

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday October 25, 2011 4:00 PM

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives and Alternates Present:

Clinton Bench, MassDOT (Representing Secretary Mullan)
Peter Niles, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator Francis DePaola)
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire Delegate)
Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield (Representing Mayor Ruberto)
John Boyle, Town of Dalton (North Central Berkshire Delegate)
Bob Malnati, BRTA
James Mullen, BRPC
Gordon Bailey, Town of Lee (Southeast Berkshire Delegate)
Mike Ouellette, Town of Adams (North Berkshire Delegate)
Mayor Richard Alcombright (City of North Adams)

Others Present:

Kevin O'Donnell, TAC Chair (Great Barrington)
Trey Wadsworth, MassDOT
Andrew Lehmann, MassDOT
Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1
Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1
Justin Diagle, MassDOT District 1
Paula Melville, Town of Adams Selectboard
Ron Turbin Williamstown (Northwest Alternate)
Nat Karns, BRPC
Clete Kus, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Jane Winn, BEAT
Douglas Plachcinski, BRPC

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bench called the meeting to order at 4:03

2. MINUTES OF August 30, 2011

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, supported by Mr. Boyle, to approve the minutes of the August 30, 2011 MPO meeting.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED, Mr. Niles ABSTAINS

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Melville indicated that the Town of Adams was dismayed that the MPO did not prefer their project proposal for a bike path, and that the Town of Adams would actively pursue the funding.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. O'Donnell reviewed the TAC's October meeting. He recommended the use of PASER in pavement analysis based on his previous experiences in the Midwest.

5. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE BERKSHIRE COUNTY PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

Mr. Plachcinski explained the steps within the pavement management report, the PASER rating system criteria, pavement repairs, data collection, and conclusions. Mr. Lovejoy asked if there were opportunities for local communities to have help with pavement assessment and Mr. Plachcinski responded that there may be opportunities, but BRPC would have to evaluate requests from communities independently. Mr. Plachcinski described what the hopeful pavement management software could do, including other assets. Mr. Wadsworth indicated that there was quite a bit of need for some jurisdictions. Mr. Plachcinski stated that pricing for asphalt was relatively stable but the largest share of cost for road improvement projects. Mr. Niles mentioned that many of the state highways had a Portland concrete base surface. Mr. Ouellette inquired about state park roads and Mr. Bench mentioned that MassDOT is assuming responsibility for many of those roads. Mr. Karns reminded the MPO that all of the data collection was pre-Irene. Mr. Lovejoy asked if the pavement management system was the same one the state uses and Mr. Bench responded that he was comfortable that there was consistency with what the state uses and MPO staff used. Mr. Karns echoed that the data should be comparable and consistent from year to year. Mr. Niles asked about the measurements, data collection, and road attributes. Mr. Plachcinski mentioned that the pavement management software with refine the estimates based on road attributes.

6. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON BOTTLENECK ANALYSIS

Mrs. Koirala presented technical analysis for four areas:

1. West/West/College to Merriam in Pittsfield
2. Union/Eagle in North Adams
3. Main/Church in North Adams
4. Route 2/Price Chopper Drive in North Adams

Mrs. Koirala explained the crash data for the West Street corridor in Pittsfield. She explained how the age cohorts were classified in the state crash reports and that they include high risk groups. There was a fatal pedestrian crash at the Onota/West intersection in winter 2010 and the crash report indicated the driver was not at fault. The intersections in the study area are in such close proximity that even though just 3 of the 4 intersections qualify for HSIP funding, the entire area should consider safety improvements. The traffic counts indicate that traffic is heavy with a significant portion of trucks. BRPC calculated LOS for each intersection. BRPC also counted pedestrian activity. The terrain impedes visibility for both pedestrians and drivers. A Road Safety Audit would better identify physical improvements to improve safety.

The Union/Eagle intersection in North Adams may best be improved through access management for adjacent properties. Shortening the crosswalks at Main/Church as well as managing adjacent access and improving visibility will make the intersection safer. The final intersection operates well but pedestrian crossings would benefit from pedestrian signal improvements. The high intensity LED caution flashers are not in use, although flashing ambers are used in a couple of locations. Adams may use traffic tables to protect pedestrians in the Park Street redesign. Mr. Bench suggested condensing the data into more recommendations. Mr. Karns was optimistic that these efforts would improve HSIP and CMAQ project delivery.

7. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE TIP AMENDMENT

Mr. Kus outlined the proposed TIP amendments including BRTA's 'state of good repair' grant award, an amendment to move the current Adams rail trail extension (Hoosac to Lime) to 2012 for construction and cost increases, a reduction in programmed funds from the South Street Pittsfield project, the Lee and Adams Scenic Byways grants, 2014 housekeeping items for bridges that were already programmed, and adding enhancement grant funds to the 2013 Great Barrington project.

ACTION: Motion to release 2012-2015 TIP for public comment, as amended, after USDOT approval of the initial 2012-2015 STIP by Mr. Mullen, support by Mr. Collingwood.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

8. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri provided an update on the status of improvement projects within the region, most specifically projects that changed status or are slated for FFY12, particularly the revised estimate for the Adams rail trail construction project. There are four contracts underway on Route 2 for Irene damage, totaling \$27M. Mr. Collingwood described issues with the South St. Corridor. Mr. Lovejoy said he would like the MPO to consider hazard mitigation opportunities in the future. Mr. Niles indicated that Route 116 was also vulnerable. Mr. Karns mentioned the update to FEMA flood maps and the need to update the design standards for the state. Mr. Bench indicated that MassDOT is considering investment for the research programs including stormwater management. Mr. Mullen mentioned that BRPC is submitting a TIGER III grant for Housatonic Railroad upgrades. It is a rural application for about \$10M through the town of Sheffield. Mr. Bench mentioned MassDOT's funding of additional intercity coaches and that the next MPO meeting will have a discussion of shared use of rail corridors for freight and rail.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Ouellette said that the proponents for the extension of the rail trail to the north in Adams were unable to attend the August meeting when the MPO prioritized the southern extension in Pittsfield.

ACTION: Motion to reconsider the Ashuwillticook Trail extension at the next meeting by Mr. Lovejoy, support by Mr. Ouellette.

Mr. Collingwood indicated his opposition to the reconsideration. Mr. Turbin mentioned how important this project was to the northern communities, and Mayor Alcombright iterated that the motion is to reconsider so that the northern proponents could present their projects.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED, Mr. Niles ABSTAINS.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m. BRPC will schedule the next meeting when the 2012-2015 Statewide TIP is approved.

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- August meeting minutes
- Pavement Management Report
- Bottleneck studies
- TIP

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Plachcinski, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner