

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, January 23, 2018 4:00 PM

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office

1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Steve Woelfel, Chair	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)
Larysa Bernstein	City of North Adams (Representing Mayor Bernard)
Andy Hogeland	Northern Berkshire Towns Representative
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
Laurel Scialabba	North Central Berkshire Towns Representative

Others Present:

Eammon Coughlin	BRPC
Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Sheila Irvin	Pittsfield
Nat Karns	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Andy McKeever	iBerkshires
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Gabriel Sherman	MassDOT

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Woelfel called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 28, 2017

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Hogeland. Ms. Irvin abstained.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT (2ND AMENDMENT) TO THE 2018 - 2022 TIP

Mr. Koirala stated the 2nd amendment to the 2018-2022 TIP had gone through the 21-day comment period and that no public comments had been received. The amendment increases funding for final design of:

Highway – 607254 – NORTH ADAMS/WILLIAMSTOWN- MOHAWK BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN TRAIL, add funding for final design to FFY 2018; \$625,000 Statewide CMAQ

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy, to approve Amendment #2 of the FFY 2018-2022 TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

5. APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE 2018 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM TO INCREASE SECTION 5303 FUNDS FOR MULTI MODAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES TO \$40,174.00

Mr. Kus stated that this amendment to the amendments to the 2018 UPWP had gone through the 21-day public comment period and no comments were received. This amendment increases funding multi-modal transportation planning activities to \$40,174 (an increase of around \$1200).

Mr. Woelfel explained that often estimates of planning funding are sent to MPOs and then need to be revised once actual funding is approved.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy and others, to approve the amendment to the UPWP.

Mr. Karns commented that the cost of advertising the UPWP amendment was roughly 1/3rd of the amount it increased by and wondered if there was a different way in which the funding amendments could be approved. Mr. Woelfel stated that other MPOs amend funding as an “adjustment.” This process can vary depending on the MPO’s bylaws. Mr. Kus stated that the bylaws did not provide guidance on if funding amendments required advertising and a comment period. Mr. Woelfel stated that MassDOT would review and determine if next time, the amendment could just be approved as a simple “adjustment.”

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

6. CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE 2018-2022 TIP (THIRD AMENDMENT) AND INITIATE A 21 DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.

The two amendments are as follows:

Highway – 608465 – Lenox, Lee, Stockbridge. Resurfacing and related work on Route 7, increase construction cost to \$3,599,164.

Bridges – 608125 – Sheffield. Route 7A (Ashley Falls Rd.) over Housatonic River, decrease project cost to \$4,243,692. (Note: this project amendment was previously listed as agenda item #8)

Ms. Koirala explained that there were increases in the cost of project 608465, while estimated costs for project 608125, a bridge project in Sheffield, had decreased by approximately \$2.5 million (listed on the agenda as Item #8). Mr. Woelfel advised that both items be combined into a single amendment and released for a 21-day public comment period.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy, to release the amendments for a 21-day public comment period.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2019 – 2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Ms. Koirala announced that the development of the 2019 – 2023 TIP had begun. On January 2nd, a memo was sent to all Berkshire communities requesting new projects be sent in by February 2nd. So

far, the MPO has not received any new projects. The next step is project evaluation. February 12th has been scheduled for MassDOT and BRPC staff to evaluate all potential projects that are eligible for the 2019 – 2023 TIP. Ms. Koirala requested that communities review potential projects with their DPW departments and return forms as necessary, and also reminded them that the Project Notification Form (PNF) is now available online through the MaPIT tool. Questions about the MaPIT tool should be directed to Peter Frieri at MassDOT District 1.

Mr. Lovejoy asked MassDOT representatives what their feelings were about TIP project readiness. Mr. Moore responded that there a number of projects, however they are at various stages of readiness. Ms. Koirala responded that there are few projects ready to be programmed for the first few years of the TIP. Mr. Moore stated that there are about as many projects under design as are budgeted for the TIP currently, and that there is not an excess of projects. Mr. Lovejoy explained that he felt that there were not enough projects at a sufficient level of design readiness to be able to program, and asked if anecdotally, there had been a change in this status. Ms. Koirala responded that there was not.

Mr. Huebner stated that he is trying to coordinate the submittal of a project on a roadway that passes between three towns; however, one town (Middlefield) is not located in the MPO District. Mr. Huebner asked if there was a way to advance this project despite the fact that one town was not in the MPO area. Mr. Moore responded that he was worked on projects shared between MPO areas before and that it has been done before.

8. APPROVAL OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT TO THE 2018 -2022 TIP

Bridges – 608125 – Sheffield. Route 7A (Ashley Falls Rd.) over Housatonic River, decrease project cost to \$4,243,692.

This item was combined with agenda item #6 and released for a 21-day public comment period as a single amendment.

