

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, April 28, 2015 4:00 PM

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office

1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives/Alternates:

Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1 (Representing Acting Highway Administrator Tom Tinlin)
Clinton Bench, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)
Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Bianchi)
John Boyle, North-Central Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy, Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Huebner, Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jeanne Pryor, Southeast Towns Alternate
John Duval, North Towns Representative
Andy Hogeland, North Towns Alternate

Others Present:

Joe Sokul, Great Barrington
Clete Kus, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Trey Wadsworth, MassDOT
Doug Plachcinski, BRPC
Peter Frieri, MassDOT
Andy McKeever, iBerkshires

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bench called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MARCH 31, 2015

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to approve the MPO meeting minutes for March 31, 2015. The correct spelling of Acting Highway Administrator Tom Tinlin's name was noted.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF APRIL 22, 2015

As the TAC Chairman was not in attendance, Mr. Kus provided a summary of the meeting to MPO members. There were three main items which were part of the meeting's agenda: update on the RTP, discussion on the 2016-2019 TIP and an overview of the proposed 2016 UPWP. It was noted that these same items will be focus of this MPO meeting. Regarding the TIP, staff presented two scenarios to the TAC, scenario two has been recommend to the MPO by the TAC.

5. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2016 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Mr. Plachcinski mentioned that we are nearing the end of the RTP cycle and that a complete

and finished draft document will be provided at the next meeting. With MAP 21 coming into play, the document is being re-organized to better follow the MAP 21 priority areas and this will facilitate MassDOT's and FHWA evaluation of the plan. The plan must also address green house gas (CO₂) emissions reductions.

At prior meetings, there has been discussion on performance measures and targets; we must also explain how we will incorporate performance measures and targets into all of our planning activities. There was mention that not all of the rule making has been finalized and this may cause some voids that will need to be addressed in the future. A detailed discussion then followed and focused on each of the seven performance areas with insight to the source of goals/objectives and which areas they were placed under.

The plan will include a fiscally constrained list of projects; it is known that the amount of funding needed to bring our roads to a good state of repair is much larger than what is available. The RTP survey received 89 responses; the greatest concerns include pot holes (road condition), bicycle facilities, sidewalks and increased public transit frequencies.

Mr. Bench inquired about the goals and objectives and stated that it is imperative that the goals are clear and that the associated objectives have performance measures and targets as part of this plan. It was mentioned that the unavailability of data poses limitations to setting performance measures and targets. Mr. Bench then asked about the approach to the identification of specific projects. From his perspective, it is fine not to identify projects that are less than \$20-\$25M. He was excited about a program level approach with specified portions of funding identified going towards each program area (i.e. pavement, public transportation, expanding off-road bike/ped facilities). Mr. Plachcinski agreed and indicated that this approach would be incorporated into the plan.

6. OVERVIEW OF THE 2016 -2019 TIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Ms. Koirala provided the following handouts: 1) regional targets, 2) two preliminary scenarios of TIP projects, 3) bike trail project status information, and 4) TIP development schedule. She presented the regional targets for FFY 2016 -2019 for the Berkshire MPO and mentioned that targets for FFY 2016 remained the same but there has been a slight increase in the future years.

The discussion then focused on the preliminary listing of TIP projects. Ms. Koirala explained that the two best scenarios are being presented. These scenarios have been developed with different combinations of projects based on project readiness, evaluation score, cost, and best fit in utilizing the limited regional targets for each of the four federal fiscal years considered.

Ms. Koirala explained each of two scenarios in detail and mentioned that the two scenarios are basically the same for FFY 2017, 2018, and 2019. The difference is in the first two years, FFY 2015 and 2016. She explained that MassDOT has a concern regarding the readiness of a project 607900 (Pittsfield Route 20/West Housatonic St & Center St) an intersection improvement project listed in FFY 2015 of the current TIP. On TIP day, MassDOT Planning suggested to move this project to FFY 2016 as the project may not be ready to go for bid by September 30, 2015. Further, it was suggested to swap the project with another intersection improvement project 607745 (Lenox Route 7/20 & Walker St) which is listed in FFY 2016 of the current TIP. She explained

scenario 1 shows the projects as listed in the current TIP. In scenario 2, the two intersection improvement projects are swapped as suggested by MassDOT Planning.

Mr. Bench sought clarification on data presented in the template and questioned CMAQ funding for project 606890, Ashuwillticook Rail Trail extension (Lime St to Hodges Cross Rd).

Ms. Koirala responded by presenting information on the status of bike and trail projects listed in the current TIP. She mentioned that the project cost of 606890: Adams, North Adams – Ashuwillticook Rail Trail extension (Lime St to Hodges Cross Rd) has increased significantly and would require other funding source to be fully funded so it could be programmed in the FFY 2016 - 2019 TIP which is being developed. She also pointed out that on the TIP day it was suggested that all the other bike and trail projects listed in the current TIP be moved to FFY 2017.

