

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, May 20, 2014 4:00 PM

At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission office

1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, Massachusetts

MPO Representatives/Alternates:

Clinton Bench, MassDOT (Representing Secretary Davey)
Peter Niles, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator DePaola)
Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire)
Bruce Collingwood, Pittsfield
Jim Huebner, Washington (Southeast Berkshire)
John Boyle, Dalton (North Central Berkshire)
Sheila Irvin, BRPC
Michael Canales, North Adams

Others Present:

Clete Kus, BRPC
Anuja Koirala, BRPC
Nat Karns, BRPC
Doug Plachcinski, BRPC
Sam Haupt, Peru (TAC/BRPC)
Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1
Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1
Bill Palmer, MassDOT
Sherry Warrington, MassDOT
Kevin Wright, FHWA
Andy McKeever, iBerkshires

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

Mr. Bench called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM. Mr. Bench explained the assistive listening devices that MassDOT would provide for each MPO meeting. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM APRIL 30, 2014

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to approve the MPO meeting minutes for April 30, 2014.

VOICE VOTE UNANIMOUS, MOTION CARRIES, ONE ABSTENTION (Niles)

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

4. REPORT FROM May 13, 2014 TAC MEETING

Mr. Haupt reviewed the TAC meeting report. He discussed the development of the TIP and the TAC's discussion of the projects submitted for funding, focusing on Washington Mountain Road. The TAC recommended the alternative 1C in the proposed TIP to the MPO for approval. He mentioned that he appreciated Peter Frieri's follow up on a couple of items for the TAC, including some of MassDOT's experimental pavement techniques.

5. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO THE 2014-2017 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) ADDING FUNDING FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO ASHUWILLTICOOK RAIL TRAIL EXTENSION FROM HOOSAC STREET TO LIME STREET BECAUSE OF INCREASED PROJECT COSTS.

Mr. Moore explained the latest 100% design submission was deficient on several items including the price estimates of a number of line items. He suggested that the MPO defer any action until the project designer had an opportunity to address the deficiencies the District had identified in the

submission. Overall, the District believed that the past project cost estimate was correct but needed to confirm that this was the case prior to taking action on the TIP.

NO ACTION TAKEN

6. DISCUSSION ON 2014-2017 TIP –TRANSIT SECTION- AND AUTHORIZATION FOR BRPC STAFF TO INITIATE 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Anuja described this proposed BRTA amendment for year 2014 of the 2014-2017 TIP. The amendment includes replacing vans, Berkshire Rides vanpooling, and travel training. Mr. Bench described the funding resources behind each items, including the 5310 funding for the vans.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Boyle, seconded by Mr. Collingwood to release the proposed 2014-2017 TIP amendment for the 30-day public comment period. Unanimously approved.

7. DISCUSSION ON THE 2015 UPWP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AUTHORIZATION FOR BRPC STAFF TO INITIATE 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Kus explained the development of the UPWP and mentioned the different planning studies that BRPC would conduct; this information was also provided in a handout to members. He suggested data collection of bicycle counts would be necessary. He also indicated that a pedestrian analysis in Dalton was included in the proposed activities. The 2015 UPWP will have a continued emphasis on incorporating performance measures into the MPO's transportation planning activities. Mr. Bench reminded the MPO that they could purchase the listening devices like the ones that were being loaned from MassDOT today. Mr. Kus also reviewed the proposed budgets included in the 2015 UPWP.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle to release the proposed 2015 UPWP for a 30-day public comment period. Unanimously approved.

8. DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED 2015-2018 TIP AUTHORIZATION FOR BRPC STAFF TO INITIATE 30-DAY PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms Koirala reviewed the project evaluations, annually inflated cost estimates, and the regional funding targets. She explained how the projects were listed by year, beginning with the highway, bridge, and bike path projects.

She then explained the transit portion of the 2015-2018 TIP which directs substantial funds towards operations and maintenance. Capital projects include bus and van replacements along with a conversion to compressed natural gas (CNG) capabilities. Mr. Bench pointed out that a major BRTA vehicle replacement was slated for 2015.

Mr. Huebner asked if bridges were funded in each year and Mr. Bench explained that the bridge funding priorities were set annually based on need and MassDOT inspections.

Mr. Karns asked what role the MPO has in determining Transportation Alternatives (TA) in the regions whose populations were too small to get a dedicated allotment? Mr. Bench indicated that half the TA came into the state went to the 9 MPOs with enough people to get an allocation and the other half went to MassDOT. The MassDOT half was dedicated to Safe Routes to Schools. There is a small amount that is allocated to the four regions which are too small to receive a direct allotment and no decisions had yet been made regarding how to utilize those funds. Mr. Karns also asked about the National Highway System (NHS) funding resource that was generally used only by MassDOT. Locally owned NHS segments seem to be in poorer condition than state maintained segments and the local communities, along with the system, would benefit from access to NHS funding. Mr. Niles confirmed that the only NHS funding in the Berkshires had been used by MassDOT. Mr. Bench

indicated that he would find information to clarify both of Mr. Karns' questions.

Mr. Bench implied that the Highway Administrator was still making an effort to find funding outside of regional targets for Washington Mountain Road and the project may still be contained in MassDOT's 2015-2019 Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Huebner indicated that the Commonwealth was working to resurface the road until it could be properly fixed later on. Mr. Niles confirmed that many of the worst locations were going to be patched. The alternative was closing the road. Mr. Karns suggested that if other projects in the state programmed for FY 2014 were not ready, as had been indicated at the quarterly MassDOT/MARPA meeting the previous week, the Berkshires believe Washington Mountain Road should be done this year since it is at 100% design.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Huebner, seconded by Mr. Lovejoy to release the 2015-2018 TIP with alternative 1C for a 30-day comment period.

9. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri reviewed the MassDOT District 1 project update spreadsheet. The BMC Area Improvements design contract was signed. There are also three bridge projects moving forward, including Williamstown and Woodlawn Avenue. The Lee Bikeway planning budget and scope were approved by FHWA and the contract with MassDOT was very close.

Mr. Karns reminded MassDOT that waiting to file Environmental Notification Forms at the 100% design submission was inappropriate because soliciting comments this late in the design process makes it nearly impossible for comments to be incorporated back into the project in a meaningful manner. At 75% design, there is adequate information about the project to conduct a MEPA review and then allow for comments to be addressed.

Mr. Kus handed out a page of current BRPC activities.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

The MPO did not discuss any other business.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting date is tentatively June 24, 2014.

12. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- April MPO Meeting minutes
- 2014-2017 TIP amendment for transit
- District 1 project update spreadsheet
- 2015-2018 TIP development materials including timeline, project summaries, initial project scoring, alternatives and funding targets.
- Draft 2015 UPWP for comment
- BRPC current activities

Respectfully submitted,
Douglas Plachcinski

Senior Transportation Planner