

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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MassDOT Announces Complete Streets Awards

MassDOT recently announced awards for its latest round of Complete Streets funding. Eligible communities may apply for projects in four broad categories, including pedestrian, bicycle, traffic safety, and transit improvements. The towns of Lenox, Clarksburg, and Sandisfield were each awarded funding that will help construct a variety of projects throughout each municipality. Lenox received \$320k for crossing improvements along its busy Main St., as well as near the intersection of Route 183 (West St.), Old Stockbridge Rd., and Main/Walker St. These projects will improve safety and pedestrian accessibility in the village center. Clarksburg received \$80k for shoulder widening to install new bike lanes along a portion of Middle Rd. Sandisfield received \$50k to install speed feedback signs in several locations, as well as bike racks and bike repair stations to encourage cycling at town buildings and parks.

Overall, the MassDOT Complete Streets program has been successful in the county. Thirteen communities have been or are currently involved in complete streets planning, and all but one of these has partnered with BRPC to provide technical assistance. Since 2016, seven communities have been awarded construction funding totaling \$1.7 million; and every municipality that has sought construction funding has been awarded some amount.

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

5th Thursday Dinner

CULVERTS AND STREAM CROSSING STANDARDS-HOW THEY CAN CO-EXIST

Please join us to hear Erin Rodgers, Ph.D., the Western New England Project Coordinator with Trout Unlimited about ways communities can address culvert replacement and meet Stream Crossing Standards. Erin works with Trout Unlimited's New England Culvert Project which has worked with communities in all the New England states to assess, analyze, prioritize, design, and replace culverts.

DATE & TIME: Thursday, March 29, 2018, 5:30-6:30 Social Hour, 6:30-8:30 Dinner and Presentation

LOCATION: Mazzeo's, 1015 South St, Pittsfield, MA 01201, Dinner Price is \$35.00

Registration required at: <https://brpc-5th-thursdaydinner.eventbrite.com>

Age Friendly Berkshires Action Plan Launch Celebration!!

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

8:30-11:30 a.m.

Berkshire Hills Country Club

500 Benedict Road, Pittsfield, MA 01201

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Keynote Speaker: Secretary Alice Bonner,
MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs

Recognition Presentation to Age Friendly Berkshires: AARP - Massachusetts

Hear from a Panel of "unsung heroes" and contribute your thoughts on creating an Age Friendly County!

Registration is free, but required at:

<https://afberkshires.eventbrite.com>

Check out the new Age Friendly Berkshires website at: <http://agefriendlyberkshires.com/>



BRPC and Partners Seek Funding for USBR 7 Wayfinding Signs



BRPC worked closely with the Upper Housatonic Valley Natural Heritage Area (UHVNHA) and MassDOT to prepare a Recreational Trails Grant that will hopefully lead to wayfinding signage along the length of U.S. Bike Route 7 (USBR 7) in the county. USBR 7 is a cycling route that runs from Montreal to New York City. The US Bike Route system is intended to mirror the US numbered highway system and encourage long-distance cycling and bike tourism. When complete, USBR 7 will provide a central cycling spine in the Berkshires that connects village and city centers, the Appalachian Trail, recreation areas, and cultural destinations.

USBR 7 was officially designated in 2016 after approval from several municipalities. In Berkshire County, USBR 7 enters Williamstown from Vermont and travels south to Sheffield before passing into Connecticut. While the route mostly travels along existing secondary and scenic roads, it utilizes existing shared-use paths (bike paths) like the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail to get cyclists away from traffic as much as possible. Additionally, USBR 7 will be re-routed as new bike paths are constructed, to provide a more comfortable and scenic ride for cyclists.

Cyclists can currently bike the entire route, but require a map to do so. The proposed grant funding will install new wayfinding signs, similar to those that can be found along state highways like Route 7 and Route 8. This will allow for easier navigation by cyclists, and also help enable shorter distance bike travel between communities.

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

2017 Berkshire County CEDS Certified

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has received formal approval for the 2017 CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) for Berkshire County. This document is filed every 5 years with the US Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration, with updates filed during each intervening year. The priorities and focuses outlined within the 2017 CEDS document will help inform EDA review of applications for Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Programs from Berkshire County. This innovative, regionally driven economic development strategy was compiled with the assistance of volunteers on the CEDS Committee.

A copy of the document can be found at www.berkshireplanning.org.

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

2020 Census Already?

The US Census Bureau has begun working on preparing for the 2020 Census and it is time for your community to get involved. In the last few weeks your town clerk should have received Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) material from the Census Bureau. Your town clerk has 120 days from when they receive the material to submit any changes back to the Census Bureau. Reviewing the census addresses and providing feedback will help to ensure a complete count of the population in your community. If your community chooses not to participate in the LUCA process, you will not be able to appeal the census results.



