



Common Ground

Volume 9, Issue 2 September/October 2002

Berkshire
Regional
Planning
Commission

BRPC Takes Hi-Tech Approach to Transportation Planning in the Berkshires

Computerized video traffic recording is being used as one of the ways to gather essential transportation planning data in the Berkshires. BRPC has retained Transformations, Inc. of Houston TX, a firm that specializes in computerized video traffic recording. This is a relatively new technology that has been used successfully in other cities. This was the first use of the technology in the Berkshires.

The data is being gathered as part of the Origin-Destination Study for the Berkshires and the Great



Transfo Engineers conducting a computerized video traffic study similar to the recent study in Great Barrington

Barrington Traffic Circulation Study. This study will quantify the extent of overall traffic flow in the region, provide greater detail on truck traffic, and clarify general categories of trip purposes. While there are numerous transportation planning needs for this data, the two most immediate are for the Great Barrington Traffic Circulation Study and calibration of the region-wide traffic model. The traffic model provides necessary analysis for the update of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and other efforts.

The initial step in the process was the collection of traffic data in Great Barrington. On Saturday, August

24, a number of survey crews were out along the roadways in and around downtown Gt. Barrington. These consultants were using a variety of specialized techniques to measure the flow of traffic. Computerized video recording equipment matched license plates as they traveled into and out of town. Manual data recorders counted turning cars at key intersections, and standard traffic counting tubes were placed at the same locations as the video equipment. The technology makes traffic surveys safer and more convenient for motorists because it does not place traffic engineers on the street and does not require stopping cars for survey questions.

The data collected by the computerized equipment will be analyzed and interpreted to determine the magnitude of various traffic circulation problems. This technology allows a great deal of data to be collected and processed in a matter of weeks. Previous studies required manual collection of the data through field observation and interpretation could take many months to complete. Traffic problems in Great Barrington are reported anecdotally to include difficulty pulling out of side streets onto main roads, the length of travel time through the town and other delays. The results may also indicate the length of time a typical vehicle spends downtown.

Following the data collection and analysis, alternative methods to resolve the traffic problems can be identified. Potential methods include improved signal timing/sequence and traffic calming techniques. The results of the data analysis will be included in a public participation process to develop appropriate recommendations to improve the flow of traffic in downtown Great Barrington. Contact BRPC for the dates of public meetings later this fall or for more information. The next steps include gathering and analyzing somewhat less detailed information county-wide. These results will be discussed at Berkshire Transportation Forum meetings and summarized in future Common Ground articles. *Contact: Charlie Cook*

Also Inside this Issue:

Umass Amherst to Offer Evening Course in Community Preservation
- see *Continuing Education*, Page 2

BRPC Compiles Draft Transportation Plans, Seeks Additional Public Input
- see *Transportation Update*, Page 3

BRPC Bids Farewell to Outgoing Senior Planner Jim McGrath
- see *BRPC News*, page 4

Programs, Projects and Grants

LAPA-West to Hold 4th Annual Workshop Symposium in Dalton

LAPA-West is planning its fourth annual workshop symposium on Saturday, September 14, 2002 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Nessacus Middle School in Dalton. This year LAPA-West has joined forces with river advocates.

The theme of this year's workshop is "Appreciating Your Water Resources" and integrates river and lake issues. There are 10 workshop sessions, exhibitors and vendors. The Keynote Speaker is Bob Durand, Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. This is also a good opportunity to meet LAPA-West's Water Steward, who is available to assist volunteer monitors. Contact Kathy Regan/Berkshire TimeSaver, time-save@bcn.net or 413-528-6133 for pre-registration.

Continuing Education

UMass Amherst to Offer Evening Course in Community Preservation

For those interested in Community Preservation and related issues, a neat opportunity will be coming to UMass Amherst this fall:

The Community Preservation Institute will offer fall courses to community leaders across the state. The nine 2.5-hour evening classes span a ten-week period beginning October 3rd. The Community Preservation Institute is designed to help Massachusetts residents and leaders explore tools, techniques and resources to help preserve and enhance the "sense of place" that is unique to each community. The Institute will provide participants with an understanding of community preservation as a concept for planning and growth, and will address the Community Preservation Act in some of the case studies and examples used in the classes.

The Community Preservation Institute is open to any Massachusetts resident. Past participants have included town planners and commissioners, members of conservation and town commissions, affordable housing and advisory committees, health, zoning and planning boards, teachers, and interested residents. Twenty-five participants will be selected and will be awarded full scholarships to keep the courses free of charge.

