



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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MINUTES OF THE Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Tuesday, December 21, 2021

Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Communications

Meeting Materials: <https://berkshireplanning.org/event/berkshire-mpo-virtual-meeting/>

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Steve Woelfel	MassDOT (Representing Secretary Jamey Tesler)
Zac Feury	City of North Adams
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Sheila Irwin	Chair of BRTA
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Towns Representative

Others Present:

Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Chris Klem	MassDOT OTP
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Derek Krevat	MassDOT OTP
Clete Kus	BRPC
Thomas Matuszko	BRPC
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Nick Russo	BRPC
Andrew Reovan	FHWA
Sarah Vallieres	BRTA

I. Introductions

Mr. Woelfel called the meeting to order at 4:08 p.m. Meeting attendees introduced themselves via a roll call conducted by Mr. Kus.

II. Opportunity for Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Note: Since a quorum was not met at the meeting, MPO members moved on to agenda items that were non-action items.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 23, 2021 (Action Item)

Agenda item was skipped due to absence of meeting quorum.

IV. Approval of an amendment (1st amendment) to the 2022-2026 TIP (Transit) and authorize the Chairman sign the certification documents on behalf of the MPO members (Action Item)

Agenda item was skipped due to absence of meeting quorum.

V. Receive an update on the Micro-transit Survey

Ms. Koirala proceeded to update MPO members on micro-transit study and survey efforts. In collaboration with the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC), BRPC is assisting in completing a micro-transit study. This study is being spearheaded by Tate Coleman, a student at Bard College of Simon's Rock, as part of his senior thesis. Ms. Koirala proceeded to explain that micro-transit is simply a form of demand responsive transport. It differs from conventional, fixed public transit in which predetermined routes are driven at predetermined times. The benefit of micro-transit is that it offers more flexibility in scheduling rides and routes. Phase one of the study looks to understand how on-demand micro-transit services are currently being used across the nation and in Massachusetts. The second phase will look at gauging interest among Berkshire residents for the creation of micro-transit services in the region. To gauge interest, a [Berkshire County Microtransit Survey](#) has been developed and MPO members are encouraged to take the survey and share it with other Berkshire residents. The findings of the study will ultimately inform micro-transit recommendations for BRTA. The survey link is:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/bbus>

The survey is also available in Spanish at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/transitsurvey_span

VI. Receive an update on the Northern Tier Rail Study

Mr. Kus proceeded to update MPO members on the most recent Northern Tier Rail Study efforts. Funding for this study effort was the result of legislative action and the MassDOT Rail and Transit Division is working in collaboration with a contractor to conduct this study. On December 16th, the first working group meeting was convened. There are about thirty-three (33) members of the working group. The working group consists of elected officials, executive directors from various agencies, including RPAs, and a number of federal congressmen staff along with mayors of cities along the Route 2 corridor. At the meeting, the purpose of the working group along with study goals were discussed. Working group members were advised to provide feedback on those study goals by January 6th. The study will span 18 months and wrap-up in 2023. There are four key milestones that have been provided to date. Through the spring of 2022, the consultant will continue collecting existing conditions data. Around the fall of 2022, there will be a public input meeting scheduled. In the winter of 2023, service plans will be reviewed. The study has funding to carry forward six (6) service scenarios. Ultimately, the study will result in a recommended preferred service line. In the spring of 2023, the final service plan along with recommendations will be made available. On the MassDOT website, there is currently a webpage dedicated to outlining this study effort, which can be accessed here: <https://www.mass.gov/northern-tier-passenger-rail-study>

VII. Status Reports from Member Agencies

Mr. Frieri provided a [brief update on District One projects to the MPO](#). This is a list of current FFY22 projects programmed for the Berkshires. As Mr. Frieri stated at the last MPO meeting, all projects are at least at 75% design – a good status to be in at the start of the new federal fiscal year. Mr. Frieri proceeded to review the details on the status for each project.

After being informed that a quorum had still not been met, Mr. Woelfel asked how time sensitive the TIP amendment action item was.

Ms. Vallieres stated that TIP amendment item is somewhat time sensitive, and the sooner it can be approved the better.

Mr. Woelfel suggested that Mr. Kus work with BRTA staff and MPO members to determine whether the next MPO meeting should occur sooner than January 25th (the next scheduled Berkshire MPO meeting date) or whether the scheduled meeting date will work. Mr. Kus acknowledged that he will work with members to determine the next meeting date.

Ms. Vallieres also stated that BRTA is suffering from the nationwide bus-driver shortage and has

therefore had to curtail some of its routes to 2-hours.

VIII. Other Business

Ms. Koirala mentioned that she will be sending out TIP solicitation letters to each community by January 4th, 2022.

Mr. Matuszko asked whether the Chair had any insight into when the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) money or Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act money will start to flow?

Mr. Woelfel was unsure about ARPA funds but mentioned that MassDOT has been looking closely at the infrastructure bill. The federal highway administration (FHWA) and federal transit administration (FTA) will address these items at the next meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA).

IX. Next Meeting date – January 25, 2022

ACTION: Mr. Lovejoy motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Feury. Mr. Woelfel adjourned the meeting at 4:33 p.m.

Materials Distributed:

- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [Draft November 23, 2021 MPO Meeting Minutes](#)
- [Berkshire MPO FFY 2022-2026 Transit TIP 1st Amendment](#)
- [Berkshire Micro-transit Survey](#)
- [MassDOT District 1 TIP Projects Update](#)