



Common Ground

Volume 9, Issue 5

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Berkshire
Regional
Planning
Commission

Making Decisions for the Regional Transportation Plan

In the process of updating the Regional Transportation Plan, goals and transportation issues related to driving, taking transit, walking and biking in the Berkshires have been compiled by BRPC. To address these problems, 96 alternative solutions were gathered from meetings and reports. The Berkshire Transportation Forum (BTF) meetings are being held to gather community input on which of these alternatives are preferable (and should advance to the next round of screening) and which are broadly unacceptable. BRPC Staff will also attend town board meetings to discuss matters further upon request.

It was an exciting BTF meeting on February 6th, with more than sixty people and productive discussion. Though not every alternative was discussed at the meeting, comments and concerns about many of the options were voiced and community input, both positive and negative, was gained on many different alternatives. Based on the data from coarse screening, public input, and staff evaluation, the following alternatives for improving transportation will continue to be considered:



Want to shape the future of transportation in Berkshire County? Come to the next Berkshire Transportation Forum on Thursday, March 13th.

Alternatives to Advance for Further Screening

| Problem Addressed | Alternative Name/Description | Reasons to Keep for Fine Screening |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Movement through Pittsfield | A connection from Dan Fox Drive to Rt. 20 (West Housatonic Street) (several alternatives) | While still being evaluated, this may offer the best of the Western Bypass while minimizing impacts and cost. |
| Movement through Pittsfield | West Pittsfield Bypass: New road going north from Dan Fox Drive, west of downtown Pittsfield, then across Rt 7 to Rt 8 south of the Berkshire Mall Rd. | This is the extensively studied old EIS route. One result of the years of examination is it is very effective at relieving congestion. Fine screening will provide more information on impacts. |
| Movement through Pittsfield | Driving/walking/bicycling improvements on North Street, focusing on traffic calming and reducing speed. | This low-impact alternative seems to have fairly minimal problems for vehicle travel while leading to one of the highest reductions in accidents at key locations. |
| Movement through other downtowns | Stockbridge: New interchange of the Mass-Pike and Rt. 7, possibly with a spur road favoring traffic going north (several alternatives) | At this point in the screening, a new interchange seems to reduce regional travel times while causing minimal impacts. It is opposed by the Stockbridge Select Board. |

Berkshire Transportation Forum (Continued on Page 3)

Also Inside this Issue:

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Grant Opportunity for nonpoint source pollution prevention or remediation (<i>See Programs, Projects and Grants, page 2</i>) | BRPC is accepting award nominations for the Charles Kusik Award. (<i>See Commission News, page 2</i>) | BRPC issues comments on Harriman Airport Environmental Impact Report. (<i>See Clearinghouse Reviews, page 4</i>) |
|--|---|--|

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Programs, Projects and Grants

Grant Opportunity

Trying to solve a stormwater problem? Want to help prevent pollution at a lake or river? Would you like to implement "green" site design techniques? Then here's a grant opportunity for you:

The Department of Environmental Protection will soon issue a Request for Responses on their s319 Nonpoint Source Competitive Grant Program. This grant program provides up to 60% of the cost of nonpoint source pollution prevention or remediation. BRPC has successfully applied for these grants to fund stormwater and water quality improvements at Ashmere, Buel, Pontoosuc, and Onota Lakes. Currently we are conducting a vegetated buffer demonstration project with s319 funds and have previously implemented Septic System Education for Homeowners and Erosion Control projects on Dirt Roads. If you would like to discuss a potential project or get help writing the grant.

Contact: Amy Pfeufer.



