



# BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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## MINUTES OF THE Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tuesday, May 23, 2023

*Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Communications*

*Meeting Materials:* <https://berkshireplanning.org/event/berkshire-metropolitan-planning-organization/>

### MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Stephen Woelfel	MassDOT (Representing Secretary Gina Fiandaca)
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Gordon Bailey	Southeast Subregion Delegate
Rene Wood	Southwest Subregion Alternate
John Boyle	North Central Subregion Delegate
Sheila Irvin	BRTA
Michael Nuvallie	City of North Adams
Ricardo Morales	City of Pittsfield

### Others Present:

Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Chris Klem	MassDOT OTP
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
Nick Russo	BRPC
Sarah Vallieres	BRTA

## **I. Call to Order – Introductions**

Mr. Woelfel called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Meeting attendees introduced themselves via a roll call conducted by Mr. Kus.

## **II. Opportunity for Public Comment**

Mr. Boyle recognized the service of Jim Lovejoy as the Southwest subregion delegate to the MPO.

## **III. Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 25, 2023**

**ACTION:** Ms. Wood introduced a motion, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to approve the minutes of the April 25, 2023, MPO meeting.

### Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Mr. Woelfel:	Yea
Ms. Heming:	Yea
Ms. Hoyt:	Yea
Ms. Irvin:	Yea
Mr. Bailey:	Yea
Mr. Boyle:	Yea
Mr. Nuvallie:	Abstain
Ms. Wood	Abstain

**IV. Approval of an amendment (4th amendment: highway projects 609072 and 609078) to the 2023-2027 TIP and authorize the Chairman to sign the certification documents on behalf of the MPO members**

Ms. Koirala shared an amendment regarding the Williamstown bridge replacement. By the next MPO meeting there will be a better estimate of the cost to the project. Mr. Woelfel suggested that the Williamstown project be removed from this Amendment until the following MPO meeting.

**ACTION:** Ms. Wood introduced a motion, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to remove the Williamstown bridge project from the 4<sup>th</sup> TIP Amendment and authorize the Chairman to sign the certification on behalf of the MPO members.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Mr. Woelfel:	Yea
Ms. Heming:	Yea
Ms. Irvin:	Yea
Mr. Morales:	Yea
Mr. Nuvallie:	Yea
Mr. Boyle:	Yea
Mr. Bailey:	Yea
Ms. Wood:	Yea

**ACTION:** Ms. Nuvallie introduced a motion, seconded by Mr. Morales, to approve the amended 4<sup>th</sup> TIP Amendment and authorize the Chairman to sign the certification on behalf of the MPO members.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Mr. Woelfel:	Yea
Ms. Heming:	Yea
Ms. Irvin:	Yea
Mr. Morales:	Yea
Mr. Nuvallie:	Yea
Mr. Boyle:	Yea
Mr. Bailey:	Yea
Ms. Wood:	Yea

**V. Consideration of an adjustment to the 2023-2027 TIP to add \$105,924 in 2023 for RTA vehicle replacement**

Ms. Koirala shared an amendment to include the purchase of a new <30ft bus in the 2023-2027 TIP. The second adjustment would change the number of replacement bus purchases from 2 to 1 with a cost change from \$44,102 to \$26,481. A new

**ACTION:** Mr. Boyle introduced a motion, seconded by Ms. Wood, to approve the TIP adjustment and open a 21-day public comment period.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Mr. Woelfel:	Yea
Ms. Heming:	Yea
Ms. Irvin:	Yea
Mr. Morales:	Yea
Mr. Nuvallie:	Yea
Mr. Boyle:	Yea
Mr. Bailey:	Yea
Ms. Wood:	Yea

**VI. Approval of the 2024 – 2028 Transportation Improvement Program and authorize the Chairman to sign the certification documents on behalf of the MPO members**

Ms. Koirala shared the final TIP document with all recorded public comments. Organizations providing comment: the Town of Dalton, the Town of Clarksburg, MassDOT, and the town of Egremont. Ms. Koirala requested signature on the TIP document along with the Global Warming Solutions Act and 3C Certification Process signoffs.

