

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

Tuesday, March 22, 2016 4:00 PM

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office

1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates:

John Boyle	North-Central Berkshire Towns Representative
John Duval	North Berkshire Towns Representative
Samuel Haupt	BRPC
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
David Mohler, Chair	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Tyer)
Sarah Vallieres	Berkshire Regional Transit Authority

Others Present:

Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Nat Karns	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Gabriel Sherman	MassDOT
Kevin Wright	Federal Highway Administration

**1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

**2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM JANUARY 26, 2016**

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy, to approve the meeting minutes for the January 26, 2016 meeting of the Berkshire MPO, as presented.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries with one abstention.

**4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING – MARCH 15, 2016**

Mr. Haupt noted the TAC discussed many of the items on the MPO agenda at their March meeting, including the TIP project evaluation and scoring.

**5. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT #1 TO THE FY 2016-2019 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) TO INCREASE TRANSIT PROJECTS COSTS TO \$372,000 FOR THE PURCHASE OF FIVE REPLACEMENT VANS AND REPROGRAM PROJECT 605299: GREAT BARRINGTON BRIDGE REPLACEMENT (SR 183 AND PARK ST) FROM 2015 TO 2016 AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS**

Ms. Koirala noted the MPO released Amendment #1 to the FY 2016-2019 TIP in January 2016, which included one change to a bridge project, and one to account for additional costs for transit. Ms. Koirala said no comments have been received.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy, to approve Amendment #1 to the FY 2016-2019 TIP as released for public comment.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

**6. CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENT #2 TO THE FY 2016-2019 TIP AND INITIATE A 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Ms. Koirala pointed members to a handout which described the proposed Amendment #2 to the FY 2016-2019 TIP. This amendment is needed to account for the increased cost for a bridge replacement in Lanesborough and to add a scenic byway project in Lee.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy, to initiate a 30-day public comment period for Amendment #2 to the FY 2016-2019 TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

**7. APPROVAL OF SELF CERTIFICATION COMPLIANCE STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE GLOBAL WARMING SOLUTIONS ACT AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATION ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS**

Mr. Kus described the result of greenhouse gas regulations, which requires MPOs to self-certify transportation certification documents. Mr. Kus noted that this is a procedural matter that serves to assure there are no negative impacts from the transportation projects in the Berkshire region. Mr. Mohler informed the MPO that this was a state certification, not a federal certification, as federal certifications have already been completed.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner, to approve the Self Certification Compliance Statement required by the Global Warming Solutions Act and to authorize the chairman to sign the certification on behalf of the MPO members.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

**8. DISCUSSION ON PROJECT EVALUATION SCORES FOR THE FY 2017-2021 TIP**

Ms. Koirala pointed MPO members to four handouts outlining TIP targets, project descriptions, evaluation scores, and the schedule for the FY 2017-2021 TIP. On February 1, 2016 BRPC sent solicitation letters to the towns, and by the end of the month BRPC had received applications for projects to be included in the TIP. Ms. Koirala described the March 11, 2016 meeting of the project evaluation committee, which included BRPC and MassDOT staff. Ms. Koirala reminded the MPO that the evaluation committee only reviewed those projects that had gone through the MassDOT Project Review Committee (PRC). There were 16 highway projects and 5 bicycle projects that were evaluated and scored out of 8 points.

Ms. Koirala described the FY 2017-2021 TIP targets, which includes a new, fifth year (2021). The draft targets released on March 10, 2016 were presented to the MPO by funding category. Mr. Mohler said

MPOs should program based on their Total Annual Target. Ms. Koirala highlighted the addition of TAP funds in 2020 and 2021. Ms. Koirala said for the next meeting, staff will prepare scenarios.

Mr. Karns requested clarification for the MPO on what TAP funding is/can do. Mr. Kus described the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which was known under previous federal transportation legislation as Transportation Enhancements (TE). Mr. Kus said TE was used for beautification, landscaping, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities as part of highway projects. Mr. Kus noted several allowable expenses for TAP, including pedestrian and bicycle accommodations. Mr. Karns noted his appreciation to the TIP spanning five years, rather than four. Ms. Koirala informed the MPO that at the next meeting of the MPO, staff will present scenarios for the FY 2017-2021 TIP.

