

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, August 4, 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)

Trey Wadsworth, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)

Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Bianchi)

John Duval, North Berkshire Towns Representative

Jim Lovejoy, Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative

Jim Huebner, Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative

Bob Malnati, BRTA

Sheila Irvin, BRPC

Others Present:

Sam Haupt, TAC Chairman

Kevin Wright, FHWA (via phone)

Sean Van Deusen, Town of Lenox

Nat Karns, BRPC

Clete Kus, BRPC

Anuja Koirala, BRPC

Peter Frieri, MassDOT

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

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

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF JULY 21, 2015

The TAC did meet on July 21st; the meeting was chaired by vice chairman Ron Tinkham. The purpose of the meeting was to make recommendations to the MPO on the three certification documents. Regarding the UPWP, the TAC was provided with an overview of the special studies and tasks as well as the budget. Anuja provided a detailed information on the highway, bridge and transit portions of the TIP. Last, a brief presentation was provided on the RTP and the seven national performance goals and information on the corresponding costs. With respect to all three of the certification documents, the TAC voted unanimously to recommend approval to the MPO. Other items discussed during the TAC meeting included: what the likelihood is for an additional interchange being constructed on the Turnpike (in Berkshire County), how are seasonal variations accounted for in traffic counts/volumes, a Harvard study appearing in the New York Times indicated that transportation is key to upward economic mobility and last, the impact which internet sales has on the transportation network.

4. APPROVE AN ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT TO THE 2015-2018 TIP TO REVISE PROJECT COSTS FOR GT. BARRINGTON (605299)

Ms. Koirala referenced handout materials which highlight the proposed changes. She mentioned the estimated project cost for the Great Barrington bridge on Park Street (over Housatonic River) was reduced by \$1,603,318 as a result of the bidding process. An administrative

adjustment is needed to accurately reflect the cost for this project in the STIP.

The chairman inquired if anyone had additional questions. Hearing none, he requested a motion.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, second by Mr. Huebner, to approve an administrative amendment to the 2015-2018 TIP to revise the cost for the Gt. Barrington (605299).

VOICE VOTE: UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

5. APPROVE THE FFY 2016 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS

Mr. Kus stated that comments on UPWP were received from FHWA and MassDOT. He then provided a summary of these comments. Comments from the FHWA:

- Add more specificity on completion dates
- Include reference to FHWA's Planning Emphasis Areas, MAP 21, Regional Models of Cooperation and Ladders of Opportunity
- Clarification of special study tasks
- With respect to the Bicycle/Pedestrian task, incorporate efforts related to a pedestrian safety plan.
- Include more specificity on staff work time associated with the UPWP tasks.

Comments from MassDOT included:

- Insure that the document is "accessible"
- Identify opportunities to coordinate/partner with BRTA
- Add public health outcomes to transportation planning activities
- Split Title VI, Public Participation and EJ keeping Public Participation as a separate task
- Create a sub task for a regional bicycle parking program
- Incorporate Bay State Greenway into the Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning task
- Establish a sub task to identify critical sidewalk gaps and assistance to access TIP funds to construct "critical" sidewalks on federal aid roads
- With respect to local technical assistance, include working with communities on the project development process.

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

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, second by Mr. Lovejoy, to approve the 2016 UPWP and authorize the chairman to sign the certifications on behalf of the MPO members.

VOICE VOTE. UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

6. APPROVE THE FFY 2016 -2019 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS

Ms. Koirala provided handouts of FFY 2016-2019 TIP listing of highways, bridges, bike & trails, and transit projects. She mentioned the TIP document was resealed for a 30 day comment period beginning on June 30, 2015. During the comment period we did not receive any comments from the general public but we did receive comments from MassDOT Planning and Federal Highway Administration. She presented the comments received for the draft FFY 2016 – 2019 TIP. Comments were general in nature which listed typographical errors and to add a table listing the projects that were evaluated for FFY 2016 - 2019 TIP and a few changes to the cost. She pointed out that there hasn't been any other changes to the draft FFY 2016 – 2019 TIP document since it was presented to the MPO at the June 30, 2015 meeting. Mr. Lovejoy inquired about the availability of federal funds to construct these projects. As no one had any question regarding highway projects, she continued presenting the transit projects as listed in four years of FFY 2016 - 2019 TIP. She mentioned that BRPC did not receive any comments related to the transit projects during the comment period.

The Chairman inquired about questions from the members. Hearing none, a motion was sought.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, second by Mr. Lovejoy, to endorse the Berkshire MPO FFY 2016-2019 TIP document and authorize the chair to sign the certification document on behalf of the MPO members.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

7. APPROVE THE 2016 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP) AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS

Handouts of the comments which were received on the draft RTP were distributed. Mr. Kus began the presentation mentioning that the comment period started on July 1 and concluded on July 31. Legal notices were published, announcements were placed on our web site, a press release was distributed, a news article was published, draft documents were placed at local libraries and three public meetings were held in July. Comments on the draft RTP were received from the Nature Conservancy, FHWA, FTA and MassDOT. Mr. Kus indicated that staff also met with BRTA to discuss the draft RTP and incorporate their suggested changes. He then went on to highlight the more substantive comments and how they were addressed including incorporating O & M funding into the final document.

Mr. Wadsworth inquired of any questions. Mr. Lovejoy raised the issue that in some areas, environmental considerations that are required are out of control with the natural environment and this increases costs. The impact of a project is not considerable and the context needs to be taken into consideration. This results in increased costs and we need to find a way to keep the context of a project into consideration when applying regulations.

ACTION: MOTION by Mr. Huebner, second by Mr. Huebner to approve the 2016 Regional Transportation Plan and authorize the Chair to sign the certification documents.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES.

8. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri presented and discussed the MassDOT District 1 project update spreadsheets. With respect to all of the TIP projects for the 2014 FY year, all have started construction. Information on project completion is also listed. In terms of the additional funding from last year (about \$26 million) that was put out to construction, all projects are under construction with the exception of two: the North Adams traffic signal replacement project and Washington Mountain Road reconstruction project.

Turning to FY 2015, Mr. Frieri mentioned that the Adams Ashuwillticook rail/trail project is at final design and efforts are focused on right of way acquisition. Dalton will have a bid opening in October, Route 7/20 repaving project is completed, Walker Street and 7/20 is at 100% design, and the bid has been awarded for the Sheffield/Gt. Barrington resurfacing project. Regarding bridge projects, both Gt. Barrington and Savoy are at final design. Looking to FY 2016, Adams/N Adams design project, a contract needs to be developed, Center and West Housatonic intersection (Pittsfield) is at 25% design, bridges are all at 25% design with the exception of the last one listed (Washington 605350).

Mr. Malnati reported that BRTA is waiting for funding to be finalized.

Mr. Karns reported on BRPC efforts moving forward with assessing routes and road impact related to the interstate natural gas pipe line construction. The number of local roads that would be impacted is significant. He indicated that BRPC is reviewing the FERC documents and will be providing detailed comments. Mr. Karns expressed appreciation to District 1 for taking the time to review/comment on our comments. BRPC is also developing a model bylaw/ordinance for consideration by the localities related to a heavy road use permitting process to provide municipalities with some regulatory protection. This is something that can also be used in conjunction with the Rest of River Clean-up Effort.

Trey Wadsworth indicated that MassDOT is currently conducting a public comment period on the STIP. The comment period ends on August 25, 2015.

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9. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date is September 29, 2015.

11. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: passes unanimously

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- TIP administrative adjustment supportive paperwork
- Comments on the draft UPWP
- TIP Tables
- Comments received on the draft RTP
- District 1 project update spreadsheet training