

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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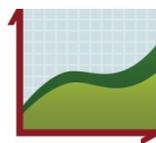
Potential Impacts of the Federal Budget on BRPC Programs

About 30% of BRPC's programs are federally funded, either indirectly through the State or directly from various federal agencies. In addition, many municipal projects which we carry out also rely on federal funds. Therefore we have paid some attention to the release of President Trump's first budget. While the budgeting process for the next federal fiscal year has a lengthy path to go down, the proposed budget, if enacted, would have the following known impacts to BRPC and our communities:

- The Community Development Block Grant Program from HUD would be eliminated. BRPC has run programs, either housing rehabilitation for low income households or infrastructure improvements, for several communities using this funding source and these would end, eliminating approximately \$800,000 in annual funding. Pittsfield, North Adams, and Adams operate their own programs and would lose almost \$3 million annually.
- Our regional brownfields program would probably continue to exist as EPA's brownfields funding was cut by 1/3 but not eliminated. Therefore we would expect to receive either smaller amounts or on a less frequent basis. In FY 2016, between two local programs which received funding in Adams and Lee and a clean-up project in North Adams, all of which BRPC staff then assist in implementing, \$900,000 was provided through this program.
- All funding for clean-water projects funded by EPA (the Section 319 and 604b programs) would be eliminated. This funding has been a primary, albeit diminishing source for continuing to clean-up our lakes and ponds through the elimination of stormwater impacts.
- All funding from the Economic Development Administration for economic development planning and potentially for public works grants which directly support job creation is eliminated. This has been a minor source of funding for BRPC and our communities.

What we have less knowledge of are the potential impacts on transportation planning, emergency preparedness and public health permitting software (much of which comes through the Centers for Disease Control), natural disaster preparedness and planning through FEMA, opioid abuse programs, and FDA food safety programs.

For more information, contact Executive Director Nat Karns (NKarns@berkshireplanning.org or x26).



Berkshire BENCHMARKS

Berkshire Benchmarks: Young Adults in the Berkshires

BRPC's Berkshire Benchmarks program recently released a paper on Young Adults in the Berkshires. This paper reviews the latest numbers related to young adults age 20-39. Overall, the county gained 23 young adults between 2010 and 2015. This was led by increases in Pittsfield, which gained 524 young adults, mostly between 25-34 year old's. Rural areas lost throughout the 20's and early 30's, but showed increases in the late 30's to help the overall county gain. This countywide gain, while modest, has changed the trend of young adults, which had been declining significantly over the last few decades. The paper can be found at http://www.berkshirebenchmarks.org/images/uploads/Young_Adults_170406.pdf.

For more information, contact GIS, Data, and IT Manager Mark Maloy (MMaloy@berkshireplanning.org or x29).

Update: Rest of River Cleanup

In autumn 2016, the U.S. EPA issued its permit directing GE how to proceed with the cleanup of the Housatonic River. In March, several parties submitted legal briefs either appealing or defending the EPA's permit to the US EPA's Environmental Appeals Board (EAB), which is a 3-judge administrative panel. GE filed lengthy arguments against several requirements within the EPA's permit, including opposing EPA's directive that the company dispose of dredged PCB-contaminated sediment from the cleanup in an existing off-site licensed hazardous waste landfill. The Housatonic Rest of River Municipal Committee, comprised of Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge, Great Barrington and Sheffield, has filed an amicus brief supporting EPA's (and the State's) directive for an off-site landfill. BRPC and five local organizations joined the Municipal Committee's amicus brief to express their support of the EPA's decision on this issue. GE stands alone in opposing EPA's off-site requirement, purely because of the additional cost of doing so.

In this same process, the Rest of River Municipal Committee also filed an appeal of the permit, because the EPA does not agree that Mass. General Laws Ch. 21D, the Hazardous Waste Facility Siting Act, should apply to the temporary consolidation/treatment areas that will need to be created as part of the cleanup. The Committee believes that invoking MGL 21D would require GE to negotiate compensation payments to the towns that would host these temporary areas. GE opposes the Committee's request to recognize MGL 21D.

The last step of the process is for petitioners to offer oral arguments in front of the EAB judges, which is scheduled for June 8th in Washington, DC. Matthew Pawa, lead counsel for the Municipal Committee, will travel to Washington and speak at this session. After oral arguments the EAB will likely rule on all arguments within a few months' time. All legal filings can be found on the EAB Docket website, filed under General Electric dockets 16-01 – 16-05, at: https://yosemite.epa.gov/oa/EAB_Web_Docket.nsf/Active+Dockets?OpenView

For more information, contact Senior Planner Lauren Gaherty (LGaherty@berkshireplanning.org or x35).

Locals and Mass. file legal brief opposing creation of a local PCB landfill

Commonwealth of Mass.

Towns of Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge,
Great Barrington, Sheffield

BRPC

Mass Audubon

Berkshire Natural Resources Council

Berkshire Environmental Action Team

Berkshire County League of Sportsmen

Housatonic Valley Association

Green Berkshires

Housatonic River Initiative

Nonpoint Source Pollution Competitive Grant Program

Mass. Dept. of Environmental Protection is again offering its Nonpoint Source Pollution grant program, a good source of funding for "shovel in the ground" projects. NPS pollution is that which is caused by diffuse sources that are not regulated as point sources and are normally associated with precipitation and runoff from the land. The primary goal of the Nonpoint Source Competitive Grant Program is to meet water quality standards and restore beneficial uses. Applications are due to Mass. DEP on June 2. For more information visit <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/grants/watersheds-water-quality.html>. Even though this program is not in President Trump's budget outline, DEP is still offering this grant round.

For more information, contact Senior Planner Lauren Gaherty (LGaherty@berkshireplanning.org or x35) or Brownfield Program Manager Melissa Provencher (MProvencher@berkshireplanning.org or x22).

Green Communities Technical Assistance

The Dept. of Energy Resources is offering technical assistance grants to aid communities become state-designated Green Communities or to provide assistance to existing Green Communities who need help with annual reporting or taking steps to implement energy projects. Grant funds would be paid to BRPC or another technical assistance agency to provide the services needed. The grant deadline is June 1.

For more information, contact Senior Planner Lauren Gaherty (LGaherty@berkshireplanning.org or x35).

Commonwealth Woodstove Change-Out Program

Massachusetts residents or businesses currently operating a non-EPA-certified woodstove or fireplace insert are eligible for a rebate of **up to \$1,750** when replacing an existing stove with an eligible, cleaner, and more efficient model. Those that meet certain income requirements are eligible for rebates of **up to \$3,000**. To see if you qualify, learn more about this year's program, and find a participating stove professional, visit: <http://www.masscec.com/get-clean-energy/residential/commonwealth-woodstove-changeout>.

For more information, contact Senior Planner Lauren Gaherty (LGaherty@berkshireplanning.org or x35).



Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors

2017 MAPD Conference Registration Now Open

The 2017 MAPD (Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors) Annual Conference will be held on June 15 and 16 in Pittsfield at the Crowne Plaza. For more information on the conference, please visit: [http://](http://massplanningdirectors.org/)

massplanningdirectors.org/. MAPD Inc. is a not for profit membership organization of professional planners dedicated to facilitating the exchange of information, presenting planning perspectives to government, and promoting fellowship.

Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program

The Massachusetts Office on Disability recently announced the Municipal ADA Improvement Grant Program application and selection process. Any city, town, special purpose district, and/or regional governmental organization is eligible to apply for a grant that can support capital improvements for improving programmatic access and/or removing barriers encountered by people with disabilities in applicant facilities. Grants of up to \$250,000 will be awarded. More information can be found at: www.mass.gov/mod/adagrant. Planning grants will be available for entities that do not have Self-Evaluation or Transition Plans.

For more information, contact Assistant Director Tom Matuszko (TMatuszko@berkshireplanning.org or x34).

Housing the Berkshires: How to Create Housing for Everybody

"Housing the Berkshires" will be an all-day informative housing workshop to be held on Friday, May 19, 2017 at the Bernstein Theatre building at Shakespeare and Co. in Lenox, MA. Participants will learn how to design tools to plan for housing, build support for housing, and produce housing in Massachusetts. It will be a local opportunity for capacity building, and will showcase local and nearby success stories in housing efforts.

