

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 4:00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| David Mohler      | MassDOT (Representing Secretary Stephanie Pollack)               |
| John Boyle        | North Central Towns Representative                               |
| John Duval        | North Towns Representative                                       |
| Zac Feury         | City of North Adams  |
| Kyle Hanlon       | BRPC Chair   |
| Francesca Hemming | MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver) |
| Jim Huebner       | Southeast Towns Representative                                   |
| Sheila Irving     | Chair of BRTA  |
| Jim Lovejoy       | Southwest Towns Representative                                   |
| Ricardo Morales   | City of Pittsfield   |

Others Present:

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Eammon Coughlin | BRPC               |
| Peter Frieri    | MassDOT District 1 |
| Justin Gilmore  | BRPC               |
| Anuja Koirala   | BRPC               |
| Derek Krevat    | MassDOT OTP        |
| Clete Kus       | BRPC               |
| Tom Matuszko    | BRPC               |
| Mark Moore      | MassDOT District 1 |
| Bryan Pounds    | MassDOT OTP        |

**1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves via a roll call conducted by Mr. Kus.

**2. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 24, 2020 (ACTION ITEM)**

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle to approve the meeting minutes from the March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 MPO meeting.

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**4. APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT (3<sup>RD</sup> AMENDMENT) TO THE 2020 – 2024 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CHANGES TO PROJECT COSTS) AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN ON BEHALF OF THE MPO (ACTION ITEM)**

At the previous Berkshire MPO meeting in March 2020, the MPO authorized staff to release the 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 – 2024 TIP amendment for a 21-day public comment period. No comments have been received to date for the amendment. Ms. Koirala proceeded to review the 3<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the 2020 – 2024 TIP.

Three projects required amendments. In year 2020, the Adams Pavement Rehabilitation & Related Work project underwent a cost increase of about \$1,564,368 – approximately \$1,007 less than the initial expected amendment cost increase.

The second project requiring an amendment is the Great Barrington Intersection & Signal Improvements on US 7 at SR23 & SR41 project. The project cost has increased by \$875,747.

The third project requiring an amendment is the Williamstown Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Construction project. The project is funded through statewide CMAQ funding and the project cost has decreased by \$429,625.

Ms. Koirala proceeded to explain that there would be remaining funds from FFY 2020 (\$359,996) under the regional target fund, and that those funds will be carried over into FFY 2021.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve the 3<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the 2020 – 2024 TIP and authorize the chairman to sign on behalf of the MPO.

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**5. DISCUSSION ON PROJECT FUNDING SCENARIOS AND PROJECT LISTING FOR THE 2021 – 2025 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (ACTION ITEM)**

Ms. Koirala stated that at the last MPO meeting in March 2020, the MPO decided to proceed with Scenario #1A for the 2021 – 2025 TIP. That document is available on BRPC website and shows the complete listing of projects along with cost and funding source for the 2021 – 2025 Berkshire region TIP. Ms. Koirala proceeded to review the Highway, Bridges and Bike/Ped. projects listed in the draft Berkshire MPO FFY 2021 – 2025 TIP handout. Ms. Koirala then proceeded to outline the Transit projects listed in the draft Transit TIP handout.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner to authorize staff to initiate a 21-day public comment period on project funding scenarios and project listings for the 2021 – 2025 TIP.

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**6. DISCUSSION ON THE BUDGET AND TASKS FOR THE 2021 UNIFIED PLANNING WOK PROGRAM**

Mr. Kus directed MPO members to the 2021 UPWP Focus Areas handout and proceeded to update

MPO members on continuing and new work tasks to be incorporated into the 2021 UPWP. The UPWP is typically broken down into four main areas: Management Certification, Technical Support, Planning Studies and Ongoing Work.

Key highlights include Special Studies work efforts, encompassing Autonomous Vehicle research/analysis/impacts on rural communities, Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Study (finalize study – may be carried over to 2021 UPWP) for Berkshire County, Housatonic Line Intra County Services Feasibility Study, and Regional Bottleneck Analyses.

Bike and pedestrian tasks are going to continue on, with a key update including the Mapping of County Wide Trails as well as providing assistance to the City of Pittsfield on their recent grant award to conduct a Berkshire Bikeshare Feasibility Study. Updates will also occur on a Berkshire Region Pedestrian Plan. Staff also hope to work towards a Bikeshare Pilot Program by the end of 2021.

Transportation and community system preservation task (TCSP), focusing on Access Management and Model Bylaws, has received little interest from Berkshire communities and funding at the federal level has all but evaporated. This task will not continue forward into the 2021 UPWP.

Culvert Assessments is a new task that will be incorporated into the 2021 UPWP. Small bridge and culvert replacement projects have been a big issue for Berkshire communities. A significant portion of these crossing structures are in need of repair/replacement and climate change is expected to exacerbate deficiencies. This topic has also been raised by a number of communities, particular those participating in the State's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program.

