

Minutes of the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Tuesday, May 21, 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)

Mark Moore, MassDOT District 1 (representing Administrator DePaola)

Jim Lovejoy, Mt. Washington (Southwest Berkshire)

Bruce Collingwood, Pittsfield

Bob Malnati, BRTA

Gordon Bailey, Lee (Southeast Berkshire)

Mike Ouellette, Adams (North Berkshire)

John Boyle, Dalton (North Central Berkshire)

Others Present:

Doug Plachcinski, BRPC

Clete Kus, BRPC

Anuja Koirala, BRPC

Nat Karns, BRPC

Rebecca Williamson, GPI

Chris Ericsson, GPI

Ed Nardi, Tyringham

Chris Pompei, Lee

Bill Palmer, MassDOT

Peter Frieri, MassDOT District 1

1. CALL TO ORDER-INTRODUCTIONS

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

2. MINUTES OF APRIL 30, 2013

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Collingwood, to approve the April 30, 2013 minutes.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED, ONE ABSTENTION

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

4. TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Plachcinski provided a report on the May 14, 2013 TAC meeting. He indicated that Ms. Koirala presented information on the proposed amendment to the 2013 -2106 TIP. The TAC did recommend replacing the Housatonic St. project in Dalton with the Tyringham Road project in Lee and releasing the document for public comment. Ms. Koirala also put forward the Federal funding targets and proposed TIP projects for the 2014 -2017 TIP. Mr. Malnati also presented the transit TIP to the TAC. The TAC voted unanimously to recommend approval of the TIP to the MPO. Mr. Plachcinski also mentioned that Mr. Kus provided details on the planning studies/initiatives that are contained in the 2014 Unified Planning Work Program; the TAC voted unanimously to recommend that the MPO adopt the UPWP as presented. There was also a discussion on project evaluation and the relative importance of project readiness.

5. DISCUSSION ON THE DRAFT 2014-2017 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) AUTHORIZATION FOR A 30 DAY COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Bench explained the purpose of the TIP. He reminded the meeting attendees that project costs must be within projected annual funding targets in order to meet the Federal government's 'fiscal constraint' requirement. Mr. Bench concluded his initial remarks with the timeline and process to adopt a new TIP.

Ms. Koirala started her presentation by reviewing the project listing associated 2013-2016 TIP amendment and referring to handouts that were provided. She reminded the MPO of the TIP amendments that they authorized for public comment at the April meeting. These TIP amendments include removing the Housatonic Street project (Dalton) and replacing it with the Tyringham Road project (Lee) in 2013. The amendment also includes adding two new bridge projects and changing the cost of a third bridge that was already listed in the TIP.

Next, Ms. Koirala discussed the project listing and proposed funding scenario for the 2014-2017 road and bridge portion of the TIP including the funding amounts available for the MPO to program each year. Tyringham Road is listed for 2014, the second year of this advance construction project. For 2014, the CMAQ project is the Adams roundabout project. Work is still continuing to identify HSIP projects. Three bridges are identified and programmed in 2014 under the bridge program and earmarks are programmed for intersection improvements in Pittsfield to improve circulation around the Berkshire Medical Center area.

Discussion then focused on the Adams roundabout project design costs (\$146,550) that exceeded MassDOT's commitment for funding of \$105,000. Mr. Ouellette stated he believed that he made and that the MPO voted to reprogram funding for the design of the roundabout, contained a condition that other funding would completely cover the design costs of the roundabout. He also informed the MPO that the Town of Adams believed the increased costs for design were because MassDOT imposed additional design requirements on the project. Mr. Karns reminded the MPO that he thought the funds should be programmed in 2013, not 2014, in order to have the project ready for construction in 2014 but that it was not a significant issue because the money was not federal.

