

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
Tuesday, May 26, 2020 4:00 PM
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Office – VIRTUAL MEETING
1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA

MPO Representatives/Alternates Present:

David Mohler	MassDOT (Representing Secretary Stephanie Pollack)
John Boyle	North Central Towns Representative
Kyle Hanlon	BRPC Chair
Andy Hogeland	Town of Williamstown
Francesca Hemming	MassDOT District 1 (Representing Highway Administrator Gulliver)
Jim Huebner	Southeast Towns Representative
Sheila Irving	Chair of BRTA
Jim Lovejoy	Southwest Towns Representative

Others Present:

Alice Bojanowski	Interested Individual
Carla	Interested Individual
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
Steve Savaria	Fuss & O'Neill

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 APRIL 28, 2020 (ACTION ITEM)

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Hanlon to approve the meeting minutes from the April 28th, 2020 MPO meeting.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF THE 2021 – 2025 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN ON BEHALF OF THE MPO MEMBERS (ACTION ITEM)

Ms. Koirala briefly mentioned that at the last after the last MPO meeting, the 2021-2025 TIP was released for a 21-day public comment period. No comments were received by the public, and one comment was received from MassDOT. Ms. Koirala proceeded to review the current projects, listed by year, cost, and funding source contained in the 2021 – 2025 Highway TIP and Transit TIP. This information is contained in the handouts titled, “BMPO FFY 2021-2025 TIP Project Listing” and “BMPO FFY 2021-2025 Transit TIP.”

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle to adopt the FFY 2021-2025 TIP and authorize the chairman to sign on behalf of the MPO members.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

5. RECEIVE THE 2020 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM, RELEASE DOCUMENT AND AUTHORIZE STAFF TO INITIATE A 21-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (ACTION ITEM)

Mr. Kus directed MPO members to the 2021 UPWP document and proceeded to update MPO members on continuing and new work tasks to be incorporated into the 2021 UPWP. Mr. Kus proceeded to highlight key focus areas contained in the draft UPWP.

Key focus areas 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. This year, BRPC is proposing to conduct two bottleneck analyses – location include: East Street and Pomeroy Avenue as well as Fenn Street and First Street.

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.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to authorize staff to release the UPWP document for a 21-day public comment period.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

6. 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. Currently, the Berkshire MPO has 10 projects scheduled for fiscal year 2020. Six have already been advertised, two are moving in that direction, and the bike path projects still have some work to complete before being ready for advertisement.

The Ashuwillticook Trail Extension Project to Crane Avenue in Pittsfield is still determining the right-of-way process with MassDOT's Rail Division. This represents the final hurdle to clear for this project, and District 1 is hopeful that this project will soon be moving toward advertisement.

The Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Construction project in Williamstown was the recent focus of the Williamstown Conservation Commission meeting on May 14th – that hearing was continued to May 28th, 2020. GPI has been instructed to hold-off on submitting the PS&E until after the May 28th meeting – in case there are additional items that need to be included in the contract.

Mr. Frieri proceeded to review the status of highway projects scheduled for fiscal year 2020 – contained in the District 1 Project Updates handout.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kus reminded MPO members that following at 6 p.m. tonight, BRPC will be hosting a virtual CIP meeting. Members are encouraged to attend.

8. NEXT MEETING DATE – JUNE 23, 2020

The next MPO meeting will be on June 23rd, 2020.

ACTION: Mr. Huebner motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy. Mr. Mohler adjourned the meeting at 4:30 PM.

Materials Distributed:

- Meeting Agenda
- April 28, 2020 MPO Meeting Minutes
- BMPO FFY 2021-2025 TIP Document
- BMPO FFY 2021-2025 TIP Project Listing

- BMPO FFY 2021-2025 Transit TIP
- Draft 2021 UPWP
- MassDOT District 1 Project Update
- MassDOT CIP Public Meeting Flyer