

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

**Tuesday, March 18, 2014 4:00 PM**

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office

1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives/Alternates:

Bill Palmer, MassDOT (Representing Secretary Davey)

Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator DePaola)

Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire)

Bruce Collingwood, Pittsfield

Mike Ouellette, Adams (North Berkshire)

Jim Huebner, Washington (Southeast Berkshire Alternate)

John Boyle, Dalton (North Central Berkshire)

Michael Nuvallie, North Adams

Sheila Irvin, BRPC

Others Present:

Clete Kus, BRPC

Anuja Koirala, BRPC

Nat Karns, BRPC

Doug Plachcinski, BRPC

Sam Haupt, Peru (TAC/BRPC)

Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1

Kevin Wright, FHWA

Andy McKeever, iBerkshires

**1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Lovejoy called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM JANUARY 28, 2014**

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Collingwood, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to approve the minutes of the joint meeting of the TAC and the MPO on January 28, 2014.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

**3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no comments from the public.

**4. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO THE 2014-2017 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) ADDING FUNDING FOR BERKSHIRE RIDES AND HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP) FUNDING TO THE ADAMS ROUNDABOUT AT FRIEND STREET AND ROUTE 8.**

Mr. Kus updated the group that there were no public comments on the amendment. Mr. Frieri indicated that there was progress on the design for the Adams roundabout and that it was at 75% design. The estimated project cost is expected to rise slightly as 100% plans are completed.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Nuvallie seconded by Mr. Ouellette, to approve the 2014-2017 TIP Amendment as presented.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

**5. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO INITIATE AMENDMENT OF THE 2014-2017 TIP FOR SECTIONS OF THE ASHUWILLTICOOK RAIL TRAIL**

Mr. Plachcinski presented a map of the 10 existing project concepts for bicycle path projects from Williamstown in the north end of the County to Lee in the center of the County. He included a spreadsheet with project details that will be updated and presented at future TAC, MPO, Bike Path Council, and other regional meetings. Mr. Frieri made several comments about the status of different projects and suggested that it was time to consider a TIP amendment for the next phase of the Trail in Adams, north to Lime Street. The new design estimate for the project is approximately \$3.25 Million dollars and is needed to accommodate the Hoosac Scenic Rail line. The railroad improvements are NOT part of the revised project estimate.

Mr. Karns commented that the project costs for the Berkshire bike path extensions seem very high, but Mr. Moore stated that they were in line with other similar projects in the Commonwealth. Often rail trail projects were expensive because of soil contamination and necessary remediation.

Mr. Kus indicated that the MPO should authorize BRPC to release the proposed amendment for public comment. A proposed amendment to the FFY 2014 – 2017 Berkshire Region Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) would concern the programming of federal earmark funding (HPP; \$250,831) and congestion mitigation and air quality funding (CMAQ; \$3,009,169) in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2014 for the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Extension from Hoosac Street to Lime Street in Adams, MA.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Ouelette, seconded by Mr. Boyle to approve BRPC releasing the proposed 2014-2017 TIP Amendment as presented, for public comment.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

**6. DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED 2015-2018 TIP DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Frieri updated the MPO on the status of projects for the 2015-2018 TIP. MassDOT District 1 and BRPC staff met on March 10 to go over the projects that communities and MassDOT submitted for inclusion in the new TIP. The projects were evaluated according to the TIP criteria approved by the MPO. MassDOT will begin the TIP festivities with a TIP day for all the MPOs on March 25, with our regional evaluations at the Berkshire MPO and TAC to begin at meetings in mid-April. Mr. Kus commented on the targets that were passed out to the group and reminded them that project costs were inflated 4% per year.

Mr. Lovejoy appraised the group on the status of the Transportation “way forward” funding from the bond bill and the project selection process. There was a presentation in Worcester that he attended (as a member of the state-wide project selection committee) where MassDOT experts discussed road, bridge, and safety needs. He suggested that the MPO process was a good place to start for selecting projects with this new state funding. Mr. Karns reminded the MPO that the initial MassDOT position was that the “way forward” funded projects would unequivocally NOT go through the MPOs.

**7. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES**

Mr. Plachcinski presented a memo to the body describing the Federal MAP 21 rulemaking for the HSIP program. He described the process, the potential performance measures, and how MassDOT and the MPO would be impacted. Mr. Lovejoy expressed concern that the performance measures proposed were not indicative of the current conditions in the Berkshires. Mr. Karns stated that he thought the performance measures were created to demonstrate that the Federal funding system did

not work well, particularly in regards to mitigating problems with road safety because Massachusetts is the national leader. Mr. Lovejoy suggested that BRPC staff draft comments to present to the MPO for submission during the HSIP rulemaking comment period.

Mr. Frieri reviewed the MassDOT District 1 project update spreadsheet.

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

The MPO did not discuss other business

**9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting date is tentatively April 29, 2014.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- January 28 meeting minutes
- 2014-2017 TIP amendment
- District 1 project update spreadsheet
- 2015-2018 TIP development materials including timeline, project summaries, initial project scoring, and funding targets.
- Berkshire bike path project spreadsheet and map
- Memo on HSIP performance measures

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Plachcinski  
Senior Transportation Planner