GIS Update

The BRPC currently has several ongoing GIS projects. BRPC has begun to develop maps for several Open Space Plans that are being developed as a component of the Community Development Plans (CDP). BRPC is also in the process of developing a methodology for the creation of Official Road Maps. This work is being conducted through the CDP process as well. The Source Water Protection Plan for the City of Pittsfield is actively underway. Currently mapping efforts are focusing on open space within the Cleveland Reservoir Complex of the Pittsfield Watershed. The Adams Stormwater Assessment grant has several mapping projects underway, including mapping of the stormwater system and mapping of the findings of the recently completed stream team assessments. Maps are currently being produced for the Unpaved Roads Assessment in the Farmington River Watershed. These maps display the pavement conditions of unpaved roads, potential nonpoint source pollution problems, and the proximity of unpaved roads to regulated resource areas. BRPC is utilizing the newly purchased 3D Analyst GIS extension to visualize the potential changes that would result from alternative density requirements for residential zoning.

Contact: Mark Maloy.

Commission News

BRPC Seeks Officers

The Commission is seeking officers for Fiscal Year 2004 (July 2003-June 2004). Interested delegates or alternates should express their interest to Mary Ellen Ausman, Chair of the Commission Development Committee.

BRPC Seeks Award Nominees

BRPC is accepting award nominations for the Charles Kusik Award. This award goes to groups or individuals who have made outstanding contributions to land use planning in the Berkshires. Individuals with nominations should contact BRPC or submit their thoughts through our website.

Continuing Education: Online Planning Resources

Citizen Planners Training Collaborative

The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative at the University of Massachusetts provides local planning and zoning officials with tools to make effective decisions regarding their community's current and future land use. CPTC supplements its planning courses with a great deal of information available on the internet. Topics include:

On-Line CPTC Training Sessions

<http://www.umass.edu/masseptc/online.html>

CPTC provides on-line training modules on the State Zoning Act, Planning Board roles and responsibilities, Special Permits, Variances, Site Plan Review, and writing good planning board decisions.

Sample Zoning By-Laws

<http://www.umass.edu/masseptc/examplebylaws.html>

CPTC posts a collection of over 50 sample by-laws as a resource for towns looking for information on particular by-laws. Examples include by-laws for overlay districts, inclusionary zoning, sign regulation, outdoor lighting, mixed use development, and much more.

U.S. EPA Smart Growth Policy Database

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/sgpdb/browse.cfm>

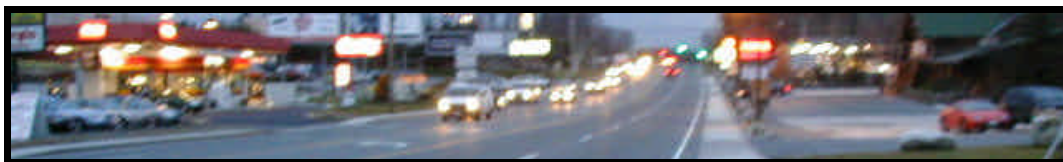
The US EPA lists a collection of policies enacted in municipalities throughout the country which work to promote the principles of Smart Growth. The database can be browsed by objective, by policy, or by the state in which the policy was enacted.

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Education Online

<http://www.lincolneducationonline.org>

In addition to numerous working papers available at www.lincolninst.edu, the Lincoln Institute currently offers two online courses: an introductory planning course for members of planning boards and other related planning positions, and an introduction to the fundamentals of New England Forests, forest processes and active, private stewardship.

Transportation Update



Berkshire Transportation Forum (Continued from Page 1)

Alternatives to Advance for Further Screening (Continued)

| Problem Addressed | Alternative Name/Description | Reasons |
|---|--|--|
| Access into and out of the Berkshires | Implement all transit service enhancements | Major additions to the amount and types of transit services would improve access with minimal impacts. |
| General enhancements of the transportation system | Alternatives such as shuttle services, signal timing/Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), bicycling/walking improvements, and social justice transportation projects. | Most of these alternatives have low transportation advantage but serve regional goals and have little negative impacts. They are proposed for inclusion in the RTP as legitimate though not priority alternatives. |

