

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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Transportation Plans Completed

Transportation planning staff have completed work on three federally required plans; the 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the 2020 Berkshire Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). These plans serve to provide overall direction on transportation planning activities and project implementation within our region.

The 2020 Unified Planning Work Program outlines the transportation planning activities for the upcoming federal fiscal year beginning October 1, 2019 which BRPC staff will be working on. New activities and studies which are included in this year's UPWP include a feasibility study for intra county rail service on the Housatonic line, developing an electric vehicle charging station strategic plan, a micro-mobility viability study for bike and scooter sharing (including a demonstration project), updating the bike path implementation plan and performing a county-wide evaluation of traffic signals and related equipment. These activities are in addition to routine MPO activities. In total, the UPWP programs nearly six thousand hours of professional transportation planning work over the next fiscal year.

The FFY 2020–2024 TIP is a prioritized, financially constrained, multi-year program for the implementation of federally funded transportation projects in Berkshire County. The TIP, updated annually, 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.

The 2020 RTP is the long-range plan for improving transportation in the Berkshires. The plan is updated every four years, with the last update completed in 2016. The RTP identifies potential transportation projects and supporting planning activities over a 20-year period—which then feed into the near-term TIP spending plan and UPWP. The RTP looks at all aspects of transportation in the region, including automobiles, public transit, passenger rail, biking, and walking. Major recommended projects and study efforts in the updated RTP include several proposed passenger rail efforts, a new emphasis on regional culvert replacement to prepare for climate change, as well as completing the proposed countywide Berkshire Bike Path.

For more information, contact Transportation Manager Clete Kus (ckus@berkshireplanning.org or x20).

Visit BRPC's website at www.berkshireplanning.org to view these documents.

Opportunity Zone Symposium

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission partnered with 1Berkshire for an Opportunity Zone Symposium on June 5th, hosted by Berkshire Money Management in Dalton. The event provided education and networking opportunities for potential partners in Opportunity Zone investment in the Berkshires. Three municipalities, Adams, North Adams, and Pittsfield, contain Qualified Opportunity Zone tracts, which were deemed eligible through median income statistics and nominated to the federal government by individual states after the program was established in 2017. Municipal officials, investment representatives, and developers attended the symposium to learn more about the program and explore potential matches between funders and projects.



For more information, contact Senior Planner Laura Brennan (lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org or x14).

Summer Weather and Heat Preparedness

Among all weather-related hazards, extreme heat results in the highest number of deaths annually. In most of the U.S., a heat event is considered extreme if temperatures exceed 90 degrees with high humidity during a long period of time. In extreme heat, evaporation is slowed, and the body must work harder to maintain a normal temperature, which can lead to death by overworking the body.



Older adults, children, and individuals who are sick or overweight are at a greater risk of the negative effects of extreme heat. Older adults are at a heightened risk of the health consequences associated with extreme heat because they are more likely to have a chronic medical condition that changes normal body responses to heat, they are more likely to take a prescription medicine that affects the body's ability to control its temperature or sweat, and they do not adjust as well as younger individuals to sudden changes in temperature (CDC). Extreme heat can occur suddenly and without warning, but there are steps that can be taken for seniors to prepare for extreme heat, and there are early signs and symptoms of heat-related illness to look out for during an extreme-heat event.

Prepare:

- Stay cool and hydrated. Stay in an air-conditioned building as much as possible. If your home does not have air conditioning, you can contact your local health department or locate an air-conditioned cooling shelter in your area. Fans are not a reliable cooling resource in extreme heat.
- Drink more water than you usually do, and do not wait until you are thirsty to drink. If your doctor limits your water intake for a medical reason, ask them how much you should drink during extreme heat events.
- Do not use the stove or oven to cook to avoid making your home hotter.
- Wear loose, lightweight, light colored clothing.
- Take a cool shower or bath.
- Rest, and do not engage in strenuous activity.
- Check on your neighbors and have someone check on you.

Symptoms of heat-related illness:

Heat Cramps: Muscle pains or spasms in the stomach, arms, or legs.

- Actions: Go to a cooler location. Remove excess clothing. Take sips of cool sports drinks with salt and sugar. Seek medical help if cramps last more than an hour.

Heat Exhaustion: Heavy sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting, or fainting.

- Actions: Go to an air-conditioned place and lie down. Loosen or remove clothing. Take a cool bath. Take sips of cool sports drinks with salt and sugar. Get medical help if symptoms get worse or last more than an hour.

Heat Stroke: Extremely high body temperature (above 103 degrees) taken orally; red, hot, and dry skin with no sweat, strong pulse; dizziness; confusion; or unconsciousness.

- Actions: Call 911 and get the person to a hospital immediately. Cool down with whatever methods are available until medical help arrives, including ice packs, cool compresses or other methods.

Information for this article was collected from www.ready.gov and www.cdc.gov.

For more information on emergency preparedness due to weather, please refer to these websites, and for local information, contact your Board of Health, Council on Aging, or Allison Egan (aegan@berkshireplanning.org or x36), or Peg McDonough (MMcDonough@berkshireplanning.org or x16).

Adult Marijuana Use and Zoning

Berkshire County municipalities began adopting zoning bylaws and ordinances regulating adult use marijuana in 2017. In the span of two years, much has been learned about the regulation of marijuana establishments.

Communities across the Commonwealth are growing increasingly concerned about the odor generated by outdoor cultivation. Recently, the Attorney General's Office approved two bylaws that have the effect of prohibiting the outdoor cultivation of marijuana.

