

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, October 28, 2014 4:00 PM

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office

1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

REVISED - DECEMBER 9, 2014

MPO Representatives/Alternates:

Clinton Bench, MassDOT (Representing Secretary Davey)

Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1 (Representing Administrator DePaola)

Bruce Collingwood, Pittsfield

Bob Malnati, BRTA

John Duval, North Berkshire Towns Representative

Jim Lovejoy, South Berkshire Towns Representative

Andy Hogeland, North Berkshire Towns Alternate

Sheila Irvin, BRPC

Michael Nuvallie, North Adams

John Boyle, North-Central Berkshire Towns Representative

Others Present:

Clete Kus, BRPC

Anuja Koirala, BRPC

Gwen Miller, BRPC

Rene Wood, Sheffield Select Board

Nat Karns, BRPC

Doug Plachcinski, BRPC

Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1

Trey Wadsworth, MassDOT

Dustin Rhue, MassDOT

Kevin Wright, FHWA

Andy McKeever, iBerkshires

Sarah Vallieres, BRTA

Jane Winn, BEAT

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bench called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JUNE 24, 2014

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Malnati, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the MPO meeting minutes for June 24, 2014.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES, THREE ABSTENTIONS: Hogeland, Duval and Lovejoy.

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Winn distributed a letter from the Berkshire Environmental Action Team stating that they were alarmed that BRTA was switching some vehicles from hybrid-electric to compressed natural gas (CNG) buses because CNG buses potentially produce more greenhouse gas emissions. **According to a 2013 study by MJB&A of Concord, MA, CNG buses emit approximately 54.5 tons more CO₂-equivalents per bus per year than hybrid-electric buses that BRTA has been using.**

4. REPORT ON PASSENGER RAIL STUDY PUBLIC MEETINGS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS; ENDORSE THE BERKSHIRE PASSENGER RAIL STATION LOCATION AND DESIGN ANALYSIS

Ms. Miller described the final two open house meetings where BRPC presented the study results. She

indicated there were over thirty persons in attendance between both open house meetings. Ms. Miller went through each location in the Berkshires that BRPC examined, from the State Line through Sheffield, Great Barrington, Housatonic, Stockbridge, Lee, Lenox, and Pittsfield. Each station location was considered by available space, buildings, ownership structures, and potential costs. The Study also considered each station location by amenities like parking and retail spaces, particularly station area plans for the 4 preferred locations. Each location should provide an economic benefit to the communities where they are proposed. She also described next steps in implementing the study recommendations.

Mr. Kus asked the MPO to endorse the study document. Mr. Malnati asked if the City of Pittsfield had been contacted about coordinating the redevelopment of the Columbus Avenue parking deck with the placement of a rail stop. Ms. Miller responded that they had not commented on that issue in particular because Pittsfield is revising their entire parking strategy – initially there appears to be ample parking in the vicinity.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Collingwood, to approve the Passenger Rail Station Location Study as presented.

Mr. Bench inquired if there was a Title VI and Environmental Justice analysis in the Study regarding station locations especially within the City of Pittsfield. Ms. Miller indicated that a demographic analysis was completed for a ½ mile area around each potential location. Mr. Karns indicated that the Pittsfield station is within an Environmental Justice area but the significant issue would be trains laying over. Mr. Bench suggested that a more complete analysis in the form of a technical memorandum should be conducted for the Pittsfield location in the event that federal funds are used on subsequent implementation efforts.

Unanimously approved.

5. INITIATING A PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR AN AMENDMENT TO THE 2015-2018 TIP ADDING THE GREYLOCK SUMMIT IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT.

Ms. Koirala reviewed the proposed TIP amendment for the project that was originally in 2014 of the last TIP for \$990K for design and construction. The project is funded through Scenic Byways and will improve Bascom Lodge and the Veterans' War Memorial.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Collingwood to release the proposed 2015-2018 TIP amendment for public comment. Unanimously approved

6. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON DEVELOPING THE 2016 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Mr. Plachcinski explained the RTP process including kickoff public meetings to be held in November and December. He explained that the MPO should examine the proposed goals and objectives and provide comments preferably by November 7. GreenDOT language was folded into some of the objective statements. Mr. Karns suggested that the MPO consider both aging/more mobility challenged demographics and a shrinking population. Mr. Plachcinski also mentioned changing truck traffic patterns. Mr. Bench stated integrating performance based planning measures and targets should be anticipated in the Regional Transportation Plan. Regular updates related to the development of the RTP will be provided at future MPO meetings.

7. PRESENTATION ON THE BERKSHIRE REGIONAL COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT HUMAN SERVICES PLAN AND AUTHORIZE A 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.

Ms. Koirala explained that the purpose of the Coordinated Plan was to identify needs and services for the Federal funding programs that were available to the Berkshires, typically complimenting existing funded transportation initiatives. Ms. Koirala reviewed the region's existing public transportation

initiatives, gaps in the system, potential projects/services, and funding resources. She explained the feedback received from the public hearing for the Plan and presentations to the Regional Coordinating Council (different transportation service agencies). Specific demographic analyses in the Plan focused on Environmental Justice and Title VI populations.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Malnati, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to initiate the 30-day public comment period for the Coordinated Plan. Unanimously approved.

8. DISCUSSION ON GLOBAL WARMING SOLUTIONS ACT PROPOSED REGULATIONS

Mr. Kus Explained that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has released proposed regulations that will require MPOs to evaluate how projects reduced energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions and to track progress in reducing green house gas (GHG) emissions in their RTPs and TIPS, in consultation with MassDOT. Also, projects should be prioritized within those documents in a manner that includes potential to reduce emissions. Mr. Kus indicated that funding and data for additional analysis were scarce. He hoped that MassDOT could provide more guidance and provide comments for the regulations that made them more reasonable and meaningful. Mr. Bench suggested that the regulations were a step in the correct direction and that the resources available for greenhouse gas emission modeling were going to need to come from MassDOT. Statewide models would play a key role in meeting the requirements of the regulations. The reductions measured from the Berkshires would be slight. To a limited degree, the Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program already address GHG emissions. Mr. Lovejoy questioned whether the funds that were needed to comply with the regulations would be better off being used to gain actual emission reductions. Mr. Bench acknowledged the concerns raised by staff and indicated that MassDOT is in a position to provide the necessary technical assistance to MPOs in order to comply with the proposed regulations.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri reviewed the MassDOT District 1 project update spreadsheet, including the Fiscal Year 2014 project statuses. The Lee Bikeway planning effort began. There are four highway projects and three bridge projects that will begin procurement with 2015 federal funding.

Mr. Karns asked if MassDOT could provide an update for state funded projects to the MPO. Mr. Bench said the MassDOT's Capital Improvement Program would be available soon and that the CIP would be provided to Mr. Kus. Mr. Karns also mentioned that three communities in the Berkshires received MassWorks grants.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

The MPO did not discuss any other business.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date will be December 9.

12. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda

- June MPO Meeting minutes
- 2015-2018 TIP amendment for Mount Greylock Summit Improvement
- Passenger Rail Station Location Study Documents
- Draft Coordinated Public Transportation Human Services Plan
- RTP Goals and Objectives Memo
- District 1 project update spreadsheet
- BRPC current activities
- GWSA proposed regulations

Respectfully submitted,
Douglas Plachcinski
Senior Transportation Planner