

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday January 31, 2012 4:00 PM

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives and Alternates Voting:

Clinton Bench, MassDOT (Representing Secretary Davey)
Peter Niles, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator Francis DePaola)
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire Delegate)
Mayor Daniel L. Bianchi, City of Pittsfield
John Boyle, Town of Dalton (North Central Berkshire Delegate)
Bob Malnati, BRTA
James Mullen, BRPC
Mike Ouellette, Town of Adams (North Berkshire Delegate)
Mayor Richard Alcombright (City of North Adams)

Others Present:

The Honorable Gail Cariddi, First Berkshire Representative
The Honorable Tricia Farley-Bouvier, Third Berkshire Representative
The Honorable Pauk Mark, Second Berkshire Representative
Kevin O'Donnell, TAC Chair (Great Barrington)
Jody Ray, MassDOT
Andrew Lehmann, MassDOT
Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1
Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1
Justin Diagle, MassDOT District 1
Paula Melville, Town of Adams Selectboard
Donna Cesan, Town of Adams
Arthur Harrington, Town of Adams
Jon Butler, Town of Adams
Tim Lescarbeau, City of North Adams
Mike Nuvallie, City of North Adams
Christine Yon, City of Pittsfield, Councilor, Ward 1
Donna Mattoon, City of Pittsfield
Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield
Jim McGrath, City of Pittsfield
Ron Turbin, Williamstown (North Berkshire Alternate)
Nat Karns, BRPC
Clete Kus, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Sara Lafayette, BRPC
Douglas Plachcinski, BRPC
James Lefevber
Marjorie Cohen, Berkshire Bike Path Council
John Yuill, Berkshire Bike Path Council
Judith Gibson, Berkshire Bike Path Council

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bench called the meeting to order at 4:03

2. MINUTES OF October 25, 2011

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, supported by Mr. Boyle, to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2011 MPO meeting with one amendment.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Melville spoke on behalf of the Town of Adams for the north Ashwiliticook Trail extension.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. O'Donnell reviewed the TAC's January 17, 2012 meeting, stressing the TAC's support of the northern extension of the Ashwiliticook trail.

5. APPROVAL OF THE 2012-2015 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AMENDMENT

Ms. Koirala presented the amendments to the 2012-2015 TIP and reported on the status of comments during the public involvement period. MassDOT commented on cost increases for projects and the change in year for the Scenic Byways portion of the amendment.

ACTION: Motion to approve 2012-2015 TIP, as amended, by Mr. Ouellette, support by Mr. Malnati.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

6. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON FREIGHT AND GOODS MOVEMENT SURVEY

Mr. Plachcinski described the survey and what went into the design and outreach effort. He mentioned that if any specific respondents were mentioned he would make an effort to contact them.

7. MASSDOT PRESENTATION ON PASSENGER & FREIGHT RAIL AND MULTI-USE TRAILS IN EXISTING RAIL CORRIDORS

Mr. Ray provided an overview of all of the efforts MassDOT was making to expand and coordinate passenger rail into New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New York and Connecticut. He explained some of the operational advances and future grant opportunities. Mr. Mullen asked about the State's position on non-motorized paths within active railroad right of ways. Mr. Ray responded that it was acceptable if it were safe. Mr. Ray also explained details of rail abandonment. Mr. Ray also indicated that there are not discussions about the AMTRAK Lakeshore Limited line. Mr. Lovejoy described his experiences using the AMTRAK service between Pittsfield and Boston. It was pointed out that the Governor had stated that existing service was unacceptable yet there was a significant choke point of single track rail through the Berkshires. There will be modifications to the existing station platform in

Pittsfield, yet there is a problematic crosswalk.

8. DISCUSSION BY PROJECT PROPONENTS AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO PRIORITIZE RAIL TRAIL EXTENSION PROJECTS IN ADAMS/NORTH ADAMS AND PITTSFIELD.

Mr. Branch reset the discussion regarding which direction the bike path should go towards. The MPO, in October, questioned the decision to endorse the Pittsfield extension. Mayor Alcombright and Mr. Butler, representing the contingency from Williamstown, North Adams, and Adams, presented their position and letters of endorsement for extending the path to the north. The vistas, municipal collaboration, and few property impacts are strengths of the northern extension. Mayor Bianchi presented Pittsfield's case for the southward extension. The southward extension's strength is regional funding equity, a single property owner, and benefits for southern communities that have been working hard to extend the path towards Connecticut. Mr. Mullen inquired about HRRC's commitment so sell the rail spur in Pittsfield and Mr. McGrath and Mayor Bianchi restated that the line was up for sale and the lone industrial user was not interested in using rail freight.

Mr. Lovejoy pointed out that this was not a programming discussion and that the amount of funds up for discussion would not complete either section- \$3.1M in Adams/N. Adams and \$2.0M in Pittsfield without engineering or right-of-way costs included. The TAC recommended the northern extension receive funding. Ms. Cohen pointed out that this was a great discussion for bike advocates and reminded the group that neither path section could be completed with the remaining funding. Mr. Moore explained the remediation that necessitated cost escalations for the prior extension under design in Adams.

ACTION: Motion to recommend priority for the northern trail extension in Adams and North Adams, by Mr. Alcombright, support by Mr. Ouellette.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED AYES-4 NAYS-3 ABSTENTIONS-2

9. DISCUSSION ON TIP DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE

Mr. Kus outlined the development schedule for the 2013-2016 TIP, including critical dates.

10. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri provided an update on the status of improvement projects within the region, most specifically projects that changed status or are slated for FFY12 and FFY2013, including Route 2.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Bench mentioned that MassDOT would exceed deadlines for the future STIP submissions to FHWA and FTA.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- October meeting minutes
- Freight and Goods Survey Report
- TIP Comments
- TIP Development Schedule
- Bikepath information and letters of support
- TAC report

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Plachcinski, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner