



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

Invite others to read Common Ground! Share [this link](#).

Employment Opportunities

[BRPC Human Resources Payroll Assistant](#)

Performs day-to-day payroll and benefits transactions and maintains personnel and payroll information.

[City of Pittsfield Community Development Specialist](#)

Serves as the City's Permitting Coordinator, land use planning, GIS and mapping/data analysis management, and administration of community and economic development projects from the planning stages through construction.

Grants & Opportunities

State Grant Opportunities Workshops

Please save the dates and register [here](#). Registering once will sign you up for all future sessions. Tuesdays, 3-5 pm.

May 10 - Energy and Environmental Affairs: MVP, DEP, DOER, and DER

May 24 - Mass Historic Commission, Mass Cultural Council

June 7 - Mass Broadband Institute (MBI), Technology Services & Security

Recordings from previous sessions are available on our website [HERE](#).

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law establishes the new [Safe Streets and Roads for All](#) discretionary program that will provide \$5-6 billion in grants over the next 5 years to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. MPOs, cities, towns, and other special districts that are subdivisions of a state are eligible to apply. The first Notice of Funding Opportunity is anticipated to be released in May 2022 with decisions released at the end of 2022. More information at these webinars:

Getting Ready for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Program - Counties, Cities, Towns, Other Special Districts That Are Subdivisions of a State, and Transit Agencies - Opening remarks by Robin Hutcheson, Acting Administrator, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA);

[Register here](#).

May 2, 1-3 pm

Getting Ready for the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Program - Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) - With opening remarks by Bill Keyrouze, Executive Director, Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO); [Register here](#).

May 3, 1-3 pm

These webinars will be recorded, and the presentation and recordings will be posted on the [SS4A Webinar Series](#) page. Questions? contact SS4A@dot.gov

State Revolving Fund & Federal Infrastructure Funding virtual briefing by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust for the Western/Central Region **May 5, 10-11:30 am**. Learn about the State Revolving Fund and details on accessing additional federal funding. Register [here](#). Other regions' briefings are open to anyone: [May 3 and 11](#).

MassTrails Grant Program

MassTrails is seeking to fund shared use path projects that will fill critical gaps in the statewide trails network. Apply to receive grant funds up to \$500,000 per award for project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of shared/multi-use pathways. Information, guidelines, application materials, and the online grant proposal submission portal can be found here: www.mass.gov/guides/masstrails-grants Applications close on **May 16, 2022**.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Long Island Sound Futures Fund - ([see map here](#)). The focus is nutrient reduction. The match is usually 60%, but it is reduced to 25% this year. These are federal funds that can match with state MVP grant funds. Applications are due **May 19, 2022**. [Check out the RFP](#) and contact [Courteny Morehouse](#) with any questions: 413.442.1521 x26.

EOEEA Planning Assistance Grants

Grants are available to the Commonwealth's municipalities, and RPAs acting on their behalf, to support efforts to plan, regulate (zone), and act to conserve and develop land consistent with Massachusetts' Sustainable Development Principles. These grants encourage municipalities to implement land use regulations consistent with the Baker-Polito Administration's land conservation and development objectives. Funds help communities retain appropriate technical expertise and undertake the public process associated with creating plans and adopting land use regulations. Applications close on **May 20, 2022**.

For more information, including program priorities and a list of past awards, click here: www.mass.gov/service-details/planning-assistance-grants

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grants

Action grants can cover a variety of projects, from planning studies and engineering design work to construction. The match is 10% for "economically disadvantaged rural communities." [Check out the Action Grant RFR here](#). Action grant applications are due **May 5, 2022**.

Planning grants can be used to supplement hazard mitigation planning or can fund both MVP and Hazard Mitigation funding completely without match. [Check out the Planning Grant RFR here](#). Planning grant applications are due **June 7, 2022**.

For questions or assistance on either grant application, contact [Courteny Morehouse](#).

Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CLFRF) for local governments. Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration & Finance Federal Funds Office [memorandum](#) outlines eligible uses. Additional information is at [Executive Office for Administration & Finance Federal Funds Office](#) and [DLS COVID-19 Resources and Guidance for Municipal Officials](#). Please contact [Tom Matuszko](#) if your community wants to pursue this.

Community Planning

Farmland Preservation Funding and Soils

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial assistance to eligible partners for purchasing Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) that protect the agricultural use of eligible land <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ma/programs/easements/acep/>.

To qualify for ALE funding a parcel must be comprised of at least 50% important farmland soils. The NRCS Soil Survey, [Web Soil Survey - Home \(usda.gov\)](#) identifies Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance based on soil type. A fourth category, Farmland of Local Importance consists of additional soil types that are suited for crop production. All categories are considered equally for ALE funding eligibility.

As the name suggests, Farmland of Local Importance requires local acknowledgement. NRCS and American Farmland Trust are assisting interested communities. This is a simple process of listing the soils from the soil survey that are used for crop production but not identified as important farmland soils. A local official who represents the town's agricultural, planning, conservation, or

open space values, and the NRCS co-sign the list enabling consideration for ALE funding.

By acknowledging these soils, a town may enable program eligibility for its willing farm landowners. Towns that value agriculture, open space, and providing choices for landowners can contact [Al Averill](#), Soil Scientist for more information and assistance.



