

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, February 28, 2017 4:00 PM

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office

1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

John Duval	North Berkshire Towns Representative
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Tinlin)
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
David Mohler, Chair	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)
Sarah Vallieres	Berkshire Regional Transit Authority

Others Present:

David Chandler	Federal Highway Administration
Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Nat Karns	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Emily Lindsey	BRPC
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Gabriel Sherman	MassDOT
Sean VanDeuseun	Town of Great Barrington

On the Telephone:

Laurel Scialabba	North-Central Berkshire Towns Representative
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1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Mohler 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 THE MINUTES FROM JANUARY 24, 2017

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy, to approve the meeting minutes for the January 24, 2017 meeting of the Berkshire MPO, as presented.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 21, 2017

Mr. Kus was not present at the TAC meeting, but provided the committee with a brief overview of the items on the TAC agenda, both of which are on the MPO agenda.

5. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT #1 TO THE FY 2017-2021 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Ms. Koirala described Amendment #1 to the FY 2017-2021 TIP to (1) increase cost of bridge project #607551 from \$1,500,612 to \$3,446,487 and (2) add purchase of replacement van (RTD0004395),

remove replacement van (RTD0005121), and reduce the cost of state funding for the purchase of a replacement van (RTD0004344) to \$63,436.

Ms. Koirala noted that no public comments were received, but MassDOT did provide a comment that the cost had increased for the bridge project to \$3,520,062.94, and pointed to the handout which shows the updated costs for Amendment #1.

Ms. Vallieres provided the MPO with a brief overview of what the transit amendment would achieve, which is essentially maintaining funding at the same level, just a reallocation of how the funds would be used. She said in April additional details will be provided.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Duval, to approve Amendment #1 to the FY 2017-2021 TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

6. DISCUSSION ON PROJECT EVALUATION SCORES FOR THE FY 2018-2022 TIP

Ms. Koirala walked the committee through each of the highway project handouts, providing an overview of the TIP project evaluation process which included 17 projects, 5 of which were new to the project evaluation process. She explained the evaluation was based on a maximum score of 8 points and reviewed the spreadsheets detailing each score. Mr. Mohler inquired if it was correct that only one project was at or above 25%, Ms. Koirala confirmed this was the case.

Ms. Koirala highlighted the nonmotorized projects that were scored, and Mr. Fieri provide a brief overview of the status of each.

Ms. Koirala reviewed the handout with funding targets by funding program, and the estimated costs for each project with 4% annual inflation. She noted there was a discussion about project readiness and how that factors into the decisionmaking process, for example BMC area improvements is programmed for FY 2018, but will not be ready so that project must be pushed back. She will present draft scenarios at the next meeting.

Mr. Karns acknowledged Mr. Mohler's comment about the design status of projects and said he wasn't worried and that there were a handful of projects that are anticipated to submit their 25% design in the next 6 months. Mr. Chandler asked if this was common for projects being considered for the TIP to be in such early stages in design (pre-25%), and Mr. Karns confirmed that this tends to happen, especially when firms do not deliver project designs in a timely fashion. Mr. Lovejoy suggested it would be helpful to provide a column on the master spreadsheet that noted what percent the project was at if it was under 25% so the MPO could better prioritize project readiness. Mr. Mohler cautioned against this since until it is at 25%, in MassDOT's eyes it is at 0%. Mr. Mohler suggested asking communities for the anticipated 25% design submittal date, as that might be a more meaningful measure and way to track projects, rather than a percentage under 25%. Mr. Karns agreed with Mr. Lovejoy's request for additional information. Ms. Koirala will update the spreadsheet.

Mr. Karns inquired about BMC right-of-way concerns, and how they might be anticipated. Mr. Moore said MassDOT is aware of these potential issues and considering them, but things will be more clear once 25% design is submitted.

7. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION ON CRITICAL RURAL AND URBAN FREIGHT CORRIDORS

Ms. Lindsey introduced a new federal funding program, the National Highway Freight Program, which was included in the current transportation legislation, the FAST Act. Ms. Lindsey described the program, which includes a National Highway Freight Network made up of four components: Primary Highway Freight System (PHFS), non-PHFS Interstate, Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFC) and Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFC). She noted the statewide apportionment for FY 2017 is upwards of \$16 million, and there is no telling how much of this the Berkshires could expect annually. MassDOT is still developing guidance about this program and funding.

MassDOT is updating their statewide Freight Plan and has asked for assistance in designating the CRFCs and CUFCs. MassDOT received total mileage limits for both CRFC and CUFC from FHWA, and MassDOT divided that mileage into totals for each MPO area. Ms. Lindsey noted the total mileage for CRFC is around 31.44 and CUFC around 1.79. Ms. Lindsey reviewed potential criteria for designating these corridors, as presented by FHWA. She provided some different options for identifying roadways, which were detailed in a handout. Ms. Lindsey highlighted which proposed TIP projects might qualify based on their location.

Mr. Sherman noted the timeline for the designation of the CRFC and CUFC had been delayed by a month from the schedule presented.

Mr. Lovejoy suggested looking at Route 23 in Egremont as a good option for a rural corridor. Mr. Karns inquired about how much money would be allocated, Mr. Sherman noted it was not going to be divided to MPOs, rather be awarded as part of a competitive statewide program, which details are still being developed for. Mr. Mohler asked if the MPO would want MassDOT input since it was intended to be a locally driven process, and Ms. Lindsey said that ultimately the MPO will make the designation decision and can consider MassDOT suggestions along the way. Ms. Lindsey requested members e-mail her with ideas and this topic will be discussed at the next meeting.

8. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri reviewed the project status report for Berkshire projects. Mr. Mohler asked about the discrepancy for the BMC area improvement project, the handouts had two different figures. Mr. Fieri noted until the project gets to 25% the cost continues to change. Mr. Karns noted the Sheffield Bridge project should keep in mind the Housatonic floodplain issues; Mr. Moore said the environmental team will surely be aware of this.

Ms. Vallieres said no one from BRTA would be attending the MassMOVES event due to the timing of their triennial review.

Mr. Kus highlighted staff activities over the last month and noted the MassMOVES event that will occur on March 28th in the Pioneer Valley. Mr. Mohler said the event will take place at Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Mr. Kus urged MPO members to attend and register online.

Mr. Karns noted the MassDOT CIP comment tool is open and members should look to that to provide comments.

Ms. Lindsey noted Mr. Sherman would be presenting about the State Freight Plan to the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission at their March meeting and MPO members are invited to attend.

Mr. Duval inquired about the status of the scenic rail in Adams and how he might learn more; Mr. Sherman will follow up.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE/MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kus mentioned that the next meeting will be held on March 28, 2017. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 4:42 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Proposed Amendment #1 to the FY 2017-2021 TIP Highway
- Proposed Amendment #1 to the FY 2017-2021 TIP Transit
- FY 2018-2022 TIP Project Evaluation Scores for Highway Projects
- FY 2018-2022 TIP Project Evaluation Scores for Nonmotorized Projects
- FY 2018-2022 TIP Funding Targets and Project List
- FY 2018-2022 TIP Schedule
- National Highway Freight Network – Massachusetts Map
- National Highway Freight Program Summary
- MassDOT Critical Rural and Urban Freight Corridors Timeline
- MassDOT Project Status Report
- MassMOVES Flyer