Mr. Duval sought clarification on the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail extension (Lime St to Hodges Cross Rd) being moved from 2017 to 2018. This was due to the cost increases. Also, issues related to right of way and their current status. Mr. Moore stated that the project goes through APR land and it is an effort to get the agriculture protection restriction removed to allow the trail to be constructed where it is desired. Then there are wetland concerns/constraints on wetland right of way. Due to the amount of wetlands impacted, it may necessitate a full EIR which could be a lengthy process.

Discussion then focused on increased costs including design and whether towns would incur the full increase. Mr. Moore indicated that currently the communities are bearing the full design cost but there has been some discussion about accessing the HPP funds. If there is access granted to these funds, the communities would be responsible for the 20% match, but there are lots of “ifs”.

Mr. Duval stated that construction costs are going up and the increase would possibly be covered by CMAQ, if the design cost is going up, would it also be possible to cover this increase also through the HPP? Mr. Bench said that is currently being discuss/considered by MassDOT.

Mr. Lovejoy inquired if there were any new projects? There are two: Route 8 & 9 intersection in Pittsfield and Gt. Barrington Route 7/41 and Main Street. There were also other bike /trail projects but these projects did not have a PRC number and cannot be considered. There are a few future projects but they need to go through the PRC process; communities need to be more active with their projects. Mr. Bench then inquired about any other projects or scenarios that could be considered.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Collingwood, seconded by Mr. Huebner directing staff to proceed with scenario 2.

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

Ms. Koirala stated that there was no information available related to the transit portion. Mr. Bench indicated that the GrantsPlus system should have some information available for print out by now. Ms Koirala reiterated that no information has been provided and that Rail/Transit staff are continuing to work on resolving this issue.

7. CONSIDERATION OF A FOURTH AMENDMENT TO THE 2015-2018 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) TO PROGRAM TRANSIT FUNDS AWARDED UNDER MASSDOT'S COMMUNITY TRANSIT GRANT PROGRAM, REPROGRAM PROJECT 607900, CENTER ST. & W. HOUSATONIC ST. TRAFFIC SIGNALS AND INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS FROM FFY 2015 TO FFY 2016 AND REPLACE WITH PROJECT 607745 LENOX-INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT WALKER STREET AND ROUTE 7/20 AND INITIATE A 30 DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.

Ms. Koirala referenced handout materials which highlight the proposed changes. With respect to the transit component, the CNG facility is proposed to be removed (Section 5307 funding in the amount of \$560K), adding funding for two Section 5310 Community Transit Grant items in 2015: SBETC operating assistance (\$32,300) and BCAC, fleet management (\$57,060) and add other non-federal funding for BRTA to acquire miscellaneous support equipment (\$131,607). Mr. Collingwood inquired if there was any information why the CNG facility was being cut; the City has an interest in this project. No information was available to share and BRTA was not present. Mr. Lovejoy mentioned that it might be appropriate to table the CNG component of the amendment.

The discussion then focused on the portion of the highway amendment. The amendment includes moving the Pittsfield, Center St. and W. Housatonic Street Intersection project from FFY 2015 to FFY 2016 and replacing it with the Lenox, Walker St. and Route 7/20 in FFY 2015. CMAQ funding would be transferred to the Dalton project in 2015 and reducing the 2017 amount. The project cost does not increase.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, second by Mr. Huebner to release the fourth amendment to the 2015-2018 TIP for the highway element, and table the two BRTA projects.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

8. UPDATE AND DISCUSSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2016 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Mr. Kus began the presentation mentioning that the UPWP is prepared annually and it is the document that outlines our focus and work activities. The UPWP consists of the four main sections: management, technical support, planning studies and other activities. He then discussed the proposed changes in comparison to the current UPWP. The 2016 UPWP is proposed to remove the following tasks: NTD, Regional Transportation Plan and ADA Transition Plan; one new task is proposed, Public Participation Plan. Changes to funding allocations will occur to four tasks: Bike/Ped Planning, Climate Change/GHG, MAP 21 performance measures and \$20K will be programmed for the revised public participation plan. A handout was provided to which outlines the proposed changes. The total amount of PL funds for FFY 2016 is \$496,942.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri reviewed the MassDOT District 1 project update spreadsheet which included information on projects that went out to bid in FY 2014 and were funded through the TIP, just over \$10M in projects and nearly \$26M in projects from state and other federal funds. Notice to proceed was just issued on the Adams roundabout. This is the first roundabout in District 1. With respect to FFY 2015, all of the bridge projects are at 75% to 100% design and are on schedule for advertising this year. Mr. Lovejoy expressed appreciation to MassDOT for the additional funding provided to Berkshire County. There were no other reports from any other agency.

Mark Moore mentioned that Clinton Bench will be leaving MassDOT and thanked him for his efforts. Other members also expressed their gratitude and expressed best wishes.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date is May 26, 2015.

12. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: passes unanimously

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- March MPO Meeting minutes
- Fourth TIP amendment with supportive paperwork
- TIP evaluation and scenario handouts
- 2016 RTP presentation handouts
- 2016 UPWP Handout
- District 1 project update spreadsheet