

# **Report from the Berkshire Transportation Advisory Committee to the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization**

*~ From the Meeting Held on June 18, 2008 ~*

## **Summary of Items Discussed**

### **1. Presentation by City of Pittsfield regarding Pittsfield East Street Project**

Mr. Collingwood updated the TAC on the portion of the East Street project from Lyman Street to Elm Street that is the City of Pittsfield's responsibility. Currently, the City is working on a Scope of Work with their consultants, Fuss & O'Neill. Once the Scope of Work is complete, the City will begin evaluating design alternatives. During the course of the project, the City will hold public meetings and solicit public involvement. In response to questions from TAC members, Mr. Collingwood noted that the City would prefer to use a boulevard design for the Lyman Street to Elm Street portion similar to the design being proposed for the Lyman Street to Merrill Road portion being designed by MassHighway. Mr. Collingwood clarified that the City would be responsible for mowing any medians or grass buffers and, depending on the design, the project could include takings. The City has not yet looked at funding options for construction, but it is anticipated that the City would not be able to cover the total construction costs and will look for federal money for construction.

### **2. Review of Draft UPWP commencing October 1, 2008 – September 20, 2009**

Ms. Church briefed the TAC on the Draft UPWP and summarized the changes from the last UPWP.

- Task 2.4: Regional Travel Demand Model has been updated to include work which will improve and upgrade 2000 and 2030 Regional Model in order to incorporate transit into the model. The budget for this task has been increased to cover this widened scope.
- Task 3.9 has been updated to include an assessment of intermodal connectors as well as Phase 2 of the Goods Movement Study.
- Although the RTP will not be published until 2011, Task 3.10: Regional Transportation Plan is included in the new UPWP. BRPC will initiate evaluations and identify studies over the next year as part of the major 2011 update. The 2011 RTP will include more public involvement, in depth assessment and analysis than the minor 2007 RTP update.
- Finally, Task 3.1: Special Studies is updated every year to include new projects.

Mr. Karns noted that the UPWP will not be authorized by the MPO for public release until the next MPO meeting on July 16<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Karns encouraged TAC members to submit comments and suggestions on possible studies or plans BRPC should consider for inclusion in the new UPWP prior to the MPO meeting.

### **3. TIP Evaluation Criteria Discussion**

Mr. Frieri presented on the TIP evaluation criteria. BRPC has been using these criteria since 2004. These criteria are very similar to those used at the State level by the MHD Project Review Committee to approve projects for inclusion in the TIP. At the regional level, the criteria are used to prioritize projects already on the TIP. There are seven major criteria, each with several sub-categories. Mr. Frieri spoke briefly about each of the two types of projects on the TIP, System

Preservation projects and Improvement projects and mentioned that System Preservation projects are projects that keep within the same footprint.

Mr. Frieri went through an “evaluation” of a project to show how the project would be scored; he also explained that projects could also score negatively. For example, if there is a congestion issue that is not addressed by the project, the project would get a negative score for that criterion.

Mr. Frieri asked that TAC members think of new ways these criteria could be scored and/or how criteria for which there is no scoring currently can be evaluated. For example, he cited that there is currently no real scoring method for Criteria VII-D: Effects on Wildlife Habitat and Rare/Endangered Species. After Ms. Winn suggested incorporating the CAPS (Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System) methodology to see how a project affected wildlife connectivity and habitat fragmentation, there was some discussion. Mr. Karns suggested that there may be need for Project Information Forms or Project Need Forms to include design assessments. Mr. Frieri suggested that as a project progresses and more of the design elements are identified, scoring could be revisited to include an assessment of the design alternatives. Mr. Siegars suggested that scoring also reflect preservation of habitat. No new criteria were suggested for this year’s evaluation. There remains the opportunity for changes or additions to future TIP evaluation criteria.

#### **4. Member Items for Discussion**

Mr. Siegars suggested a presentation to the TAC regarding the economic forecasting model used in the Regional Transportation Plan.

Mr. Siegars suggested BRPC send the TAC the approved TIP amendments from the last MPO meeting.

Mr. Karns and Ms. Church related the highlights regarding CMAQ funding from last week’s MARPA meeting. Berkshire County municipalities need to identify real CMAQ projects that have project ID numbers and are well into the design process. Berkshire County will be receiving a smaller CMAQ allocation but will have a safety project allocation.

Ms. Neumann briefed the TAC on the Ashuwillticook Trail user counts performed in May. A handout was provided outlining the data collected. On Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1,180 users were counted between 7:00AM and 7:00PM. On Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 510 users were counted between 7:30-9:30AM and 4:30-6:30PM. The next round of counts will be performed on Saturday, July 12 and Tuesday, July 15. TAC members are welcome to participate in helping to count trail users and can contact Ms. Neumann at [cneumann@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cneumann@berkshireplanning.org) for more information.

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

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, July 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:00. At this meeting, the TAC will have the opportunity to review the TIP prior to its release for public review following the July 16<sup>th</sup> MPO meeting.

### **Report on Issues Brought to a Motion**

- There were no issues brought to a motion at the June 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.