Soil Map With Farmland Class
Blue- Farmland of Statewide Importance
Red – Not Prime Farmland
Source: USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey



The same area: soils suited for hay production can be identified as Farmland of Local Importance and considered for Agricultural Land Easement funding.
Source: Google Earth Pro

Data & Information Services

Berkshire Benchmarks Update

The new Berkshire Benchmarks website will be available in mid-May. The website features improved access to data, a report repository, and new indicators that the region has been working on developing over the last two years. Take a look and let us know what you think!

On **May 23**, Berkshire Benchmarks, in collaboration with the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council, will be releasing the Berkshire Benchmarks 2022 State of the County Report. Please join us at the [Berkshire Innovation Center](#), **9-11 am** for highlights of the region's successes and challenges. You can register for the event at <https://bit.ly/Benchmarks22>. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

2020 US Census

The Census Bureau has announced that the detailed 2020 Census data will be released starting in May 2023. This delay by the Census Bureau is due to disruptions from the pandemic and delays in how the Bureau manages its Disclosure Avoidance Protection methods. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

Economic Development

The [Shared Economic Development Planning](#) program allows each participating town to access services and assistance that fit their specific needs and budget. Participating towns receive assistance with a wide range of projects, including downtown revitalization, grant writing, marketing/communications, business community outreach, and project-specific planning assistance. Contact us to learn more or to register for FY23. Please contact [Laura Brennan](#).

BRPC comes to you! Add us to your next Select Board agenda

Economic Development Senior Planner Wylie Goodman has been presenting on the upcoming 2023-27 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) report, specifically the resiliency chapter. These brief conversations introduce communities to the topic of economic resiliency and reflect BRPC's efforts to hear directly from municipalities about resiliency concerns. Even in towns that are primarily residential, economic resiliency is important so that when another economic shock happens, people can mobilize quickly to withstand the impact and bounce back quickly.

Contact [Wylie Goodman](#) to book a short presentation.

Please share with your business community:

BE PROFITABLE

Join the Mass Small Business Development Center Network for three FREE webinar workshops providing existing businesses with an overview of key business success dynamics, and a review of simple practices and tools to help boost their bottom line. Participants will leave with specific takeaways to guide them to stronger profits. Attend all three modules and receive a complimentary Executive Summary of the key actions steps you can take today to be more profitable.

Tuesday, May 10, 9-10:30 am

Tuning Your Operational & Business Model: review your business model and compare it to best practices. Particular attention will be given to current operations and how to achieve greater profitability through better organizational structure and simple systems.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Thursday, May 26, 9-10:30 am

Better Financial Management: learn how to identify the income and expense drivers in your business, and how to obtain accurate sales and profit projections.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Thursday, June 9, 9-10:30 am

Marketing for Profit: learn to get the right marketing messages to the right people at the right time - and on the right media platforms - as a critical key to sales growth and profit.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Presented by:

Mark Avnet, Certified Senior Business Advisor, MSBDC

Keith Girouard, Regional Director and Certified Senior Business Advisor, MSBDC

For more information, please email [Jayne Bellora](#).

Environmental & Energy

Williamstown Net Zero Plan

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is partnering with the Town of Williamstown and the Williamstown COOL (CO2 Lowering) Committee to develop a scope of work for a future community-wide net-zero plan. The town has already made progress toward its net-zero goal: the residents of Williamstown approved a resolution to become a Net Zero Community at the 2021 Town Meeting. This initiative is part of the comprehensive Climate Action Plan that the Town is developing in collaboration with the community by 2023.

As the first step in this process, a survey was released for anyone that lives or works in Williamstown. Community input from this survey will help shape the plan's recommendations for how Williamstown can transition to net zero. You can find the survey [HERE](#). To gather more feedback, a community meeting will be held on **May 25 from 7-8:30 pm** on Zoom. [REGISTER HERE](#) to hear more about the process and participate in a brainstorming session to share your ideas for a net-zero Williamstown! Contact [Emily Lange](#) with any questions.

Culvert Operations Coming to the Berkshires

Spring has sprung and BRPC is working with the Regional Culverts group in Pittsfield, Lenox, Stockbridge, and New Marlborough to get the field season started off right. The [Greenagers](#) youth crew have adopted the name "Culvert Operations" in honor of their task to assess every culvert in these four towns for flood risk, fish passability, and the potential for nature-based solutions such as rain gardens, bank restoration plantings, and floodplain reconnection.

BRPC is working to make connections with communities to make sure they not only know about the project but help us prioritize areas of focus. As part of this outreach, BRPC has funds to support partnership groups, organizations, and local individuals in helping spread the word and engage residents. We'll be tabling at events throughout the spring and summer. If you have an event you'd like us to join or a group you think would be a good fit, please get in touch! Email [Courteny Morehouse](mailto:Courteny@berkshireplanning.org) or call at 413.442.1521 x26. Thank you!

Transportation

Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program

The Berkshire MPO released the FFY 2023-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) document for a 21-day public comment period on April 26, 2022.

The TIP is the prioritized, multi-year program for the implementation of federally funded transportation projects in Berkshire County. The TIP implements the region's long-range transportation plan by programming federal-aid funds for transit, highway, bridge, transportation enhancements, bike paths, safety, and air quality improvements.

Click here to review the [Draft FFY 2023-2027 TIP](#) document on BRPC's website and provide comments to staff during the comment period, which **ends on May 18, 2022**.

Comments should be addressed to the Berkshire Metropolitan Organization/BRPC, 1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA 01201, or via email to info@berkshireplanning.org. For more information, contact Principal Transportation Planner [Anuja Koirala](#).

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org

