



MINUTES OF THE Berkshire Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
Tuesday, March 15, 2022

Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Communications

Meeting Materials: <https://berkshireplanning.org/event/berkshire-transportation-advisory-committee-meeting/>

TAC Representatives/Alternates:

Sam Haupt, Chair	Town of Peru
Joe Diver	Town of Dalton
Bill Elovirta	Town of Becket
Bill Gop	Town of Lenox
George McGurn	Town of Egremont
Jim Noe	Town of Egremont
Scott Rodman	Town of Hinsdale
Sean VanDeusen	Town of Great Barrington

Others Present:

Peter Frieri	MassDOT District 1
Justin Gilmore	BRPC
Chris Klem	MassDOT OTP
Anuja Koirala	BRPC
Clete Kus	BRPC
John Morgan	CHA
Nick Russo	BRPC
Steve Savaria	Fuss & O'Neill

I. Introductions

Mr. Haupt called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

II. Opportunity for Public Comment

There were no public comments.

III. Approval of the Meeting Minutes from February 15, 2022 (Action Item)

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Rodman, seconded by Mr. VanDeusen, to approve the meeting minutes from the February 15th, 2022, TAC meeting.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Morales and Mr. Diver abstained from voting.

IV. Discussion on preliminary draft project listing and funding scenarios for the 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (Action Item)

Ms. Koirala proceeded to review [TIP funding targets along with the FFY 2023-2027 TIP scenarios](#). Ms. Koirala mentioned that there are four scenarios that have been developed, with scenarios 1 and 1A being very similar. Scenario 1 is based on the current TIP. Ms. Koirala proceeded to review details of Scenario 1.

Under Scenario 1, there would be \$1,036,892 remaining that would not be obligated. To utilize this money, there are several restrictions that must be adhered to. Ms. Koirala proceeded outlining Scenario 1. Ms. Koirala then proceeded to review Scenario 1A. For this scenario, the roughly \$2 million that would be left over after FFY2027 could be utilized for a project at that cost, or if the cost of the project pushes the Berkshires over the target amount allocated for the subsequent TIP year.

Ms. Koirala proceeded to review Scenario 2. In this scenario, the first three years are the same as the previous scenarios with the only difference being in FFY2026. Instead of Dalton-Division Road beginning in 2026 and completing in 2027 – Egremont, Mt. Washington Road project starts in FFY2026 and completes in FY2027. After completing this project in 2027, there would be just over \$3 million remaining. This would mean the Dalton-Division project would begin in FFY2027 and complete in FFY2028.

Ms. Koirala proceeded to review Scenario 3. For this scenario, FFY2022 and FFY2023 remain the same as Scenario 1, 1A and 2. For FFY2024, the Pittsfield-Merrill Road project was moved to FFY2025, and moved the North Adams, Ashland Street project up to FFY2024. This results in around \$3.2 million remaining for FFY2024. Due to this, an additional project, the Lanesborough, Route 7 project could also be programmed for FFY2024. There are still some remaining questions about Scenario 3 as the Lanesborough, Route 7 project is not at 25% design and costs typically increase year over year.

Mr. Haupt proceeded to summarize the difficulty with consolidating remaining funds from previous years to fund a new project.

Mr. Morales asked for more information and the current status on the North Adams, Ashland Street project programmed for FFY2024.

Mr. Frieri mentioned that this project is at 25% design. It has not had a public hearing yet, but DOT expects that by summer of this year (2022) it should get a public hearing, after which it can proceed to 75% design phase.

Mr. Morales then asked about the Merrill to Limen Street project, specifically, the DOT section – asking why this project is programmed so far out – for FYY2026 – implying that maybe it could be moved up to a sooner date.

Mr. Frieri mentioned that this was determined by multiple DOT sections that came together during TIP readiness day to review all current and prospective TIP projects and came to the determination that, based on the project evaluation, it could feasibly be delivered for FFY2026.

Mr. Morales proceeded to add that the city is working to submit 25% design for the Pittsfield section of that project for later this year (fall) and, with approval from DOT, move forward with design hearing for early next year, putting the project at full design status by 2023.

Mr. VanDeusen asked about the Mt. Washington Road project – asking how the project would meet Complete Streets design standards (required by DOT) as that road contains several narrow bridges that lead the road to bottleneck at those pinch points.

Mr. Morgan mentioned that the western most portion of this project is what they are looking at for this first phase. Mr. Morgan mentioned that this portion of the project is the narrowest. CHA is proposing that the road be widened from 22' to 24'. The existing bridges are actually wider than the 24' – so we won't have that pinch point.

Mr. VanDeusen asked if the plan was to put bike lanes in with the road width planned to be that wide.

Mr. Morgan stated that they would not be putting in bike lanes or a bike path.

Mr. VanDusen asked if they were granted a waiver.

Mr. Morgan said that the project did in fact receive a waiver – as it has been through the design exemption process.

Mr. Morgan also added that since the project cost is still below the target funding, this presents an issue. The project could be expanded a little further to the east to increase the project value if that ends up being necessary. Initially, CHA split the project at points with the intention of keeping project costs down, to address the most critical part of the road that the town was interested in repairing. However, as mentioned, the project extent could be increased which would raise the project cost – that could be done if needed.

Mr. Koirala mentioned that we would be discuss this at the next MPO meeting.

