

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, June 26, 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)
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Andy Hogeland	North Berkshire Towns Representative
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Tyer)
Sheila Irvin	BRTA

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. Lovejoy called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM as Mr. Pounds was not yet present. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MAY 22, 2018

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Hanlon, seconded by Mr. Huebner to approve the minutes as written.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF THE 2019 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATION ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS

Mrs. Kus explained that there were minor revisions to the draft UPWP based on comments from MassDOT. No additional comments were received from the public.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Hanlon, seconded by Mr. Huebner to approve the UPWP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

5. PRESENTATION ON THE CHAPTER 90 STUDY

(Mr. Pounds chaired the meeting from this agenda item forward)

Mr. Coughlin explained that staff are wrapping up the Chapter 90 study. Major findings from the study are that increasing amounts of Chapter 90 are being spent on “construction” type projects as opposed to resurfacing type projects. These “construction” type projects include full-depth reclamation and other road reconstruction and are usually longer lasting than simple resurfacing projects. Additionally, it appears that communities that receive less Chapter 90 tend to not spend it on engineering. This may limit some smaller community’s access to grant funding or federal TIP funds. Overall, there was a high level of saving of Chapter 90 funds across Berkshire County for the five years of data available. From FY12 to FY16, 75% of communities saved some level of Chapter 90, while the remaining 25% spent down their saved Chapter 90 balance (spent more than they received). It appears that communities that receive less Chapter 90 tend to have a higher percentage of their yearly allocation in saved or unspent funds. This helps to confirm what many towns have reported – that it takes several years to accumulate enough Chapter 90 to spend on a meaningful project, especially for those communities that receive smaller amounts. Finally, it appears that Chapter 90 spending likely lags by at least one year and possibly more if additional saving is required to spend on larger projects.

6. UPDATE ON THE I-90 INTERCHANGE STUDY

Mr. Kus reviewed a presentation from the I-90 interchange study open house that was held in April. Participants to identify areas for a potential new interstate ramp. Potential areas were Becket, Otis, Blandford, and Russell. A Health Impact Analysis (HIA) is being conducted as part of the project. The project is expected to wrap up in December 2018, and another Open House will be held in September.

7. AUTHORIZATION OF A 21-DAY COMMENT PERIOD ON THE AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY DETERMINATION WHICH WILL BE AMENDED INTO THE 2016 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN PENDING MASSDOTS COMPLETION OF THE AIR QUALITY ANALYSIS

Mr. Kus described a recent court decision, *South Coast Air Quality Management District v. EPA* which struck down provisions of the 2008 Ozone NAAQS (National Ambient Air Quality Standards) SIP Requirements Rule. The implication for the MPO is that a new air quality conformity determination must be made for the Western Mass. region, and the results of this determination will need to be amended into the existing 2016 RTP. As part of this, potential transportation projects must be evaluated to determine if they will impact air quality. Generally, only regionally significant “capacity” projects such as new vehicle lanes are determined to impact air quality. Mr. Kus asked for authorization to release the conformity determination for a 21-day public comment period when it is received. It is likely that the determination will be received during July, when there is no scheduled MPO meeting, and as such, this will allow the MPO to vote on the RTP amendment when during their next scheduled meeting in August. If there is a delay in adding this amendment to the TIP, it is

possible that projects could be held up for approval if they are not found to be “exempt” from the air quality standards.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to authorize MPO staff to release the Air Quality Conformity Determination for a 21-day comment period when it is received by MPO staff.

Mr. Pounds explained further that the entire Commonwealth is now labelled as “nonconforming” as a result of this court decision. Previously, the state had been working under the 2008 NAAQS standards, but these have reverted to the 1997 standards. Conformity for each region is determined in the RTP and is measured by analyzing regionally significant capacity projects. There are not any regionally significant projects in the 2016 RTP. Essentially, there is a statewide emissions “budget” and evaluation of these capacity projects helps determine if the emissions budget has been exceeded.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2020 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP)

Mr. Gilmore updated MPO members on the development of the RTP, which will begin this fall. The RTP provides an overarching framework for the development of the TIP and helps to guide year to year planning work in the UPWP. The RTP will include a thorough public involvement process beginning with a public survey. Mr. Gilmore asked MPO members to review the draft survey questions and to contact staff with questions or suggestions.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

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

10. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next MPO meeting will be on August 28, 2018.

Mr. Huebner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Pounds adjourned the meeting at 5:08 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- Draft May MPO meeting minutes
- Chap 90 presentation slides
- Draft UPWP
- District 1 Project Updates
- MPO work activity updates