9. PRESENTATION ON BRTA'S SHARED RIDE ACCESS TO WORK STUDY

Representatives from BRTA were not in attendance to give an update on this study.

10. DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF SAFETY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Mr. Coughlin reviewed the five safety performance measures and targets that were adopted by MassDOT. The performance measures and targets are as follows:

- Total number of fatalities (average of 352 fatalities in '14-'18, declining by 0.8% per year over the next three years)
- Rate of fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) (rate of 0.61, declining by .8% per year over the next three years)
- Total number of serious Injuries (2896, declining by 3.65% per year over the next three years)
- Rate of serious injuries per 100 million VMT (5.01, declining by 4.42% per year over the next three years)
- Total number of combined serious injuries and fatalities for non-motorized modes (as this measure has been increasing statewide, the target set by MassDOT was no increase in injuries and fatalities from '11-'15 over the next three years, or 540)

Mr. Coughlin reiterated points from the November MPO meeting. MPO staff compared statewide data to the Berkshire MPO region. Statewide, four of the five performance measure areas are expected to improve. For the Berkshires, all the performance measure areas are expected to improve. Mr. Coughlin stated that the deadline to adopt the measures and targets is Feb. 27th and that he hoped MPO members would consider adoption. Mr. Sherman went on to explain that if the MPO adopts the statewide targets, the burden of reporting to FHWA to MassDOT. However, if the MPO chooses to set its own targets, the MPO would be required to report them. Mr. Woelfel added that if state targets are not met, there may be some restrictions in spending. If safety targets aren't met, the state may be required to spend HSIP solely on safety projects, instead of spreading HSIP funds across different projects.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner, to adopt the statewide safety targets.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

11. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER 90 SPECIAL STUDY

Mr. Coughlin updated the MPO on a special study of Chapter 90 spending in the county. Staff received five years of Chapter 90 spending data from MassDOT. The study looks at Chap. 90 spending versus saving for the 32 municipalities in the county. Overall, communities spend small amounts of Chapter 90 on engineering and equipment. Most spending is on road resurfacing or reconstruction projects. Over the five years of data (Fiscal year 2012-2016) there was an increase in the amount of spending on reconstruction vs. resurfacing projects. The data also revealed that there was a high level of saving across the county - only 25% of communities spent more Chap. 90 than they received, meaning they were spending down accumulated reserves.

Mr. Lovejoy commented that the high level of saving indicated that smaller communities had to accumulate several years' worth of funding to be able to spend a meaningful amount on a project. Mr. Lovejoy also stated that he felt Chap. 90 was a municipality's most valuable funding source in regards to transportation because it allowed for local control over project requirements and decisions. Mr. Heubner stated that the level of saving seen across the county was due to four uncertainties: the uncertainty of if towns will need the funding for emergencies, the lack of assurance over the availability and amount of funding from year to year, and finally uncertainty about timing, as money must be in hand to begin a project. If these uncertainties were removed, the level of saved Chap. 90 would likely come down.

Ms. Heming stated that looking at an additional five-year funding cycle might be helpful and would give a better picture of spending practices.

Mr. Coughlin stated that the study is still on-going. Early in the process, staff members reached out to communities to get anecdotal and narrative data about Chap. 90 spending habits. However, not many communities responded. Staff are now preparing a letter and questionnaire which will be mailed to towns to help gather this data.

Mr. Kus asked Ms. Heming if she thought it might be beneficial to work through the state-aid engineer at District 1 to get a better response from communities about data.

Mr. Lovejoy stated that he felt that draft study was a great start, and that more work is needed to complete it and build the case for additional funding to the state, as well as be able to recommend changes to Chap. 90 distribution that will make it work better for individual communities.

BRPC staff will continue the study and report at future MPO meetings.

12. UPDATE ON THE STATE RAIL PLAN

Mr. Sherman explained that the draft state rail plan will be released on Friday, January 26th for a three-week public comment period. Additionally, there will be a public meeting in Worcester on February 9th. The presentation given at this meeting will be available the following day on the MassDOT website. The plan is a FRA requirement for strategic purposes. Rail projects used to have to be listed in the plan to be eligible for funding, however, this is no longer the case.

13. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri updated the MPO on District 1 Projects. Mr. Kus reviewed activities of BRPC staff members. Mr. Sherman stated that the project manager for the Interstate 90 interchange study will be attending the next MPO meeting to give an update on the project.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business brought forward.

15. Next Meeting Date

The next MPO meeting will be on February 27, 2018. Mr. Woelfel adjourned the meeting at 5:10 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- FY 2018-2022 TIP Transit Amendments
- Potential 3rd amendment to the 2018-2022 TIP
- MassDOT District 1 Project Status Report
- MassDOT Safety Performance Measures Presentation
- Berkshire Region Safety Performance Measures Presentation
- Draft Chapter 90 Study slides
- FFY 2019-2023 TIP Tentative Schedule
- District 1 Project Updates.