Mr. Diver stated, in relation to the Dalton, Division Road project, that the Town is committed to moving quickly on that process and that this group is aware of the current issues along that road. Mr. Diver continued be stating that he would not support Scenario 3 and would support Scenario 1A. The Town is about to release an RFP for an engineer and so forth and hopes to continue to move this project forward.

The consensus of the group appears to be favoring Scenario 2 – which would bump the Dalton, Division Road project by one year – to FFY2027 and completing in FFY2028.

ACTION: Motion by Mr. Morales, seconded by Mr. VanDeusen, to recommend the MPO move forward with Scenario 2.

All those in favor:

Jim Noe – Yea
George McGurn – Yea
Sean VanDeusen – Yea
Ricardo Morales – Yea
Scott Rodman – Yea
Sam Haupt – Yea
Joe Diver – Yea
Bill Gop – Yea
Bill Elovirta – Yea

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Koirala proceeded to review the STIP (state prioritized projects) [handout](#).

V. Presentation and discussion on national traffic safety initiatives

Mr. Russo proceeded to present on the National Roadway Safety Strategy (NRSS). Mr. Russo reviewed background information on the NRSS which included the following:

- Published in late January 2022 by the USDOT, under Secretary Buttigieg
- The first national strategy to tackle roadway safety of the 21st century
- 2020: 38,680 died in traffic crashes: NHTSA
- 2021 (first 3 quarters): 31,720: NHTSA early estimate
- Deaths per 100 million VMT spiked in 2020

Mr. Russo proceeded to review the features and objectives of the NRSS which include:

Safe System approach, 6 guiding principles:

1. Death and serious injuries are unacceptable
2. Humans make mistakes
3. Humans are vulnerable

4. Responsibility is shared
5. Safety is proactive
6. Redundancy is crucial

5 objectives (pillars) of the safe system:

- a. Safer People
- b. Safer Roads
- c. Safer Vehicles
- d. Safer Speeds
- e. Post-crash care

Safer People:

- Behavioral interventions to discourage risky driving
- Culture of safety

Safer Roads:

- Design interventions to increase care and attention while driving
- Interstates are safest statistically despite high speeds and long distances
- Arterials are statistically most dangerous
- Rural roadways make up disproportionate number of fatalities

Safer Vehicles:

- Driver assistance technology
- New tech can also cause distractions
- New vehicles are getting taller and heavier
- Fatalities involving large (freight/industrial) trucks are increasing faster than average

Safer Speeds:

- "Prioritize safe speeds over focusing exclusively on capacity and throughput"
- Rethink the 85th percentile's importance in policymaking
- Build roads that enforce the appropriate speed limit by design

Better Post-Crash Care:

- Studies suggest that there is a 25% increase in the chance of survival from a crash if brought to a Level I or II trauma center
- Clearing and analyzing crash scenes more efficiently is safer for responders and traveling public
- Higher quality data gathering will help to uncover trends in crashes and more proactive fixes

Mr. Russo then proceeded to review suggested strategies in the Berkshires – outlining the following:

Safer People:

- Unified, sustained messaging on the importance of safe behaviors
- Taking advantage of national/regional messaging campaigns
- Become familiar with FAQs of this newer safety paradigm
- Resources from state and federal agencies

Safer Roads:

- Collector-class roads are the most disproportionately dangerous in Berkshires
- Utilize tools like the IMPACT dashboards, Rural Roadway Departure Countermeasures and MUTCD

Safer Vehicles:

- Mostly will be in the hands of higher levels of government
- Local govns can advocate for more resources and higher scrutiny of vehicle safety ratings, especially ped safety
- Vehicle size and weight mostly overlooked in NRSS publication

Safer Speeds:

- Keep in mind the Big E's of transportation planning
- BRPC traffic safety in town centers survey and resource guide
- Speed studies are just first step when a speeding problem is identified

Post-crash care:

- Nearest Level I or II trauma centers are in Albany and Springfield

- BMC is designated a Level III trauma center
- The only areas on the MA mainland outside of a 1-hour distance of Level I or II center are in Berkshire County (and small part of Franklin)

Mr. Russo concluded by outlining the following key takeaways:

1. Mistakes should not turn fatal or life-altering
2. Safe Systems protect users before, during and after crashes
3. Communication will be vital to reducing traffic violence
4. Vehicle technology can be a double-edged sword
5. New focus on mitigating risks to people outside of vehicles
6. Remember the Big E's of transportation planning
7. Communities outside of Trauma Center radii could be especially vulnerable

Mr. Frieri proceeded to update TAC members on the [status of District 1 projects](#).

VI. Member Items for Discussion

Mr. Diver proceeded to thank Ms. Koirala for all her hard work on the TIP, and mentioned that he understands the TACs sentiments, in terms of the preferred scenario (Scenario 2), and is thankful the Dalton, Division Road project remains in the TIP list.

There were no member items for discussion.

VII. Next Meeting Date – April 19, 2022

The next Berkshire TAC meeting date is April 19, 2022.

ACTION: Mr. Morales motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Diver. Mr. Haupt adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

Materials Distributed:

- [Agenda](#)
- [Draft TAC Meeting Minutes February 15, 2022](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2023-2027 TIP Funding Scenarios](#)
- [Draft BMPO FFY 2023-2027 TIP \(State Prioritized Projects\)](#)
- [BMPO FFY 2023-2027 TIP Schedule – March 2022](#)
- [MassDOT District 1 TIP Projects Update](#)