

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, October 24, 2017 4:00 PM
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office
1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Larysa Bernstein	City of North Adams (Representing Mayor Alcombright)
Laurel Scialabba	North Central Berkshire Towns Representative
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Tinlin)
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Linda Tyer)
Sarah Vallieres	Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
Robert Malnati	Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
David Mohler, Chair	MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (Representing Secretary Pollack)

Others Present:

Eammon Coughlin	BRPC
Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Cassandra Gascon	MassDOT
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Nat Karns	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Quinn Molloy	MassDOT
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Gabriel Sherman	MassDOT
Jane Winn	Berkshire Environmental Action Team / Recorded Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM June 27, 2017

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Hanlon, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy and others, to approve the meeting minutes for the June 27, 2017 meeting of the Berkshire MPO, as presented.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING OF OCTOBER 17, 2017

Mr. Kus provided the MPO with a brief report on the discussion at the TAC meeting on October 17, 2017. The main topic of discussion at this meeting was culvert replacement and stream crossing standards. Mr. Kus described one of the main outcomes of the meeting, which stressed pre-permitting coordination between municipalities and MassDEP on culvert replacement projects. A letter was sent to the Berkshire County Highway Superintendents Association requesting that

consideration be given to have MassDEP provide this presentation to their membership at future meeting.

Following the report, Mr. Lovejoy expressed his concern with the stream crossing standards and the increased costs they bring to projects. Mr. Lovejoy asked committee members and others to consider a reworking of or relief from complying with the stream crossing standards, particularly for small communities or projects, or in certain environmental contexts. These sentiments were echoed by Mr. Huebner, who pointed out the extreme costs of recent culvert replacement projects, and stated that reaching out to the legislative delegation might be the best avenue to rework stream crossing requirements. Ms. Winn pointed out the importance of nutrient transport in small headwater streams (in rural areas) to the entire ecological system, stating that culverts do not only provide for greater wildlife movement. Mr. Karns informed the committee that he thought that MassDEP should be invited to speak at the next Mass. Selectmen's Association meeting to give a similar presentation which was given at the TAC meeting.

5. RECEIVE INFORMATION ON AN ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT TO THE 2018-2022 STIP AND THE RESULTING CHANGES TO THE 2018 2022 TIP

Mr. Mohler reviewed an administrative adjustment to the 2018-2022 STIP. During fiscal review, the STIP was out of fiscal restraint. There are no changes to projects, only the sources of funding or "color of money" for each project. Ms. Koirala reviewed the specifics of each project.

- FFY18 - Lenox Walker St. Reconstruction – around \$2 million dollars for the project was reduced from CMAQ funding, and instead funded by STP sources.
- FFY19 – BMC Area Improvements – Funding of around \$350k was reduced from HSIP, and instead funded by CMAQ sources.

6. CONSIDERATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE 2018-2022 TIP (FIRST AMENDMENT) AND INITIATE A 21 DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD.

Mrs. Koirala outlined amendments to the 2018-2022 TIP. Mr. Malnati clarified that six (6) para-transit vehicles are being purchased, not the five (5) described on the agenda.

Transit Amendments

- Add the acquisition six (6) para-transit vehicles (RTD0006522) \$321,000
- Add funding for Travel Training (RTD0006528) \$6,000

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner and others, to approve Amendment #1 of the FFY 2018-2022 TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carries unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION ON TRANSIT ISSUES, CURRENT STUDY EFFORTS AND ACTIVITIES, BRTA CRITICAL NEEDS

Mr. Kus explained that public comments at the last MPO meeting around transit issues prompted the inclusion of this agenda item. Mr. Kus then turned discussion over to Mr. Malnati.

Mr. Malnati discussed recent efforts and projects of the BRTA including:

- Participation in a transit "design thinking" workshop. One outcome of this workshop was the potential for a new "figure-8" bi-directional route through the county from 6:00 am to midnight with stops every half-hour that could benefit both service workers and visitors to

the Berkshires. This potential new route is being modeled to determine if it is feasible to implement.

- Shared ride service to employment centers during evening hours. BRTA is currently working to determine if this service could be provided by the current inventory of human service provider vehicles.
- Discussions around the potential Berkshire Flyer. This potential rail service would run between New York City and Pittsfield.

Mr. Malnati discussed BRTA's critical needs, including funding for operations. Capital needs, such as vehicles, can often be funded, but there is no funding to run these vehicles. Mr. Malnati discussed issues with some federal funding sources, which are around for a few years and then disappear. Mr. Malnati discussed options for a local use tax, similar to room taxes, which could help fund local transportation projects.

Mr. Lovejoy stated that better advertising or messaging around public transit might help to increase ridership.

Mr. Karns stated that the relative lack of public transportation in the county is a critical issue that comes up in many different discussions, whether around economic development, education, and other topics. Improvements to public transportation and connecting the county to surrounding areas has been discussed since the 1800's.

8. RECEIVE A DEMONSTRATION ON MASSDOTS PROJECT INTAKE TOOL (MAPIT) AND GEODOT

Ms. Molloy demonstrated the MassDOT Project Intake Tool (MAPIT). This tool is an online application designed to replace the Project Notification Form (PNF) and Project Initiation Form (PIF) for federal-aid eligible projects. One benefit of the MAPIT tool is that it can quickly screen projects for potential environmental conflicts. The tool is expected to be available for use within a week and a half.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES INCLUDING MASSDOT STUDIES

Mr. Kus briefly discussed work activities of BRPC. BRPC is also gearing up for a number of special studies including a travel and tourism study.

Mr. Frieri reviewed the project status report for Berkshire projects in FY 2018.

Ms. Gascon stated that MassDOT will be conducting a feasibility study focused around a potential new interchange on I-90 between Westfield and Lee.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE/MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The next MPO meeting will be on November 28, 2017. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 5:20PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- FY 2018-2022 TIP Transit Amendments
- Changes to the 2018-2022 TIP resulting from an administrative adjustment to the STIP

- MassDOT District 1 Project Status Report