

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, July 23, 2019 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)
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC Chair
Francisca Heming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Administrator Gulliver)
Jim Huebner	Southeast Berkshire Towns Representative
Sheila Irving	Chair of BRTA
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Berkshire Towns Representative
David Turocy	City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Tyer)

Others Present:

Eammon Coughlin	BRPC
Tate Coleman	Chair, Great Barrington Public Transportation Advisory Committee
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Derek Krevat	MassDOT Planning
Clete Kus	BRPC
Thomas Matuszko	BRPC
Mark Moore	MassDOT District 1
Brandan Wilcox	FHWA

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Pounds 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 MAY 28, 2019 (ACTION ITEM)

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve the meeting minutes from the May 28, 2019 MPO meeting.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF THE 2020 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) AND AUTHORIZE THE MEMBERS TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATION (ACTION ITEM)

Mr. Kus explained that following the May 28th MPO meeting, the 2020 UPWP was released for public comment in accordance with BRPC's public participation plan. The comment period ran through June 18th, 2019. Comments were received by both MassDOT and members of the public. Mr. Kus proceeded to briefly summarize a few of those comments. MassDOT comments were mostly general

and were addressed in the UPWP – these included incorporating a reference to fiscal years in some of the tables, clarification of work task activities, and referencing a few of the state’s initiatives with respect to bicycle and pedestrian planning. Two public comments were received – with one asking why the UPWP does not specify which person is responsible for which task. Mr. Kus mentioned that in the front of the document, the UPWP specifies that these are the activities we are carrying out as an RPC as staff of the Berkshire MPO. The only activity that is not performed by staff are the traffic count projects. The other comment relates to the Housatonic Rail – this member of the public was in favor of establishing rail service along that line. Mr. Kus concluded by stating that all comments have been adequately addressed in the 2020 UPWP document and today we look for the MPO to endorse this document.

Mr. Pounds asked if the 2020 UPWP document contains language that specifies MassDOT is operating under one contract this year instead of two contracts (5303 Transit Grant & Highway PL contract are being combined under one contract)?

Mr. Kus mentioned that we do – on page 4, paragraph 3, last sentence – “This FFY 2020 UPWP will be funded by a combined PL/5303 contract which will be administered by the FHWA and that match for the 5303 funding will be provided by MassDOT.

ACTION: Motion by Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner to authorize members to sign the 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) certification document.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Kus quickly made the point that today we will need signatures of all the MPO members – therefore, for the next couple of items on the agenda, Mr. Kus will be passing around documents for MPO members to sign.

5. APPROVAL OF THE 2020 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN (RTP) AND AUTHORIZE MPO MEMBERS TO SIGN CERTIFICATIONS (ACTION ITEM)

Mr. Coughlin explained that as with the 2020 UPWP, staff will be wrapping-up efforts on the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) document this month. After the last MPO meeting in May, the RTP was released for a 21-day public comment period. We received about 60 total comments. Comments were received by MassDOT, 4 general public comments relating to various aspects of transportation in the county were received, and the remaining 55 comments were uniform general support comments sent in by supporters of the train campaign – showing their support for eventually passenger rail along the Housatonic Line. Just as a note, the Housatonic Passenger Line is recommended in the RTP, however no funds have been programmed towards it. All comments have been addressed and incorporated into the document. Today, we seek a vote of approval from the MPO – after which the document will be sent of to FHWA for final approval.

Mr. Pounds addressed two points of clarification – one, that these were comments received during the public comment period and were separate from the public engagement/outreach activities conducted during the public input phase of the RTP?

Mr. Coughlin confirmed – a separate public engagement/outreach campaign was conducted during the Fall in which just over 700 public transportation needs surveys were collected.

Mr. Pounds wanted to ensure that the findings of the public engagement/outreach campaign launched for the RTP was included in the body of the report – in addition to the public comments received during the comment period.

Mr. Coughlin confirmed.

Mr. Pounds mentioned that the reason the MPO did not meet last month was because MassDOT still needed to run the statewide air quality conformity model. Mr. Pounds briefly explained that the statewide air quality conformity model accounts for all regionally significance projects – projects that affect capacity (whether an increase or decrease of CO₂ and therefore influence the region's air quality). Mr. Pounds mentioned that the region is in conformity – which is good news. This item needed to be incorporated into the RTP document – which is why the MPO did not meet in June as the document cannot be endorsed unless you show that you're in conformity statewide.

ACTION: Motion by Huebner, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and authorize members to sign RTP certification document.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

6. APPROVAL OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON AIR QUALITY PLANNING AND COORDINATION FOR TRANSPORTATION CONFORMITY AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS (ACTION ITEM)

Mr. Kus explained that within the last week, the MOU relating to air quality planning and transportation conformity was sent out. In general, air quality and transportation planning have a nexus. Federal efforts through the Clean Air Act acknowledge the role transportation plays on impacting air quality and require more actions be done so that transportation planning activities/projects don't further degrade air quality. This MOU – developed in response to federal requirements – outlines the roles and responsibilities of the players in the air quality conformity arena. Those players include MassDEP, MassDOT, administrators of the RTA's and the MPO's. Mr. Kus proceeded to review roles and responsibilities outlined in the MOU.

