

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, December 1, 2015 4:00 PM

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office

1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates:

Richard Alcombright	City of North Adams
John Boyle	North-Central Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1 (Representing District Highway Administrator)
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Bianchi)
Steve Woelfel, Chair	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)

Others Present:

Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Clete Kus	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Emily Lindsey	BRPC
Andy McKeever	iBerkshires
Laurel Scialabba	Town of Hinsdale
Gabriel Sherman	MassDOT
Kevin Wright	Federal Highway Administration

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Woelfel called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 30, 2015 AND AUGUST 4, 2015

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner, to approve the meeting minutes for the June 30, 2015 meeting of the Berkshire MPO, as presented.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to approve the meeting minutes for the August 4, 2015 meeting of the Berkshire MPO, as presented.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

4. REPORT FROM TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING - NOVEMBER 30, 2015

Mr. Kus provided a brief account of the discussion that took place at the TAC meeting on November 30, 2015. Mr. Kus noted the TAC's discussion specific to the proposed TIP evaluation criterion singling out GHG emissions and concern with the change in weight this gives the natural environment criteria.

5. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Ms. Lindsey provided a brief overview of the purpose, context, and contents of the draft Public Participation Plan (PPP) and explained its compatibility with the MassDOT PPP. She described the framework MassDOT has requested, which includes a preliminary review of the draft plan before a 45-day public comment period. Ms. Lindsey explained that after MassDOT reviews the draft PPP, the TAC and MPO will have an opportunity to review and comment before they are asked to release the draft PPP for public comment in early 2016.

Ms. Lindsey said that in response to feedback received from the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, there was language added to ensure compliance with their public participation process for the development of the BRTA Program of Projects.

Mr. Woelfel confirmed that the MPO would see the document again before the document goes out for public comment, and this motion is just to send it to MassDOT for review.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Boyle, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy, to release the draft PPP to MassDOT for review, as presented.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

6. DISCUSSION ON NEW TIP EVALUATION CRITERION FOCUSED ON GREEN HOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSION REDUCTIONS, RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO

Ms. Koirala described a proposed TIP evaluation criterion which separates out GHG emission reductions from the existing environmental criterion, and asked the MPO for comments on the proposal. Ms. Koirala presented sample scores for those projects in the FY 2016-2019 TIP as an example of the new scoring system (out of 8, if approved), to show that with existing projects, there are no changes to the project scores. Ms. Koirala noted this request came from legislation which requires the use of this criterion as presented.

Mr. Woelfel clarified the regulation, which requires MPOs to use GHG emissions as a determining factor in project selection. Mr. Lovejoy noted his understanding of the regulation, but was conflicted with giving environment more weight in the overall project selection process because of this regulation. Mr. Lovejoy suggested the MPO may want to revisit the weighting of the criteria, because by adding this point for GHG emissions, and effectively doubling the points given to the environment, the methodology for project selection has now been altered from its original intent. Mr. Woelfel noted this concern and concurred with Mr. Lovejoy regarding his request that the MPO revisit this topic at a later meeting.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to approve the use of the new GHG emission reduction criterion, as presented.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ON STATEWIDE INITIATIVES: PROJECT SELECTION ADVISORY COUNCIL, SPECIAL MPO COMMISSION, MASSDOT COMPLETE STREETS PROGRAM

Mr. Kus provided the MPO with an informational overview of three statewide initiatives. Mr. Kus gave a brief summary of the work of a statewide Project Selection Advisory Council's Report on their recommendations for Project Selection Criteria. Mr. Kus pointed to their report which outlines the

goals, criteria, and scoring systems by project category as well as some details on proposed implementation. Mr. Woelfel noted the intention of MassDOT is to utilize all of the Council's recommendations (including weights). He said MassDOT was currently collecting existing project selection methodologies from all divisions to compare with the Council recommendation. Mr. Lovejoy wondered how we might be able to measure metrics like regional equity, as this is an ongoing issue.

Mr. Kus then described the work of another statewide body, the Special MPO Commission, which was developed to look at the MPOs and determine ways to increase the efficiency and operations of MPOs across the Commonwealth. The Commission has scheduled a public hearing in early 2016, but may likely add another. Mr. Kus committed to sharing information as it is made available with the MPO. He said the Commission is currently developing a stakeholder survey and Mr. Kus expects MPO representatives will be invited to participate. Mr. Woelfel clarified the reason the state is getting involved is likely due to the fact that the Governor is the official who approves each MPO planning area boundary, and these boundaries are something the Commission is looking into. Mr. Lovejoy was concerned with the lack of municipal representation on the commission and emphasized the importance of local officials attending the 2016 hearing.

The third statewide initiative Mr. Kus briefed the MPO on was the MassDOT Complete Streets Program. Mr. Kus described a preliminary program that has funding for the first couple of years and is comprised of three different tiers depending on where a community is in the process of developing/implementing a Complete Streets Policy. There will be a Complete Streets Training in Pittsfield on December 11, 2015 for those interested; a prerequisite for eligibility for MassDOT's Complete Streets Funding Program is based on one municipal official attending a training session.

8. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri reported the project status of those projects in the Berkshire MPO area. He said the region had programmed 9 federally funded projects and MassDOT had put all but one out to bid, and there will likely have to be a TIP amendment for the remaining bridge project. The FY 2015 total was around 28 million dollars out to bid. Mr. Frieri reviewed the FY 2016 projects as well, noting the region has 8 federally funded projects moving forward this fiscal year.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Frieri noted there is an upcoming TIP Amendment for a bridge project that will need to be addressed at the next meeting.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE/MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2015. MassDOT District One will work with BRPC staff to convene earlier if necessary for a TIP Amendment to move forward. Mr. Woelfel adjourned the meeting at 4:57 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft PPP
- Proposed New TIP Evaluation Criterion Worksheets
- Recommendations for MassDOT Project Selection Criteria Handout
- MPO Special Commission Description Handout
- MassDOT District One Project Update Spreadsheet