

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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Electric Vehicles and Infrastructure on the Rise

Continued interest in electric vehicles and forthcoming mandates has spurred transportation planning staff to research vehicle recharging stations in Berkshire County. Currently, there are 25 charging locations in the region with the overwhelming majority of these being destination chargers. Destination chargers are typically located at resorts and hotels and are intended for use by patrons and guests. The charging equipment at these facilities do not provide a “fast” charge and require the vehicle to remain parked for hours to receive a complete charge. Currently there are several charging sites at municipal locations including the Dalton Senior Center, Lenox Town Hall, MCLA Feigenbaum Center and a site under construction in Williamstown. Three car dealerships (Haddad Nissan, Haddad Toyota and Flynn VW/Audi) also have charging stations at their establishments.

Because of its location along the turnpike and connectivity to Routes 7 and 20, several “fast” charging stations have been strategically located in Lee. Both service plazas along the turnpike have EVgo fast charging stations. Additionally, near exit 2, the Big Y parking lot hosts Tesla and ChargePoint fast charge stations. These publicly accessible charging sites have the ability to provide up to 40 miles of range for every 10 minutes of charge. The ability to provide a quick charge also correlates to higher equipment and construction costs for “fast” charge stations and is part of the reason why so few facilities exist. At present, there are approximately 130 electric vehicles registered in Berkshire County; limited demand for electric vehicle charging has resulted in limited investment and no construction of additional charging stations.

As the Governor’s Commission on the Future of Transportation has set a goal that all new cars, light duty trucks, and buses sold in Massachusetts will be electric by 2040, it is necessary to ready the region for electric vehicles. Obviously, additional charging infrastructure will be required. BRPC has begun focusing on electric vehicles and charging infrastructure and will continue to share information with municipalities on funding opportunities for electric vehicles and charging facilities to further this clean transportation alternative.

MassDOT has also set an aspirational goal of increasing the number of electric vehicles from the current statewide number of 15,000 to 300,000 in the next several years. To help achieve that goal, there are five open grant programs, funded by the Volkswagen Settlement and administered by the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), that are aimed at reducing emissions of nitrogen oxide (NO_x) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across Massachusetts, while supporting electrification of the state’s transportation network.

- [Volkswagen Settlement Open Solicitation Grants](#)
Available to public and private entities for eligible projects that will reduce NO_x and GHG emissions.
- [MassEVIP Fleets Incentives](#)
This program helps Massachusetts cities, towns, state agencies, and public colleges and universities acquire electric vehicles (EVs) and charging stations.
- [MassDEP Multi-Unit Dwelling Charging Incentives](#)
Provides incentives for owners of multi-unit dwellings to acquire EV charging stations.
- [MassDEP Public Access Charging Incentives](#)
These incentives help property owners with publicly accessible parking acquire EV charging stations.
- [MassEVIP Workplace Charging Incentives](#)
Provides incentives for employers to acquire Level 1 and Level 2 EV charging stations.

For additional information, please contact Clete Kus, ckus@berkshireplanning.org

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Or email
info@berkshireplanning.org



The Massachusetts Department of Transportation invites you to a Public Meeting on the East-West Passenger Rail Study

Tuesday, March 12, 2019 from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

6:00 PM Presentation & 6:45 PM Open House

UMass Center at Springfield, Classroom 014
[Tower Square, 1500 Main Street, Springfield, MA*](#)

Please join MassDOT at the first public meeting and open house on the East-West Passenger Rail Study. The study will examine the costs, benefits, and investments necessary to implement a range of passenger rail service alternatives from Boston to Springfield and Pittsfield, up to and including high speed rail.

The goal of the meeting is to:

- **Inform** attendees about the study scope and existing conditions on the corridor
- **Learn** from attendees about what they would like to see in rail service alternatives

The meeting will begin with a presentation at **6:00 PM**, followed by time for Q+A. The open house will begin at **6:45 PM**, where participants can view study materials in more detail and speak directly with members of the study team.

***Parking:** If you would like to park in the Tower Square garage, parking will be validated at \$5 per car. Meeting attendees can park on all levels but are encouraged to park on Level A.

Please visit the website to sign up for email updates and learn more about this important study: www.mass.gov/east-west-passenger-rail-study.

