

BRTA Needs Assessment Study

BRPC is working with the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) to assess the BRTA's fixed route bus service and provide recommendations for improvement. BRTA's routes have not changed significantly for many years. The study will identify expanding business parks and residential areas in each community to see where the greatest needs are. The study will also examine the possibilities and need for alternate routes, introduction of shuttles or park and ride areas, and introduction of an electronic arrival/departure display at the main terminal in Pittsfield.

Please visit berkshireplanning.org to learn more about the BRTA study, and to fill out a survey that will help us learn more about the County's bus riding patterns. This will help to make sure our recommendations serve as many people as possible.

BRPC Contact: *Anuja Koirala*

Form Based Zoning

Most zoning seeks to regulate uses. For example, a town might say that in a certain zone, a single family residence is allowed by-right, a two-family home is allowed by special permit, and apartment buildings are not allowed at all. Bylaws typically don't address what buildings should and should not look like. Form-Based Zoning regulates buildings by shape and size, not by use. Form-based Zoning is an interesting alternative to "traditional" use-based zoning, and is being implemented in more cities and towns across the country, including Massachusetts. Form based codes often include detailed pictures, tables and illustrations to explain what development should look like. Typically, form-based codes address building height, size, placement, parking areas, landscaping, setbacks, roof design, location of entrances, and other important physical elements. It is especially useful in cities and village centers, and can be a useful tool to create infill development that fits in with established neighborhood character, and creates a sense of place.

Final details are still being worked out, but BRPC hopes that the October 30th "5th Thursday Dinner" will feature an information session on Form-Based Zoning.

BRPC Contact: *Sarah Izatt*

American Planning Association Audio / Web Conferences

As part of its continued initiative to promote planning education, BRPC has obtained the new audio/web conferences through the American Planning Association (APA). At these conferences, participants gather at a central location to listen to the audio portion via telephone and view a PowerPoint presentation. The following topics are offered this coming fiscal year:

- [Mastering Density](#) - September 24, 2008; 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
- [Renewable Local Energy](#) - October 8, 2008; 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
- [Creating Successful Meetings](#) - November 5, 2008; 4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.
- [Introduction to the Zoning Board](#) - December 3, 2008; 3:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m.–8:30 p.m.
- [Infrastructure, CIP, and Alternative Transportation](#) - January 21, 2009; 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
- [Informed Decisions: A Guide to Gathering Facts and Evidence](#) - February 18, 2009; 4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.
- [Designing for Water Conservation](#) - March 18, 2009; 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
- [Zoning for Transit-Oriented Development](#) - April 15, 2009; 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
- [Inclusionary Housing](#) - May 13, 2009; 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
- [Great Plans, Great Communities](#) - May 27, 2009; 4:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.
- [2009 Planning Law Review](#) - June 24, 2009; 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.

All conferences will be held at the BRPC offices in Pittsfield. Pre-registration is not necessary. However, participants are encouraged to e-mail

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or sizatt@berkshireplanning.org

stating their plans to attend and to learn if there have been any changes in the schedule.

More information about the conferences is posted on the BRPC website and www.planning.org/audioconference.

A minimal fee of \$15.00 per participant will be collected at the door from attendees to help cover the cost of subscribing to the conferences.

BRPC contact: *Tom Matuszko*

Local Hazard Mitigation Plans

BRPC expects to apply for grant funds to help Berkshire County communities develop Local Hazard Mitigation Plans this fall. BRPC will apply for funds to provide technical assistance to each town developing a plan, collect needed data and statistics, draft text and help towns get final state and federal approval of the plans. Local hazard mitigation plans are required by the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. Only six of the Berkshires' thirty-two communities have hazard mitigation plans in place, and that number needs to be significantly increased if the Berkshires are to keep pace with the rest of the state and remain competitive for future disaster grant funds.

The grant application will need to list exactly which communities will be developing hazard mitigation plans. If your community is not one of the six with a plan, please contact *Mark Maloy* to discuss how your community can participate in BRPC's application. The six Berkshire towns with an approved hazard mitigation plan are Becket, Hinsdale, Lenox, Stockbridge, Tyringham and Williamstown.