#### **9. UPDATE ON MASSDOT CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAM**

Mr. Mohler presented information on the 2017-2021 MassDOT Capital Investment Program (CIP), a 5-year document that describes cash flow. Mr. Mohler noted the CIP is different than the TIP in this regard as the TIP is an obligation document. Mr. Mohler noted the CIP describes the federal-aid program in addition to other state programs. He said that though there aren't projects in the CIP yet, project listings will be part of the document when it is released for public comment. Mr. Mohler described the process of the Project Selection Advisory Council, which Mr. Lovejoy was a member of. This Council spent the last year developing project evaluation criteria/scoring for MassDOT to use to select projects. MassDOT is committed to using these to guide the investments set forth in the CIP. Mr. Mohler reviewed the planning process that was used to develop the draft CIP, which included three priority areas: reliability, modernization, and expansion. Each division within MassDOT was asked to develop their programs using these three priorities. Mr. Mohler told the MPO that the CIP includes \$14.3 billion over the next five years, and allocations are determined by looking at DOT priorities, portfolio optimization, historical spending patterns, estimates of needs, Board guidance, and fiscal constraints.

Mr. Mohler described the allocation for the Highway Division which includes over 20 different programs in the three priority areas. Mr. Mohler noted the \$60 million commitment to implement projects identified in both the Statewide Bicycle Plan and Statewide Pedestrian Plan. Mr. Mohler described the Rail program, which includes potential commuter rail and the Knowledge Corridor, the Transit program (not the MBTA, the RTA), the Aeronautics program, the IT program, and the RMV program. Once there is a project list and the draft CIP has been released, there will be a presentation to the MPO.

Mr. Lovejoy inquired about the allocation for Chapter 90 funds over the next five years, given the low level of funding. Mr. Mohler said that like everything, the funds are subject to appropriations. Mr. Lovejoy expressed his concern for the small allocation for Chapter 90 at \$200 million per year in comparison to the overall CIP spending. The committee discussed the need for standard engineered bridges/culverts to minimize funds spent on engineering for short span bridges, emergency bridges, and a streamlined approval process. Mr. Mohler alerted the MPO that there is a joint meeting of the Board on April 11, where this could be brought up. Mr. Moore noted the standardization on bridge design has been brought up and the issues with reporting (subsurface, hydrology, etc.) are key because there is no standard scenario for each of these issues. The structural element is the only place where this might be relevant, but since standards change so often by the time one is adopted, a new standard might be available.

#### **10. UPDATE ON MPO SPECIAL COMMISSION AND INTERSTATE RENUMBERING PROJECT**

Mr. Kus informed the MPO about the MPO Special Commission, which was enacted via legislation and tasked with looking at the MPO process. The Commission was scheduled to meet in February, but this meeting was cancelled. Mr. Mohler said this meeting will be rescheduled to occur in Springfield, Mr. Kus will attend. Mr. Kus reminded the MPO about a live survey that is looking to garner input from MPOs and stakeholders. The closing date for this survey is April 15. Mr. Mohler also encouraged stakeholders to participate in the survey.

Mr. Kus informed the MPO about the Interstate Renumbering Project, an effort by MassDOT to renumber limited access highways so the exits reflect the mile-marker. This is a practice by most states across the country and was a recommendation that came out of the 2012 Update of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Mr. Mohler said there is a federal requirement for states to have an implementation plan for limited access highways. Mr. Mohler noted benefits that include: emergency vehicle directions, assisting lost motorists, and providing general sense for travelers where along the system they are. There is a concern about businesses that have printed material locations, and MassDOT will develop a public process to inform this effort.

#### **11. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES**

Mr. Frieri reported the project status of TIP projects in the Berkshire MPO area from FY 2015 and FY 2016. Mr. Frieri described several local projects, noting the design contract for the Adams extension of the Ashuwillticook was awarded to VHB, and the intersection at Center St. and W. Housatonic St. in Pittsfield has an estimate that is higher than the amount identified in the TIP. He also said there are five bridge projects that are at least at 25% design and all should be ready to go this year.

#### **12. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Karns said there are several Berkshire communities are participating in MassDOT's Complete Streets Funding Program with BRPC's assistance, including the Town of Egremont, which has an adopted policy. Mr. Karns noted there is a BRPC template on the website, which is intended for communities to customize. Mr. Kus noted BRPC was hosting a Fifth Thursday event at Mazzeos on March 31 that is focused on Complete Streets. Mr. Karns noted the regional effort to designate United States Bicycle Route 7 throughout the Berkshires; out of the 8 towns, 4 have pledged support. Mr. Moore introduced the new District 1 Highway Director, Francisca Heming.

#### **13. NEXT MEETING DATE/MEETING ADJOURNMENT**

The next meeting is scheduled for April 26, 2016. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 5:15 PM.

#### Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- FY 2016-2019 TIP Amendment #2
- FY 2017-2021 TIP Project Evaluation Scores
- FY 2017-2021 TIP Project Summaries
- FY 2017-2021 TIP Targets
- FY 2017-2021 Schedule
- MassDOT District 1 Project Status Update
- MassDOT CIP Presentation