

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday April 24, 2012 4:00 PM

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

MPO Representatives and Alternates Voting:

David Mohler, MassDOT (representing Secretary Davey)
Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator DePaola)
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire Delegate)
Gordon Bailey, Town of Lee (Southeast Berkshire Delegate)
Bruce Collingwood, City of Pittsfield
John Boyle, Town of Dalton (North Central Berkshire Delegate)
Bob Malnati, BRTA
James Mullen, BRPC
Mayor Richard Alcombright, City of North Adams
Ron Turbin (North Berkshire Alternate)

Others Present:

Kevin O'Donnell, TAC Chair (Great Barrington)
Ed Nardi, Tyringham Planning Board
Alan Wilcox, Tyringham Selectboard
Andrew Lehmann, MassDOT
Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1
Justin Diagle, MassDOT District 1
Douglas Plachcinski, BRPC
Michael Canales, City of North Adams
Jane Winn, BEAT
Clete Kus, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Bob Nason, Town of Lee
Nat Karns, BRPC

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Mohler called the meeting to order at 4:02

2. MINUTES OF March 27, 2012

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, supported by Mr. Mullen, to approve the minutes of the March 27, 2012 MPO meeting.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Nardi asked about the history of the Great Barrington bypass, and Mr. Plachcinski indicated he would forward information.

4. REPORT FROM THE TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. O'Donnell reviewed the TAC's March 2012 meeting including the recommendations for the TIP projects. The TAC recommended that Bash Bish Falls Road in Mt. Washington and Friend Street Improvements in Adams be added to the TIP for 2016.

5. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON THE MOHAWK BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN PHASE II SCOPE OF WORK

Mr. Plachcinski reviewed the timeline and the deliverables for the proposed scenic byways agreement. He assured Mr. Mohler that the MPO would receive regular status reports.

6. PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ENDORSEMENT OF PROJECT EVALUATION AND PROJECT RANKING FOR 2013-2016 TIP.

Ms. Koirala introduced the project evaluation and explained how each project could receive up to 7 points. She reviewed how each funding resource works and how each project is financed by year. She also reiterated the TAC's recommendation of Bash Bish Falls Rd. and Friend St. in Adams. Mr. Nason asked why Lee's Tyringham Rd. project was not higher on the list. Mr. Karns and Ms. Koirala explained the project ratings system. Mr. Wilcox explained the importance of the road and how damage to the Meadow Street bridge has forced truck traffic from two businesses on that street to Tyringham Rd. and how the Big Y generates more traffic on Tyringham Rd. Mr. Nardi spoke about Meadows Farm and the truck traffic associated with this business and the impact it have on the bridge and questioned the use of readiness as a criteria for project selection as there are many competing needs for different roads within Berkshire County. Mr. Mullen inquired about pre-fabricated bridges; Mark Moore responded that this approach solves the construction duration issue but not the funding issue.

Mr. Bailey stated that given the change of status, increases in traffic that were not taken into consideration and readiness, he motioned to remove project number 602280 (Housatonic Street, Dalton) and replace it with project number 601320 (Tyringham Road, Lee). Mr. Boyle indicated that he came to the meeting expecting it to be routine but finds himself surrounded by advocates to over throw and dis-allow the Dalton project. He was completely unprepared for the scope of information presented by the representative from South county. He mentioned a year ago, we went through this whole process and after a lengthy discussion and evaluating all projects, the Dalton project was voted in by a 5 to 4 vote. Mr. Boyle reiterated that Dalton has been involved with this project for 10 years and it has been at near 100% design. Mr. Boyle reminded the MPO of the importance of Housatonic St. to economic activity, safety, and the neighborhoods in Dalton and that it was a well worn connector between Routes 8 and 9 and there are drainage and sidewalk issues. He also stated that it was grossly unfair that Dalton was not notified in advance of this meeting to have the opportunity to present its position.