Having a complete count impacts funding from the state and federal government as well as determining if Massachusetts loses another congressional seat, like we did in 2010. As April 1, 2020 (Census Day) approaches, your community should begin thinking about how to reach the hard to count populations to help ensure you get a complete count. Hard to count populations include people of color, low income, immigrants and young children. You should also think about how to reach out to seasonal residents who should be counted as local residents if they live in your community most of the time (i.e. snow birds).

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



PUBLIC MEETING

To Update Berkshire regional Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

Thursday, MARCH 22 2:00 - 4:00 PM
 Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
 1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

NOTE: The Public Meeting is being held in conjunction with the Berkshire Regional Coordinating Council Meeting. Please attend the meeting on March 22nd to learn more about the Human Services Transportation Plan and provide your input.

For more information, contact
 Senior Transportation Planner Anuja Koirala
 (akoirala@berkshireplanning.org or x 18.)



2018 District Local Technical Assistance

BRPC received 21 requests for project assistance under the 2018 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program. We are pleased to be able to provide support to all of them. The DLTA program is more closely aligning itself with the Baker-Polito Administration's Community Compact Program. Projects are categorized as being part of a community's signed Compact, items that support Community Compact Best Practices, or those that don't fall under the Community Compact Best Practice list. This year, projects that support the newly released Housing Choice Program are eligible for assistance.

There were three projects that directly support a community's signed Community Compact. Lanesborough, along with Great Barrington, Hinsdale and Richmond will be assisted with Shared Economic Planner services. Windsor and Washington will be assisted with developing Capital Improvement Plans in conjunction with Strategic Plans.

Communities implementing Community Compact Best Practices will be assisted in the following ways. Adams will be assisted to pursue additional housing option through accessory dwelling units or tiny houses. Communities will be assisted with the following items on the zoning front: Becket related to a solar bylaw; Dalton related to a drive-thru bylaw; Mt. Washington related to zoning consistency; North Adams to align zoning with the Master Plan; Pittsfield related to form based zoning in the downtown; and Williamstown related to an agricultural overlay district for enhanced economic opportunity for farmer. Great Barrington will be assisted in the development of an Open Space and Recreation Plan update. New Marlborough will be assisted with the development of an ADA Transition Plan. Sheffield will be assisted to prepare for emergencies with informational and outreach material for residents. Tyringham will be assisted designing web-based systems for data storage, back-up and public access.

There are several regional projects that implement Community Compact Best Practices as well. Lenox and Lee will be assisted with an economic self-assessment. Regional projects that continue from previous years are support for the Rest of River Municipal Committee dealing with the PCB waste (requested by Lee), the Berkshire County Education Task Force (requested by North Adams), pursuing establishment of a regional Economic Development District (requested by Pittsfield), regional brownfields program support (requested by Pittsfield also), shared services exploration (requested by Washington and Sheffield), and planning for broadband in the "cable only" towns and cities (requested by Williamstown).

Through the DLTA program BRPC will also continue to assist communities understanding the recreational marijuana law and with the development of municipal options and tools related to the recreational marijuana legalization (requested by Sheffield and North Adams.)

This is a robust list. Thanks to our legislators for their strong support for this important program. BRPC is steadily working with communities to finalize scopes of work. Priority is given to those projects with a short deadline, primarily those related to the marijuana law or those seeking a Spring town meeting vote.

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

Call for Photographs

BRPC is looking for photographs of our communities that can be used by the commission for a variety of purposes, such as in reports, on the website, in presentations, or hanging on our walls. Photographs can range from vistas to closeups, from outdoor activities to cultural events, from winter to summer and everything in between.

Photos cannot be copyrighted.

Please send photos to officeassistant@berkshireplanning.org and include where and what it is and date taken.

Thomas Matuszko Selected as Next Executive Director

At a special meeting on February 22nd, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission selected Tom Matuszko as its next Executive Director, succeeding Nat Karns who will be retiring in the next several months. Tom has been Assistant Director of BRPC since 2000 after being a Principal Planner here for two preceding years. Tom was selected from three very qualified applicants considered for interviews by the Commission. The Executive Committee will negotiate terms and conditions, including salary, with Tom in the coming couple of weeks.



CALENDAR

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

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



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March 1 - BRPC Executive Meeting, 4:00 pm

March 13 - Age Friendly Berkshires, Berkshire Hills Country Club, 8:30-11:30 a.m.

March 20 - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting 4:00 PM

March 27 - Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting 4:00 PM

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April 5 - BRPC Executive Meeting, 4:00 pm

April 10 - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting 4:00 PM

April 24 - Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting 4:00 PM

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