

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting
Friday, March 6th 2009, 4:30 PM**

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)
Jay Green, City of North Adams (designee of Mayor John Barrett)
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mount Washington (Southwest 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

Others Present:

Colleen Henry, Berkshire Mall
Joe Scelsi, Berkshire Mall TAC Representative
Mark Siegars, Town of Tyringham, TAC Chairman
Sam Haupt, Town of Peru, TAC Vice Chair
Frank Feigin, Town of Windsor TAC Representative
Ron Tinkham, Baker Hill Road District TAC Representative
Jane Winn, Berkshire Environmental Action Team TAC Representative

1. Introductions

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

2. Minutes of February 3rd MPO Meeting

Mr. Niles moved to approve the minutes from the February meeting. Mr. Green seconded. The motion carried with Mr. Haupt abstaining.

3. Report of February 10th TAC Meeting

Mr. Siegars summarized the report from the February 10th meeting at which the TAC endorsed the FY07-10 TIP amendment that was out for public comment. The TAC also discussed the possible inclusion of wildlife protections into the evaluation process of road projects as well as the proposed gas tax.

4. Opportunity for Public Comment

There were no public comments made at this time.

5. FFY09 Element of FFY07-10 TIP Amendment

Mr. Karns explained that the amendment was released for a 15 day public comment period, which has now ended. No public comments were received, however, MHD requested several modifications to the amendment. Earlier today, the City of North Adams also requested an additional project be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP.

The amendment which was released for public review included the following changes to highway projects:

- Bridge replacement on Old Pleasant Street over the Housatonic River, Lee: This project will be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP and will be funded through the Accelerated Bridge Program.
- Route 7/Route 8 Connector Road reconstruction, Lanesborough: This project will be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP and will be funded through economic stimulus funds.
- Route 7A, Kemble Street reconstruction, Lenox: This project will be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP and will be funded through economic stimulus funds.
- Downtown Roadway and Streetscape Improvements, North Adams: This project will be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP. The City of North Adams had requested a revision in cost for this project. \$90,400 will be moved from the amount allocated for construction into design funding. This will reduce the amount of construction funds available for that project.

Transit amendments have not changed from what was released for public comment:

- Facility Upgrade
The cost of this project has increased by \$30,000 for a revised total cost of \$85,000.
- Revenue Vehicles and Fareboxes: 4 23' 17 passenger minibus and fareboxes
This project will be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP.
- Revenue Vehicles and Fareboxes: 1 26' 23 passenger minibus and fareboxes
This project will be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP.
- Phase 1 ITS Implementation
This project will be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP.

During the public comment period, MHD submitted a letter requesting the addition of four more projects to be funded through the economic stimulus package. Mr. Maloney noted that projects which will receive funding through the economic stimulus package should be referred to as ARRA projects (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009).

- Adams, Route 116 Resurfacing and Retaining Wall Replacement (\$1.72 million)
- Lanesborough/New Ashford, Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 7 (\$3.2 million)
- Cheshire, Route 8 Resurfacing from the Lanesborough Town Line to Mile Marker 51 (\$1.23 million)
- Application of Reflectorized Pavement Markings on various State Highways (\$552,080)

Mr. Green requested that an additional project be added to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP. This project, referred to as a "major artery resurfacing project," would include curb to curb surface restoration of major entrance corridors in North Adams, including Route 2, Route 8 and Route 8A, which are feeder entrance corridors from Williamstown, Clarksburg and Adams. Tighe and Bond is the City's consultant. The preliminary project cost using MHD figures is approximately \$4.5 million. The City anticipates 100% design submission within 75 days. Mr. Green moved that the project be included to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP. The motion failed for lack of a second.

There was some discussion regarding whether the Berkshire MPO wanted to add more projects to the Phase 1 ARRA funding round or if the MPO wanted to hold off on adding these projects until Phase 2. Mr. Mohler explained that the State would prefer to hold off on adding any more projects to the TIP at this time. The State would like to finalize the Phase 1 ARRA funding list and leave the additional projects for Phase 2. Phase 2 projects are those that can be "shovel ready" within one year from Tuesday, March 4th.

In response to a question from an MPO member, Mr. Niles confirmed that the four MHD projects are ready to go. Later, Mr. Moore added that the MHD projects have all received wetland permits that are good for three years (starting from Fall 2008). The Route 116 project has received its right-of-way permit, which is good for three years (starting from Fall 2008). The Route 116 project has been on the supplemental list for some time. The Route 8 project was programmed for 2010 through NHS Pavement Preservation funds.

Mr. Green explained that design began on the "major artery resurfacing project" this week. Mr. Collingwood noted that any municipality with available design money could request that a project be added to the TIP. Mr. Collingwood suggested that all municipalities submit project requests in a timely manner so that BRPC staff has time to evaluate them and make an informed decision.

Mr. Haupt added that there are other projects under consideration for the Phase 2 ARRA funding, including the Skyline Trail reconstruction project in Hinsdale and Peru, which has been on the supplemental list for at least ten years. Mr. Lovejoy suggested the MPO consider funding projects in the smaller outlying communities.

Mr. Mohler clarified that the Commonwealth will receive approximately \$437 million in ARRA transportation funds. To date, approximately \$330 million has already been programmed for Phase 1. (The Commonwealth is required to program at least \$153 million statewide during Phase 1. These projects must be ready to be advertised within 120 days – 75 of which are remaining.) Mr. Niles expressed his concern that any of the projects under consideration today could potentially not be ready in 75 days. Mr. Mohler clarified that, as long as the Commonwealth spends the required \$153 million in Phase 1, any additional money that is not spent during Phase 1 will not be reallocated to other states.

Because the Commonwealth has programmed approximately \$330 million for Phase 1, this leaves approximately \$106 million for Phase 2. Mr. Mohler noted that some projects which are slated for Phase 1 may or may not be ready for Phase 1. These projects will not necessarily be guaranteed funding during Phase 2. Phase 2 funding decisions will be made during the development of the 2010 TIP.

Mr. Siegars noted that the TAC had not had a chance to review the North Adams' project being discussed today. Mr. Siegars also mentioned that there is information about the federal economic stimulus process available on the FHWA website (<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/economicrecovery/index.htm>).

In response to a question from an MPO member, Mr. Niles explained that the reflectorized pavement markings project is a maintenance contract to add several plastic pavement markings on state highways. Adding it to the list of ARRA projects was a way of getting additional funds into the region without using TIP funds. Mr. Lovejoy raised concerns over the appropriateness of routine maintenance projects (i.e. reflectorized pavement markings) to receive ARRA funds.

Mr. Green expressed his concern that municipalities may not be able to access Phase 2 funding if MHD continues to request the addition of their projects. Mr. Mohler noted that no one can guarantee any specific amount of money from Phase 2. There will be an assessment of readiness, geographic equity and regional/state priority. Mr. Green expressed his concern that, because Phase 2 funding is not guaranteed, municipalities may not have the chance to access any of the stimulus money. Mr. Green urged the MPO to take this opportunity to get a municipal project funded.

Mr. Niles noted that the benefit of getting as many projects funded through the ARRA at this time is that there will be more money available for municipalities in future TIP years.

Mr. Niles moved to add the first three MHD projects (Route 116, Route 7 and Route 8 resurfacing projects) to the FY09 element of the FY07-10 TIP to be funded under Phase 1 of the ARRA. Mr. Lovejoy seconded. The motion carried by a 4-2 vote. Mr. Niles noted that the reflectorized pavement markings project will be removed from the request at this time.

Mr. Niles moved to approve the TIP amendment as amended. Mr. Haupt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Other Business

Mr. Karns noted that BRPC sent out FFY2010-2013 TIP requests to the municipalities. If communities are interested in submitting federal aid eligible pavement resurfacing projects or NHS Pavement Preservation projects, BRPC will need those forms as well.

Mr. Mohler noted that there will not be a FFY2009-2012 TIP. In regards to the air quality conformance, EOT will be giving their finance plan to the Boston MPO in March. The Boston MPO's Regional Transportation Plan will be in place by the time the FFY2010-2013 TIP is developed.

Mr. Siegars added that the TAC has asked BRPC staff to provide information on the proposed gas tax and asked if the MPO would like the TAC to discuss the gas tax and present a recommendation to the MPO. The MPO indicated their support of this suggestion.

7. Next Meeting Date and Agenda

The next meeting of the Berkshire MPO was left open.

Mr. Lovejoy moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 P.M. Mr. Haupt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.