**ACTION:** Ms. Wood introduced a motion, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to endorse the TIP and authorize the chairman to sign all certification documents for the 2024-2028 TIP on behalf of the MPO members.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Mr. Woelfel:	Yea
Ms. Heming:	Yea
Ms. Irvin:	Yea
Mr. Morales:	Yea
Mr. Nuvallie:	Yea
Mr. Boyle:	Yea
Mr. Bailey:	Yea
Ms. Wood:	Yea

**VII. Presentation and discussion on the coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan and authorize a 21-day public comment period**

Ms. Koirala shared the upcoming update on the 2023 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan and requested authorization to release for a 21-day public comment period. This version is updated with 2020 census data. The CHST is focusing on the needs of seniors, disabled passengers, and low-income travelers in Berkshire County. The document was developed using a public input process involving seniors and disabled individuals, along with representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation service providers and other members of the public.

Section 5310 funding is available to enhance transportation for senior and disabled riders, including capital and operating assistance for agencies. The MassDOT Community Transit Grant program is a broad opportunity to provide resources to agencies and customers via eligible expenses and activities.

According to the 2020 Census for Berkshire County, the overall population decreased 1.7% since 2010. The percentage of Berkshire residents aged 55+ is 39.8%. The percentage of the population with a disability is 14.9%, and the median household income is \$63,159. 65.7% of households have 1 or more person working. Of these, 2.3% do not own a vehicle.

There are fifteen priorities for implementation of future services. These include expanded service, workforce transportation resources, reducing headways, expanding service in underserved communities, encouraging more towns to join the BRTA compact, coordinating vehicle sharing between social service agencies, acquiring vehicles, providing language services, leveraging TNCs to increase on-demand mobility, exploring microtransit funding, and exploring bike-share infrastructure.

Ms. Wood noted that Sheffield would be inclined to use COA or other service apparatuses for transporting low-income residents.

**ACTION:** Mr. Boyle introduced a motion, seconded by Ms. Wood, to authorize the release of the draft CHST document for a 21-day public comment period.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Mr. Woelfel: Yea  
Ms. Heming: Yea  
Ms. Irvin: Yea  
Mr. Morales: Yea  
Mr. Nuvallie: Yea  
Mr. Boyle: Yea  
Mr. Bailey: Yea  
Ms. Wood: Yea

## **VIII. Update on the development of the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan**

Mr. Russo shared the upcoming milestones and dates for the remainder of the RTP development process:

- Internal document review kickoff: 5/29/23
- Advance document copy to MPO members for review: 6/13/23
- MPO authorization for public comment: 6/27/23
- 21-day public comment period with local meetings: 6/28/23 – 7/18/23
- TAC review and comment: 7/18/23
- MPO and MassDOT endorsement: 7/25/23
- FHWA endorsement: by 9/30/23

## **IX. Discussion on focus areas of the FFY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and provide direction to staff**

Mr. Kus shared the updated focus areas for the FFY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program. They include staff activities and tasks within the following focus areas:

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning
- Regional Transit Planning
- Special Studies
- Safety Initiatives
- Climate Change and Resiliency
- Title VI and Environmental Justice
- Freight and Freight Rail Planning
- Expansion of rail service

Ms. Wood inquired if there has been consideration of investigating a rail-with-trail corridor along the Housatonic rail ROW owned by MassDOT. Mr. Kus responded that this activity is included within the Bicycle/Pedestrian work task.

## **X. Status reports from Member Agencies**

Mr. Frieri shared updates on the 6 projects that will be advertised by District 1. Two have already been advertised and the remaining projects are on schedule.

Ms. Koirala reminded the representatives that a TIP Amendment will be needed for the Pittsfield intersection improvement project and the Williamstown intersection improvement project.

Ms. Irvin shared that BRTA ridership has been increasing since the COVID travel restrictions of 2020.

Mr. Kus shared that BRPC is continuing the search for qualified applicants to fill a vacancy.

## **XI. Other Business**

MassDOT representatives expressed interest in a future hybrid meeting for the MPO body. Mr. Woelfel inquired if there is interest in a hybrid model for the June meeting. Based on feedback, the June meeting will be all virtual.

## **XII. Next Meeting date – June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

The next MPO meeting will be held on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**ACTION:** Mr. Boyle motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Wood. Mr. Woelfel adjourned the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

### **Materials Distributed:**

- [Agenda REVISED](#)
- [Draft MPO April 25, 2023 Meeting Minutes](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2023-2027 TIP 4th Amendment](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2023-2024 TIP Adjustment](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2024-2028 TIP Public Comments](#)
- [Berkshire MPO FFY 2024-2028 TIP](#)
- [Draft Berkshire Regional CHST Plan 2023](#)
- [MassDOT District 1 TIP Projects Update](#)