

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, April 24, 2018 4:00 PM

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office

1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Bryan Pounds, Chair	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)
Larysa Bernstein	City of North Adams (Representing Mayor Bernard)
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC Chair
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Andy Hogeland	Northern Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
Laurel Scialabba	North Central Berkshire Towns Representative
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Tyer)

Others Present:

Eammon Coughlin	BRPC
Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Nat Karns	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Thomas Matuszko	BRPC
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Gabriel Sherman	MassDOT Planning

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Pounds called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 28, 2018

March meeting minutes were revised to show that Mr. Lovejoy called the meeting to order, not Mr. Sherman.

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF APRIL 10, 2018

Mr. Kus updated the MPO on discussion at the TAC meeting of April 10, 2018. The TAC endorsed the TIP project listing as drafted as well as the Combined Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (CHST) Plan and recommended that the MPO release both plans for a 21-day comment period.

5. ENDORSEMENT OF AN AMENDMENT (4TH AMENDMENT) TO THE 2018 -2022 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HIGHWAY)

Mr. Koirala introduced the 4th amendment to the 2018-2022 TIP. No comments were received from the public; however, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) did submit comments. The amendment increases funding in FY18 for North Adams – Route 2 & Phelps Ave. Intersection Improvements (607429) and in FY18 and FY19 for Lenox – Walker St. Reconstruction (606462). Because of cost increases for the North Adams project, funding for the first advanced construction year of Lenox – Walker St. Reconstruction (606462) had to be reduced. This change did not reduce the overall funding to the project, only for the first year of advanced construction which will be completed in FY19.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Hanlon, to release the 4th amendment to the FFY 2018-2022 TIP for a 21-day comment period.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

6. CONSIDERATION OF AN AMENDMENT (5TH AMENDMENT) TO THE 2018 -2022 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HIGHWAY)

Ms. Koirala presented a 5th amendment to the 2018-2022 TIP. The amendments include cost increases for proposed bridge projects as well as several new bridge projects. Mr. Pounds explained that typically the entire TIP is not amended, but there were major cost increases that impacted the entire bridge program. To keep projects within fiscal constraint and so FY18 projects could be advertised, the entire bridge program had to be amended.

Mr. Lovejoy asked about the reasons for the project cost increases. Mr. Pounds explained that costs for projects almost always increase due to a variety of factors. Additionally, MassDOT has changed the way it accounts for construction contingencies, such as utilities and traffic control. Mr. Lovejoy asked for greater transparency around project cost increases. Ms. Heming explained that the MassDOT healthy transportation directive has also increased project costs in recent years. Mr. Lovejoy reiterated that his constituents do not always understand the reasons that project costs are so high and that the MPO should address this in some way.

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ON PROJECT FUNDING SCENARIOS AND PROJECT LISTING FOR THE 2019 – 2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Koirala described the projects listed in each year of the draft 2019-2023 TIP. Mr. Hogeland asked for clarification about the proposed \$18 million bridge project in North Adams. Mr. Hanlon responded that this is the bridge along Route 2 in North Adams near the West Package Store.

After describing the highway and bike/ped. projects, Ms. Koirala described some of the proposed transit projects.

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

8. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE DRAFT COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN, AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Koirala updated MPO members on the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation (CHST) Plan. The CHST plan is federally required and focuses on the transportation needs of seniors, people with disabilities, and people with low income. The plan identifies strategies to improve the quality and availability of transportation services and is updated every four years. Overall, the Berkshires has a higher percentage of older individuals and people with disabilities. Moreover, the region has a lower median household income than the state as a whole. Some major priorities identified in the plan are expanding transportation services, reducing gaps in transit needs, and encouraging better coordination of the many smaller transportation service providers in the county. Other priorities include leveraging and increasing more on-demand transportation, such as Uber and Lyft, as well as potential creation of a regional Transportation Management Association. BRTA identified several priorities in the plan, including increased service hours, and the addition of smaller bus circulator loops to make regional transportation more convenient. Another goal is to increase the number of BRTA member communities.

Mr. Pounds asked if the RCC had been involved in the creation of the CHST Plan. Ms. Koirala explained that yes, the RCC was actively involved, and the public meeting held as part of the planning process was conducted jointly with the RCC.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Hanlon, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to release the CHST Plan for a 21-day comment period.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

9. DISCUSSION OF THE 2019 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Mr. Kus discussed potential UPWP projects for FY2019. Mr. Pounds asked if the planning funds dedicated to the RTP were sufficient and what funds had been dedicated to the RTP in previous years. Mr. Kus responded that he did not have those figures at hand.

10. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri updated the MPO on District 1 Projects. Mr. Kus reviewed activities of BRPC staff members. Mr. Pounds announced that a public meeting for the MassDOT CIP will be held immediately following the MPO meeting on May 22.

Mr. Kus asked about if there was any change in the status of the state Rail Plan. Mr. Pounds responded that there had not.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Karns announced that BRPC received a request for information from MassDEP about how to best allocate monies from the state settlement with Volkswagen. MassDEP is interested in mitigation actions that would electrify the transportation system and serve environmental justice populations across the state. Mr. Karns said that it occurred to him that some of this funding might help to address the funding gap in public transportation. Even a small amount of additional funding for public transit could make a huge difference in the region.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy to request that the MPO draft a letter to MassDEP recommending that the funding be used enhance public transit.

Mr. Pounds explained that as Mr. Mohler is not present, he cannot speak on his behalf. Mr. Mohler might not be supportive of the recommendation. Additionally, comments are due back to MassDEP prior to the next MPO meeting date. After additional discussion, Mr. Hogeland seconded the motion.

Mr. Pounds recommended that BRPC send the letter instead of the MPO. Mr. Karns explained that perhaps both the MPO and BRPC could provide responses. Mr. Pounds reiterated that he felt that the MPO sending a letter to MassDEP was not the best way for it to advocate given the absence of Mr. Mohler and that responses were needed prior to the next MPO meeting. Mr. Hogeland stated that he still felt that MPO was an appropriate body to send the letter to MassDEP, and if two letters were sent (from both MPO and BRPC), that was fine.

Mr. Lovejoy restated the motion that the MPO would draft a letter to MassDEP recommending that the funding from the settlement be used enhance public transit. The letter will be drafted and sent to MassDOT OTP for consideration by Mr. Mohler.

VOICE VOTE: All members present voted in support of the motion. Mr. Pounds abstained from voting.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next MPO meeting will be on May 22, 2018. Immediately following the MPO meeting on May 22 will be a meeting and discussion of the MassDOT CIP. The public is invited to attend this meeting as well.

Mr. Huebner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 5:45 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft March MPO meeting minutes
- 4th amendment to the 2018-2022 TIP
- Proposed 5th amendment to the 2018-2022 TIP
- 2018-2022 TIP Transit project list
- FFY 2019-2023 TIP tentative schedule
- CHST Plan presentation slides
- District 1 Project Updates
- MPO work activity updates