

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

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting
Tuesday, October 21st, 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)
Julie Hannum, Town of Sheffield (Southwest Berkshire Alternate)
Roscoe Sandlin, Town of Lenox (Southeast Berkshire Alternate)
Thomas Szczepaniak, Town of Dalton (North Central Berkshire Representative)
Ron Turbin, Town of Williamstown (North Berkshire Representative)
Michael Ouellette, Town of Adams (North Berkshire Alternate)

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
Christine Neumann, Transportation Planner, BRPC

Others Present:

Jeff Cook, Cain, Hibbard, Myers & Cook, Counsel for Boston Symphony Orchestra
William Decelles, Lanesborough DPW Superintendent
Charlie Durfee, Lanesborough Fire Department
Greg Federspiel, Lenox Town Manager
John Goerlach, Town of Lanesborough Selectboard
Colleen Henry, Berkshire Mall
Sarah Hudson, Town of Tyringham
Dick Lindsay, Berkshire Eagle
Roger Manzolini, Town of Richmond Selectboard
Linda Messana, Town of Lenox Selectboard
Hon. William Pignatelli, State Representative, District 4
Joe Scelsi, Berkshire Mall
Mark Siegars, Town of Tyringham, TAC Vice Chairman
Dave Sturma, Tanglewood
Ron Tinkham, Baker Hill Road District
Jeff Vincent, Lenox DPW

1. Introductions

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

2. Minutes of September 9th MPO Meeting

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

3. Report of September 25th and October 14th TAC meetings

Mr. Siegars summarized the report from the September 25th and October 14th TAC meetings. At the September 25th meeting, TAC members heard presentations from municipalities and organizations with projects on the 4 year TIP. New information was presented at the September meeting, so a follow up meeting was scheduled for October 14. At the October 14th meeting, the TAC reviewed updated funding scenarios prepared by BRPC staff. The majority of the TAC endorsed Scenario J. A minority endorsed Scenario L. There was a consensus among the minority that the Lanesborough Connector Road project has a high level of transportation improvements. Subsequent to the October 14th meeting, the TAC members who comprised the majority position asked Mr. Siegars to inform the MPO that Scenario L is the preferred scenario. The majority wanted to note that both scenarios included all four of the projects that have been on the TIP in previous years and that both of the scenarios acknowledged that the highest priority is the Williamstown Route 2 project.

4. Opportunity for Public Comment

There were no public comments made at this time.

5. Vote to Approve 2007-2010 TIP Amendment

Ms. Church summarized the changes to the 2007-2010 TIP Amendment. No public comments were received, but there have been three changes.

First, complete ID numbers have been assigned for the Mount Greylock Scenic Byway project in Lanesborough (604886), the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Historic Preservation project (604552), and the Route 7/20 Corridor Access Management project in Pittsfield and Lenox (604887). These ID numbers were not available at the time the document was released for public review.

Second, the Route 8 Corridor Access Management project in Cheshire and Lanesborough, and the Route 8 resurfacing project in Lanesborough have been added to the amendment. These projects had been erroneously omitted.

Third, as per the written request of Mass Highway dated September 17th, three projects have been moved from 2009 to 2010. These are the bike path project in Adams, the bike path project in Lenox and the downtown streetscape phase II improvements in Pittsfield.

Mr. Moore explained that the Adams bike path project has had some public input but is not yet at the 25% design stage, nor is the Lenox bike path project. The Downtown Streetscape project in Pittsfield has only recently begun, and based on the timeline of a similar project which took two years to get through the design process, MHD considered 2010 to be a more appropriate year for this project. All three projects are federal earmark projects. If these projects happen to get done more quickly than MHD anticipates, an administrative adjustment could be performed to bring the projects back into 2009. Mr. Frieri noted that the Route 8 resurfacing project also has a complete ID number – 605211.