Initiation of Onota Lake Preservation Project

BRPC has partnered with the City of Pittsfield and the Lake Onota Preservation Association to conduct the Onota Lake Preservation Project. This project has been funded through an s.319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant awarded to the City of Pittsfield. This project will address the highest priority water quality impairments and the major nonpoint pollution sources identified in the *Onota Lake Long-Range Management Plan*. Components of the project include the installation of stormwater best management practices, erosion controls, and shoreline stabilization at Burbank Park. Improvements will also be made to increase the capacity of Onota Lake dam to provide adequate lake drawdown capability. Increased drawdown capability will provide additional protection against the erosion of the shoreline, provide flood storage capacity, and improve the control of invasive, exotic weeds in the lake. A multi-media education and outreach campaign will focus on residents, visitors, and boaters.

BRPC Contact: *Melissa Provencher*

Successful Great Barrington CDBG Application

The Community Development Block Grant for improvements in Housatonic, written by BRPC for the Town, was approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development. The grant will provide funding for street, sidewalk, drainage and retaining wall improvements, as well as handicapped accessibility improvements for Ramsdell Library. One important element that was not funded was to develop a reuse plan for the now-vacant Housatonic School. BRPC will assist the town to find other ways to come up with a reuse plan for that property as it is a key issue for the village. The total amount awarded is \$647,478. BRPC Contact: *Tom Matuszko*

Staff Congratulations

Senior Transportation Planner Anuja Koirala recently received her planners certification. Planners seeking American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) status must meet educational and professional experience requirements, must pass a written exam, and must commit to annual continuing education. Congratulations, Anuja!

Fall CPTC Classes

BRPC will again be holding two Citizen Planner Training Collaborative classes in Pittsfield this fall. The first session is scheduled for October 15 at 7:00, on "Nonconforming Structures and Vested Rights." Details will be available later in September. For more information about CPTC, please visit www.umass.edu/cptc, or contact *Sarah Izatt*

Ashuwillticook Trail Counts

In July, BRPC continued its program to count trail users on the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. The July counts were a great success! 2,355 trips were counted on Saturday, July 12th from 7:00AM to 7:00PM. The most popular mode of travel was cycling (1,659 trips/71%) with walkers coming in at a distant second (429 trips/18%). Between

Transportation Workshop

BRPC encourages all who commute to and from Berkshire County to attend a public workshop to be held on Thursday, October 2nd at 6 pm at the North Adams City Hall. Representatives from the Executive Office of Transportation want to hear what you have to say about the transportation system. Please join in the discussion.

Meetings and Events

September 9	Metropolitan Planning Organization	4:00 p.m.	BRPC
September 18	Full Commission Meeting -New Member Orientation	7:00 p.m. 5:30 p.m.	BRPC BRPC
September 24	"Mastering Density" Audio Conference	4:00 p.m.	BRPC
October 1	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
October 2	"Move Massachusetts" Workshop	6:00 p.m.	N Adams City Hall
October 8	"Renewable Energy" Audio Conference	4:00 p.m.	BRPC
October 15	CPTC Class- Nonconforming Uses	7:00 p.m.	BRPC
October 30	5th Thursday Dinner	6:00 p.m.	TBA

7:30-9:30AM and 4:30-6:30PM on Tuesday, July 15, 561 trips were counted. The most popular mode of travel on Tuesday was cycling (322 trips/58%) and walking (148 trips/26%). The Berkshire Mall location was the most frequently used location on Saturday, but the Russell Field location was



the most frequently used location on Tuesday. The information will be used to advocate for greater trail development. The final round of counts for 2008 will take place on Saturday, September 6th and Tuesday, September 9th. More information on the trail counts is available at: www.berkshireplanning.org/3/bike
BRPC Contact: *Christine Neumann*

BRPC Contact: *Alison Church*

Grant News

The Berkshire Environmental Endowment grant program is accepting applications. The focus of the program is on water quality and related land issues. Deadline for the grant is Sept., 29th. Visit www.berkshiretaconic.org for more information.

Information about the next round of grants from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust will be released soon.. Letters of interest will likely be due Oct. 1st. Visit www.agmconnect.org/MassEnvironmentalTrust for more information.

Clearinghouse Reviews

River Road Reconstruction (Florida)
Ashley Lake Dam Repair (Pittsfield)
North Adams Plaza Redevelopment (North Adams)