

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, May 28, 2019 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)
John Boyle	North Central Towns Representative
John Duval	North Towns Representative
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC Chair
Andy Hogeland	North Towns Representative - Alternate
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Administrator Gulliver)
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Tyer)

Others Present:

Eammon Coughlin	BRPC
Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Derek Krevat	MassDOT Planning
Clete Kus	BRPC
Thomas Matuszko	BRPC
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Brandan Wilcox	FHWA

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Woelfel 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 MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 23, 2019 (ACTION ITEM)

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve the meeting minutes from the April 23, 2019 MPO meeting.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT (2ND AMENDMENT) TO THE 2019 – 2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND AUTHORIZE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS (ACTION ITEM)

Ms. Koirala directed MPO members to the Berkshire MPO FFY 2019 – 2023 2nd Amendment handout. Ms. Koirala mentioned that the highlighted projects represent the amendments. Among the amendments include cost increases for four separate projects along with moving the North Adams – Williamstown Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Project from TIP FFY 2019 to FFY 2020. Ms. Koirala mentioned that the TIP was released for public comment after the last MPO meeting. Thus far, the only comments received to date centered on the North Adams – Williamstown Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail project (607254); a total of 87 comments were received. No other comments on any other projects were received.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve the 2nd amendment to the 2019 – 2023 TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

5. APPROVAL OF THE 2020 – 2024 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS (ACTION ITEM)

Ms. Koirala directed MPO members to the Berkshire MPO FFY 2020 – 2024 TIP handout. Ms. Koirala proceeded to explain that the 2020 – 2024 TIP went out for public comment. To date, the only comments received have been from MassDOT. Those comments have been addressed in the full TIP document. Beyond these comments, the only other comments received related to the North Adams – Williamstown Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail project (607254). Eighty-seven comments were received for this project. All but one expressed approval of the project with no further project delays.

Ms. Koirala directed MPO members back to the Berkshire MPO FFY 2020 – 2024 TIP handout. The key changes include project increases – highlighted in blue. Ms. Koirala proceeded to identify each project contained in the TIP, along with the date the project is to be programmed and the associated funding source for each project.

Mr. Woelfel briefly summarized the circumstances surrounding the North Adams – Williamstown Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail project. New developments in North Adams have created a project delay. Last time the MPO met, the two projects were combined into one project – which initially was thought to have no impact on the project schedule. Now, with the new issues in North Adams, the project needs to be split into two – with the Williamstown portion planned for construction during the 2020 timeframe.

Mr. Moore briefly updated MPO members on the North Adams portion of the bicycle/pedestrian trail project. After meeting with the FAA, MassDOT was informed that the portion of the bike path planned to run through airport property is not going to be as easy as initially thought. For the North Adams portion to continue forward, the FAA is requiring an update to the airport master plan along with having to go through a NEPA process. This would take a minimum of three years, and thus the North Adams portion of the project delayed the entire project. Therefore, it made sense to split the projects, allowing Williamstown to go ahead with construction.

Mr. Hogeland expressed appreciation to the MPO for bringing this issue up for discussion during the last meeting. Mr. Hogeland also expressed gratitude to MassDOT for providing a response to his letter. Mr. Hogeland directed MPO members to the draft MPO response letter to be included in the TIP document.

Mr. Woelfel clarified with Mr. Hogeland that this draft letter pertained to the entire project – but will now only be relevant to the Williamstown portion.

Mr. Hogeland confirmed, as this letter was drafted prior to the formal decision to split the project into two separate projects.

Mr. Woelfel suggested that the MPO vote to concur on this item, however, the language in the letter should be slightly adjusted to reflect the project being split into two projects.

Ms. Koirala added that the Transit TIP should be all set, and no comments have been received to date relating to the transit portion of the RTP.

Mr. Matuszko asked if the North Adams portion of the bike path project falls out of the TIP entirely.

Mr. Woelfel replied by stating that the project falls out of the current TIP for now.

Mr. Kus asked the question of whether the FAA makes money available for municipal airports to update their master plans.

