

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1

- *Outdoor Recreation Plan for Berkshire County*

PAGE 2

- *JANUARY 2020 LOOKING FORWARD: FARMLANDS FOREVER*
- *The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission 5th Thursday Dinner—Electric Cars and Charging Stations*

PAGE 3

- *Berkshire MPO—FFY 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*
- *Electric Vehicle Rebates to Restart in New Year*
- *Partnerships for Growth: A plan to enable the Commonwealth's regions to build, connect and lead*

PAGE 4

- *BRPC wishes you a happy and healthy New Year!*
- *Calendar*

Outdoor Recreation Plan for Berkshire County

As mentioned in our last newsletter, BRPC is working on an Outdoor Recreation Plan for the county. We are studying current conditions and assets, and looking at possible areas of opportunity for further development of the outdoor recreation economy in our region. As part of this work, we are conducting a survey of area residents, second home owners, and visitors.



Image (above): Bikes on Baldwin Hill, credit: Steffen Root



Please participate in this 10-15 minute survey, and share it with your networks: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BRKOutdoorRec>

A public forum will be held on **January 8th, 2020** from **5-7pm** at **Hotel on North in Pittsfield** to explore preliminary results from this survey and discuss possible improvements and areas of concern.



Image (above): Hiking dog, credit: Matt Heim



Image (above): Otis Reservoir, credit: Jeff Gamelli

Please share information about this public meeting as well, and encourage people to register in advance at: bit.ly/BRKORforum

JANUARY 2020
LOOKING FORWARD: FARMLANDS FOREVER
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources- [View Online Flyer](#)

Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program Events in 2020

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources is holding a series of public meetings over the course of January 2020 to review the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. The APR Program preserves and protects agricultural lands from being built upon for any activity detrimental to agriculture. The meetings are intended to provide the public with an opportunity to review existing guidelines, policies and regulations in order to assess the effectiveness of the program and provide input.

Events held from 6-8pm

January 7: Red Barn, Hampshire College, 893 West Street, **Amherst**

January 14: Community Harvest Farm, 37 Wheeler Road, **North Grafton**

January 21: Berkshire Athenaeum, Public Library, 1 Wendell Ave, **Pittsfield**

January 28: Bristol County Ag High School, Library Rm 212, Gilbert Hall, 135 Center Street, **Dighton**

January 30: Essex North Shore Ag/Tech School, Smith Hall Cafetorium, 565 Maple Street, **Danvers**

Since 1980, the APR Program has permanently protected 932 farms and 73,368 acres in Massachusetts. The APR program was the first in the nation and continues to protect and preserve working farms for generations to come.

For questions please email dorothy.du@mass.gov

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
5th Thursday Dinner—Electric Cars and Charging Stations

Interested in learning more about electric vehicles (EVs) and how to prepare for their arrival? This emerging technology is resulting in more EVs operating in our region. A number of Governor Baker's initiatives are focused on significantly increasing the number of electric vehicles. Learn more about EVs including what municipalities should be aware of as it relates to the siting and construction of EV charging facilities and what incentives are available for vehicles and charging stations.

Please join Stephen Russell, Alternative Transportation Program Coordinator/Clean Cities Director for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and is responsible for coordinating and promoting the use of alternative vehicles and fuel and reducing petroleum usage. Having held this position since 2009, Steve has extensive knowledge and experience in the alternative fuel vehicle arena and has



been instrumental in efforts to promote and increase clean alternative fuel vehicles and infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth. He will share his insight on what communities can do to prepare for the increasing numbers of electric vehicles that are being added to the fleet mix. Steve will also speak about resources available such as grants and incentives as well as what assistance the Massachusetts Clean Cities Coalition can provide.

