



# BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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## MINUTES OF THE Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tuesday, March 22, 2022

*Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Communications*

*Meeting Materials:* <https://berkshireplanning.org/event/berkshire-mpo-virtual-meeting-5/>

### MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Stephen Woelfel	MassDOT (Representing Secretary Jamey Tesler)
John Boyle	North Central Towns Representative
Joe Diver	Town of Dalton
John Duval	BRPC Chair
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Christine Hoyt	North Towns Alternate
Sheila Irvin	Chair of BRTA
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Towns Representative
Ricardo Morales	City of Pittsfield

### Others Present:

Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Chris Klem	MassDOT OTP
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Derek Krevat	MassDOT OTP
Thomas Matuszko	BRPC
George McGurn	Town of Egremont
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
John Morgan	CHA
Andrew Reovan	FHWA
Nick Russo	BRPC
Sarah Vallieres	BRTA

## **I. Introductions**

Mr. Woelfel called the meeting to order at 4:03 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 February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 (Action Item)**

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Morales to approve the meeting minutes from the February 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

### Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Stephen Woelfel – Yea  
Francisca Heming – Yea  
John Duval – Yea  
Sheila Irvin – Yea

Ricardo Morales – Yea  
Christine Hoyt – Yea  
John Boyle – Yea  
Jim Lovejoy – Yea

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**IV. Consideration of an amendment (2<sup>nd</sup> amendment) to the FFY 2022-2026 TIP related to cost increases for project 608767: Egremont, Route 23/41 (Action Item)**

Ms. Koirala proceeded to explain the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment to the current TIP – related to a cost increase for project 608767: Egremont, Route 23/41.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Morales to release the amendment for a 21-day public comment period.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Stephen Woelfel – Yea  
Francisca Heming – Yea  
John Duval – Yea  
Sheila Irvin – Yea  
Ricardo Morales – Yea  
Christine Hoyt – Yea  
John Boyle – Yea  
Jim Lovejoy – Yea

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**V. Discussion on preliminary draft project listing and funding scenarios for the 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (Action Item)**

Ms. Koirala explained that at the last MPO meeting, she showed the [TIP development handout](#). The table at the top of the handout outlines regional targets and the table at the bottom of the handout shows projects being considered for the 2023-2027 TIP. This table shows the project status (whether it's in the TIP or not), project cost, design phase, and comments.

Ms. Koirala then proceeded to review the TIP funding scenarios. Ms. Koirala mentioned that there are four scenarios that have been developed, with scenarios 1 and 1A being very similar. Scenario 1 is based on the current TIP. Ms. Koirala proceeded to review details of Scenario 1.

Under Scenario 1, there would be \$1,036,892 remaining that would not be obligated. To utilize this money, there are several restrictions that must be adhered to. Ms. Koirala proceeded outlining Scenario 1. Ms. Koirala then proceeded to review Scenario 1A. For this scenario, the roughly \$2 million that would be left over after FFY2027 could be utilized for a project at that cost, or if the cost of the project pushes the Berkshires over the target amount allocated for the subsequent TIP year.

Ms. Koirala proceeded to review Scenario 2. In this scenario, the first three years are the same as the previous scenarios with the only difference being in FFY2026. Instead of Dalton-Division Road beginning in 2026 and completing in 2027 – Egremont, Mt. Washington Road project starts in FFY2026 and completes in FY2027. After completing this project in 2027, there would be just over \$3 million remaining. This would mean the Dalton-Division project would begin in FFY2027 and complete in FFY2028.

Ms. Koirala proceeded to review Scenario 3. For this scenario, FFY2022 and FFY2023 remain the same

as Scenario 1, 1A and 2. For FFY2024, the Pittsfield-Merrill Road project was moved to FFY2025, and moved the North Adams, Ashland Street project up to FFY2024. This results in around \$3.2 million remaining for FFY2024. Due to this, an additional project, the Lanesborough, Route 7 project could also be programmed for FFY2024. There are still some remaining questions about Scenario 3 as the Lanesborough, Route 7 project is not at 25% design and costs typically increase year over year.

Ms. Koirala reported that the TAC's preferred scenario was Scenario 2.

Mr. Lovejoy mentioned that he would advocate for Scenario 2. Mr. Lovejoy asked for some clarification on the Lanesborough project in Scenario 3.

