

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

**Tuesday, January 15, 2013 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)

Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator DePaola)

Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire)

Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield

Bob Malnati, BRTA

John Boyle, Town of Dalton (North Central Berkshire)

Jim Huebner, Town of Washington (Southeast Berkshire-alternate)

Michael Ouellette, Town of Adams (Northern Berkshire)

Gordon Bailey, Town of Lee (Southeast Berkshire)

Others Present:

Doug Plachcinski, BRPC

Clete Kus, BRPC

Anuja Koirala, BRPC

Nat Karns, BRPC

Bill Palmer, MassDOT

Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1

Jane Winn, BEAT

Dick Lindsey, Berkshire Eagle

Ed Nardi, Tyringham Planning Board

Alan Wilcox, Tyringham Select Board

**1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Lovejoy called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

**2. MINUTES OF October 16, 2012**

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Moore, to approve the November 8, 2012 minutes.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED, ONE ABSTENTION

**3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jane Winn announced an upcoming workshop –Improving Stream Crossings; flood resistant and fish friendly. The workshop will be held on March 19<sup>th</sup> at Berkshire Community College.

Mr. Bench provided a brief overview of the State's Way Forward Transportation financing plan which the Governor released on January 14<sup>th</sup>. He encouraged members to review the plan and summary document to gain more information on this funding initiative.

**4. DISCUSSION AND AUTHORIZE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE MPO TITLE VI ASSURANCE DOCUMENTS FOR FHWA AND FTA.**

Mr. Kus explained that recipients of federal funds must comply with Title VI non-discrimination requirements and take measures to ensure that no person in the United State shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability will be

discriminated under any program or activity. The Assurance documents are intended to acknowledge that the MPO will comply with FHWA and FTA Title VI requirements.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, supported by Mr. Huebner, to approve the Title VI Assurance Documents and authorize the Chair to sign the documents on behalf for the MPO members.

VOICE VOTE, MOTION CARRIED

**5. CONSIDERATION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE FFY 2013 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM TO INCORPORATE THE PASSENGER RAIL STATION LOCATION AND DESIGN ANALYSIS AND AUTHORIZE A 30 DAY COMMENT PERIOD.**

Mr. Bench explained the application for grant funding through TCSP that BRPC was awarded from FHWA through MassDOT. It is a two year study to look at physical design, environmental impacts, and economic benefits from adding passenger rail stations along the Housatonic Railroad. The project budget includes time from BRPC and HRRC staff.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Collingwood, supported by Mr. Lovejoy, to release the UPWP amendment for a 30 day public comment period.

Mr. Ouellette asked what the project's deliverables would be. Mr. Kus explained the planning process to identify station locations, sizes, and purposes. Then, more detailed plans could be developed that would result in preliminary design and cost estimates. Mr. Karns explained how important land use decisions were for the local communities. Mr. Lovejoy pointed out that there were no preconceived outcomes and that it was important to identify as many of the issues as possible before spending money on capital improvements. Mr. Boyle pointed out that HRRC did not partner with the Berkshire Scenic Railroad in Lenox and that he was very disappointed that the railroad did not try harder to work with the scenic trains to keep them running in 2013.

VOICE VOTE, MOTION CARRIED

**6. PRESENTATION ON THE DOWNTOWN LEE TRUCK TRAFFIC ANALYSIS**

Mr. Kus provided the background on why truck operations were examined in detail for downtown Lee along Route 20 from the Turnpike through the north-central part of the County. He described how the counts were collected and why they were collected where they were. He indicated that four of the counters saw a reduction in overall daily traffic volumes, consistent with national trends. However, all but one counter recorded a significant increase in the percentage of truck traffic. Mr. Kus explained how the vehicles were counted, and what the machines considered 'trucks'. Detailed tables of the counter data was provided to the committee. The average percentage of truck traffic at the counters was almost 12%. The data and findings of the Lee truck traffic analysis substantiates the need for a complete corridor analysis along US 20 through Lee.

Mr. Karns reminded the MPO that the point of this study was to quantify truck traffic. National trends in truck traffic will continue to increase. Opportunities to upgrade the

existing infrastructure must be exhausted before more regionally significant projects like a new or improved interchange with the turnpike can be examined. Mr. Bailey asked if the MPO could get a more specific breakdown of vehicles and how the counters distinguish them. Staff indicated that they will develop this information and provide it to the members.

**7. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES**

Mr. Malnati indicated buses are ordered and the roof contractors are going. The BRTA vision plan is going before the BRPC next Thursday. Mr. Frieri provided an update on the status of all projects MassDOT was reviewing or constructing, including the Housatonic Street in Dalton redesign. 100% comments for Main Street in Great Barrington were proceeding. MassDOT did receive a scope of design for the BMC area improvements from the City. There are bridge replacement design contracts and rail trail construction contracts that are recently completed and MassDOT anticipated work commencing shortly. Mr. Karns indicated that the East Street capacity study and local road pavement surveys for Otis and Sandisfield are complete.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

The MPO did not discuss other business

**9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

February 26, 2013, at 4:00 p.m.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- November meeting minutes
- MassDOT Way Forward handouts
- 2013-2016 TIP Amendment Materials
- Lee Truck Analysis handouts
- Project update spreadsheet

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Plachcinski, AICP  
Senior Transportation Planner