

2010 Census

The U.S. Census Bureau has started to prepare for the upcoming 2010 Census. The development of an accurate Master Address File is the first and most vital stage of the census process. Reviewing and updating this data is one of the only chances communities will have to review and correct census information. All errors and disputes with the census must take place prior to the census being conducted, since disputes with the final census results will no longer be possible.

This decennial census is very important to local communities, the region and the state. Political representation is based upon boundaries that are delineated from Census results. This directly corresponds to how much of a voice each community has in the Commonwealth and with the U.S. Congress. The Census also directly impacts financial positions, as funding from the state often depends on populations as reported in the Census. Numerous federal programs and grants are also dependent upon population, such as neighborhood improvements, transportation, public health, and education. Participating in this program is of vital importance and the BRPC hopes that each municipality will give this a high degree of attention. Recognizing the importance of a full, accurate census count to our cities and towns, if there is any assistance the BRPC can provide, please contact *Mark Maloy*.

2008-2011 Preliminary TIP Schedule

Project Information Forms for highway, transportation enhancement and transit projects needing federal funding are in the mail and must be returned for consideration/evaluation and inclusion on the 2008-2011 TIP.

It is unlikely that the total allocation for target projects throughout the County will exceed \$4 million.

If you know of a project that should be funded, let us know via the TIP.

February 21 – Project Information Forms sent to cities, towns, MassHighway and BRTA

March 1 – TAC Meeting/TIP Workshop

March – Sub-regional information meetings upon request, outreach to project proponents

April – Preliminary financial targets

established, project evaluation by BRPC, MassHighway & EOT staff

May – Preliminary draft TIP listing

June – Draft TIP released by MPO for public comments

July – Public comment period

August – MPO Approval of TIP

September – Federal agencies review and determine conformity

October – TIP published and distributed

BRPC Contact: *Alison Church*

Housatonic Grant Application

With BRPC support, the Town of Great Barrington filed a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application for the revitalization of the Housatonic Village neighborhood. The request for \$993,448 was submitted by a team of BRPC planners in February, and it is anticipated that notification of CDBG program awards will be made in April. The application was made more competitive by the financial commitments of Town officials in their own, continuing campaign to revitalize the village. This year's application is the result of a



The Ramsdell Library in Housatonic Village

community-based planning initiative which consistently brought 20 – 30 citizens to evening meetings and attracted considerable press attention.

The application includes

- 1) Planning for a new, more unified “Village Common”
- 2) Design work for renovations of the public Ramsdell Library to promote access for persons with disabilities; and
- 3) Construction of infrastructure including streets, sidewalks and utility repairs as part of Great Barrington's broader “Village Infrastructure Campaign.”

BRPC Contact: *Jamie Francomano*

The Berkshire's Sense of Place

Known as “America's premier cultural resort,” the arts have played a major role in the history of the Berkshires. Today, art is found throughout the County. From the performing arts- dance at Jacob's Pillow, music at Tanglewood- to the written word- the homes of Herman Melville and Edith Wharton- to the visual arts- the Norman Rockwell Museum, Mass MoCA and the Clark Museum, the arts are everywhere. The arts create a unique cultural sense of place that is distinctly “Berkshire.” The City of Pittsfield, through land-use planning, is trying to ensure that arts in the City will continue to flourish. The Downtown Arts Overlay District, for which Pittsfield received a state Smart Growth Award in December, will create a core of arts, cultural, and residential activities; encourage pedestrian activity as part of entertainment and residential uses, mixed with traditional retail and business activities; encourage economic revitalization; and nurture artistic contributions to the city and region.

What contributes to your Berkshire Sense of Place? If you have an outstanding person, location, event, or cultural item which you would like featured in *Common Ground*, please contact *Sarah Izatt*

Southern Berkshire Community Transit Study

BRPC conducted the Southern Berkshire Community Transit Study to understand the transportation needs of people in South County who do not have cars or whose transportation options are otherwise limited. To evaluate the needs of this group, and to investigate the potential for improved transit service, BRPC staff analyzed demographics, existing transportation, and surveyed transit users. Southern Berkshire communities are sparsely populated, and mobility is a major problem as automobiles are the only available transportation. Public transportation is only available in Great Barrington and Stockbridge. Six percent of the households do not have a vehicle, and eighteen percent of the populations are more than 65 years of age. Analysis indicates a need for demand-responsive public transit to connect the isolated Southern Communities with Great Barrington and other towns in the Berkshires. For detailed analysis reports, contact *Anuja Koirala*

Expedited Permitting Project

BRPC will in the very near future reach out to every municipal government to survey the state of the art in permitting commercial and industrial developments across the region. This is part of a state-wide initiative required under the 2006 Expedited Permitting law which hopefully will lead to clearer, more expeditious and less contentious permitting of well-planned economic development projects.

As part of this outreach, the BRPC will also be seeking information about what tools to improve local development review and permitting our communities would most like to see. BRPC then will be applying many of the resources BRPC has been provided through this legislation to assist as many of our interested communities as possible in improving their rules and regulations, procedures, and development standards.

Assistant Director *Tom Matuszko* will act as the Project Manager.

**North Adams-Williamstown
Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail**

The BRPC received a grant from the National Scenic Byway Grant Program to work on a potential bicycle-pedestrian trail between the downtowns of North Adams and Williamstown. This project is Phase I of a multi-phased, multi-year project. The proposed trail will hopefully one day serve as a northern extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail.

Phase I consists of three main components:

- 1) conduct a detailed feasibility study to determine preferred and alternative routes,
- 2) open dialogs with landowners and abutters along the trail routes about preferences for trail design and use, and
- 3) develop preliminary designs and cost

Lee Area Traffic Study

The BRPC is performing a Lee Area Traffic Study to address the impact of traffic on downtown Lee and to improve the level of service, and the flow of regional traffic in

Mark Your Calendar!

March 1	Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting	5:30 P.M.	BRPC	
March 14	Census Local Address Workshop	10:00 A.M.	BRPC	
March 15	Full Commission Meeting	7:00 P.M.	BRPC	
March 17	CPTC Annual Conference	8:00 A.M.	Holy Cross, Worcester	
March 20	Berkshire MPO Meeting	4:00 P.M.	BRPC	
March 29	"5th Thursday" Planning & ZBA Dinner	6:00 P.M.	Aster's, Pittsfield	
April 4	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 P.M.	BRPC	
April 26	Mass Housing Partnership Workshop	5:00 P.M.	Lenox Community Center	

estimates for the routes identified in the feasibility study. Feasibility will depend on terrain, environmental constraints and ability to secure rights-of-way.

BRPC contact: *Lauren Gaherty*

2007 RTP Update

A Final Draft of the 2007 Berkshire Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) has been completed by BRPC staff and is available for public comment. The public comment period extends until Friday, March 23rd. BRPC staff encourages everyone to provide comments. The draft Plan can be viewed at the BRPC website:

<http://www.berkshireplanning.org/>

BRPC Contact: *Michael Hoffmann*

that area. The objective of this study is to identify strategies to improve the traffic flow on Main Street in downtown. The traffic congestion in this area has been identified in both the Berkshire Region MPO's Regional Transportation Plan (2003-2007) and MassHighway's North Central Berkshire Access Study/MIS (2001).

Existing traffic conditions data was collected in summer of 2006. BRPC staff is in the process of analyzing the existing traffic conditions. A public meeting will be held in late April or early May to discuss the analysis findings and to receive public input to improve the traffic congestion in downtown Lee. Stay tuned for upcoming public meeting announcements.

BRPC Contact: *Anuja Koirala*