Applications for the Fall 2002 session are due September 5, 2002.

For more information visit the EOE website: www.mass.gov/envir and Click on Community Preservation.

Contact: *Joellyn Gregory*

Federal Stormwater Regulations Update – New Towns Listed

Under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II program, the US EPA requires municipalities within "Urbanized Areas" to prepare stormwater management plans. The 2000 Census updated the "Urbanized Area" for the Berkshires to include Richmond, Cheshire and Lenox. These towns are added to the original list of Pittsfield, Lanesborough, Dalton and Hinsdale. All listed communities must apply for permit coverage by March 10, 2003.

The purpose of the requirement is to address a previously uncontrolled source of pollution. Stormwater runoff from municipal drainage systems can result in fish kills, destruction of habitat, weed growth, odor and contamination of drinking water. BRPC will be preparing stormwater management plans for Dalton and Hinsdale under a grant from the Department of Environmental Protection. Contact: *Amy Pfeufer*.



A family enjoys a late-summer dip at Berry Pond in Pittsfield State Forest

Welcome to New Delegates and Alternates – September Orientation

BRPC welcomes the following new delegates and alternates to the Commission:

Mary Poole, Alford – Alternate
Andrew Etman, Clarksburg – Alternate
Rebecca Tamol-Kay, Gt. Barrington – Delegate
James Mullen, New Marlborough – Delegate
Rene Wood, Sheffield – Delegate
Barbara Cohen Hobbs, Stockbridge – Delegate
Joseph P. Ruggio, Stockbridge—Alternate
Carey McIntosh, Tyringham – Alternate

The new representatives to the Commission bring a breadth of experiences, knowledge and interests. They will make a welcome addition to the committees and the policy-making body as a whole.

There will be an orientation for new delegates and alternates at 6:45 PM, just before the Thursday, September 19 BRPC meeting. It is critical to the Commission that delegates and alternates remain engaged and involved if we are to meet the needs of the region. New members as well as established delegates and alternates are encouraged to attend. Contact: *Amy Pfeufer*

Transportation Update

Transportation TidBits

- Thanks to participants in the Berkshire Transportation Forum (BTF). If you would like to be on the mailing list for these non-technical discussions of transportation planning, please contact BRPC. This group will actively shape the next Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The next meeting will be in October; see the Calendar at berkshireplanning.org, watch for a mailing, or contact BRPC.
- Based on the July BTF meeting and other input, the draft goals for the next RTP have been revised. The other draft items that were discussed are under revision based on the comments received. Please keep in mind that we genuinely want your input, and reviewing draft material is an effective way to shape results. Revisions will be posted on the BRPC web site and available from the office or at meetings.
- The Origin-Destination Study and Great Barrington Traffic Circulation Study are underway (see details in lead story)!
- On August 28, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) met and approved the 2003-2007 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), 2003 Unified Work Program (UWP) and an amendment to the current RTP. These approvals allow federal transportation funds to continue to flow to the Berkshires.
Contact: Zoe Neaderland

Feature: Transportation Planning Comes To Fruition in the Berkshires

As the summer comes to a close, the Berkshires find themselves harvesting a bounty of new transportation-related projects. The past seasons spent gathering public input and strategizing effective transportation plans are being realized today with two major projects that will make a definite impact upon the state of public transportation in Berkshire County:

• On August 26, after several years of planning, ground was broken on construction of the \$10 million Berkshire Intermodal Transportation Center. Scheduled to be completed in November 2003, the Center will serve as a depot for bus, train and taxi service for Berkshire County.

- In Northern Berkshire County, even with the a grand opening not scheduled until September 4th, the Call Center established by the

Transportation Association of Northern Berkshires, Inc (TANB) has already made 143 trips, helping individuals in the Northern Berkshires get to employment and employment-related services free of charge. The Call Center comes partially as a result of the BRPC 2001 Northern Berkshire Community Transit Study and a combined planning effort conducted by TANB, the BRPC, the BRTA, the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, and Congressman Olver.

- **Limited Opportunity Available Now!** If your community would like to enjoy the fruits of recent planning work and implement the recommendations of the 2002 BRPC Corridor Access Management Guidelines, BRPC is currently offering 3 Berkshire municipalities **FREE** technical support.

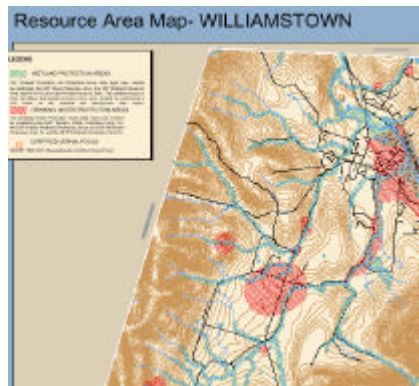
Contact Zoe Neaderland for more information about this opportunity.

Transportation Term of the Month: Origin-Destination Study

Every trip you take has a place of origin, or starting point, and a destination. Origin Destination (O-D) Studies involve recording the origin and destination of many travelers in order to know how many vehicles are traveling from one place to one other place. This is done to help understand whether an area is congested due to people trying to drive through it or to it. This understanding is essential to figuring out appropriate recommendations.

GIS Update

Community Development Plan mapping has been moving rapidly ahead over the last few months. An important part of this effort has been the development of GIS resource maps. Resource maps have been completed for 13 towns and two additional towns have additional resource maps made specifically for the open space component. Resource maps are useful tools for picturing and loc-



Sample GIS Resource Area Map

ating the various natural and man-made local resources such as water lines, sewer lines, sensitive environmental areas, soils, current land uses and developed land, steep slopes, and much more. The wealth of information included on the maps makes them both interesting to look at and highly useful as a foundation of knowledge to guide community development planning in the participating towns.

Contact: Mark Maloy

Clearinghouse Reviews

The following comments were submitted by the BRPC under the direction of the Clearinghouse Review Committee between 6/15/02 and 8/23/02.

- Merritt Road Sight Distance Improvement Project (Otis). Comments on this ENF were submitted to MEPA on 6/27/02.
- Lane Construction Water Management Act Permit (Lee). Comments on this permit application were submitted to the MA DEP on 7/10/02.
- Mt. Everett Fire Tower Repair Project (Mt. Washington). Comments on the Notice of Project Change were submitted to MEPA on 7/11/02.
- County Court Development (Pittsfield). Comments on the sewer extension permit request were submitted to the MA DEP on 8/23/02.
Contact: Amy Pfeufer

BRPC News: Good Luck, Jim!

The BRPC would like to thank Jim McGrath for all the hard work and dedication he gave during his tenure at BRPC. Since his arrival at the BRPC in 1999, Jim has been a key player in many local and regional projects; most recently involved in developing the Berkshire Planners Tools, the Regional Plan for the Berkshires, and outreach and assistance to public works departments. Starting this September, Jim will be leaving the BRPC to begin his new position as Director of Community Services for the City of Pittsfield. We wish him the best of luck, and look forward to working with him in the future.

BRPCconnections

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Web Site</i> | www.berkshireplanning.org |
| <i>Electronic Mail</i> | BRPC@berkshireplanning.org |
| <i>Chair</i> | Samuel Haupt |
| <i>Executive Director</i> | Nathaniel W. Karns, AICP |
| <i>Staff:</i> | |
| <i>Assistant Director</i> | Thomas Matuszko, AICP |
| <i>Transportation Manager</i> | Charles Cook |
| <i>Senior Planners</i> | Joellyn Gregory Bryan Boeskin Zoe Neaderland, AICP Amy Pfeufer Lauren Gaherty Melissa Jette Mark Maloy Raymond Wong Dan McCue Kate McNulty-Vaughan Carolyn LeBlanc Debbie Polito Joyce McGuire |
| <i>Planner</i> | |
| <i>GIS Coordinator</i> | |
| <i>Traffic Planner</i> | |
| <i>Associate Planners</i> | |
| <i>Planning Associate</i> | |
| <i>Bookkeeper</i> | |
| <i>Secretary</i> | |
| <i>Office Administrator</i> | |



Date CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Thurs- Sept. 4 - BRPC Executive Committee Meeting - BRPC Conference Rm - 3:30 PM
- Wed - Sept 11- Regional Issues Committee Meeting - BRPC Conference Rm - 3:30PM
- Sat - Sept 14 - LAPA West Symposium - Nessacus Middle School, Dalton - 8AM-3:30PM
- Thurs- Sept 19 - BRPC Commission Meeting - BRPC Conference Rm - 7:30PM
- Thurs- Oct 10 - CPTC: How to hold a perfect public meeting - BRPC Conference Rm - 7PM
- Wed - Oct 23 - CPTC: Managing Chapter 40B- BSRCC, Inc., 15 Crissey Road, Gt. Barrington - 7PM

Presorted
 Standard
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Permit No. 4
 Pittsfield, MA

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
 1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
 Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201

Common Ground