Work on the regional transit tasks will continue. Safety Initiatives including Road Safety Audits (East St./Pomeroy Ave and First St./Fenn St.) will also continue. Climate Change tasks will largely continue forward as well. Other sub-tasks falling under the following tasks will continue forward into the 2021 UPWP: Title VI, Performance Measures, Passenger & Freight Rail Planning (regional and statewide), and Berkshire Flyer Marketing and Service Implementation,

Two new tasks, Expansion of Transit & Rail Service (promoting micro-transit in rural areas, advocating for east-west rail service, TMA assistance and increasing rideshare opportunities within the region) and Outreach & Interregional Coordination (participation in statewide efforts, collaborating with neighboring RPAs MPOs and assisting in COVID-19 recovery efforts) will be added to the 2021 UPWP.

Mr. Kus proceeded to direct MPO members to the 2021 UPWP Budget handout. Mr. Kus proceeded to review the budgetary allocations to each task and sub-task for FFY 2021. The dollar amounts for the Management & Certification and Technical Support tasks will not change much from the current to the next (2021) FFY. Dollars allocated to the Planning Studies task, and specifically Special Studies and Bicycle & Pedestrian Planning sub-tasks, have increased – reflecting the expected time and efforts required to accomplish. Ongoing Activities are also receiving a slight increase – again, reflecting anticipated time and effort to complete. Lastly, \$15,000 is programmed toward Direct Expenses, which includes activities such as travel. A finalized draft document will be completed soon and the MPO members will be provided a copy of the draft document prior to the May meeting. The MPO will consider a vote to initiate a comment period at the next meeting and approve the 2021 UPWP at their June meeting.

## **7. PRESENTATION HSIP ELIGIBLE CRASH CLUSTERS 2015 – 2019**

Mr. Coughlin proceeded to review the Berkshire Region Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) eligible crash cluster data from 2015 – 2017, which was released a few months ago. Crash clusters represent 3-years of rolling data, and the most recent data always lags by 3-years. The HSIP tries to use a data-driven, strategic approach to improve highway safety. The HSIP clusters represent the top-five percent most dangerous crash areas in a given region. HSIP clusters are determined using a methodology known as EPDO score – which is Equivalent Property Damage Only score. Mr. Coughlin explained, that EPDO scoring methodology has recently been updated (2-years ago) – and specifically, crashes that involve a fatality or injury now drastically increase the score a crash is given. Therefore, specific intersections or stretches of roadway that see numerous crashes with multiple injuries or fatalities over time are more likely to rise to the top of the list and be identified as HSIP crash clusters.

In the Berkshire Region, there was 543 crash locations, and the top-five percent of between 2015 – 2017 represent 24 crash cluster areas. Of the 24 clusters, 18 are found in Pittsfield, 4 are located in Lenox, all along Route 7, 1 is found in Dalton and 1 is in Stockbridge. There are also HSIP eligible bicycle clusters and HSIP eligible pedestrian clusters. These clusters use 10-years of data as these crashes are less frequent. Mr. Coughlin proceeded to review those cluster areas in the Berkshires. Mr. Coughlin then proceeded to outline more specific information surrounding Berkshire crash clusters, including HSIP eligible intersections by municipality, showing the top-five percent of vehicle crashes, bike crashes and pedestrian crashes. Mr. Coughlin also noted, new this year – is the ability to collate the top-five percent of crash locations by town/city, which allows municipal officials to take a deeper look at crash areas within their municipal borders.

Mr. Lovejoy expressed surprised at there not being more pedestrian crashes along Main Street in Great Barrington.

Mr. Coughlin concurred and also stated that the data does lag by a few years – however the most recent data does suggest some pedestrian issues in that area of Great Barrington.

## **8. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES**

Mr. Frieri proceeded to update MPO members on District 1 projects outlined in the MassDOT District One Project Update handout.

Mr. Duval asked whether there has been any impact as a result of the Governor's restrictions enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on the status of projects in the region.

Mr. Moore stated that at this juncture, there has not been any delays as a result of the Governor's orders on shovel-ready projects. The areas where slowdowns have been seen include projects like the Williamstown Mohawk Bike Path project where the municipality is having difficulty navigating the required in-person public input meeting in order for the project to move forward.

## **9. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Kus informed the MPO that he would be forwarding a recently received Intercity Bus Needs Survey to MPO and TAC members – members should consider providing input through this survey. Mr. Kus also mentioned following the next MPO meeting, there would be a CIP meeting, either in-person or virtually, and stay tuned for information on this meeting.

**10. NEXT MEETING DATE – MAY 26, 2020**

The next MPO meeting will be on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

ACTION: Mr. Huebner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 5:05 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Meeting Agenda
- Draft MPO March 24, 2020 Meeting Minutes
- BMPO FFY 2020 – 2024 TIP 3<sup>rd</sup> Amendment
- Draft BMPO FFY 2021 – 2025 TIP Document
- Draft BMPO FFY 2021 – 2025 TIP Project Listing
- Draft BMPO FFY 2021 – 2025 Transit TIP
- Draft BMPO FFY 2021 – 2025 Schedule
- 2021 UPWP Focus Areas
- 2021 UPWP Draft Budget
- HSIP Crash Clusters
- MassDOT District One Update