

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, February 27, 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)
John Duval	Northern Berkshire Towns Alternate
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC Chair
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Andy Hogeland	Northern Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
Laurel Scialabba	North Central Berkshire Towns Representative (via speaker phone)
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Tyer)

Others Present:

Eammon Coughlin	BRPC
Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Cassandra Gascon	MassDOT
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Nat Karns	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Andy McKeever	iBerkshires
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Gabriel Sherman	MassDOT Planning
Jane Winn	PCTV

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 JANUARY 23, 2018

Two mistakes were corrected in the January meeting minutes. Under Item #1 “Mr. Mohler” was corrected to “Mr. Woelfel” and under Item #4, the motion seconded by “Mr. Huebner” was corrected to “Mr. Lovejoy.”

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to approve the minutes as revised. Mr. Hanlon abstained.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT (3RD AMENDMENT) TO THE 2018 - 2022 TIP

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

Mr. Koirala stated the 3rd 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 construction of the projects listed above.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Turocy, to approve the 3rd amendment to the FFY 2018-2022 TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

5. DISCUSSION ON PROJECT EVALUATION SCORES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2019 – 2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Ms. Koirala stated that the 2019-2023 TIP process began on January 1st. A solicitation for new projects was sent out early in the year. On February 12, a TIP evaluation was conducted by BRPC and MassDOT staff and scored 18 total projects. A preliminary TIP listing was also created and will be reviewed. The Berkshire MPO has eight project criteria, so projects can score a maximum of eight; however, no project has received over a six. Projects were also evaluated based on cost, design status, existing pavement condition (if known), and current status in the TIP.

Mr. Huebner asked about a project submitted for Middlefield Rd. in Washington. Mrs. Koirala explained that only projects that have gone with the MassDOT Project Review Committee (PRC) were evaluated in Feb. 12. There were some late project submissions that have not yet gone through PRC.

Bike/Ped. projects were also evaluated. Project scores have not changed from last year. However, project 606890 – Ashuwillticook Rail Trail Extension: Lime St. to Hodges Cross Rd. in Adams was removed from the TIP. Mr. Moore explained that there is no longer a viable alignment for this route due to landowner concerns about the trail. If a viable alignment is found, this project can be included back into the TIP.

Mr. Hogeland asked if there is a minimum project score threshold to be included on the TIP, as some projects only received a score of 1. Ms. Koirala explained that there is no minimum score. Design status and cost are major factors which influence listing on the TIP.

Mrs. Koirala explained that there are two potential new projects that can currently be programmed into the TIP, possibly in year 2023. These are listed as projects 604003 and 608737. The project evaluation takes into consideration changes in project cost and design status to determine whether projects need to move up or down in TIP fiscal years. Project 606233 – BMC Area Improvements will not be ready for FY19, and so must be moved to later TIP years. This will cause many other projects to shift around. Staff developed three potential scenarios. Scenario 1, the preferred scenario has project 607328 – Adams Route 8 moving up to FY19. Every project in the previous TIP moved up by one year. However, the Adams Route 8 project might not be ready for FY19. MassDOT District 1 staff will be meeting with Adams officials on March 1 to determine if the project can be ready in time for funding.

Mr. Duval, MPO alternate and Selectman from the Town of Adams spoke about the Adams Route 8 project and said he anticipated the project would be ready for FY19. However, he said there was another issue with the project. For about 1/8th of a mile, water pipes beneath the road were replaced by the water district (a separate entity from the town). Mr. Duval stated that the paving and fill were not installed correctly, and as cars pass over the section of road containing the pipes, they cause shaking and vibration inside of homes. The Town has been working with the contractor's insurance company to seek relief, and residents from the area have approached the Selectboard with their concerns.

Mr. Turocy also spoke about the BMC area improvements project. He said they area is very constrained and there is little room to make improvements. Historic buildings as well as potential real estate takings and intersection realignment have complicated the project. After reviewing the design for the area, there would be little improvement in overall transit time for vehicles. Mr. Turocy stated that given the \$5 million cost of the project, he could not justify implementing the project given the limited benefits that would be seen. Mr. Turocy stated that he was been working with MassDOT to identify some alternative designs that might actually improve the BMC area. Mr. Turocy said the project needs more time to be developed and could likely move to FY20 or FY21. Mr. Woelfel asked Mr. Turocy to maintain communication with the MPO over the next few months to determine which year the project should be programmed into.

Mr. Lovejoy asked Mr. Turocy about plans for the City of Pittsfield's unprogrammed Chapter 90 funds. Mr. Turocy stated that of the \$4.6 million in Chapter 90 funds, \$2 million are encumbered in current and prior projects which have not been closed out yet, \$600,000 is reserved for salt shed improvements, and the remaining \$2 million is reserved for paving bids that will be released in the next few weeks.

Mr. Koirala went on to explain the additional scenarios that staff had developed. Scenarios 2A and 2B are the same for the first few years. These scenarios are based on if the Adams Route 8 project moves to a later fiscal year and other projects must be moved up to replace it. So far, the only potential project that could move into FY19 is the repaving of the Ashuwillticook Trail. The current cost estimate is around \$5 million to repave 11.2 miles of rail trail. In scenario 2A, the Pittsfield Merrill Road project would move into FY23, and in 2B, Dalton Division Road would move into would move into FY23. Scenarios are being presented for discussion purposes only, no voting or final decisions will be made at this February meeting.

