

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, June 30, 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)
Steve Woelfel, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)
Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Bianchi)
John Boyle, North-Central Towns Representative
John Duval, North Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy, Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Huebner, Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Andy Hogeland, North Berkshire Towns Alternate
Jeanne Pryor, Southeast Berkshire Towns Alternate
Bob Malnati, BRTA
Sheila Irvin, BRPC

Others Present:

Kevin Wright, FHWA
Nat Karns, BRPC
Clete Kus, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Doug Plachcinski, BRPC
Peter Frieri, MassDOT

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Woelfel called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MAY 26, 2015

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to approve the MPO meeting minutes for May 26, 2015.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIES, ONE ABSTENSION (Malnati)

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. APPROVAL OF THE FOURTH AMENDMENT TO THE 2015-2018 TIP TO PROGRAM TRANSIT PROJECTS AWARDED UNDER MASSDOTS COMMUNITY TRANSIT GRANT PROGRAM, REPROGRAM PROJECT 607900, CENTER STREET AND W. HOUSATONIC STREET TRAFFIC SIGNAL AND INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS FROM FFY 2015 TO FFY 2016 AND REPLACING IT WITH PROJECT 607745 LENOX- INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS AT WALKER STREET AND ROUTE 7/20 AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS

Ms. Koirala referenced handout materials which highlight the proposed changes. She indicated the Fourth Amendment proposes amendment to both the highway and transit section of the FFY 2015-2018 TIP. She mentioned the Berkshire MPO released the proposed Fourth Amendment to the current TIP for public comments at the April 28, 2015 meeting. No comments were received regarding the proposed amendments since it was released for public

comments.

With respect to the transit component, adding funding for two Section 5310 Community Transit Grant items in 2015: SBETC operating assistance (\$32,300) and BCAC, fleet management (\$57,060).

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.

The Chairman inquired if anyone had additional questions. Hearing none, a motion was sought to adopt the proposed Fourth Amendment to the 2015-2018 TIP.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, second by Mr. Boyle, to adopt the proposed Fourth Amendment to the 2015-2018 TIP for the transit and highway section.

VOICE VOTE, UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

5. APPROVAL OF THE FIFTH AMENDMENT TO THE 2015-2018 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) RELATED TO TRANSIT PROJECTS AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS

Ms. Koirala indicated the Fifth Amendment proposes changes to FFY 2015 Transit TIP. She referenced handout materials which highlight the proposed changes. She mentioned the Berkshire MPO released the proposed Fifth Amendment to the current TIP for public comments at the May 26, 2015 meeting. No comments were received regarding the proposed amendments during the public comment period.

Through this amendment, Section 5307 funding is proposed to be removed for a CNG facility (\$700,000), the purchase of replacement vans (5) (\$350,000), and the purchase of replacement van (1) (\$119,600). Included in the amendment is adding the purchase of support vehicles (100,000) under the same section. Under other non-federal funding, BRTA proposes to acquire miscellaneous support equipment (\$131,607).

Ms. Koirala mentioned that the Fifth Amendment to the FFY 2015-2018 TIP also requires an administrative adjustment. This request has been made by MassDOT planning and Boston to move six projects from FFY 2016 to FFY 2015. She referenced handout materials which highlight the proposed changes. Mr. Malnati explained that BRTA has applied for the federal grant before the TEAM/TRAM system changes so these projects need to be in the active element of the TIP in order for these funds to be utilized. As such, this amendment moves the projects to FFY 2015.

Mr. Woelfel inquired if anyone had additional questions. Hearing none, he called for a motion.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, second by Mr. Boyle, to adopt the Fifth Amendment to the FFY 2015-2018 TIP for the transit projects including the administrative adjustment.

VOICE VOTE. UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

6. APPROVAL OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT TO THE 2015-2018 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) TO REVISE COSTS FOR BRIDGE PROJECTS IN SAVOY (607121) AND GT. BARRINGTON (605299)

Ms. Koirala referenced handout materials which highlight the proposed changes. She mentioned the project cost for two bridges were reduced at the time of the bid. An administrative adjustment was needed so the project cost for these bridges would reflect correctly on the STIP.

Great Barrington (605299) bridge on Park Street over Housatonic River project cost reduced by \$2,293,608. Savoy (607121) bridge on River Road over the Westfield River project cost reduced by \$778,308.

Chairman Woelfel inquired if anyone had additional questions. Hearing none, a motion was made to adopt the proposed administrative adjustment to the 2015-2018 TIP to revise the cost of bridge projects.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Malnati, second by Mr. Huebner to approve the Administrative Adjustment to the FFY 2015-2018 TIP.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

7. RECEIVE THE 2016 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 30 DAY COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Plachciniski mentioned that the purpose of the agenda item is to release the RTP to the public and to initiate a 30 day comment period. This will provide the opportunity to receive feedback on the draft document. His presentation began mentioning that nearly \$1.3 B is the amount estimated needed for federal aid eligible transportation improvements in the region. An additional \$275M is required for local roads over the next 30 years. The forecasted revenue over this time period is only \$298M.

