

BERKSHIRE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)

Meeting of Wednesday, January 11, 2006

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 1 Fenn Street, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MINUTES

MPO Representatives Present:

Ken Miller, Director, EOT Planning, Chair (representing Secretary of Transportation John Cogliano)
Sandra Lamb, Chair, Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
Sam Haupt, Chair, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Mark Moore, Project Development, MassHighway District 1 (representing MassHighway Commissioner Luisa Paiewonsky)

Agency Staff Present:

Nat Karns, Executive Director, BRPC
Andrew Lenton, Transportation Program Manager, BRPC
Ethan Abeles, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Chuck MacNeil, Administrator, BRTA
Peter Frieri, MassHighway District 1
Mark Guenard, EOT Office of Transportation Planning
Bruce Collingwood, Public Works Director, City of Pittsfield
Michael Chong, Federal Highway Administration

Others Present:

Jane Winn, Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)
Sarah Hudson, Tyringham, BRPC Vice-Chair

1. Minutes of meeting of November 29, 2005

A motion by Sam Haupt, seconded by Mark Moore, to approve the minutes of the previous meeting was passed unanimously.

2. Briefing on South Street Alternatives Study

Andrew Lenton described the public meeting held on November 29 and the results of technical analysis of alternatives performed by BRPC staff, as summarized in the briefing paper distributed to the MPO prior to the meeting. He reported that the Transportation System Management alternative, featuring signal coordination along South Street and along West Housatonic Street would solve many of the existing problems. In response to a question about the status of the signal project, Bruce Collingwood said the City intends to include signal coordination in the TIP project for South Street Resurfacing. Mark Moore suggested that it might be eligible for CMAQ funding. Mr. Lenton reported that the Dan Fox Drive extension alternatives would reduce peak hour travel time and delay along South Street by diverting traffic away from South Street. Ken Miller urged BRPC staff to find a way

to make direct travel time comparisons among the various corridors between identical end points.

3. Briefing on Downtown Pittsfield Circulation Study

Andrew Lenton presented the results of the Consultants' evaluation of various Downtown Action Plan alternatives and details of the Action Plan recommended by the consultants. In response to a question from Ken Miller, Mr. Lenton referred to a handout listing the evaluation criteria. Mr. Miller expressed concern about the travel time delay effect of North Street traffic calming in relation to the regional mobility goals of the study. Nat Karns responded that other elements of the recommended plan would offset that, such as the major changes proposed at First and East Streets. Mark Moore said that the various elements of the recommended plan should be placed in a chronological sequence, since they can't all be done as one package. Mr. Miller said it would be desirable to confirm that a consensus among affected parties has been established before the MPO endorses the recommendations.

4. Status of MOU Implementation

Nat Karns reported that he and Ross Dindio were meeting with sub-regional Select Board caucuses, starting with the south-central sub-region, where the towns in attendance called for an east-west division of south county instead of the north-south split contained in the MOU. He reported that after that meeting he reached out to all the Select Board Chairs in south county, all but one of whom agreed to an east-west split. On the issue of whether to include Lee and Lenox in the southeast or the southwest, Mr. Karns proposed putting them in the southeast. Ken Miller called for a motion to release that proposed change to the MOU for public comment. The motion was made by Mark Moore, seconded by Sam Haupt, and passed unanimously.

Mr. Karns also mentioned that another issue was that the alternate representative from the north sub-region is also the Vice-Chair of the BRTA, which makes him the alternate for two members.

5. UPWP Amendment

The proposed amendment was to add \$13,000 of unspent PL funds de-obligated from federal fiscal year 2005 to the 2006 UPWP as re-obligated PL funds. A briefing paper summarizing the amendment had been distributed to the MPO prior to the meeting. Ken Miller called for a motion to release the proposed amendment for public comment. The motion was made by Sam Haupt seconded by Sandra Lamb, and passed unanimously.

6. Other Business

Chuck MacNeill announced that the allocation formula for Section 5307 urban area service funding had been revised in favor of small urban areas, resulting in an increase in BRTA 5307 funds for 2006, from \$524,053 as programmed in the TIP, to \$1,147,000. A formal TIP amendment will be required.

7. 2006 Regional Transportation Plan Update

Andrew Lenton said FHWA had reported that the completion schedule had been extended to April 2007. Ken Miller announced that EOT would like the RTP updates to be completed by December 31, 2006. Ethan Abeles summarized the work completed to date on data forecasts. Michael Chong said FHWA intends to hold workshops in the coming months on the new requirements under SAFETEA-LU, such as broader consultation and environmental mitigation. Mr. Miller said EOT is having other regions re-visit the policies and goals from the 2003 Plans. The question of whether to postpone the Berkshire Transportation Forum meetings was discussed, and it was agreed that they should go on as scheduled. Mike Chong added that FHWA and FTA are working on a joint letter.

8. Route 7-20, Lenox Corridor Access Management

Andrew Lenton handed out a news article about the rapid development occurring along this corridor and a scope of work for an access management plan. Mark Guenard said the scope would have to be fleshed out and approved by FHWA, as well as the MPO.

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

Peter Frieri distributed a list showing the status of 2006 and 2007 highway TIP projects in the region.

10. Next meeting date and agenda

The MPO agreed to meet again February 28 at 1:30, at which time the new members would be formally seated.