

# COMMON GROUND

## A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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### 2019 Berkshire Survey

A Berkshire County Survey was conducted recently, following up and expanding upon a survey conducted in 2015. We had 1550 participants in this survey, and the responses have been very helpful in seeing what residents and former residents of Berkshire County think of the area, what needs improvement, what draws people to the area, and what factors may be causing people to move away.

Here are some initial takeaways from the survey:

- When asked what could be done to improve life in the Berkshires, higher paying jobs was identified by many age groups
- Better rail access and affordable, quality housing were also identified as areas for improvement by many respondents
- Respondents who moved to the Berkshires from other areas indicate a high rate of satisfaction with the area
- Non-natives often move to (and stay in) the Berkshires because of a job or because they enjoy the activities and scenery of the area
- Cultural activities and scenery were identified by older respondents as their primary reason for wanting to remain in the Berkshires
- Younger respondents are more likely to indicate a desire for higher paying jobs or different experiences as reasons for leaving or considering leaving the Berkshires

Please be on the lookout for the release of the final report on the Berkshire County Survey.

For more information, contact GIS, Data and IT Manager Mark Maloy ([MMaloy@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:MMaloy@berkshireplanning.org) or x29)

### Donation Announcement

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has received a generous \$15,000 donation from a private family foundation fund at Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation to support the development of a comprehensive post-overdose engagement program for the Northern Berkshire region. This work will be undertaken by the Berkshire Opioid Addiction Prevention Collaborative in the Commission's Public Health Program, along with several community partners. We are enormously grateful to the foundation for their support of this essential, life-saving work.

### Berkshire County Open Space and Recreation Plan

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is in the process of creating a county-wide Outdoor Recreation Plan, with the intention of benefiting both public and private entities interested in understanding our existing assets and in developing the future of our outdoor recreation economy. An extensive inventory will be included, with input from a wide range of stakeholders including land stewards, equipment retail and rental facilities, and hospitality properties. In early 2020, we will be working with Milltown Capital to gather comments at an in-person public forum. Please look out for an announcement of when and where the public forum will be held.

In the meantime, we will be reaching out to each municipality with a request to review our current inventory and provide corrections – please keep an eye out for our email correspondence. Thank you!

Please contact Senior Planner Laura Brennan with any questions: [lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org)



## Transportation and Climate Initiative

Massachusetts continues with efforts to address climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The state has joined the Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI), a regional collaboration aspiring to build a regional program which would cap and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, and invest the proceeds in a cleaner, more resilient, and more equitable low-carbon transportation system.

The states participating in TCI's regional policy design process have been studying options to reduce carbon emissions through a "cap-and-invest" program which will establish a price for transportation emissions. The goals of the process are to improve transportation, especially in underserved communities, and to reduce carbon emissions along with other air pollutants.

TCI has recently released a preliminary framework for a draft regional policy proposal for public input. While many of the details remain under consideration, the draft framework reflects progress to date on the key elements of the proposed program. BRPC staff have been actively following this effort to ensure that the program does not impose inequitable burdens or costs to our residents and businesses.

The release of a regional policy proposal in the form of a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is expected by December 2019. Berkshire county residents are encouraged to follow this effort and learn more about the potential impacts and benefits that may result. Once the policy and related memorandum of understanding is completed, each member state will decide whether to adopt and implement the policy. The final TCI policy, along with other efforts of the Commonwealth to reduce emissions, would help to meet requirements of the Commonwealth's Global Warming Solutions Act.

For additional information please visit the TCI website at <https://www.transportationandclimate.org/>

For more information, contact Transportation Program Manager Clete Kus ([ckus@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:ckus@berkshireplanning.org) or x20)

## Massachusetts Rural Policy Plan Released

The Massachusetts Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) released its [Rural Policy Plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#). The Plan identifies, highlights and offers policy recommendations related to the unique issues and challenges faced by rural Massachusetts. The Plan provides a socioeconomic summary of rural Massachusetts and addresses 15 Focus Areas that were identified through listening sessions held across the state in late 2018. The goal of the Plan is to provide a thorough but succinct outline of each Focus Area that identifies the issues and highlights sub-regional differences, describes current related state policies and best practices from Massachusetts or other parts of the country or world, and provides prioritized recommendations. Members of the RPAC and rural Regional Planning Agencies have shared in the effort to engage and solicit input from a large swath of stakeholders throughout Massachusetts, through meetings and other efforts, and in sharing in the writing of the Plan.