The Towns of Dighton and Westminster voted to adopt zoning bylaws that require all marijuana establishments, including marijuana cultivators, to be contained within an enclosed structure. As such, these bylaws are in effect prohibiting outdoor cultivation.

Approval of both bylaws by the Attorney General's Office signals that municipalities have the authority under MGL 94G § 3(1) to adopt or amend zoning bylaws or ordinances that have the effect of prohibiting outdoor cultivation.

Municipalities should also be aware of recent developments at the state level regarding "social consumption establishments," or marijuana cafes. After a round of policy discussions in May, the Cannabis Control Commission announced that it had approved a proposal to launch a future social consumption pilot program. Despite the Commission's approval, the proposed pilot program would require further approval from the Commission, as well as change in state law or passage of new legislation that would allow municipalities to authorize social consumption in their communities.

Any municipalities interested in adopting or amending zoning bylaws regulating adult use marijuana should contact Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Age Friendly Berkshires Annual Gathering

On Monday, June 24th, Age Friendly Berkshires held their **Annual Gathering 2019**, at Berkshire Community College's Koussevitsky Arts Center. BCC and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at BCC—both members of the Age Friendly Berkshires Task Force—generously offered the use of their Arts Center space for the event.

This year's Gathering, attended by about 80 guests, featured the Premiere of a new video, "Becoming Age Friendly Berkshires," produced by Berkshire Film and Media Collaborative and scripted by AFB Communications Committee lead, Roger Gutwillig. Special guest speakers included State Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier of Pittsfield, who serves as vice chair of the state Elder Service commission and AARP Massachusetts State Director Michael Festa. AARP Massachusetts was a major sponsor for the video production and supports Age Friendly communities state wide.

After viewing the video, the audience chatted with the film's creators about how the project was conceived and put together. Age Friendly Berkshires Coordinator Peg McDonough acted as M.C. and also presented an Annual Review of progress made implementing the Age Friendly Berkshires Action Plan throughout the county, during fiscal year 2018-19. A Keynote address, offered by the recently-appointed Secretary of MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Elizabeth Chen, was a highlight of the event. Chen reiterated the commitment of the Baker Administration to the goals of creating a "livable" community for all ages and pledged a close relationship with Age Friendly Berkshires as leaders in the state's efforts.

Age Friendly Berkshires will be publishing their Annual Report 2018-19 shortly, with copies available on their website at agefriendlyberkshires.com. The Age Friendly Berkshires video is available for viewing anytime on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2KMpDb45yM>.

For more information about the work of Age Friendly Berkshires, please contact Planner Margaret McDonough (MMcDonough@berkshireplanning.org or x16).



Adaptive Reuse of Historic Churches

On June 26th, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission presented an historic preservation workshop entitled "Adaptive Reuse of Historic Churches". The event was hosted by Saint James Place in Great Barrington, and case studies included Saint James Place, Clinton Church Restoration, and the Flying Church Project. Joshua Castano of the national non-profit organization Partners for Sacred Places served as keynote. This workshop was part of a series co-produced regularly in partnership with Preservation Mass, FRCOG, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and Massachusetts Historical Commission.

For more information or to connect with presenters from the session, please contact BRPC Senior Planner Laura Brennan (lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org) or BRPC Senior Planner Caroline Massa (cmassa@berkshireplanning.org).



Test Out E-Bikes on July 18th— Pittsfield's 3rd Thursday in July

On July 18th, 2019, during Pittsfield's Third Thursday event, transportation planning staff from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission will be accompanying representatives from Bewegen Technologies, Inc.—a Canadian-based bikeshare company—to showcase the company's pedal-assist e-bicycles. Bewegen is the equipment provider for the ValleyBike Share program—a bikeshare system operating in Amherst (including UMass campus), Holyoke, Northampton, South Hadley and Springfield in the Pioneer Valley. BRPC is striving to get a better sense from event attendees on receptiveness to a potential bikeshare program in Berkshire County. Please stop by the corner of North Street and Fenn Street to speak with BRPC planning staff and Bewegen representatives about bikesharing. Additionally, event attendees will be given the chance to hop-on one of Bewegen's pedal-assist e-bikes to get a feel for this technology. We look forward to seeing you there!

For more information, contact Transportation Planner Justin Gilmore (JGilmore@berkshireplanning.org or x28).



Thanks to Zachary Feury for all your hard work as a planner at BRPC! We wish you luck with all your future endeavors!

Thank you

BRPC Annual Dinner Meeting

The BRPC annual dinner meeting will be held on September 19, 2019 from 5 pm to 9 pm. The commission meeting will start at 5pm and the dinner will begin at 6 pm.

Lead Observer Certification

Senior Planner Caroline Massa and Transportation Planner Justin Gilmore recently completed the Northern Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) stream crossing assessment protocol training. This protocol includes observations of the crossings (for example: road-type, flow condition, crossing alignment) and of the structure itself (for example: material, shape, dimensions). Now certified as Lead Observers, Caroline and Justin are trained to collect attribute data information on crossings such as culverts and bridges—information that can be used to help municipalities identify high priority structures most in need of upgrades and replacements.

For more information, please contact Senior Planner Caroline Massa (cmassa@berkshireplanning.org) or Transportation Planner Justin Gilmore at (jgilmore@berkshireplanning.org).

CALENDAR

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

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**July 11 - BRPC
Commission Meeting,
5:00 pm**

**July 11 - BRPC
Executive Meeting,
6:30 pm**

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Image (above): Tanglewood

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