

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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2020 Regional Transportation Plan Under Construction

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is currently working to update the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP, updated once every 4 years, is a 20-year horizon planning document that provides short- and long-range transportation projects and policies that are consistent with federal, state, and local goals. The RTP is also a major certification document that allows the Berkshire Region to remain eligible to receive federal transportation funding. The document functions as a blueprint for all state and federal funded transportation improvement projects and planning studies. Projects identified in the RTP are grouped into federally prescribed 'planning factors' – these are broad areas of the transportation system that help categorize future targeted investments.

There are seven planning factors in the most recent RTP, including system reliability, congestion reduction, freight and economic vitality, infrastructure condition, environmental sustainability, safety, and reduced project delivery delays. Within each planning factor, performance measures and performance targets direct BRPC's planning efforts, the MPO region's investment, and bring greater clarity as to how progress is defined. Planning factors, performance measures, and performance targets contained in the RTP are locally adopted and represent an amalgamation of technical analyses, input from municipal residents and staff, and of past studies in the Berkshires performed by BRPC.

As part of the 2020 RTP update, BRPC will be distributing surveys to Berkshire County residents to understand perceptions, successes, and shortcomings of the transportation countywide. Public input is extremely important to this process, as it allows our agency to keep abreast of how well the region's transportation network services the needs, wants, and aspirations of long-time residents and newcomers alike. Public engagement is likely to begin by August – keep your eyes and ears tuned for public announcements and flyers requesting RTP survey participation.

For more information, contact Senior Transportation Planner Eammon Coughlin (ECoughlin@berkshireplanning.org, or x19)

Western MA Developers Conference



BRPC participated as an exhibitor at the bi-annual Western Massachusetts Developers Conference on June 12th at the MassMutual Center in Springfield. This regional conference is designed to connect business leaders, developers, real estate professionals, site selectors, economic development professionals, and public officials. The event highlights assets and development opportunities that make this region an excellent place to invest, launch, and grow business. Keynote Speaker Governor Charlie Baker spoke to the over 400 attendees about important public/private partnerships in Western Massachusetts, including the Berkshire Innovation Center which plans to break ground in early fall. The day also included a CEO panel, lightning-style presentations from investors, municipal leaders, and representatives from MassDevelopment, as well as workshops on incentive program such as District Improvement Financing, New Market Tax Credits and Historic Tax Credits. Attendees also had the opportunity to tour the new MGM facilities in Springfield.

For more information, contact Senior Planner Laura Brennan (lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org or x14)

Greenfield ADA Project



In January, the City of Greenfield was awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Massachusetts Office on Disability to update their Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. The city chose BRPC as their consultant to conduct the infrastructural evaluations and write the plan. The scope of work included evaluating seven municipal buildings, nine schools, fourteen municipal parks, more than 650 sidewalk sections and approximately 500 curb ramps, for ADA compliance. Due to the large amount of work and time that is involved in creating these plans, they often take up year to complete. In this case, BRPC was given only two months to evaluate all barriers to access in city services, programs, and activities.

The Transition Plan was written to include all necessary information required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title II Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan and is reflective of extensive public input from the city's Commission On Disability Access, Council On Aging, Sustainable Greenfield Implementation Committee, and the larger disability and older adult community. The product will be used to help the city determine priority areas to make ADA accessible, including cost estimates and a timeline for removal of identified barriers.



The consulting team included BRPC staff, led by Patricia Mullins, Community and Economic Development Program Manager. Eammon Coughlin, Senior Transportation Planner and Will Sikula, Community Development Planner worked with Greenfield city staff to collect data and conducted field evaluations on the condition of public rights-of-way including on-street parking, sidewalks, and curb ramps. Mark Maloy, BRPC's GIS and IT Manager, created the graphics and maps for public right of way priority areas and overall conditions. Other staff members included Peg McDonough, Planner and Age-Friendly Berkshires Coordinator and Rebecca Haight, Community Development Program Associate, assisted with report editing and public outreach. An outside consultant and building specialist also helped to complete the evaluation of municipal buildings, schools, and parks and develop cost estimates to remove identified barriers.

BRPC saw this project as an excellent opportunity to build capacity and think similarly about ADA compliance in Berkshire County, including integrating it into ongoing project work. Examples include Complete Streets, Universal Design and particularly, the Age Friendly Berkshires movement.

For more information, contact Community Development Planner Will Sikula
(WSikula@berkshireplanning.org or x30)

BRPC to Receive \$450,000 in Supplemental Funds for Cleanups of Contaminated Brownfield Sites Berkshire County

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced approximately \$15.7 million in supplemental funding to communities to assist them in cleaning up contaminated brownfield properties. BRPC is one of 33 successful applicants to receive funding.

"These supplemental funds provide communities with the resources they need to continue to clean up contaminated lands, which will improve public health and generate economic growth," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. These funds will ensure more cleanups are completed and more land can be returned to beneficial reuse."

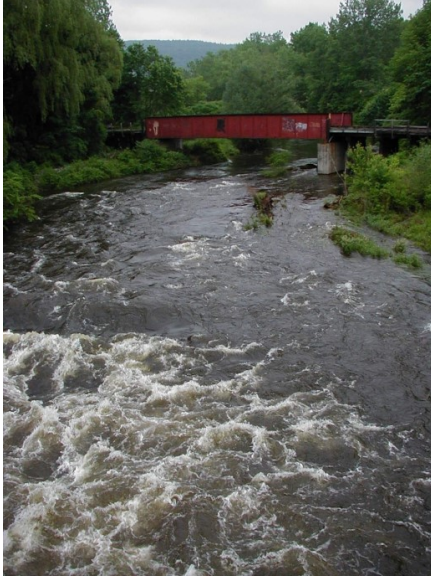
The Brownfields RLF program supports EPA's commitment to assist communities in addressing environmentally challenged properties and meet their local revitalization priorities. The supplemental funds will help communities reuse vacant and abandoned properties and turn them into community assets such as housing, recreation and open space, health facilities, social services, transportation options, infrastructure and commerce opportunities.



RLFs specifically supply funding for loans and sub-grants to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites. These supplemental funds are provided to communities who have shown achieved success in their work to clean up and redevelop brownfield sites.

For more information about BRPC's Brownfields Program contact Melissa Provencher, Energy & Environmental Program Manager
(mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org or X22).

Housatonic River Restoration Projects: Round 4



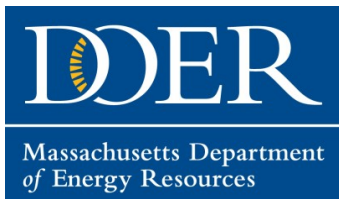
The Housatonic River Trustees have announced the fourth and final round of funding (Round 4) of the Massachusetts Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Project. A total of up to \$1.45 million is available for this upcoming grant opportunity to support habitat restoration projects that address one or more of the following restoration categories:

- Aquatic Biological Resources and Habitat
- Wildlife Resources and Habitat
- Recreational Uses
- Environmental Education and Outreach

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to contact MassDEP in the month of July before the Grant Application and Announcement is issued, anticipated to be some time in August, to refine project ideas and obtain feedback. Contact Thomas M. Potter (617-292-5628 or thomas.potter@state.ma.us) for a discussion of ideas and settlement objectives. Additional information on the Massachusetts Housatonic River Watershed Restoration Program is available at www.ma-housatonicrestoration.org and hardcopies are available at the Lenox Library and other public libraries in the Housatonic River watershed.

Municipal Energy Technical Assistance Grant Program— apply period July 19-20, 2018

For ALL Communities and School Districts, not
just designated Green Communities



Do you have an energy efficiency or renewable energy project that you want to advance, but need technical assistance or engineering to understand the feasibility of it? Or engineering bid specs to go

out to bid? Or, as a first step do you need a commercial energy audit of a building to identify the energy projects that will be the most energy- and cost-effective? The Mass. Dept. of Energy Resources is offering technical assistance grants of up to \$12,500 to municipalities and school districts to advance energy projects. Typical projects could include (but not be limited to) solar projects, heat system conversions for efficiency, in depth audits, energy efficiency assessments of processes at public water and wastewater facilities, and clean energy resiliency opportunities at emergency municipal facilities.

The grant solicitation can be found here:

[https://www.commbuys.com/bsa/external/bidDetail.sdo?
docId=BD-18-1041-ENE01-ENE01-
28072&external=true&parentUrl=bid](https://www.commbuys.com/bsa/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-18-1041-ENE01-ENE01-28072&external=true&parentUrl=bid)

Exercising Regional Shelters for Berkshire County

The Northern, Central, and Southern Regional Emergency Preparedness Committees (REPCs) in Berkshire County, with funding from the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council, have been working to plan and execute regional sheltering emergency exercises to evaluate and improve current regional shelter plans. In 2016, the REPCs worked with Planning Commission staff to plan for regional sheltering and select regional shelter sites across the County. In Northern Berkshire, St. Elizabeth's Parish serves as a regional shelter site, along with Berkshire Community College in Central County, and Bard College at Simon's Rock in Southern Berkshire County. First responders, hospital representatives, Emergency Management Directors, voluntary organizations, and representatives from the Department of Public Health and MEMA, as well as the Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition and other organizations get together to simulate an event that triggers the activation of a regional shelter. Benefits of conducting exercises include increasing readiness in the event of an actual emergency, expanding professional networks among participants, pre-identifying any gaps or conflicts in planning, and identifying needed resources. After exercises are conducted, improvement plans are developed.



For more information, contact Senior Planner Allison Egan (aegan@berkshireplanning.org or x36)

The next round of HeatSmart to accept applications in July 2018!

The HeatSmart Massachusetts Program is a partnership between the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) and the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER). HeatSmart Mass is a community-based outreach and education program that will encourage clean heating and cooling technologies that include air-source heat pumps, ground-source heat pumps, central biomass heating, and solar hot water. Each participating community competitively selects designated installer(s) to offer one or more of the clean heating and cooling technologies to interested residents. The Program aims to help 1) drive down the installation cost and 2) increase deployment of residential and small-scale commercial clean heating and cooling installations through a group purchasing model. HeatSmart Mass is modeled on the highly successful Solarize Massachusetts program, which is now in its seventh year and has served 58 communities and resulted in over 3,400 contracts and 20.6 megawatts of solar photovoltaic projects.

For more information visit:
<http://www.masscec.com/heatsmart-mass>

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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July 12 - BRPC Executive Meeting, 4:00 pm

July 12 - BRPC Commission Meeting, 5:00 pm

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Image (above): Tanglewood

Remember to check our inclement weather hotline to learn the status of a meeting at (413) 442-1521 X 15

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