Kevin O'Donnell spoke about the discussion at the TAC meeting and trying to squeeze in as many projects as possible to the TIP; this approach provided for two additional project going into the TIP. Mr. Collingwood indicated that the City of Pittsfield may not be ready to pursue the BMC area improvement project in 2015 and would not be upset if the project were delayed. He inquired how this would change things. Mr. Moore suggested that the Friend St. project in Adams was a more complicated project than it may seem and may not be ready to be advanced as currently thought. Discussion followed on the projects and programing. Mr. Karns indicated that we have some time to sort through this and come up with a few funding scenarios and reminded the MPO that the draft TIP did not have to be released for another month for public review. This approach would allow for the maximum use of funding. Mr. Lovejoy described the importance and the value that the Bash Bish Falls Rd.

project in Mt. Washington had relative to many of the larger and more expensive projects. There was additional discussion of re-scoring the projects and what the criteria like economic development attempted to quantify. Mr. Bailey indicated that he would be willing to withdraw his motion if the group was serious about looking at the scoring and revisiting this matter given that it is not critical to vote on this today and that we have another month to move money around. Mr. Boyle inquired if that was a serious withdrawal. Mr. Bailey replied in the affirmative with clarification that there would need to be serious discussion and that delaying this for a month would not pose a problem.

Mr. Mohler wanted to make it clear, we don't have to vote on the TIP today. We can come back in a month and do it all over again. Staff can work on this given that 2015 is now open and come back with one or more options for the MPO to vote on. Could commit to re-scoring but not sure or clear on how/who would be involved in this effort. Mr. Moore mentioned that he was looking for input on the economic development threshold and provided insight on how the evaluators looked at this aspect. Mr. Nardi spoke about economic development as it related to Tyringham Road. Mr. Karns pointed out that many access roads connected the outlying towns with the Region's economic centers. Mr. Lovejoy spoke about the information provided by staff and pointed out that the 'scoring' criteria were a tool to help make decisions, not to dictate funding choices. He felt that it is most appropriate for the group to take time to better understand this information.

Mr. Bailey re-affirmed his willingness to withdraw the motion at this time if there is an opportunity for presentations next month and all should be informed/invited to attend. Mr. Boyle expressed appreciation to Pittsfield for putting their project aside so another project can be advanced in 2015; he suggested a resolution in favor of the compromise proposed but it was determined that any such action would be premature.

STAFF WILL PROVIDE REVISED SCENARIOS FOR ROAD PROJECTS BASED ON THE DISCUSSION FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE PROPOSED TIP.

Mr. Malnati explained the transit TIP projects and how the project needs to have actual funding before it is included in the proposed Program. Mr. Moore suggested using CMAQ funds for rail-trails. Mr. Malnati asked that the MPO keep BRTA in mind for CMAQ projects. Mr. Collingwood suggested that the local funding provided for projects going into the TIP be shown in the information provided.

7. PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ENDORSEMENT OF WORK TASKS AND BUDGETS FOR THE FY 2013 UPWP

Mr. Kus presented the 2012-2013 UPWP budget and program areas. He explained how the program was divided and additional details for rules and regulations. Mr. Karns reminded the MPO that the UPWP action was not necessary right now. Mr. Kus further explained local planning studies and technical assistance.

8. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri noted the South St. project has begun and that the Ashuwillticook Trail extension had outstanding items due from the Town of Adams. The Main Street Project in Great Barrington and the Sandisfield bridge replacement were proceeding. The Pittsfield Safe

Routes to School project is under design. Mr. Mullen reported on BRPC's annual Traffic Count program.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kus stated that HB 1808 would impact speed limits on the Region's local roads.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

May 29, 2012

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Mullen, support from Mr. Lovejoy, to adjourn.

VOICE VOTE: PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- March meeting minutes
- Project Updates
- Draft UPWP
- Draft TIP
- Draft Mohawk Phase II Scope

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Plachcinski, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner