

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting  
Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 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)  
Katherine Eade, City of North Adams (designee of Mayor John Barrett)  
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mount Washington, Southwest Berkshire Representative  
Thomas Szczepaniak, Town of Dalton, North Central Berkshire Representative  
Sam Haupt, Town of Peru, TAC Chairman, (BRPC Alternate)  
Jack Hickey, BRPC Chairman and Representative

Member Agency Staff Present:

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

Others Present:

Joe Scelsi, Berkshire Mall  
Mark Siegars, Town of Tyringham, TAC Vice Chairman  
Jane Winn, Berkshire Environmental Action Team  
Dana Huff, Tighe and Bond, Inc.

**1. Introductions/Opening of Meeting**

Mr. Mohler welcomed everyone to the meeting; members introduced themselves. Gary Shepard, the new BRTA administrator was introduced and welcomed.

**2. Minutes of November 14, 2007 MPO Meeting**

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

**3. Presentation of TIP 08 Amendment and Vote to Approve Document for Public Release**

Ms. Church presented the changes to the 2008 TIP. There have been no significant changes or reallocations in projects. One bridge project on Lower Valley Rd. in the Town of Washington will be programmed in a future year because of significant environmental impacts; it is important to note that the delay to this project had nothing to do with funding. One new funding category was added: National Highway System funding for a pavement preservation program. The amount of money for

the Western MA Scenic Byways Marketing program was increased from \$400,000 to \$552,000.

There were minor cost adjustments for the two CMAQ projects. Regarding the North Adams Hoosic River bridge project on Route 8, BRPC staff raised a question regarding the difference between what BRPC had expected to program last spring (\$10 million) and the MHD update (\$26 million). Mr. Mohler recommended spreading the funding out over 4 years and that EOT and MHD will determine a more detailed schedule. The bike path project has been removed from the list of CMAQ projects because funding is available through a federal earmark. Future bike path project funding is to be determined.

Phase 2 of the Pittsfield Streetscape project has been added to the TIP for 2009 to allow the City to access these funds at a later date. The City has requested to “flex” \$650,000 from the Phase 1 Streetscape to the Park Square project. Mr. Maloney approved this because both projects are within the scope of the earmark. There was a change in the scope for the North Adams streetscape project. FHWA has approved the change in scope.

There were several carryovers related to transit projects including the hybrid electric bus engine project and bus maintenance facility projects. There was also a revision of cost for the urbanized area service – fixed route and paratransit operations subsidy project for an increase of \$144,908.

Mr. Szczepaniak motioned to release the draft amendments to the 2008 TIP for public review with changes. Mr. Niles seconded. Motion carried unanimously. After the public comment period, the MPO will reconvene to discuss any comments and endorse the changes.

#### **4. Report from April 3 TAC Meeting**

Mr. Haupt summarized the April 3<sup>rd</sup> TAC meeting. The TAC had not held elections in November 07 and decided to extend the current terms to November 08. Mr. Haupt addressed the issue of the BRTA fares, which increase at town lines; this increase in fares at town lines has led to people disembarking the bus before the town line and walking along major highways to get to their destination in order to save a few dollars each week. The MPO affirmed the TAC’s wishes to have this issue brought before the BRTA. During the MPO meeting, Mr. Shepard indicated that he will bring this issue to the BRTA Board’s attention. The TAC also indicated its interest to hear more about the East Street project in Pittsfield to address their concerns for the Elm St. portion. Mr. Collingwood indicated he will have more information available for the July TAC meeting.

#### **5. Discussion of Current Status of TIP Projects**

Mr. Frieri reviewed the current status of TIP projects, including projects that recently received PRC approval and will be added to the TIP. The Project Review Committee (PRC) has approved nine projects including two bike path projects for inclusion in the TIP.

**Bridge Projects:** The bridge project in Egremont to replace the bridge on Route 41 over Karner Brook is at 100% design, but still has to receive a dam permit and right-of-way certificate. The rehabilitation project for the Hadley Overpass in North Adams is at 100% PS&E stage. This project has received a right-of-way certificate and cleared the environmental review. The replacement project for the Hungerford St. bridge over the Housatonic River in Pittsfield is also at 100% PS&E stage. It has also received a right-of-way certificate and cleared the environmental review. The rehabilitation project for the Norfolk Road bridge over Sandy Brook in Sandisfield was a 2009 project but was moved up to 2008 and will be ready for advertisement this year. This project has completed the 100% PS&E stage and cleared the environmental review. No right-of-way certificate is needed for this project. The project to replace the bridge on Lower Valley Road in Washington has been removed from the current TIP and will be recommended for a future year.

**Highway Projects:** All of the highway projects except for the Tyringham Main Road project are being designed by the municipalities. The Park Square project had 75% design comments submitted in

March 2008 but needs to receive a right-of-way certificate. There was an increase in costs due to a culvert design for the Tyringham Main Road project. The environmental permits also require revisions. However, the project has already received a right-of-way certification and should be able to move forward this year.

CMAQ Projects: Public hearing for right-of-way is required for the North Adams project.

Non-Target Projects: The Reservoir Road project in North Adams is at 100% design and has also received a right-of-way certificate and an ENF has been filed. The Downtown Streetscape project in North Adams has had a change in scope, which FHWA has indicated they will approve. The project to improve the Route 8 and Old State Road intersection in Lanesborough has submitted 75% design and revised right-of-way plans. The right-of-way certificate is still needed. The South Street project in Pittsfield is at 100% design and has cleared the environmental review. This project still needs right-of-way certificate.

In response to a question about the West St. project in Pittsfield, Mr. Collingwood confirmed that the dedicated left turn lane will be lengthened. In response to a question concerning how long McNerney Rd. will be closed, Mr. Niles indicated that the bridge design will be completed in June and construction is intended to start in the fall, but there is no way of knowing at this time how long the road will be closed to through traffic. Another member wanted to know why the Lower Valley Rd. bridge project was taken off the TIP. MHD District 1 responded that National Parks Service (NPS) had some serious concerns about design and that the NPS has authority over permitting because Depot Brook is a tributary to the Westfield River, which is part of the Wild and Scenic River program.

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

Mr. Collingwood stated that the Park Square project will be at 100% design by the end of the month. Phase 1 of the downtown Pittsfield streetscape will also have plans and specs submitted by the end of the month. He also wanted to acknowledge all the hard work MHD has done in support of these projects.

Mr. Karns notified the MPO that at the next meeting, BRPC staff will provide an update to BRPC's Lee Area Traffic Study. This study is the first study to focus on traffic through downtown Lee and has become more complex. The critical part of this study is the amount of commercial truck traffic on a two lane highway. BRPC's data shows that 12% of the traffic through downtown Lee is multi-axle trucks and that, at peak hours, there is more than one large truck every minute. BRPC fully expects to bring the 26 possible alternatives down to 1 by the end of FFY 08 and bring a staff level recommendation to the MPO for a focused discussion at that time.

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

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, May 28<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM.

Mr. Hickey moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 PM. Mr. Niles seconded. The motion carried unanimously.