Out: Alternatives Proposed for Documenting and Setting Aside

| Problem Addressed | Alternative Name/Description | Reasons to Drop From Further Consideration |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Movement through Pittsfield | Southeast Pittsfield Crescent: new road from Rt. 20 to Coltsville. This includes relocating Rt. 20 south of the Shaker Village and a new road from Dan Fox Drive to Coltsville | While it appears that this alternative would slightly reduce VHT*, it would have significant environmental impacts. |
| Movement through other downtowns | Lee: Canal Street extension and one-way pair with Main Street | This alternative shows virtually no regional benefit and has broad, wide opposition. |
| Access into and out of the Berkshires | Regional highway, like the Taconic Parkway, from Great Barrington, east of Pittsfield with spur connector, to North Adams/Williamstown and connecting to I-91. | While this alternative does reduce VMT*, VHT, and crashes, it would have environmental impacts that would likely be broadly seen as unacceptable, plus major other impacts that would very likely have eliminated it if carried to fine screening, including cost. |
| Access into and out of the Berkshires | Bypasses around Adams, or more broadly from Coltsville to North Adams | These alternatives produce virtually no improvements in any regional goals. |

* RTP = Regional Transportation Plan

VHT = Vehicle Hours Traveled; a measure of traffic congestion in the Berkshire region.

VMT = Vehicle Miles Traveled; in the region, minimizing growth in VMT is an indication of minimizing sprawl.

Notes on Coarse Screening

Note that the above tables are only a sampling of alternatives and focus on the most clear-cut screening preliminary conclusions. It is essential that some alternatives get documented and put aside as lesser contenders because the fine screening is time and data intensive, and overall there is a need to move toward a limited number of recommendations. Screening data is intended to assist in informed, productive discussions within and among the public, public officials, and the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization. *Contact: Zoe Neaderland*

Transportation Term of the Month: Traffic Model

A traffic model is a computer simulation of how many vehicles will take which routes in a region. It integrates data about roads (such as numbers of lanes), socio-economic data (such as numbers of jobs) and known travel patterns. A traffic model is calibrated to reflect current conditions (the base model) and then used for analyzing different scenarios. A common application is to model a forecast year such as 2025. Different alternatives, such as new roads or changes in land use, can then be run for comparison against the "no-build" future year results.

Clearinghouse Reviews

The following comments were submitted by the BRPC under the direction of the Clearinghouse Review Committee between 12/13/02 and 2/28/02:

- Blue Hill Commons Subdivision (Gt. Barrington). ENF comments submitted to MEPA on 2/11/03.
- Lee Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade and Expansion (Lee). ENF comments submitted to MEPA on 2/11/03.
- Becket Chimney Corners YMCA Wastewater Project (Becket). ENF comments submitted to MEPA on 2/11/03.
- Specialty Minerals, Inc. (Adams). NPDES permit comments submitted to EPA on 2/12/03.
- Fox River Paper Co. (Gt. Barrington). Water Management Act permit comments submitted to DEP on 2/7/03.
- MDFA Loan for Norman Rockwell Museum (Stockbridge). Comments submitted to MassDevelopment on 2/11/03.
- Harriman Airport (North Adams). EIR comments submitted to MEPA on 2/21/03.
- Green River Pond Dam Repair Project (New Ashford). 401 Water Quality Certification comments submitted to DEP on 2/18/03.
- Stockbridge Terrace Subdivision (Lee). ENF comments submitted to MEPA on 2/28/03.
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction (Clarksburg). Comments submitted to MDFA on 2/19/03.
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction (Gt. Barrington). Comments submitted to MDFA on 2/19/03.
- Land Acquisition 120-day Waiver (Egremont). Comments submitted to DEM on 2/19/03.

Contact: Amy Pfeufer

BRPCconnections

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Leigh Anne Adams



Date

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mon - March 13 - Berkshire Transportation Forum (BTF) Meeting - BRPC 2nd Floor - 7:00 PM

Thurs - March 20 - BTF Follow-up Meeting - BRPC 2nd Floor Conference Room - 3:30 PM

Sat - March 22 - CPTC Conference - Hogan Conference Center—Holy Cross College - 9:15 AM

Thurs - April 10 - Tyringham CDP Advisory Committee Meeting - Town Hall - 7:00 PM

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