This workshop received support from the HousingUs Fund of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation to plan and implement this event, and BRPC is managing the event with assistance from Gwen Miller of the Town of Lenox, the Town of Great Barrington, the CDC of South Berkshire, Construct Inc. and Age Friendly Berkshires.

Our goal is to get at least two decision makers from each community to attend, and of course we want as many housing champions to come and share lessons learned and brain storm. We want everybody leaving the workshop thinking, "Yes, we can!"

The cost of the workshop is \$30 and includes refreshments and lunch. Register at: www.eventbrite.com/e/housing-the-berkshires-tickets-33710909237. For more information, contact Community Development Program Manager Patricia Mullins (PMullins@berkshireplanning.org, or x17).

**HOUSING THE BERKSHIRES:
How to Create Housing for Everybody
Tips, Techniques, and Partnerships**

FRIDAY MAY 19, 2017

8:30 am - Registration & Light Refreshments

9:00 am to 4:00 pm - Panels, Workshops & Networking
Catered Luncheon Included

FFY 2018-2022 Transportation Improvement Program

The Berkshire MPO recently released the draft FFY 2018-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for a 21-day public comment period. The TIP, updated annually, lists all highway, bridge, transit, and multimodal projects in Berkshire County that are programmed to receive federal funding. You can review the draft document on BRPC's website or in the office, and provide comments to staff during the comment period, which ends Tuesday, May 16.

For more information, contact Senior Transportation Planner Anuja Koirala (AKoirala@berkshireplanning.org or x18).

Northern Berkshire Community Coalition: Transportation Forum

The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is hosting a community forum focused on multimodal transportation. The forum is on Friday, May 19 at 10:00am in North Adams at Colegrove Park. For more information visit: www.nbccoalition.org/ or contact Mass in Motion Project Coordinator Amanda Chilson (achilson@nbccoalition.org).



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Bay State Bike Week and Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Opening

Massachusetts is the only state in the nation that has a statewide bike week! From May 13 to May 21, residents will come together to celebrate active, two-wheeled transportation during Bay State Bike Week. To learn more about Bay State Bike Week and find an event to participate in, check out www.baystatebikeweek.org.

Locally, there will be an event to celebrate the opening of the new 1-mile section of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail! The event is on Friday, **May 12** at 2pm in Adams at the Scenic Railroad Station on Hoosac Street.

For more information, contact Senior Transportation Planner Emily Lindsey (ELindsey@berkshireplanning.org or x12).

Historic Preservation Workshops in Stockbridge

Historic New England is offering three *Leading Locally: Preservation Management Strategies that Work* workshops at its Merwin House property in Stockbridge. The workshops are intended for Historical Commissions and property managers charged with historic preservation stewardship. These full day (9:00am–3:30pm) workshops are:

- **May 19:** Design Review Concepts, Cases and Issues
- **June 2:** Intro. To Establishing & Administering Preservation Restrictions
- **June 16:** Caring for Municipal and Other Non-Profit Historic Properties

Registration is required and space is limited. Visit www.HistoricNewEngland.org or call (617) 994-6644 for more information.

CALENDAR

Be sure to check out our online calendar for updates, cancellations, recently posted events and agendas. berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar

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May 3 - Berkshire Bike Path Council Meeting - 6:00pm

May 4 - BRPC Executive Committee Meeting - 4:00pm

May 16 - Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting - 4:00pm

May 18 - BRPC Commission Meeting - 7:00pm

May 19 - Housing Development Training - 9:00am-4:00pm

May 23 - Metropolitan Planning - Organization Meeting - 4:00pm

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June 1 - BRPC Executive Committee Meeting - 4:00pm

June 20 - Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting - 4:00pm

June 27 - Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting - 4:00pm

Please consider receiving an e-newsletter—saving trees and energy costs in our region and beyond. E-mail SZaleski@berkshireplanning.org today to subscribe!