No clear answer was provided. Mr. Woelfel mentioned that he would check in with the aeronautics division.

Mr. Moore made a clarification that the FAA is requiring an update to the North Adams master plan regardless of this project. In other words, the proposed bike path project is not triggering the step to update the airport master plan.

Mr. Wilcox asked if the project was still listed under one project I.D.

Mr. Woelfel replied by stating that the project is currently listed under one project I.D., but that the North Adams section would be broken off, and eventually given a separate project I.D.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve the 2020 – 2024 Transit and Highway TIP and authorize chairman to sign the certification on behalf of the MPO members.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Frieri explained that the TAC had asked the MPO to investigate feasible highway resurfacing projects that might utilize the remaining \$1.2 million of the first TIP year. After deliberating, MassDOT identified a 1.8 mile stretch of roadway in Great Barrington that fit the criteria. The road is in a rural area, is compliant with Healthy Transportation Policy, and was last resurfaced in 2005. This is a project that could be ready for 2020 advertising if the MPO wishes to proceed with that action.

Mr. Woelfel suggested that the project sounds good and should be explored further. However, no action should be taken on this project today as it makes sense to wait and see how other projects are costing out in 2020 to ensure the concept project in Great Barrington doesn't exceed the remaining money of the first year's TIP.

The MPO concurred.

6. PRESENTATION ON THE 2020 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM, RELEASE DOCUMENT AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 21-DAY COMMENT PERIOD (ACTION ITEM)

Mr. Kus directed MPO members to the 2020 UPWP Focus Areas handout. Mr. Kus provided key highlights including new work tasks outlined in the draft 2020 UPWP. Key highlights include, under special studies, a traffic signal equipment inventory and assessment, developing an electric vehicle infrastructure strategic plan, a service feasibility study along the Housatonic Line, and resiliency in transportation best practices report. Under bicycle and pedestrian planning, new items include a micromobility (bikeshare) feasibility study and pilot program and updating the Bike Path Implementation Plan. Moving on to transit planning, items include participating in a TMA employment-based feasibility study, to be led by 1Berkshires. Transit performance measure reporting is also included under this category. Under safety initiatives, one new item includes conducting an elderly auto crash analysis which fits neatly within the organizations Age Friendly Berkshires initiative. Under climate change, new items include road-stream crossing (culvert) assessments and attribute data collection along with participating in the Transportation and Climate Initiative. Lastly, under passenger freight and rail planning, new tasks include Berkshire Flyer pilot service implementation and advocating/participating in the East/West Rail study.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to release the 2020 UPWP for a 21-day comment period.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

7. RECEIVE THE 2020 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 21-DAY COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Coughlin proceeded to inform the MPO that a draft version of the 2020 RTP is ready to be released for public comment. Mr. Coughlin reminded MPO members that the RTP is a 20-year horizon planning document that plans for all modes of transportation in the region, it feeds into the 5-year TIP, is required for our region to continue to receive much needed federal transportation funding and represents a wish list of infrastructure improvement projects for the region. Mr. Coughlin proceeded to review the over-arching recommendations contained in the plan.

Key projects and recommendation areas in the plan include safety and maintenance. One of the greatest needs in the Berkshires is preserving and maintaining the infrastructure of our roadways and bridges. A number of recommendations focus on maintenance and preservation activities. Safety is an additional area of focus. Key safety recommendations include reconstructing key intersection and addressing 'lane departure' accidents.

Moving forward, another suite of recommendations relate to expanding public transit in the region. Key recommendations include reducing BRTA's fixed route service headways to 30 minutes, creating 'micro'

transit hubs in North and South county for more efficient and convenient services, developing sub-regional circulator loops and incorporating electric 'cutaway' minibuses into BRTA's fleet to expand services range.

Additional recommendations are focused around exploring collaboration and better coordination among the region's human services transportation providers. Creating a transportation management association (TMA) which typically involves public-private partnerships to ensure workers have transportation to employment centers, is also recommended in the plan.