Mr. Hickey moved to adopt the 2007-2010 TIP Amendment with the changes noted today. Mr. Niles seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Vote to Approve for Public Release 2007-2010 TIP Amendment for Transit Improvements

Ms. Church explained that there are a series of transit projects to be moved into the 2009 element of the 2007-2010 TIP. In an attempt to keep 2009 projects moving forward, Ms. Church asked if the MPO would approve the transit TIP amendment for the FFY2009 year of the 2007-2010 TIP pending public notification and an open public comment period. The thirty day public comment period would begin on Saturday, October 25th. If no objections are made during the public comment period, the amendment would go into effect without the need for an additional MPO meeting to endorse the amendment. BRTA's public participation requirements from the Federal Transit Authority would still be met with a legal notice in the Berkshire Eagle and a thirty day public comment period.

Mr. Hickey moved to release the TIP amendment for transit improvements for a thirty day public comment period, with the authorization that the amendment becomes effective pending no adverse public comments. Mr. Collingwood seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Review and Discussion of 2009-2012 TIP

Ms. Church summarized Scenario L, which was the preferred funding scenario endorsed by the TAC. Scenario L includes funding the 2nd year of the Florida River Road project and the Williamstown Route 2 project in 2010 as well as starting the Lenox Route 183 project. 2011 is entirely dedicated to completing the Lenox Route 183 project. The Pittsfield South Street project is programmed for 2012 along with the commencement of the Lanesborough Connector Road project. Scenario L includes all of the projects that have been on the TIP in previous years as well as the Pittsfield South Street project and the Lanesborough Connector Road project, which were added to the draft TIP in July 2008.

Mr. Maloney noted that the TIP is financially constrained and because funding is only shown for the first year of the Lanesborough Connector Road project in 2012, the TIP document should include an explanation of how the remainder of the Lanesborough Connector Road project will be funded after 2012.

Ms. Church added that the TIP document includes columns showing the breakdown of federal and nonfederal monies in order to be in better compliance with FHWA standards. Several 2009 projects, including the North Adams Downtown Streetscape roadway and streetscape improvements project, the Lanesborough Route 8 resurfacing project, the Pittsfield/Lenox Route 7/20 Corridor Access Management project, the Lanesborough Mount Greylock Scenic Byways Road improvement project, and both the Adams and Lenox bike path projects are all subject to 80/20 splits. In 2010, the Cheshire Route 8 resurfacing project is subject to an 80/20 split.

Mr. Szczepaniak had questions and concerns about Section 3 of the TIP. Mr. Karns explained that Section 3 is a list of all the other projects that have been submitted in the recent past for which there is no funding available in the four year TIP. Presumably, some of these projects will be programmed in the 2010-2013 TIP. Mr. Szczepaniak asked if there is any way of knowing which communities have already spent money on these projects. Mr. Karns explained that the only information BRPC has is the level of design that is reported on the Project Information Form. Mr. Karns noted that there has been a decrease in the amount of available money to program and the number of years that can be programmed (from 5 years to 4 years) as well as significant increases in construction cost estimates. Therefore, the costs listed on the supplemental list may not be accurate. Ms. Church emphasized that towns must continue to supply updated Project Data Forms each year when requested. Mr. Moore added that projects with incomplete ID numbers have not been approved by the MHD Project Review Committee, which is necessary to access federal funds.

Mr. Szczepaniak suggested that the Berkshire MPO submit a letter to the State asking for additional funding.

Mr. Hickey moved to adopt Scenario L as the 2007-2010 draft TIP for public comment, pending determination of Statewide Air Quality Conformance. Mr. Szczepaniak seconded. The motion carried with Mr. Collingwood opposed.

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

Mr. Mohler explained that the 2009-2012 TIP cannot be released until the Boston MPO completes its air quality conformity analysis of its Regional Transportation Plan. The Boston MPO cannot complete its Regional Transportation Plan adoption until it receives a financial plan from the State. Mr. Mohler explained that the State is currently developing its financial plan which addresses changes in estimates of federal and state funding, the accelerated bridge program and cost adjustments. Mr. Mohler expects that the FY 2009-2012 TIP will be adopted within the second quarter of the federal fiscal year (i.e. sometime between January and March of 2009).

