

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, October 22, 2019 4:00 PM
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office
1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Jim Lovejoy, Vice Chair	Southwest Towns Representative
John Boyle	North Central Towns Representative
John Duval	North Towns Representative
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC Chair
Jim Huebner	Southeast Towns Representative
Sheila Irving	Chair of BRTA
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver)
Ricardo Morales	City of Pittsfield

Others Present:

Eammon Coughlin	BRPC
Zachary Feury	City of North Adams
Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Derek Krevat	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning
Clete Kus	BRPC
Bob Malnati	BRTA
Thomas Matuszko	BRPC

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Lovejoy 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 JULY 23, 2019 (ACTION ITEM)

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

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously. Ricardo Morales abstained from voting.

4. CONSIDERATION OF AN AMENDMENT (1ST AMENDMENT) TO THE 2020-2024 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND INITIATE A 21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (ACTION ITEM)

Ms. Koirala proceeded to explain that rather than being an amendment, today the MPO will consider an adjustment to the 2020 – 2024 TIP. The Florida-Savoy – Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 2 – project has decreased in cost by \$1,174,207.

Mr. Krevat proceeded to explain that, under normal procedures, if a project contained in the TIP undergoes a cost decrease of 10% or more (of the entire project cost), this would trigger an amendment and the MPO would have to put the change out for a public comment period. However, since this project decrease was less than 10%, the MPO can go ahead and vote on the adjustment without putting the TIP change out for a 21-day public comment period.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Hanlon, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to approve the adjustment to the 2020 – 2024 Berkshire MPO TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

5. HSIP DATA UPDATE

Mr. Coughlin proceeded to explain the yearly Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) update the Berkshire region has received. The region receives crash cluster data from the state on an annual basis. The Berkshire MPO HSIP Eligible Crash Clusters 2014 – 2016 handout outlines the most dangerous crash locations in the county – the data always lags by three years. This most recent data outlines close to 449 crash cluster locations in the county – a crash cluster is any place where two or more car crashes occur within 25 meters of each other). The HSIP cluster locations represent the top 5% of the most severe of crashes. This data identifies 23 specific intersections in the county that are considered the most dangerous.

Mr. Coughlin proceeded to explain that the methodology for measuring crash severity this year has undergone a change. Every crash receives a score based on the severity of that crash. Three categories are used to classify the severity of the crash. These include, property damage only crashes, crashed with an injury, and crashes resulting in a fatality. In previous years, a property damage only crash would score a 1; an injury only crash would score a 5; and a crash resulting in a fatality would score a 10. New this year, crashes involving an injury and/or a fatality now score a 21, and a property damage only crash now receives a score of 1. This means that locations/intersection that experience injury or fatality crashes will rank higher and become more easily identified under the new scoring methodology.

6. BERKSHIRE FLYER UPDATE

Ms. Koirala proceeded to update the MPO on the Berkshire Flyer. Ms. Koirala explained that BRPC's study conducted last year for a pilot service included first and last mile transportation considerations for passengers arriving to Pittsfield via this new service. Ms. Koirala mentioned that a pilot service is expected to run in 2020, from Memorial Day weekend to Columbus Day weekend. As a reminder, the train service would be a weekend service and would bring New Yorkers from Penn Station in NYC to Pittsfield on Friday afternoon/early evening and depart to NYC to return NYC passengers on Sunday

in the late afternoon. Exact times and ticket prices for the pilot service are still being negotiated between MassDOT, Amtrak and other vested parties.

Ms. Koirala explained that as a part of the legislative budget allowing for the Berkshire Flyer pilot train service – an apportionment has been secured to hire program manager for the pilot service – BRTA is working on filling this position and an RFP has been sent out (the deadline for applying to the position is scheduled for mid-December 2019).

Mr. Morales asked whether the train that would bring New Yorkers to Pittsfield would return to NYC on Friday (after dropping NYC passengers off in Pittsfield) empty – or if there is an option to fill those seats – as it might behoove Amtrak to consider this from a financial feasibility standpoint.

Ms. Koirala replied that those decisions are still being worked out.

7. TRANSPORTATION AND CLIMATE INITIATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Kus updated the MPO members on the Transportation and Climate Initiative. This initiative was initiated back in December of 2018. There are 12 states that compose this consortium of northeast states and the District of Columbia. The governors of each participating state have signed on to this initiative – which seeks to reduce GHG emissions associated with the transportation sector. This document outlines a framework for the draft regional policy – which will move this initiative forward in the form of a ‘cap and invest’ strategy. This would manifest as a tax levied on carbon-based fuels and the revenues generated would fund measures to assist in further reducing emissions from the transportation sector. Mr. Kus continued to review the framework handout with MPO members. Input is being sought on the draft framework but it contains limited information. More details are forthcoming following the initial input/comment period. Mr. Kus shared comments which have been prepared. MPO staff will continue to monitor TCI activities and will provide regular updates to the MPO.

8. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri proceed to update MPO members on District 1 projects. Key highlights include:

- MassDOT has released all the FFY 2019 projects on page 1 of the MassDOT District 1 Update handout out for advertisement;
- Design contract for the Adams to North Adams extension of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail (from Lime Street where it currently is and connecting it up to Hodges Cross Road in North Adams) has received a Notice to Proceed.
- FFY 2020 will see two bike path projects. Both will extend the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Malnati provided an update on BRTA – including new equipment acquisitions, grant request submittals and ridership data on new routes and corresponding funding sources.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kus gave a brief update on the I-90 Interchange Study. The working group met on October 2nd. At the meeting, the working group made the decision to remove the Algeria Road Alternative from any

future consideration – leaving two alternatives, one at the service plaza and one at the Blandford maintenance facility. A public meeting was held on October 10th, which was very well attended by resident stakeholders. Adverse future impacts were voiced among those in attendance as the primary concern of siting the interchange in either of the remaining locations. The group will be kept informed as developments occur.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE – NOVEMBER 19, 2019

The next MPO meeting will be on January 21, 2020.

ACTION: Mr. Hanlon motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Lovejoy adjourned the meeting at 4:50 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Meeting Agenda
- Berkshire MPO FFY 2020 – 2024 TIP 1st Amendment Handout
- Berkshire MPO HSIP Eligible Crash Clusters 2014 – 2016 Handout
- Transportation and Climate Initiative: Framework for Draft Regional Policy Proposal
- Berkshire MPO 10/22/2019 – MassDOT District One Project Update