Ms. Koirala explained that in Scenario 3, 2023 remains the same as all the other scenarios. However, in FFY2024, Ms. Koirala moved the North Adams, Ashland Street project up from FYY2025 to FFY2024, which moves the Pittsfield, Merrill Road project from FFY2024 to FYY2025. We had around \$2 million remaining, however, conducting this change makes available an additional \$1 million or so, for a total of about \$3.2 million remaining. Ms. Koirala was able to fit the Lanesborough project using that remaining funding. There are still questions as to whether the North Adams, Ashland Street project will be ready for FFY2024.

Ms. Hoyt asked why, if the Lanesborough, Route 7 project is not at 25% design, it would be allowed to be listed for FYY2024 as a TIP project. Ms. Hoyt mentioned that in this respect, the Dalton, Division Road project seems similar from that standpoint. Why does Lanesborough get to move up?

Ms. Koirala mentioned that this project is much smaller than the Dalton, Division Road project and will require a lot less work.

Mr. Duval had a procedural question – asking whether a project needs to be at 24% design status to be considered eligible to be listed in the TIP.

Mr. Woelfel stated that each MPO does it a little differently, and it depends on how the Berkshire MPO does things.

Ms. Koirala explained that there is no 25% design requirement for a project to be considered for the TIP, however, 25% design shows that work is being done and the project is moving forward, and therefore, projects that are at 25% design are typically seen as getting preferential treatment.

Ms. Kus stated that such a policy

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to move forward with Scenario 2 and include it in the TIP for next month.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Stephen Woelfel – Yea

Francisca Heming – Yea

John Duval – Yea

Sheila Irvin – Yea

Ricardo Morales – Yea

Christine Hoyt – Yea

John Boyle – Yea

Jim Lovejoy – Yea

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Koirala proceeded to review the [STIP projects](#).

## VI. Presentation and discussion on national traffic safety initiatives

Mr. Russo proceeded to present on the National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS). Mr. Russo reviewed background information on the NRSS which included the following:

- Published in late January 2022 by the USDOT, under Secretary Buttigieg
- The first national strategy to tackle roadway safety of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- 2020: 38,680 died in traffic crashes: NHTSA
- 2021 (first 3 quarters): 31,720: NHTSA early estimate
- Deaths per 100 million VMT spiked in 2020

Mr. Russo proceeded to review the features and objectives of the NRSS which include:

### Safe System approach, 6 guiding principles:

1. Death and serious injuries are unacceptable
2. Humans make mistakes
3. Humans are vulnerable
4. Responsibility is shared
5. Safety is proactive
6. Redundancy is crucial

### 5 objectives (pillars) of the safe system:

- a. Safer People
- b. Safer Roads
- c. Safer Vehicles
- d. Safer Speeds
- e. Post-crash care

### Safer People:

- Behavioral interventions to discourage risky driving
- Culture of safety

### Safer Roads:

- Design interventions to increase care and attention while driving
- Interstates are safest statistically despite high speeds and long distances
- Arterials are statistically most dangerous
- Rural roadways make up disproportionate number of fatalities

### Safer Vehicles:

- Driver assistance technology
- New tech can also cause distractions
- New vehicles are getting taller and heavier
- Fatalities involving large (freight/industrial) trucks are increasing faster than average

### Safer Speeds:

- "Prioritize safe speeds over focusing exclusively on capacity and throughput"
- Rethink the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile's importance in policymaking
- Build roads that enforce the appropriate speed limit by design

### Better Post-Crash Care:

- Studies suggest that there is a 25% increase in the chance of survival from a crash if brought to a Level I or II trauma center
- Clearing and analyzing crash scenes more efficiently is safer for responders and traveling public
- Higher quality data gathering will help to uncover trends in crashes and more proactive fixes

Mr. Russo then proceeded to review suggested strategies in the Berkshires – outlining the following:

### Safer People:

- Unified, sustained messaging on the importance of safe behaviors
- Taking advantage of national/regional messaging campaigns

- Become familiar with FAQs of this newer safety paradigm
- Resources from state and federal agencies

Safer Roads:

- Collector-class roads are the most disproportionately dangerous in Berkshires
- Utilize tools like the IMPACT dashboards, Rural Roadway Departure Countermeasures and MUTCD

Safer Vehicles:

- Mostly will be in the hands of higher levels of government
- Local govs can advocate for more resources and higher scrutiny of vehicle safety ratings, especially ped safety
- Vehicle size and weight mostly overlooked in NRSS publication

Safer Speeds:

- Keep in mind the Big E's of transportation planning
- BRPC traffic safety in town centers survey and resource guide
- Speed studies are just first step when a speeding problem is identified

Post-crash care:

- Nearest Level I or II trauma centers are in Albany and Springfield
- BMC is designated a Level III trauma center
- The only areas on the MA mainland outside of a 1-hour distance of Level I or II center are in Berkshire County (and small part of Franklin)

Mr. Russo concluded by outlining the following key takeaways:

1. Mistakes should not turn fatal or life-altering
2. Safe Systems protect users before, during and after crashes
3. Communication will be vital to reducing traffic violence
4. Vehicle technology can be a double-edged sword
5. New focus on mitigating risks to people outside of vehicles
6. Remember the Big E's of transportation planning
7. Communities outside of Trauma Center radii could be especially vulnerable

**VII. Consideration of an Administrative Adjustment to the FFY22 UPWP (Action Item)**

Mr. Kus mentioned that this administrative adjustment seeks to transfer \$10,000 in staff funds from the UPWP 3.6 Climate Change task to the 3.5 Safety Initiative task. Since the TCI-P has been put on pause, it makes sense to transfer these funds to focus more on safety initiatives – as these initiatives have been receiving recent federal and state attention. When it comes to adjustments to the UPWP, there are two options – an administrative adjustment and a full-blown amendment. The Berkshire MPO's UPWP provides that if the funding amount being allocated is 25% or less of the total amount allocated to the task, the change can be handled through an administrative adjustment – meaning it does not have to go out for a 21-day public comment period. This adjustment meets that criterion.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Ms. Hoyt to approve the administrative adjustment to the FFY22 UPWP.

Mr. Kus conducted a roll call:

Stephen Woelfel – Yea  
 Francisca Heming – Yea  
 John Duval – Yea  
 Sheila Irvin – Yea  
 Ricardo Morales – Yea  
 Christine Hoyt – Yea  
 John Boyle – Yea

Jim Lovejoy – Yea

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

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

Mr. Krevat proceeded to give a presentation on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) enacted as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. The BIL has implications for all MPOs and transportation target funding. Mr. Krevat mentioned that he would touch on the BIL's implications for highway formula programs, transit formula programs, and discretionary programs.

Highway formula funding included in the BIL spans fiscal years 2022-2026 and serves as the Surface Transportation Reauthorization Act – with the last iteration being the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. Mr. Krevat proceeded to review the funding sources and amounts and highlighted the new funding programs. Mr. Krevat mentioned that a big focus of the BIL is on bridges, resiliency, and greenhouse gas emission reduction.

Mr. Krevat proceeded to highlight the three funding sources included in the BIL – contract authority, supplemental appropriations, and authorizations subject to appropriation.

Mr. Krevat then proceeded to outline how the BIL impacts TIP target funding. The Berkshire region can expect the regional target to increase by \$1,619,468 for FY22. From FY23-FY26, the Berkshire Region can expect an increase of \$6.4 million over that 4-year period. Mr. Krevat proceeded with transit and discretionary programs.

Mr. Krevat mentioned that the Massachusetts five-year transit formula funding (FY22-FY26) under the BIL is approximately \$2.8 billion, of which \$2.2 billion is for the MBTA and the remaining \$600 million is distributed among RTAs at amounts determined through split letters. The BIL did not establish any new transit formula programs.

Mr. Krevat shifted to the BIL's discretionary programs. 18 existing programs were reauthorized, and 19 new programs added. Mr. Kravet proceeded to review the three largest discretionary programs – local and regional project assistance (RAISE) grants, national infrastructure project assistance grants (Mega Projects), and Safe Streets and Road for All grant program. Mr. Krevat concluded by outlining the other discretionary programs.

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

Ms. Irvin provided a brief update on behalf of BRTA. BRTA is going to be making some changes to its routes and will soon be in the process of receiving comments from the public on proposed changes. This effort will be progressing over the next few weeks.

Mr. Kus mentioned that within BRPC, there is a group purchasing section. This was put together to help out communities take advantage of buying municipal supplies in bulk. This section recently put out a survey for their next round of contracts. That information has gone out to all the communities and Mr. Kus wanted to remind communities to take time to respond back to that survey. Many of the highway departments utilize group purchasing to acquire materials and services.

## **IX. Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **X. Next Meeting date – April 26, 2022**

The next MPO meeting will be held on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

**ACTION:** Mr. Morales motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Woelfel adjourned the meeting at 5:27 p.m.

**Materials Distributed:**

- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [Draft BMPO Meeting Minutes February 22, 2022](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2022-2026 TIP 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2023-2027 TIP Development Funding Scenarios](#)
- [Draft BMPO FFY 2023-2027 TIP \(State Prioritized Projects\)](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2023-2027 TIP Schedule – March 2022](#)