The plan contains recommendations relating to expanding passenger rail and regional connectivity in the region. Bicycling and pedestrian mobility is another major focus area of the plan, with recommendations for continuing to build the Berkshire bike path along with encouraging highway and DPW staff to look for opportunities to build-up bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure during regular roadway maintenance projects.

The plan further recommends facilitating technological change in transportation trends and technology to ensure Berkshire County is not left behind. Major trends/technological developments include planning for the implementation of autonomous, connected, electric, and shared vehicles (ACES).

Climate change resiliency and environmental sustainability is another major focus area. Major recommendations under this section include gaining a better handle on the region's road-stream crossing infrastructure, specifically culverts, and creating a prioritization plan for cataloging structures and replacing those that do not meet the updated river and stream crossing standards.

Lastly, the plan calls for exploring additional mechanisms at the county level for securing additional transportation funding, through imposing an entertainment tax or local option gas tax, and by continuing to advocate at the state and federal level for change in design standards and program requirements to allow for creative uses of limited funding.

Mr. Coughlin briefly reviewed next steps, including having the MPO vote today to release the document for a 21-day public comment period. Next, in mid-June, a public meeting will be held to review the draft document with the public. In late June, the MPO should be voting to adopt the draft plan. Final approval from the FHWA is expected in the Fall.

Mr. Woelfel asked a clarifying question concerning the RTP recommended projects, asking for clarification that not all the recommended projects have an identified source of funding.

Mr. Coughlin stated that while most of the recommended projects have a projected dollar value associated with the project, that does not mean the project has an identified source of funding and is more emblematic of concept projects.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to release the 2020 RTP for a 21-day comment period.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

8. MPO CONSULTATION: UPWP BUDGET REALLOCATION

Mr. Kus mentioned that this item is on the agenda to discuss with the MPO today the possibility of reallocating current UPWP funding – transferring \$5,000 in funding from two tasks (2.5 Pavement Management and 3.1 Special Studies) into task 2.2 Regional Data and Analysis to allow for more time and effort to be focused on Census 2020 preparation.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner to approve the reallocation of current UPWP funding (\$5,000 from tasks 2.5 and 3.1) into task 2.2 Regional Data and Analysis for supporting the 2020 Census.

Mr. Lovejoy asked for some clarification on why tasks 2.5 and 3.1 were identified as candidates to supplement work for task 2.2.

Mr. Kus mentioned that Mr. Coughlin was the key staff person for task 2.5, however, his time is essentially booked for the rest of the federal fiscal year. Task 3.1 has ample time remaining, and currently BRPC does not have the staff capacity to complete all the work. Therefore, those represent good areas from which to reallocate money from.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri updated the MPO on District 1 Projects.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Woelfel mentioned that directly after this meeting, at 6:00 p.m., MassDOT will be presenting the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Ms. Koirala mentioned that BRPC will be hosting a MaPIT training on June 3rd and encouraged members interesting in learning about MassDOT's new project intake tool to attend.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE – JUNE 25, 2019

The next MPO meeting will be on June 25, 2019.

ACTION: Mr. Turocy motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Hanlon. Mr. Woelfel adjourned the meeting at 5:01 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Meeting Agenda
- Berkshire MPO FFY 2019 – 2023 TIP 2nd Amendment
- Berkshire MPO FFY 2020 – 2024 TIP
- Berkshire MPO Draft FFY 2020 – 2024 TIP: Comments received for project #607254 North Adams – Williamstown Mohawk Bicycle / Pedestrian Trail
- MassDOT District One – Potential 2020 Resurfacing Project for Berkshire TAC/MPO Consideration (Project 609464)

- MassDOT Project Development – Williamstown Mohawk Bike Trail – Design Schedule response letter to Andy Hogeland
- Draft response to MassDOT pertaining to North Adams – Williamstown Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail project (607254)
- 2020 UPWP Focus Areas handout
- 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Executive Summary
- Berkshire MPO 05/28/2019 – MassDOT District One Project Update