

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, April 30, 2013 4:00 PM

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office

1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives and Alternates Voting:

Clinton Bench, MassDOT (Representing Secretary Davey)

Peter Niles, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator DePaola)

Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire)

Bruce Collingwood, Pittsfield

Bob Malnati, BRTA

Sam Haupt, BRPC

Jim Huebner, Washington (Southeast Berkshire-alternate)

Mike Nuvallie, City of North Adams

Others Present:

Doug Plachcinski, BRPC

Clete Kus, BRPC

Anuja Koirala, BRPC

Nat Karns, BRPC

Bill Palmer, MassDOT

Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1

Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1

Joe Sokul, Great Barrington

Donna Cesan, Adams

Ken Walto, Dalton

Jane Winn, BEAT

Dick Lindsey, Berkshire Eagle

Andy McKeever, iBerkshires

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bench called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 2013

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Collingwood, to approve the January 15, 2013 minutes.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED, ONE ABSTENTION (NILES)

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public on non-agenda items.

4. TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Haupt provided a report from the TAC meeting. He recounted the discussion for replacing the Housatonic St. project in Dalton with the Tyringham Road project in Lee. The TAC recommended that the Route 116 project in Savoy and exploring the segmentation of Washington Mountain Road in Washington be considered for FY 2017 in the new TIP. He also mentioned the informational presentations that were on this MPO agenda.

5. APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE FFY 2013 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM TO INCORPORATE THE TCSP GRANT AWARD FOR THE PASSENGER RAIL STATION LOCATION AND DESIGN ANALYSIS.

Mr. Kus briefly explained the project and the amendment process for the UPWP task for the passenger rail station locations and design analysis. BRPC did not receive input during the public comment period. The total cost of the project is \$300k.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Malnati, to approve the UPWP Amendment.

VOICE VOTE, MOTION CARRIED

6. FFY 2013 TIP PROJECT STATUS AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON 2013-2016 TIP AMENDMENT

Mr. Frieri and Mr. Moore provided an update to the status of the 2013 projects in the current TIP. There are three bridge projects that should be in this 2013 TIP amendment because of funding needs and project readiness, according to the statewide bridge section and District 1. The Dalton Housatonic Street project also has a significant cost increase with the submission of 75% design plans, leaving a \$2M funding gap. Mr. Kus passed out a memorandum from the town's engineering firm that indicates an increased cost for the project; the town manager had requested that information be made available to the MPO. Ms. Koirala reminded the MPO of the fiscal constraint requirement and that Housatonic St. is only eligible for Surface Transportation Funding (STP), as opposed to also being able to utilize Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) and/or Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds.

Ms. Koirala stated that the Tyringham Road project is at 100% design and could be ready to go this fiscal year. Also, the Adams roundabout would take the place of the Ashuwillticook Trail extension in 2014, which is tentatively moved to 2017, and does qualify for CMAQ funding.

Mr. Bench reminded the MPO that an amendment is proposed to the 2013-2016 TIP as a separate action from the adoption of the 2014-2017 TIP. This distinction is important because the adoption of the future TIP is more complex and includes a project development and evaluation component that the amendment of the present TIP (expiring October 1, 2013) does not. It is important that there is functional dialogue and public comment opportunity for the new 2014-2017 TIP separate from the proposed amendment to the 2013-2016 TIP that includes the bridge additions and the exchange of the 2013 Dalton/Lee projects.

Mr. Karns mentioned that the Adams roundabout's design cost had increased substantially. Mr. Bench reiterated MassDOT's commitment to \$105,000 towards design. Mr. Bench suggested that discussion happen on the next item. Mr. Bench asked for a motion to release the TIP amendment for public comment that exchanges the Lee Tyringham Road project for the Dalton Housatonic Street project at the costs shown by staff in 2013 and 2014.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Collingwood, to approve the TIP amendment that exchanges the Lee Tyringham Road project for the Dalton Housatonic Street project at the costs shown by staff in 2013 and 2014, as well as inserting the two additional bridge projects, for public comment.

Mr. Walto asked if this was the best time to propose this amendment because the District just received 75% plans for the Dalton project. Ms. Koirala responded that the District had previously indicated that there would not be sufficient time to review the design submissions for the Dalton project in 2013. Mr. Bench reminded the MPO that this vote was only to send the amendment for public comment, not for adopting the proposal. Mr. Moore agreed, and mentioned that he thought the Right of Way acquisition process for Dalton was somewhat complicated. The District has not received the right of way plans that typically accompany the 75% design submittals. Mr. Walto commented that the Right of Way process should be fairly expedient from Dalton's perspective and mentioned a past performance record for South St.

Mr. Lovejoy remembered that the original debate between the two projects was focused on completeness and that Dalton was ready to move forward, but now the MPO had to consider not just unanticipated delays, but also a substantial price increase for the Dalton project. He asked what difficulties there were with the Lee project's readiness. Mr. Moore thought there was only one parcel in Lee that needed acquisition. Mr. Lovejoy believed that given the readiness and the importance of the project, Lee's Tyringham Road amendment deserved to go to public comment and MPO vote.

Mr. Bench said that FHWA dollars could not carry over from one fiscal year to another and that October 1, 2013 was a magical date for financial obligation. Mr. Walto said he was confident that property acquisition would not add delay to the Housatonic project timeline.

