the possibility of extending the commuter rail line into Berkshire County, possibly using the Housatonic Railroad to provide commuter rail service into Pittsfield. BRPC is waiting to receive a written notice and will plan to coordinate with EOT to have this project included in the Statewide Rail Study. Mr. Mohler clarified that the Statewide Rail Study began very recently and will continue for eighteen months. The first public meetings will be held next month.

Mr. Mohler announced that EOT is preparing a Strategic Transportation Plan to develop priorities for transportation improvements across the State. As part of this, EOT will hold public workshops to talk to Massachusetts residents about their experiences using the transportation system. Berkshire County's public workshop will be held on Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 P.M. at the North Adams City Hall. The website [www.youMoveMassachusetts.org](http://www.youMoveMassachusetts.org) has more information about the plan and features for providing your input about transportation gaps and challenges.

Mr. Karns noted that BRPC is working on preparing a Title 6 report, which deals with civil rights compliance. BRPC updated its Public Participation Plan last year and will be included in the documentation of Title 6 compliance.

### **8. Next Meeting Date and Agenda**

The next meeting of the Berkshire MPO will be held on Tuesday, October 21<sup>st</sup> at 4:00 P.M.

Mr. Szczepaniak moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:20 P.M. Mr. Hickey seconded. The motion carried unanimously.