



# BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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## MINUTES OF THE Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tuesday, January 18, 2022

*Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Communications*

*Meeting Materials:* <https://berkshireplanning.org/event/berkshire-mpo-virtual-meeting-4/>

### MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

David Mohler	MassDOT (Representing Secretary Jamey Tesler)
Ray Bolduc	North Central Towns Alternate
John Boyle	North Towns Representative
John Duval	BRPC Chair
Zac Feury	City of North Adams
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Christine Hoyt	North Central Towns Representative
Sheila Irwin	Chair of BRTA
Kent Lew	Southeast Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Towns Representative
Ricardo Morales	City of Pittsfield

### Others Present:

Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Kyle Hanlon	City of North Adams
Michelle Ho	MassDOT OTP
Chris Klem	MassDOT OTP
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Derek Krevat	MassDOT OTP
Clete Kus	BRPC
Thomas Matuszko	BRPC
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Brandi Page	Town of Otis
Nick Russo	BRPC
Steve Savaria	Fuss & O'Neill
Sarah Vallieres	BRTA

## **I. Introductions**

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. Meeting attendees introduced themselves via a roll call conducted by Mr. Kus.

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

There were no public comments.

## **III. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 (Action Item)**

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Lew to approve the meeting minutes from the November 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

David Mohler – Yea  
Francisca Heming – Yea  
John Duval – Yea  
Sheila Irving – Yea  
Ricardo Morales – Yea  
Zac Feury – Yea  
Christine Hoyt – Yea  
John Boyle – Yea  
Kent Lew – Yea  
Jim Lovejoy – Yea

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Approval of an amendment (1<sup>st</sup> amendment) to the 2022-2026 TIP (Transit) and authorize the Chairman to sign the certification documents on behalf of the MPO members (Action Item)**

Ms. Koirala proceeded to review the [first amendment](#) to the FFY 2022-2026 TIP. The first amendment relates to the need to include four new Transit projects to the FFY 2022 project list. Two projects fall under 5307, one for preventative maintenance (\$45,300) and one for operating assistance (\$3,249,366). The other two projects include the purchase of a <30 ft replacement bus (\$238,209) and S&B fare collection upgrades (\$257,134). After the November MPO meeting, the amendment went out for public comment – none were received.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle to approve the amendment to the 2022-2026 TIP and authorize the Chairman to sign the certifications documents on behalf of the MPO.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

David Mohler – Yea  
Francisca Heming – Yea  
John Duval – Yea  
Sheila Irving – Yea  
Ricardo Morales – Yea  
Zac Feury – Yea  
Christine Hoyt – Yea  
John Boyle – Yea  
Kent Lew – Yea  
Jim Lovejoy – Yea

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**V. Discussion on the development of the 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program**

Ms. Koirala proceeded to update MPO members on the development of the 2023-2027 TIP. Ms. Koirala showed the [2023-2027 TIP Tentative Schedule](#), mentioning that on January 4<sup>th</sup>, she sent around solicitation letters to each community for prospective TIP projects. January 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline to respond with TIP project data forms. Ms. Koirala proceeded to review key milestones outlined in the tentative TIP schedule.

Mr. Duval asked for a reminder on the types of projects that communities can apply for through the TIP process and for a quick overview of how the actual submittal process is completed by municipalities.

Ms. Koirala mentioned that a workshop was held in 2018 in which the TIP process was discussed, including the different types of projects that can be included in the TIP along with how to proceed with

submitting a project notification form through MassDOT's MaPIT software tool. BRPC staff are working to hold another, similar workshop this upcoming fall.

## **VI. Presentation, discussion, and action on Safety Performance Measure Targets (Action Item)**

Mr. Klem proceeded to discuss [statewide numbers related to safety performance measures](#). Mr. Klem gave a brief background on performance measures, stating that performance measures were established by FHWA in 2016, along with requirements that state DOTs and MPOs track these performance measures. Performance measure 1 (PM1) relates to improving safety. Performance measure 2 (PM2) relates to maintaining pavement and bridge condition. Performance measure 3 (PM3) acts as a catch-all for system reliability.