For more information contact Executive Director Tom Matuszko ([TMatuszko@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:TMatuszko@berkshireplanning.org), or x34).

## Community Compact Connector Tool

The Community Compact Connector Tool has recently launched. This connector provides information on state resources and grant opportunities to all communities in the Commonwealth. It is a "one stop shop" for local governments to seek grant funding opportunities and technical assistance regardless of state agency. Categories under technical assistance include Community Development, Education, Emergency Management and Planning, Energy, the Environment, Health, Historic Preservation, Housing, Public Accessibility, Public Safety, Public Works and Transportation.

Each category has related available grants and it includes a Community Compact Connector Calendar that shows opening and closing dates for all grants. Each program listing can provide a summary of the service, who is an eligible applicant, eligible activities, funding limits, selection criteria, posting dates, deadline and award dates etc.

Best Practices provides the best practices for Education, Energy and Environment, Financial Management, Housing and Economic Development Information Technology, Regionalization/Shared Services and Transportation. By providing examples of what other communities have done it helps set a tone of applicability and compatibility.

You can also use the At A Glance Community Comparison Reports. It provides town by town comparisons to help transparency. Information such as bond ratings, free cash, debt as a percentage of the budget, revenue by source are all right there. You can also submit a question directly to the connector and staff will get back to you.

For more information on the Community Compact Connector Tool, please visit <https://www.mass.gov/community-compact-connector-campaign>.

## Grants Available to Become an MVP Community and to Implement Resiliency Projects

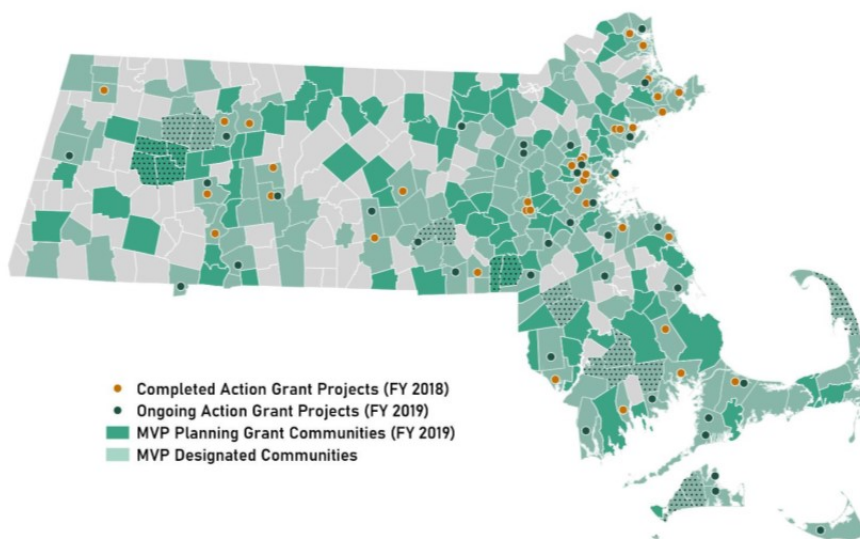
The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) has announced grants available for municipalities under the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant program. The MVP Program provides support for cities and towns to begin the process of planning for climate change resiliency and implementing priority projects. Please see the map below to see your municipality's MVP Status.

If your town has not received an MVP Planning Grant or Designated as an MVP Community, your town is eligible to apply for an MVP Planning Grant to complete vulnerability assessments and develop an action-oriented resiliency plan. Towns have no financial commitment under the MVP Planning Grants, but are required to dedicate 120 hours for municipal staff time. These grants can also be used to update your FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan.

