

**Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)**  
Tuesday, June 23, 2020 4:00 PM  
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office – VIRTUAL MEETING  
1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

Steve Woelfel	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
Robert Malnati	Administrator of BRTA
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

**1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 4:00 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 MAY 26, 2020 (ACTION ITEM)**

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Huebner to approve the meeting minutes from the May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020 MPO meeting.

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**4. APPROVAL OF THE 2020 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE CERTIFICATION ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS (ACTION ITEM)**

Mr. Kus stated following the MPO meeting last month the 2021 UPWP was released for a 21-day public comment period. No comments were received from the public. A few comments, mostly editorial in nature, were received by MassDOT. Mr. Kus provided a brief overview of UPWP tasks that MassDOT asked for more clarification on. Mr. Kus stated that comments from MassDOT have been adequately addressed and the UPWP is now ready for approval from the MPO.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to approve the 2020 UPWP and authorize the chairman to sign on behalf of the MPO members.

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**5. CONSIDERATION OF AN AMENDMENT (4<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT) TO THE 2020-2024 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TRANSIT – ADD \$3,438,208 FOR 5307 OPERATING ASSISTANCE) AND AUTHORIZE A 21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (ACTION ITEM)**

Ms. Koirala stated that there are six new projects to be included in the 2020-2024 Transit TIP. The first two projects are funded through 5307 and 5311 funding. Four other projects, which are funded through non-federal funding, include the acquisition of surveillance equipment, preventative maintenance, state planning and research, and operating assistance funded through state sources.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Hanlon, seconded by Mr. Huebner to authorize staff to release the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment of the 2020-2024 TIP for a 21-day public comment period.

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**6. APPROVAL OF AN ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENT TO THE 2020-2024 TIP TO CHANGE THE FUNDING SOURCE FOR ADAMS ROUTE 8 PROJECT TO ENTIRELY STBG FUNDS (ACTION ITEM)**

Ms. Koirala directed MPO members to the Berkshire MPO FFY 2020-2024 TIP 4<sup>th</sup> Adjustment/Amendment handout. Ms. Koirala stated that this adjustment to the 2020-2024 TIP does not require an amendment. Originally, the Adams – Pavement Rehabilitation & Related Work on Route 8 project drew from two funding sources, STBG and CMAQ. This adjustment changes the funding source to solely STBG funds for the FFY2020 portion of this project.

**ACTION:** Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve administrative adjustment to the 2020-2024 TIP.

**VOICE VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

## **7. BRTA UPDATE – COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

Mr. Malnati stated that BRTA, along with the other regional transit authorities in the state, are undergoing a comprehensive service analysis. MassDOT has hired the consulting firm, AECOM, to collect information from BRTA in order to put together a 5-year plan. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected AECOM's original data collection and public outreach strategies, which were to include customer interactions, on-board head-counts along specific routes during identified times, and in-person surveying. Since then, BRTA has posted a survey on their website – and have distributed that link to the survey as widely as possible through email blasts. Currently, just over a hundred responses have been collected through the survey. The plan is to keep the survey open through mid-August. The report is expected to list goals and objectives for sustaining transit operations, particularly through this pandemic, and to chart a path forward for continuing to provide and improve transportation services for the Berkshire region.

Mr. Lovejoy asked how the pandemic has affected BRTA's operations – is it mainly revenue and route scheduling?

Mr. Malnati stated that prior to the pandemic, BRTA had been seeing consistent growth in ridership numbers. As of March 16<sup>th</sup>, when businesses began to shut down, BRTA was limited to providing only 'essential trips' and thus ridership numbers saw a decline. Moreover, BRTA reduced service along particular routes. Additionally, BRTA has enacted certain safety measures and precautions to ensure that bus/van riders and drivers remain safe during this time.

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

Mr. Frieri provided MPO members with a status report on MassDOT District 1 projects updates.

## **9. OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Kus mentioned that the East/West Passenger Rail study advisory group met on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to narrow down the six proposed alternatives. Alternatives 1, 2, and 5 have been eliminated, as those proposals included bus-to-rail service for Berkshire riders. Alternative 6 is the most expensive, at \$25 billion dollars and includes the creation of a high-speed rail network running down the center of the Mass. Pike corridor. Alternatives 3 and 4 utilize existing tracks, with a portion of alternative 4 requiring the creation of new tracks. Alternative 4a, which were part of the recommendations, would provide a double-tracking between Springfield and Worcester, and extending it out toward the Pittsfield area.

Mr. Kus mentioned that he has been sending out the town managers and select boards, information related to MassDOT's Shared Streets and Space grant program. Through the program, \$5 million is available for quick launch and quick build transportation projects that are intended to promote safe distancing and healthy multimodal travel options. The grants range from \$5,000 to \$300,000. Interested member should contact Mr. Kus for more information.

**10. NEXT MEETING DATE – JULY 28, 2020**

The next MPO meeting will be on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

ACTION: Mr. Huebner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 4:35 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Meeting Agenda
- May 26, 2020 MPO Meeting Minutes
- BMPO FFY 2020-2024 TIP 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment
- BMPO FFY 2020-2024 TIP 4<sup>th</sup> Adjustment
- MassDOT District 1 Update