Ms. Koirala continued by describing each of the projects in 2015 and beyond. Mr. Boyle asked who recommended the switching of the Dalton and Lee projects and sending the change out for public comment. Mr. Bench reviewed the minutes from the meeting. Mr. Boyle stated that the Dalton project was on target according to the MassDOT Boston staff. Mr. Bench explained that the reasoning for the amendment was the project cost escalated and the timeliness of the project design was 'razor thin' with the deadlines for advertising the construction contract. Mr. Karns mentioned that different staff at MassDOT were providing divergent opinions about the Housatonic Street project's ability to be bid by the end of the federal fiscal year. Mr. Ericsson from GPI, Dalton's engineer for the Housatonic Street project, provided a status update for the project and stated he believed the project would still be advertised for bidding by the end of September. Mr. Bench recalled that the decision to exchange the projects was based on project readiness, not project merit. MassDOT is supportive of expeditious completion for all projects in the Berkshire's TIP. Mr. Bailey reminded the MPO that the Lee Tyringham Road project was ready for advertisement immediately.

Mr. Karns and Mr. Bench discussed the timing for some design funding related to the bike paths and agreed that the design funding should be programmed a year prior to the construction funding within the draft TIP. The timing should be clarified during the remaining public comment period.

Mr. Moore indicated that the MassDOT was advancing the Adams roundabout project with a design agreement for \$105,000. He mentioned that MassDOT would be questioning the engineering consultant about the design cost escalation. Mr. Ouellette asked what funding might be available to the Town if the design costs do remain above \$105,000. Mr. Bench stated that Federal funding was very problematic because the design process already commenced. Mr. Karns and Mr. Bench agreed the roundabout design should be listed in 2013.

Mr. Bench reiterated MassDOT was supportive of the draft TIP presented for public comment.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Malnati, seconded by Mr. Ouellette, to release the draft highway element of 2014-2017 TIP as presented, for public comment.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Malnati presented the 2014-2017 transit portion of the TIP. There were also projects on BRTA's supplemental list that supported their 10-year vision like satellite garages and Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) propulsion systems in new vehicles. Mr. Bench requested slight amendments to the language in the TIP regarding the 5307 program in order to clarify the financial arrangements between MassDOT, FHWA, and BRTA to the public. Mr. Boyle asked if there would be a need for new hires and more training if vehicles were purchased for or converted to CNG. Mr. Malnati replied that there would be a need to hire or re-train staff to be able to maintain new CNG equipment.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Boyle, to release the draft transit 2014-2017 TIP as presented, for public comment.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

6. DISCUSSION ON THE DRAFT 2014 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP) AND AUTHORIZE A 30 DAY COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Kus presented the UPWP for October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014. He provided an overview of the planning studies that are reflected in the draft UPWP which include: a feasibility update for the next section of the Ashuwillticook Trail north of Hodges Crossroads, an analysis of the transportation impacts from the 'rest of river' environmental remediation of the Housatonic River for the GE clean-up, model bylaws/ordinances/standards for access management, continued analysis of passenger rail station opportunities, safety analysis to identify Highway Safety Improvement Program projects, additional data collection and processing for an inventory of culverts and stream crossings, and a review of the National Functional Classification System (NFCS) designations for roads

within the region. Mr. Bench asked Mr. Kus to verify the percentage breakdown of funding between the different program sections.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Lovejoy, seconded by Mr. Bailey, to release the draft 2014 UPWP as presented, for public comment.

VOICE VOTE: MOTION CARRIED

7. STATUS REPORTS FROM MEMBER AGENCIES

Mr. Frieri updated the MPO on the 2013 and 2014 projects, many of which are already discussed at this meeting. The Great Barrington revisions to the Main Street project should be submitted to the District by the end of May. The Pittsfield 'Safe Routes to Schools' project was at 100% design. Mr. Malnati told the group the BRTA garage roof project was nearly complete and that new vehicles were being delivered. Mr. Karns summarized the initial Passenger Rail Station Study stakeholder meetings.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

The MPO did not discuss other business

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

June 25, 2013, at 4:00 p.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

VOICE VOTE: PASSES UNANIMOUSLY

Materials Distributed:

- Agenda
- April 2013 meeting minutes
- 2014-2017 Draft TIP and Project Information
- District 1 project update spreadsheet
- 2014 UPWP

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Plachcinski, AICP
Senior Transportation Planner