If your town or city is an MVP Designated Community, you are eligible for an MVP Action Grant. Culvert assessments and replacements are eligible for MVP Action grant funding, as well as much larger scale projects such as streambank stabilization or microgrids (max. award \$2M per project). A 25% match is required under the MVP Action Grants.

BRPC is an "MVP Certified Provider" and our team can potentially help you with applications, project development, and identifying diversified funding sources for the MVP Action grant match.

Contact BRPC Senior Planner Caroline Massa, [cmassa@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cmassa@berkshireplanning.org), with questions and interest.



## Rivers and Roads Tier 2A Workshop

### Course Description

The goal of the Rivers & Roads Training Program is to advance an understanding of fluvial geomorphology across the transportation sector, to ultimately develop and implement projects that improve the resiliency of the Commonwealth's transportation network. Fluvial geomorphology allows us to understand river shape and process, to predict channel responses/changes over time, and to design culverts, bridges and roadways that are more resilient to severe precipitation events.

MassDOT Highway Division has based this training program off of the successful Vermont Rivers & Roads program, and has developed Massachusetts specific content through partnership with Milone & MacBroom, MA Division of Ecological Restoration, MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, UMass Amherst, and MassDEP.

### Target Audience

Anyone who manages, plans, designs or builds roadway infrastructure around rivers and roads.

### MassDOT Rivers & Roads Program Overview

**Tier 1:** A two-hour online course that provides an overview of rivers and the fundamentals of fluvial geomorphology. (Prerequisite to Tier 2). Take the Tier 1 training at: <https://www.umasstransportationcenter.org/umtc/Rivers-and-Roads.asp>

**Tier 2A:** A classroom session that includes interactive exercises and trainings on a model river flume table. (Prerequisite to Tier 2B)

**Tier 2B:** Building upon Tier 2A content, this field component of the training program allows participants to identify river features in the field and advance their understanding of fluvial geomorphology. This one-day session investigates channel cross section, profile, stability, and habitat at a healthy reference site and two to three projects sites. Future Tier 2B courses will be held spring 2020.

**Tier 3:** Topic specific one-day training modules to enable design and construction personnel to lead and implement projects. Modules will include: grade control and bank stabilization; bridges and culverts; sediment and large wood; floodplains; and, municipal project development and implementation. Tier 3 courses are tentatively planned for winter 2019-2020.



1 Fenn Street, Suite 201  
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# COMMON GROUND

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## Amazon Smile and Berkshires Tomorrow

Amazon has a charitable arm called Smile, which donates 0.5% of every purchase made to a charity of your choice. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. is setup to receive donations through Amazon Smile. To use Amazon Smile, go to: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/03-0572303>. Enter your Amazon username and password and your account will then be set to donate to Berkshires Tomorrow.

Whenever you shop through Amazon, go to <https://smile.amazon.com> first and then 0.5% of any purchase you make will go to Berkshires Tomorrow. You will see in orange "Supporting" with the name of the charity you support. If you ever decide to change your charity, select the drop down triangle after the charity, you can select Change your Charity.

*Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes including, without limitation, improving and enhancing the quality of education and learning opportunities for the general public and local officials, and planning and integrating innovative methods and technologies into regional and local education and governance, in Berkshire County, Massachusetts.*



**#1 holiday hack:**  
When you buy your gifts at [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com), Amazon donates.  
**amazonsmile**

## CALENDAR

Be sure to check out our online calendar for updates, cancellations, recently posted events and agendas. [berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar](http://berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar)

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**November 7 - BRPC Executive Committee, 4:00 pm**

**November 7 - CPTC Workshop-Drafting Zoning Amendments, 6:00 pm**

**November 21 - Commission Development Committee, 5:45 pm**

**November 21 - BRPC Commission Meeting, 7:00 pm**

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**December 5 - BRPC Executive Committee, 4:00 pm**

**December 5 - CPTC Workshop-Zoning with Overlay Districts, 6:00 pm**

Remember to check our inclement weather hotline to learn the status of a meeting at (413) 442-1521 X 5

Please consider receiving an e-newsletter—saving trees and energy costs in our region and beyond. E-mail [officeassistant@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:officeassistant@berkshireplanning.org) today to subscribe!