DATE & TIME: Thursday, January 30, 2020, 5:30-6:00 Social Hour, 6:00-8:00 Dinner and Presentation

LOCATION: Mazzeo's Restaurant, 1015 South Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201; Dinner Price is \$35

Registration required by January 15, 2020

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/5th-thursday-electric-cars-and-charging-stations-tickets-86332628215>

Berkshire MPO—FFY 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

We are beginning the process of preparing the FFY 2021–2025 TIP for Berkshire County. The TIP is a prioritized, financially constrained, multi-year program for the implementation of federally funded transportation projects in Berkshire County. The TIP implements the region’s long-range transportation plan by programming federal-aid funds for transit, highway, bridge, transportation enhancement, bike paths, safety, and air quality improvements.

FFY 2021-2025 TIP Schedule:

January 6—TIP project solicitation letter and data forms to Cities, Towns, MassDOT and BRTA via e-mail (forms due January 31)

February 18—TAC discussion on project evaluation scores

February 25—MPO discussion on project evaluation scores

March 17—TAC discussion on preliminary draft TIP listing

March 24—MPO discussion on preliminary TIP listing

April 14—TAC recommendation to MPO

April 28—MPO release draft TIP for public comments

May 19—TAC endorsement/recommendation to MPO

May 26—MPO approval of TIP

For more information, contact Principal Transportation Planner Anuja Koirala (akoirala@berkshireplanning.org or x18).

Electric Vehicle Rebates to Restart in New Year

The rebate program (MOR-EV) that had run out of funding and therefor cancelled at the end of September is starting up again. Funding from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative has allowed \$27 million available for the rebates program. This program allows consumers to be eligible for \$2,500 rebate on all electric cars or \$1,500 rebate for plug-in hybrid that has at least a 25-mile range on a battery charge. In order to be eligible for either the cars sticker price must be under \$50,000.



When the MOR-EV program started in 2014 there was over \$31.2 million given out in rebates, meaning there were 15,421 vehicles purchased. These vehicles were predominantly Tesla, but Chevrolet, Toyota, Nissan, and Ford were also purchased. In 2018 6,098 electric cars were purchased and received rebates. It is unclear how long the \$27 million will last for the rebate program (at the peak of the program they received about \$1-1.2 million rebate requests per month) and with prices going down on electric batteries and new models coming out the purchase of electric cars will become even more enticing to consumers.

For more information on this program, please visit: <https://mor-ev.org/>

Partnerships for Growth: A plan to enable the Commonwealth's regions to build, connect and lead

The Baker-Polito Administration has come out with a new Economic Development Plan after working with stake holders, expert, and an appointed Economic Development Planning Council. Focusing on four core pillars: responding to the housing crisis; building vibrant communities; supporting business competitiveness; and training a skilled workforce; this plan considers the unique needs of the separate regions that make up Massachusetts. Through multiple listening sessions and meetings, it was also founded that there were five principles that spanned across the four pillars, they are: regional needs, accessible government, environment, equitable opportunity, and infrastructure. The use of these pillars and principles will help guide the plan to align the Administrators economic development programs, funding, and legislative efforts in order to address the challenges and needs of Massachusetts over the next four years.

For more information on this plan, please visit: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/partnerships-for-growth>

Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 121
Pittsfield, MA

BRPC wishes you a happy and healthy New Year!



CALENDAR

Be sure to check out our online calendar for updates, cancellations, recently posted events and agendas. berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar

**M
O
N
T
H
1**

- January 8 - BRPC Outdoor Recreation in the Berkshires - Public Forum 5:00 pm**
- January 9 - Finance Committee Meeting, 4:00 pm**
- January 16 - BRPC Full Commission Meeting, 7:00 pm**
- January 21 - Looking Forward: Farmlands Forever, 6:00 pm**

**M
O
N
T
H
2**

February 6 - BRPC Executive Committee, 4:00 pm

Remember to check our inclement weather hotline to learn the status of a meeting at (413) 442-1521 X 5



Please consider receiving an e-newsletter—saving trees and energy costs in our region and beyond. E-mail officeassistant@berkshireplanning.org today to subscribe!