Mr. Plachciniski then provided an overview of the seven national performance goals and the policy recommendations for each of the goals. System Reliability is focused on how people access the transportation system, particularly those without vehicles. Recommendations are focused on expanding transit service and the construction of transit centers in northern and southern parts of Berkshire County. Congestion Reduction is the second national performance goal. Traffic signals are not functioning as well as they can, they are old technology and improper system geometrics/mis-aligned intersections contribute to the problem. Policy recommendations seek to elevate bottlenecks, adding passing lanes to Route 8 (Cheshire and Lanesborough), a new access to I-90 and for bike path projects. Freight Movement and Economic Vitality looked at where there are expandable development areas and to improve access to priority development areas. Funding is also directed at improvements to passenger rail that will also benefit freight rail and the related jobs. Infrastructure Conditions are such that a great deal of roads are in need of a lot of work; the

greatest need is keeping our pavement together. The RTP estimates that \$528 M is required for federal aid eligible roads and bridges and an additional \$275 is required for local roads. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on preventative maintenance of bridges and culverts. With respect to Environmental Sustainability, there is a desire to have a natural, safe and clean environment within the Berkshires. Recommendations related to sustainability include GHG emissions modeling, wildlife crossings and electric vehicle charging stations. The Safety performance goal is focused on reducing fatalities. Our least safe intersections have not been invested in to improve safety, regional guard rail and signage upgrades are needed. Recommendations are focused on these areas to improve safety. Reducing Project Delivery Delays is the final national performance goal. A program account approach has been taken with respect to the RTP. Delivering more projects and getting more funding to implement projects called for by the RTP is the key recommendation for this goal. This summarizes the basic findings of the planning process and these serve as the basis for the plans recommendations.

ACTION: MOTION by Mr.Lovejoy, second by Mr.Huebner to release the RTP for a 30 comment period.

Mr. Lovejoy raised the issue of culverts and questioned if the RTP addresses the environmental process. He believes that this needs to be addressed to reduce costs and expedite the completion of the projects. Chairman Woelfel inquired about information on 5 year banding and a table showing financial constraint. Mr. Plachciniski responded that unless we have a project which exceeds \$10 million, we were advised to develop program area accounts which are included in the draft RTP.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

8. RECEIVE THE 2016 -2019 TIP AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 30 DAY COMMENT PERIOD.

Ms. Koirala provided handouts of FFY 2016-2019 TIP listing of highways, bridges, bike & trails, and transit projects. She presented in detail the listing of Berkshire MPO TIP projects as prioritized in the four years of FFY 2016 – 2019 TIP. She mentioned that BRPC received the listing of bridge projects for the Berkshire MPO for FFY 2016 – 2019 TIP from MassDOT Planning. She pointed out that the FFY 2016-2019 TIP listing being presented is the same as what was presented to the MPO at the May 26, 2015 meeting other than updating the bridge listing.

After she presented the listing of highway, bridges, and bike & trail projects the Chairman inquired if anyone had additional questions. As no one had any question regarding highway projects, she continued by presenting the transit projects listed in the TIP.

Chairman Woelfel asked if anyone had additional questions. Hearing none, a motion was made to release the Berkshire MPO FFY 2016-2019 TIP document for 30 day comment period.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, supported by Mr. Boyle, to release the draft FFY 2016-2019 TIP document for a 30 day comment period.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

9. DISCUSSION ON THE STATE'S CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.

Mr. Kus began the discussion by mentioning that this item was included on the agenda for the benefit of the members to discuss the State's CIP. He indicated that he had forwarded members an email he received on June 15th containing the document along with a meeting notice for June 16th at PVPC. The discussion then focused on some of the discrepancies that were identified and whether these have been resolved prior to adoption of the CIP. Mr. Woelfel indicated that he was aware that the MBTA CIP was approved by the Board but he was not certain about the full CIP. He indicated that it was a one year CIP and that they are moving forward with a five year CIP once the Project Selection Advisory Committee's process is finalized.

Mr. Karns indicated that he was not happy with the timing of the CIP and was hoping that OTP would have come to the meeting prepared to provide the MPO some overview of what is in the CIP. Mr. Karns also mentioned that it is very difficult when staff receives a document one day before a public meeting; there is no way to engage policy folks, inform them and learn of any comments that they may have. The MPO is held to a standard of providing 30 days for public comment. It is unknown why the State doesn't achieve the same, if not more, as the State has even more stake holders.

Mr. Woelfel indicated that he was aware of BRPCs concern and indicated that OTP was only a part of the CIP. He indicated that as MassDOT moves forward with the 5 year CIP, these issues would be addressed and OTP will provide more direct involvement with the MPO.

10. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri reviewed MassDOT District 1 project update spreadsheets. All of the TIP project for the current year have started construction. Pittsfield/BMC project was recently subject to a design audit by FHWA; 25% design should be forthcoming. Mr. Karns requested that MassDOT keep MPO staff involved in this project along with providing information to MPO members.

Mr. Frieri continued mentioning that projects paid for with redistribution and Way Forward funding were moving forward and that the Dalton public meeting for the revised PSE was held the previous week.

MassDOT is beginning to inspect BRI's; these are bridge/culvert structures less than 20 feet (between 10 and 20 feet). They do not have a complete inventory of these structures as they have not inspected these in the past. This is something that they are going to start doing and provide reports to the towns.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date is August 4, 2015.

13. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: passes unanimously

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Minutes from May 26th meeting
- Fourth TIP amendment with supportive paperwork
- Fifth TIP amendment with supportive paperwork
- District 1 project update spreadsheet