MVP Planning Grants Available

From repeated rain on snow events that flooded the basement to the mega storms you heard about on the news, every year it is growing more apparent that we are dealing with changing weather patterns. To address the impacts of climate change within the Commonwealth, Massachusetts created the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to help municipalities plan and take action to protect vulnerable communities. Many municipalities in Berkshire County have already taken advantage of the MVP grants, and a new round of funding is available. Right now, towns and cities can apply for the planning grant ranging from \$15,000 to \$100,000, which will qualify communities for action grants to complete planned adaptation projects that take on local climate change related challenges such as flooding or forest fire. BRPC is an EEA approved provider that will help each municipality throughout the entire process. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis no later than 4pm, Friday, May 3, 2019. Keep in mind it is first-come first-serve. Regional partnerships between municipalities are eligible. Grant details are available here: <https://www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-mvp-program>.

For more information, contact Senior Planner Caroline Massa at cmassa@berkshireplanning.org

How Healthy is Berkshire County? County Health Rankings Release Event

March 25th, 2019, 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Registration & light refreshments begin at 12:30 p.m

Zion Lutheran Church (Common Room) 74 First St, Pittsfield MA 01201

County Health
Rankings & Roadmaps

Building a Culture of Health, County by County

A Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program

Pre-Registration available at: <https://ChiRelease.eventbrite.com>

Compare County and State measures on:
chronic disease, health behaviors and access to care.

Provide input on:
2019-2020 Berkshire County Health priority areas.

Keynote speaker: Jessica Collins
Executive Director of the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts:
Health Equity and Concrete Steps to Address Local Disparities

Livestream of this event can be found at: www.facebook.com/berkshireregionalplanning/

Sponsored by the County Health Initiative:



Northern Berkshire Community Coalition



Calling for Environmental Points of Contact for Each Municipality

BRPC is working with the Berkshire Green Committee Network (BGCN) to help Berkshire towns and cities support each other as we all work to improve our environmental impact. We are calling for the local environmental champions from each municipality to serve as the point of contact (POC) for that Town or City. Whether that person is you or someone that you know has been an environmental leader in your community, we would like to connect you or them with the network. Involvement or interest in the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Green Communities program is a plus, but not a requirement. The individual should have experience working in or with your local government and NGOs. On a voluntary basis the POC will be invited to BGCN meetings to be a voice for their community's accomplishments and challenges with the potential to be called upon to support their neighbors with advice and comradery.

For more information, contact Senior Planner Caroline Massa at cmassa@berkshireplanning.org

Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program

Dispersed throughout Berkshire County are thousands of individual locations where streams and rivers intersect roadways. These points of overlap are referred to as road-stream crossings. Road-stream crossings represent excellent starting points for addressing ecological impacts of the built environment and climate change resiliency in Berkshire County. As such, the Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, is seeking proposals from Massachusetts communities interested in replacing undersized, perched, and/or degraded culverts located in areas of high ecological importance. The purpose of the funding is to encourage communities to replace culverts with crossings that meet the updated Massachusetts River and Stream Crossing Standards, improving overall aquatic connectivity and capacity to withstand heavier and more frequent precipitation events. Massachusetts communities are eligible to apply for funding to support the advancement of one culvert replacement project toward completion. The application for this funding round is due by March 20, 2019 at 5:00 p.m.

Interested municipalities can view the full announcement here: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/culvert-replacement-municipal-assistance-grant-program> or for more information, contact BRPC Senior Planner Caroline Massa at cmassa@berkshireplanning.org.



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2020 Census PSAP

The 2020 Census Participant Statistical Area Program (PSAP) has begun. This is the only opportunity for the next 10 years for a community to modify the tract and block group boundaries within their community. Tracts and block groups are statistical areas that the census uses to aggregate data. These boundaries allow a community to get statistical data, such as population, age, income and educational attainment, for areas that are not legally defined (municipal boundaries).

Communities that are interested in reviewing their tract and block group boundaries should contact GIS, Data and IT Manager Mark Maloy (MMaloy@berkshireplanning.org or x29)

DataTown

DataTown is a new way to get community info in one place! Developed by MHP's Center for Housing Data, DataTown is a new interactive website that provides community level information from various sources. This site has information for all 351 municipalities in Massachusetts and puts the data in easy to understand graphics and charts.

For more information go to <https://mhpcenterforhousingdata.shinyapps.io/DataTown/>.

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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March 7 - BRPC Executive Meeting, 4:00 pm

March 7 - Short Term Rental Workshop, Lee High School, 6:00 pm

March 21 - BRPC Commission Meeting, 7:00 pm

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April 4 - BRPC Executive Meeting, 4:00 pm

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



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