

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
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Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting
Tuesday August 24th, 4:00 PM
At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives and Alternates Present:

David Mohler, MassDOT (representing Secretary of Transportation Jeff Mullan)
Peter Niles, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator Luisa Paiewonsky)
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire Representative)
James Mullen, Town of New Marlborough, (BRPC Representative)
Ron Turbin, Town of Williamstown (North Berkshire Representative)
Mike Ouellette, Town of Adams (North Berkshire Alternate)
Jay Green, City of North Adams (North Adams Representative)
Tom Szczepaniak, Town of Dalton (North Central Berkshire Representative)
Gordon Bailey, Town of Lee (Southeast Berkshire Representative)
Gary Shepard, BRTA Representative

Member Agency Staff Present:

Trey Wadsworth, MassDOT Boston
Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1
Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1
Doug Plachcinski, BRPC
Dave Daskal, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Nat Karns, BRPC

Others Present:

Mark Siegars, TAC Vice-Chair
Ken Walton, Dalton
David Laviolette, Dalton
Dan Filiault, Dalton
Alan Wilcox, Tyringham
Sarah Hudson, Tyringham
Sam Haupt, Peru
Ed Richards, Peru
Doug Haskins, Peru
Chris Cornwell, Greenman Pedersen
Jane Winn, BEAT

1. Minutes from July 20, 2010 MPO meeting

Mr. Mullen moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Szczepaniak seconded. The motion was approved.

2. Opportunity for Public Comment

Mr. Siegars commented on the TIP project selection process followed by the MPO. He expressed concern about the politicization of the process, and disappointment that the MPO chose not to consider TAC recommendations in the course of their deliberations. He also spoke on behalf of the Tyringham Road TIP candidate project.

Mr. Siegars concluded his remarks by requesting that the MPO reconsider the recommendations of the TAC before endorsing the 2011-2014 TIP.

3. Endorse 2010 TIP Amendment

Mr. Daskal summarized comments received on the proposed 2010 TIP amendment. Mr. Daskal requested that in response to MassDOT comments, three projects be removed from year 2010 of the TIP. These projects are to be included in year 2011 of the TIP.

Mr. Mohler announced that MassDOT, in seeking to program its remaining unobligated ARRA funds balance, requests the addition of the Peru Skyline Trail project to the 2010 TIP. This project would receive \$4.1 million in ARRA funds, and \$2.1 million in statewide STP.

Mr. Niles moved to endorse the FY 2010 TIP Amendment, further incorporating public comments received that would:

- Remove three projects from FFY 2010 element 1C, as outlined in a MassDOT letter dated 8-20-2010
- Add the Peru Skyline Trail project (601739)

Mr. Szczepaniak seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

4. Endorse 2011-14 TIP

Mr. Daskal summarized comments received from FHWA and MassDOT. Per MassDOT's request, Mr. Daskal reminded the MPO that the 2011-14 TIP has programmed CMAQ funds in year 2011 for the Pittsfield South Street project, and year 2013 for the Great Barrington Main Street project. Mr. Daskal also acknowledged comments made by MassDOT on the TIP table of non-funded 'Additional Regional Projects,' and stated that since this table is informational only, projects with no PRC number or no staff project ranking should be retained.

Mr. Mohler then opened the floor to entertain motions.

Mr. Mullen made a motion to replace Dalton Housatonic Street (year 2014) with Lee Tyringham Road. Mr. Bailey seconded the motion.

Mr. Szczepaniak spoke in opposition to the motion. He discussed the merits of the Dalton project, including benefits relating to school access, economic development, road safety (the Town reports the accident rate for this road segment is twice the Statewide average for roads of similar type), and the road's use as an alternate route to State Route 8/9.

Mr. Bailey spoke in favor of the motion, noting the lack of recent regionally funded improvements in the Town of Lee, Tyringham Road's project readiness, the importance of the road as the only link between central Berkshire County and the Towns of Tyringham and Monterey, and the road's function as a Gateway route to much of the region.

Mr. Laviolette described the use of Housatonic St. by the Hinsdale ambulance service and as a connector route to hill towns.

Mr. Siegars discussed the design process for Tyringham Road, and its pioneering status as a 'footprint road' that is sensitive to the surrounding environment.

Mr. Walto spoke in support of Housatonic Street, and noted other Dalton community representatives at today's meeting.

At the discussion's conclusion, Mr. Mohler requested a roll call vote on the motion to replace Housatonic Street with Tyringham Road. The vote result was a 4-4 tie, with one abstention, as shown below. The motion failed.

North Adams – Yes
North Central Representative – No
Southwest Representative – No
Southeast Representative – Yes
BRTA – No
North Representative – No
BRPC – Yes
MassDOT District 1 – abstain
MassDOT – Yes

Mr. Szczepaniak then made a motion to approve the 2011-2014 TIP as released for public comment, incorporating changes made in response to comments from MassDOT and FHWA. Mr. Green seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a vote of 7-2.

5. RTP Status Report

Mr. Plachcinski provided an update on RTP activities, including plans for more focused public participation forums in the coming months. He also distributed a table of transportation improvement needs that have been identified during the needs assessment phase of the Plan, and requested that MPO members review the list for accuracy of descriptions and completeness.

6. Endorse 2011 UPWP

Mr. Daskal summarized comments received on the UPWP. Per FHWA comments, the draft UPWP was modified to include a task focusing on climate change. Mr. Daskal also informed the MPO to expect that UPWP activities will develop more detailed information to support TIP project selection, including data of regional pavement condition.

Following a discussion with Mr. Mohler, it was also agreed that the RTP task should be moved to task group 1 (Certification tasks) as was requested by FHWA.

A motion was by Mr. Lovejoy to endorse the 2011 UPWP as modified. Mr. Mullen seconded. The motion was approved.

7. Status reports from Member Agencies

Mr. Frieri presented an update of road and bridge project status.

8. Other Business

Mr. Daskal informed the MPO of the upcoming Sub-regional Caucuses to select or re-certify MPO members for the North and Southeast subregions. He also informed the MPO of plans to use the BRPC Transportation Subcommittee to assist in the development of planning and project evaluation processes.

9. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Berkshire MPO was set for Thursday October 7th, at 4:00 pm.

Materials Distributed:

- Draft 2011-2014 TIP
- 2010 TIP Amendment
- RTP memo
- UPWP memo