Required performance measures under PM1 include:

### **Fatalities (total count and rate)**

- 5-year average of total fatalities
- Rate of fatalities per 100,000,000 vehicle miles traveled (VMT)

### **Series Injuries (total count and rate)**

- 5-year average of serious injuries
- Rate of serious injuries per 100,000,000 VMT

### **Combined Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries**

Mr. Klem proceeded by stating that the calendar year 2022 target setting process took place last April and began with trendline projections based on the most recently available data at that time. Due to the unusual circumstances of the pandemic and its influence on VMT, calendar year 2021 projections were based on 2019, and the calendar year 2020 data was disregarded. From there, the calendar year 2022 projections are based on a 2.5% reduction in fatalities from calendar year 2021, resulting in 340 for the 5-year average of total fatalities and a fatality rate of 0.56 per 100,000,000 VMT. Mr. Klem stated that the overarching goal from MassDOT is to have zero fatalities, per the Vision Zero policy, but for the purposes of this reporting exercise required by FHWA, these are the numbers that have been created.

Next, Mr. Klem review serious injuries. MassDOT projections in this category are based on 2019 data as well. Calendar year 2022 has a projected target of 2,504 'Total Serious Injuries' at a rate of 4.11 per 100,000,000 VMT.

For Total Combined Non-Motorized Injuries and Fatalities, again because of fluctuations in the data, the calendar year 2021 projections were set equal to the average of calendar year's 2017, 2018, and 2019 data. MassDOT then estimated a 2% reduction for calendar year 2022, which comes out to 471 Total Combined Non-Motorized Injuries and Fatalities.

Mr. Russo proceeded to update MPO members on safety performance measure targets (PM1) in the Berkshires using the [Berkshire comparison handout](#). Mr. Russo mentioned total fatalities and the fatality rate has been steadily decreasing in the Berkshires, despite a slight uptick in the past two 5-year average reporting cycles. Calendar year 2021 shows a total of 10.5 fatalities with a fatality rate of 0.68 per 100,000,000 VMT for the 5-year average. Calendar year 2022 projects a total of 10.2 fatalities with a fatality rate of 0.64 per 100,000,000 VMT.

Next, total series injuries and rate in 5-year average cycles again show a declining trendline in the Berkshires. Following the trendline, calendar year 2021 shows a total of 52.1 total serious injuries at a rate of 3.42 per 100,000,000 VMT. For calendar year 2022, the projection for the Berkshires comes to 50.6 total series injuries with an injury rate of 3.24 per 100,000,000 VMT.

Lastly, Nonmotorized Combined Fatalities and Serious Injuries has fluctuated in Berkshire County. Calendar year 2021 and 2022 both project 11 non-motorized combined fatalities and serious injuries.

Mr. Russo concluded: The MPO can choose to adopt the statewide safety performance measures and targets or come up with their own. Staff recommend the MPO adopt statewide targets.

Mr. Duval asked whether MPO staff would be identifying dangerous intersections and roadways in specific communities, as has been done in the past?

Mr. Kus mentioned that MPO staff continue to monitor this data through the State's HSIP, guiding which intersections MPO staff examine and evaluate for safety countermeasures.

Mr. Duval asked whether there would be a presentation to review all the HSIP clusters and/or dangerous intersections/roadways in each Berkshire community?

Mr. Russo mentioned that a report could be prepared if the MPO is specifically interested in seeing the top HSIP clusters in the county.

Mr. Kus mentioned that staff typically provide and update on these areas when new data is available.

Mr. Lew asked if there has been any close examination of the underlying causes (or other factors) regarding the uptick in overall fatalities and in the combined non-motorized fatalities and injuries?

Mr. Russo mentioned all crashes that occur within Berkshire County have a report associated with them, describing external and internal factors contributing to an accident, injury, or damage to property. Lane departures are a big reason for crashes in the county, and lane departures can be caused by several factors. Staff could certainly dive more deeply into this data.

Mr. Kus added that in Berkshire County, inattentive driving is a big contributor to accidents as it is across the commonwealth, and the safety reports that staff prepare look at a range of accidents and causations and recommend countermeasures. Mr. Kus mentioned that staff will be reviewing this information during the upcoming summer and can bring this topic up again to the MPO during that time.

Mr. Morales asked if there was any indication that we would receive information on crash data for 2020?

Mr. Russo mentioned that when he first began compiling this data, 2020 numbers had not yet been released. Mr. Russo stated that he would go back and check to see if 2020 data has been updated.

Mr. Morales asked whether there was any expectation as to what that number might be?

Mr. Russo couldn't say.