There was additional discussion of the Route 8 project. Mr. Moore explained that the 25% submission for the project had some significant errors. MassDOT has concerns with the designer's workload given some recent staff changes at the company. These reasons may force the project to move to later TIP funding years.

Mr. Hogeland asked about the feasibility of the Pittsfield Merrill Road project. In the current TIP it is listed in FY22, however in Scenario A, it is being moved to FY20. Ms. Koirala stated that the project is fairly straight forward, which is why it can advance. MassDOT is handling the design, and it primarily involves resurfacing.

Discussion turned back to the Adams Route 8 project. Mr. Woelfel asked Mr. Moore if the consultant's ability to design the project was the major issue holding the project back. Mr. Moore stated that there are also significant Right of Way issues involved with sidewalk and bike lanes as part

of the project. There are many steps that have to occur before the project will be ready. Mr. Moore stated that many of the projects that might advance on the TIP will have to be looked at carefully, as many of them are in the very early design stages.

6. DISCUSSION ON PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Ms. Kus stated that this item was included to continue the conversation about performance measures. Mr. Kus stated that the intention of the MPO was to include some transit performance measure related to tracking ridership. Mr. Huebner stated that if this performance measure was not included, the MPO is missing the point. Ridership will increase if the transit service in the county is correct. Mr. Lovejoy stated that the issue is difficult given the rural and dispersed character of the county. Mr. Woelfel reminded MPO members that one idea discussed previously was using an MPO meeting to hold a “transit summit.” Performance measures will be discussed at future MPO meetings.

7. DISCUSSION ON PRESENTATION ON BRTA’S SHARED RIDE ACCESS TO WORK STUDY

Representatives from BRTA were not in attendance to give an update on this study. However, BRTA did present about the study to TAC members during their February meeting, and information on the study is available on the BRTA website and in TAC meeting minutes.

8. OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT STATE RAIL PLAN

Mr. Kus stated that the comment period for the draft state rail plan is ending on Friday, March 2. The plan was last updated in 2010. There is a focus on reliability, resiliency, modernization, optimization and regional balance. Mr. Woelfel stated that there are short term Tier 1 projects in the plan which will be programmed into the CIP, there are Tier 2 projects that need additional study, and Tier 3 projects that are not recommended to advance to the CIP. Mr. Kus stated that the Berkshire Flyer study is mentioned in the plan, but it has not been listed in any of the plan tiers. The Selectmen’s Association and BRPC are providing comments to MassDOT to recommend that the Berkshire Flyer study be included in Tier 2 of the plan.

9. PRESENTATION ON THE I-90 INTERCHANGE STUDY

Ms. Gascon of MassDOT gave an update on the I-90 Interchange Study. The study is examining the feasibility of a new interchange off Interstate 90 between exits 2 (Lee) and 3 (Westfield). The study held its first working group meeting in early February. There was great turnout at the meeting. The first meeting looked at the study area, goals and objectives, evaluation criteria, and a public involvement plan. The next step is to conduct traffic counts and other data collection which will wrap up in April or May. A public meeting and the next working group meeting will also be held during that time. The long-term goal is to finalize the study by next December. MassDOT has also created a project website with info.

10. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri updated the MPO on District 1 Projects. Mr. Kus reviewed activities of BRPC staff members.

Mr. Hogeland asked if the MPO has reserved some time to talk about the Transportation Management Association (TMA) that was recommended as part of BRTA's shared ride access to work study. Mr. Hogeland stated that he would like to more about TMAs, how they operate, and if it makes sense for our region. Mr. Kus stated he would relay that information to BRTA and include discussion of the TMA at a future meeting.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kus made MPO members aware of an upcoming culvert replacement grant through Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Restoration (DER). There will be an upcoming briefing on the grant to be held at the MassDOT District 1 offices in Lenox on Friday March 9 at 9am.

Mr. Lovejoy asked if pavement standards were being upgraded to require Superpave. Mr. Lovejoy stated that there are few facilities that could produce Superpave in the area. Mr. Moore stated that he had heard there are many municipalities that may already be using Superpave but do not know it. Superpave is required for MassDOT projects, and sometimes asphalt manufacturing facilities may keep their mix the same despite of the requirements of municipal projects. Mr. Lovejoy stated this issue was brought up at a recent MMA meeting and it was thought that use of Superpave might become a requirement of Chapter 90 funded projects. Mr. Moore stated that this has been discussed, but nothing will be decided at least for the next year. The concept is that Superpave is a stiffer pavement than traditional asphalt. However, it has to be placed more carefully.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next MPO meeting will be on March 27, 2018. Mr. Lovejoy motioned to adjourn, and Mr. Huebner seconded. Mr. Woelfel adjourned the meeting at 5:10 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft January 23 MPO meeting minutes
- 3rd amendment to the 2018-2022 TIP
- FFY 2019-2023 TIP tentative schedule
- TIP project descriptions
- TIP project evaluation scores
- TIP Scenarios
- District 1 Project Updates
- UPWP updates