9. Status Reports on Planning & Design Projects of Member Agencies and Others

Mr. Frieri briefed the MPO on 2008 and 2009 TIP Bridge and Highway projects (see handout). All of the 2008 projects have been advertised. Additional bid openings have been scheduled and several contracts have been awarded subsequent to the last MPO meeting.

2008 Bridge Projects

- The Egremont bridge project on Route 41 has been advertised as of 9/20/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 1/21/09.
- The contract for the Sandisfield bridge project on Norfolk Road was awarded to J.H. Maxymillian, Inc.

2008 Highway Projects

- The Pittsfield Park Square traffic improvements project has been advertised as of 9/6/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 11/4/08.
- The Tyringham Main Road reconstruction project has been advertised as of 7/19/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 10/28/08.
- The Pittsfield West St./Center St. signal and intersection improvement project has been advertised as of 9/20/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 1/6/09.

2008 Non-Target Projects

- The North Adams Reservoir Road improvements project has been advertised as of 9/13/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 11/18/08.
- The Pittsfield South Street streetscape enhancement project has been advertised as of 7/26/08. Bid opening is scheduled for 11/13/08.
- The contract for the National Highway Preservation project to resurface Route 7 in Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge was awarded to Lane Construction Corporation.

2009 Highway Projects

- The Florida River Road project is at 100% design. The project cleared the environmental section as of 10/14/08. The Right-of-Way process is currently underway for this project. MassHighway anticipates that this project will be advertised before the end of the 2009 fiscal year.

2009 Non-Target Projects

- MassHighway received 25% design plans as of 10/15/08 for the North Adams downtown roadway and streetscape improvements project.
- The District is preparing 100% PS&E for the National Highway Preservation project to resurface Route 8 in Pittsfield and Lanesborough. The project is currently under review by the environmental section.

Mr. Karns asked for clarification on the status of the Pittsfield East Street project. Mr. Moore explained that the project is under active design. There have been some delays due to changes in staffing in design and other issues in the environmental section. Once the project has cleared DEP/EPA requirements, the public hearing will be held sometime in the spring 2009. It was made clear that it would be a very aggressive schedule to have this project ready for construction in 2010.

Mr. Karns briefed the MPO on the Lee Area Traffic Study and the BRTA Needs Assessment Study. Regarding the Lee Area Traffic Study, BRPC staff anticipates being able to present a preferred alternative(s) to the MPO sometime after the new year. BRPC staff will present on the recommended alternatives at a final public meeting to be held sometime after the new year.

Regarding the BRTA Needs Assessment Study, BRPC staff prepared several surveys for distribution. BRPC has received approximately 900 surveys back. Employers seem to have a high level of interest in this project. BRPC staff anticipates briefing the MPO on this project as well.

Mr. Shepard reported that although transit fares were raised on Labor Day, ridership during the month of September was the highest it has ever been for the month of September.

10. Other Business

Mr. Siegars announced that the Mass Highway Right-of-Way Bureau will be holding a seminar on the Right-of-Way Acquisition Process for municipalities on October 28th at the Red Lion Inn in Stockbridge. The cost to attend is \$50.00. Mr. Niles encouraged MPO members to attend.

Ms. Church will attend the State Freight and Rail Plan public stakeholder meeting on Thursday, October 30th in Springfield.

Mr. Mohler welcomed new MPO members.

11. Next Meeting Date and Agenda

The next meeting date of the Berkshire MPO was left open. Assuming there are no negative comments received on the transit amendment, the MPO will meet next to approve the FY 2009-2012 TIP. BRPC staff will also present on the recommendations of the Lee Area Traffic Study at the next MPO meeting.

Mr. Hickey moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:40 P.M. Mr. Niles seconded. The motion carried unanimously.