Mr. Morales asked if there was any appetite among the MPO to select Berkshire specific targets for the non-motorized fatalities and injuries, and specifically, to set that target lower?

Mr. Lovejoy made the point that since this data is collected, it is useful for the MPO to look at and consider, but that the fatalities and injuries in Berkshire County, compared to the rest of the state, are very low. Mr. Lovejoy mentioned that since the county's numbers are so low, it doesn't take much more than a few anomalous incidents to skew the data and make it seem as though there is a significant increase. Adopting the statewide targets is more practical for the MPO for reporting purposes.

Mr. Mohler called for a vote – and reminded the MPO, just so everyone understands, that if the group wished to adopt their own regional targets, Berkshire MPO staff will have to do the work of monitoring those performance targets, reporting them back to the state, and then defining why the region is not meeting those targets – if that is the case.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle to adopt the statewide safety performance measure targets.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

David Mohler – Yea  
Francisca Heming – Yea  
John Duval – Yea  
Sheila Irving – Yea  
Ricardo Morales – Yea  
Zac Feury – Yea  
Christine Hoyt – Yea  
John Boyle – Yea  
Kent Lew – Yea  
Jim Lovejoy – Yea

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

## **VII. Status Reports from Member Agencies**

Mr. Frieri provided a [brief update on District One projects to the MPO.](#)

## **VIII. Other Business**

Mr. Kus mentioned that this past Thursday and Friday, the Surface Transportation Board held their hearing regarding CSX acquisition of Pan Am rail lines. Throughout that hearing, the Surface Transportation Board further encouraged the parties to come to a resolution on outstanding rail issues. CSX wants their acquisition to gain approval from the Surface Transportation Board, and they are working with all parties that have issues or needs. One such need is to get the Berkshire Flyer to proceed as a pilot program. That process appears encouraging, as CSX is taking steps to remove barriers that had previously been in place preventing the pilot from initiation. More information will be provided as it is made available.

Mr. Kus also mentioned the new round of Shared Streets and Spaces grant program is open and he encouraged communities to consider taking advantage of this program if they have project ideas in mind. Information about the Shared Streets and Spaces program along with eligible projects and project examples can be found [here](#).

Mr. Boyle asked if anyone at DOT had any insight into whether the department has leaned toward any decisions concerning the South Street and Housatonic Street intersection in Dalton – either improvements in the form of lighting, or the infamous roundabout.

Ms. Heming noted, to the best of her knowledge, DOT has not made any decisions and more meetings are needed between the parties to move forward.

Mr. Duval asked about the recent passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and whether there have been any discussions on what projects that funding might support and what the process would be in dispersing monies.

Mr. Mohler stated that for transportation purposes, there are two types of funding in the infrastructure bill. There's funding that comes to the state via formula and then there is competitive, discretionary grant funding. The funding that comes via formula is distributed through the MPO process to the MPO's and to the state. At the end of the month, DOT will be presenting to MARPA on how the department believes that money will flow to each of the MPOs as well as to the state. As an example, the bridge money that was announced last week is a formula program – the formula is provided to the state – the state will select the projects, and the state will then work with those MPO's to program projects in the appropriate regions. In February, the MPO will likely discuss how much more money is available to the MPO through the TIP process because of this legislation. On the discretionary side, FHWA and FTA will announce the

availability of funding when the money is accessible. Each discretionary program will outline eligible projects/criteria – for which the appropriate parties would then apply for.

Mr. Duval asked if projects that would come through the MPO would be required to follow the TIP process?

Mr. Mohler stated this is Title 23 funding, meaning it comes with all the normal requirements – has to be programmed in the TIP, has to be selected through the TIP process, and has to be designed and constructed adhering to federal aid standards around ‘build America’ and ‘buy America.’

## **IX. Next Meeting date – February 22, 2022**

**ACTION:** Mr. Lovejoy motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Boyle. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 4:47 p.m.

### **Materials Distributed:**

- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [Draft MPO November 23, 2021, Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Berkshire MPO FFY 2022-2026 Transit TIP 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment](#)
- [BMPO FY 2023-2027 TIP Tentative Schedule](#)
- [CY22 Safety Performance Measure Targets \(PM1\) Berkshire Comparison](#)
- [MassDOT CY22 Safety Performance Measure Targets \(PM1\)](#)
- [MassDOT District One TIP Projects Update](#)