Mr. Kravet confirmed that RTA's are signatories to this MOU and that Mr. Pounds will be giving a presentation at the Mass. Association of Regional Transit Authorities as well to get their input and signatures. Transportation Secretary Pollack will sign on behalf of the state's MPO's.

Mr. Pounds mentioned that this agreement formalizes roles and responsibilities and was desperately needed as the previous agreement was from 1997 – and various state agencies that were initially parties to the agreement during that time no longer exist.

Mr. Lovejoy asked who the cop on the beat was? In other words, who ensures that all parties are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities?

Mr. Pounds replied by stating that everyone is supposed to act as their own enforcers and this agreement, which specifies "by and among" means that all parties to this agreement will do their utmost to fulfill their obligations.

Mr. Matuszko asked why the RTA's sign this MOU individually and not the MPO's?

Mr. Pounds mentioned that this is a question for MassDOT federal transit partners. Mr. Pounds proceeded to explain that RTA's typically have representation on MPO's – however there are some instances where this is not the case. For example, Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) does not have a seat on the Boston MPO. As a result of a federal certification review a couple years ago, it is now being explored how CATA can be represented – whether that is through a seat on the MPO or through a transit committee. Having the RTA administrators sign this MOU ensures adequate representation from these transportation providers.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded Mr. Huebner to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Air Quality Planning and Coordination for Transportation Conformity and authorize the Chairman to sign on behalf of the MPO.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

7. APPROVAL OF THE CERTIFICATION FOR GLOBAL SOLUTIONS ACT REQUIREMENTS AND AUTHORIZE THE MEMBERS TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATION (ACTION ITEM)

Mr. Kus mentioned that this action is to endorse an updated certification document. Requirements haven't changed – reference and citations needed to be updated in order to provide an updated certification document to ensure it accurately reflects Massachusetts Code of Regulations.

Mr. Pounds mentioned that this document is referred to as the GHG self-certification document. This document essentially certifies the 3-C process – which is something that is done every year.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to approve the certification for the Global Warming Solution Act requirements and authorize members to sign certification document.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

8. CONSIDERATION OF AN AMENDMENT (3RD AMENDMENT) TO THE 2019-2023 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TRANSIT) AND INITIATE A 21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (ACTION ITEM)

Ms. Koirala proceeded to direct MPO members to the TIP amendment document. This amendment is for the Transit section of the TIP. BRTA received an operational grant through the 5307 Area Formula Grant. This is money that BRTA has received in the past but was never required to be reflected in the TIP document. Now, the FTA has required RTA's reflect this funding in the 2019-2023 TIP, which is the crux of the amendment before the MPO today.

Mr. Pounds mentioned that this is a new line item – it's federal dollars – and therefore constitutes an amendment. Mr. Pounds mentioned that the project description says, "up to 50% of federal share." Mr. Pounds mentioned that he believes this is a description of what the funding should be – and so MassDOT needs an actual project description. Mr. Pounds mentioned that during the public comment period, there should be a project description included. Secondly, the match requirement needs to be identified (dollar amount) and needs to specify where those funds are coming from.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to initiate a 21-day public comment period on the 3rd amendment to the 2019-2023 TIP.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Moore updated the MPO on District 1 Projects.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Matuszko mentioned that tonight there is a MassDEP sponsored workshop on Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) occurring in this meeting room. All are encouraged to attend. The Berkshire Flyer was in the Conference Committee budget for funding - \$240,000 for operational subsidy and another \$30,000 for a part-time staff person at BRTA and another \$100,000 for marketing, to be headed by 1Berkshires.

Mr. Matuszko proceeded to mention that he had attended an East-West Passenger Rail Study Advisory Committee meeting earlier in the afternoon. Thus far, the consultant on the project has completed preliminary alternatives for how an East-West Passenger Rail service would operate. There are three buckets of alternatives. One bucket of alternatives is looking to share the rail corridor with CSX. Of interest to our folks in the Berkshires – one of those alternatives includes a bus connection from Pittsfield to Springfield to then catch the train in Springfield heading toward Boston. The next bucket of alternatives looks at a shared corridor with new pieces of track that would be built to straighten out the route in order to decrease overall travel times. The third alternative looks at a separate corridor that would go along I-90. In this scenario – there would be a train that would go down to Lee and over to Springfield along I-90 and onto Boston.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE – AUGUST 27, 2019

The next MPO meeting will be on August 27, 2019.

ACTION: Mr. Huebner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Pounds adjourned the meeting at 4:40 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Meeting Agenda
- Berkshire Regional Transportation Plan Draft 2020: Comments Received for Berkshire 2020 TIP
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): The Conduct of Air quality Planning and Coordination for Transportation Conformity
- Berkshire MPO FFY 2019 – 2023 TIP 3rd Amendment proposed July 23, 2019
- Berkshire MPO 07/32/19: MassDOT District One Project Update