VOICE VOTE, MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. DISCUSSION ON TIP PROJECT EVALUATION SCORES AND PRELIMINARY PROJECT LISTING

Mr. Bench provided an overview of the TIP timeline and scoring process. Ms. Koirala provided a complete description of the project scoring and described why there were changes from previous scoring. The BMC area improvements project scored the most points, however, the City is still not pursuing potential construction until at least 2016. Mr. Huebner would like updated information for Washington Mountain Road.

The funding targets are shown and each project estimate must be inflated 4% for each year in the future. Mrs. Koirala mentioned the changes in year 2014 including the CMAQ switch from the Ashuwillticook Trail to the Adams Friend St/Route 8 roundabout. Ms. Cesan told the MPO the new design costs for the Adams roundabout are increased to \$146,515 more (from an initial estimate of \$105,000). The increased costs are due to MassDOT requirements during project design and the 25% design review comments.

Mr. Bench reviewed the targets for the proposed TIP and the Lee project and how it would be straddled over 2014 and 2015. Ms. Koirala indicated that the BMC area improvements would need to be advanced constructed which left some funds available to program Bash Bish Falls Road in Mount Washington. The new TIP also has the Dalton Housatonic Street project after that. The Ashuwillticook extension also includes remaining earmarked funds.

Mr. Bench indicated that this was a discussion for advertising and getting comment, not for approval of the TIP. He expected next month that there would be a more in-depth discussion on the new TIP. Mr. Karns pointed out that the TAC also had not been able to advise the MPO on a project listing that had the most current information. There is not enough money to start another significant project in 2017. Mr. Lovejoy suggested that smaller projects were more flexible and could spread more Federal money around the region. Also, the MPO was struggling with identifying HSIP eligible projects.

The repurposed earmark discussion capped the additional expense for the Adams Route 8/Friend Street project at \$105,000. Mr. Bench stated that municipalities are usually responsible for designing projects on non-MassDOT advanced projects to 100% approvals with construction funding from the TIP. Ms. Cesan mentioned that the cost overrun was unanticipated and that the Town did not realize increased design costs would be needed out of the repurposed earmark funding that is no longer available. Mr. Karns recalled that the repurposed earmark conversation did not include a specific number although \$105,000 was an early estimate and that it was a sorry state of affairs if MassDOT could not locate about \$42,000 to help the Town of Adams, which had one of the lowest average incomes in the Commonwealth.

The cost overrun makes it difficult to consider additional projects. Mr. Bench encouraged the staff to get input from the TAC if there were additional projects to consider.

8. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2014 UPWP

Mr. Kus described the UPWP and mentioned that if there were ideas for studies, then to communicate them to him. BRPC expects the TPL funding to decrease because of the region's population decrease. The Federal Highway Administration is going to focus on sustainability, performance measures, Title VI, and freight and goods movement. He anticipates a draft document to correlate with the TIP development schedule.

9. PRESENTATION ON THE EAST STREET CAPACITY ANALYSIS

Mrs. Koirala presented the background from previous efforts for the East Street capacity improvements and why it was split into two projects. BRPC met with stakeholders and reviewed the capacity for both the west (City) and east (MassDOT) portions of the road. BRPC collected data on existing conditions including classification counts, intersection LOS analysis and a speed analysis. The most problematic intersection is northbound Elm onto East (LOS E). The stop controlled intersections also suffer from poor service. Pedestrian crossings are difficult and the sidewalks are in poor condition. Crash data showed significant crashes, mostly at the Fourth/Elm Street intersection and Lyman Street, that qualify for HSIP (mostly rear-end and angle crashes). Driveway spacing contributes to crashes. The posted 35 MPH speed is appropriate based on observations.

There were three, four, and five lane potential configurations that were evaluated in the analysis with a 20 year horizon. The failing LOS intersections remain poor in future conditions without any improvements. The Fourth Street intersection would improve with a turn lane, the Fenn St. intersection should be signalized and "t" 'd off, and the Lyman Street intersection should get a right turn lane. The three different lane configurations all provide adequate through capacity, with just the three lane alternative showing difficulty at Lyman Street. ROW

is difficult for widening East Street. The three lane configuration mitigates traffic crashes. All of the sidewalks should be rebuilt, complete streets implemented with bicycle accommodations, and driveways consolidated where appropriate. The study area did not include Pittsfield High School. The intersection of East and Elm should also include pedestrian signals.

10. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Malnati stated the repurposed funding for the BRTA roof and vehicle purchases was almost completely expended. The transit TIP projects would be updated in the new 14-17 TIP at the next meeting, potentially including satellite facilities. Mr. Lovejoy asked for Mr. Malnati's impression of the transportation funding debates and he replied 'cautiously optimistic.' Mr. Bench will continue to provide updates, particularly on Western Massachusetts tolls, capital funding, and operations/capital funding. Mr. Lovejoy commented that small towns would continue to need expanded funding.

Mr. Frieri updated that Pittsfield had submitted a scope for the BMC area improvements design and was headed towards a Federal Aid contract with the consultant.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

The MPO did not discuss other business

12. NEXT MEETING DATE

May 21, 2013, at 4:00 p.m.

13. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- January 2013 meeting minutes
- 2013-2016 TIP Amendment Materials
- 2014-2017 TIP Project Information
- Project update spreadsheet
- East Street Capacity Study Presentation

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Plachcinski, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner