



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Announcements

BRPC is pleased to welcome Andrew McKeever as a Community Planner! He works with Community Planning Program Manager CJ Hoss and other staff members on housing, digital equity, and zoning projects, as well as expanding the [Planning Toolkit](#).

Andrew most recently served as the Director of Communications at the Berkshire District Attorney's Office, where he developed and implemented new systems and methods to preserve, organize, and present data and information about the local justice system. Before that, Andrew enjoyed a lengthy career in journalism. He served as the Central Berkshire Regional Bureau Chief for iBerkshires.com, where he oversaw municipal, regional, and state government coverage, including the work of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Andrew's appreciation for Berkshire County's history and his extensive knowledge of the issues the municipalities are working to address will be a great asset to BRPC.



Andrew grew up in the Berkshires and lives in Pittsfield with his wife, Jenna, and his dog Tuukka. You can reach him at amckeever@berkshireplanning.org; 413-442-1521 ext. 27.

Employment Opportunities

[Senior Planner or Planner, Transportation](#) The focus of this position is developing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders and the public through active outreach efforts, presentations, and preparing/administering surveys. Projects include the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, electric vehicle acquisition, and charging station development.

[Senior Planner or Planner, Community Planning](#) One focus of this position is housing planning, working with municipalities to promote housing development readiness, identifying housing needs and opportunities, recommending ways to address those needs, and working to implement measures to promote housing development.

[Public Health Inspector and Training Specialist](#)

Full-time offsite Project Specialist sought to provide environmental health inspections, support the inspectional services program, and help develop a new local Public Health Excellence Training Hub for Berkshire and Hampden Counties, Massachusetts.

Follow title links for full descriptions.

PLEASE NOTE: There is a new [Solicitations](#) page under "About" on BRPC's website with postings for part-time, temporary consultant positions, requests for proposals, etc.

Grants & Opportunities

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness has two webinars coming up for their Pre-RFR release:

- Monday, March 13, 10 am - [Register here](#)
- Tuesday, March 14, 1 pm - [Register here](#)

Note that you only need to attend one, both webinars are exactly the same.

Implementing the [Berkshires Equity Toolkit](#) - Training opportunity for those working in substance use treatment, recovery, harm reduction, medical and behavioral health, and others. Register for one of these sessions. See the Public Health section below for more information.

[Tuesday, 3/14, 9 -10](#)

[Thursday, 3/16, 12:30 -1:30](#)

[Thursday 3/16, 4 - 5](#)

Community One Stop FY24 Application Portal

The [Expression of Interest](#) (EOI) period continues through **March 17**. Last year, 75% of successful applicants participated in the EOI process. Applicants may log into the [IGX system](#) to work on applications that may be submitted as early as May 1 and are due **June 2**. If you would like assistance with preparing a One Stop application, please [CONTACT US](#) immediately.

CPTC Annual Conference March 18

The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative annual conference will be held Saturday, **March 18** at the Hogan Campus Center, Holy Cross College, Worcester MA fully in person. There are 17 workshops on core planning topics and timely Massachusetts land use issues. Some workshops provide MIIA insurance credit. More information at [Annual Conference - CPTC](#).

The Western Massachusetts Passenger Rail Commission has two public hearings on **March 21**: 1 pm at the Northampton Senior Center and 6 pm at Springfield Tech in Scibelli Hall. The purpose is to hear public testimony concerning potential public entities with the ability to design, permit, construct, operate and maintain passenger rail service proposals from the East-West Passenger Rail Study Final Report. Remote participation will be available via the [MassDOT website](#). Participants may click the "raise hand" icon to signify that they wish to be called on during the public comment period. Written testimony may be submitted by email to commission staff at: Siobhan.Morrissey@mahouse.gov.

[The Berkshire Regional Group Purchasing Program](#) (BRGPP) FY24 Product Survey is available and responses are due on Wednesday, **March 22**. For additional information, contact [Christie Lewis](#) at (413) 442-1521 x23.

[Massachusetts Historical Commission's Spring 2023 Workshops](#)

- [Administering Local Historic Districts and Design Review](#), Monday, March 6, 7 pm
 - [State and Federal Historic Resources Review and Compliance](#), Tuesday, March 21, 1 pm
 - [Developing an Historic Preservation Plan](#), Thursday, April 6, 10 am
 - [Adopting a Demolition Delay Bylaw or Ordinance](#), Friday, April 21, 10 am
-

Massachusetts Select Board Association will host its third [Western and Rural Massachusetts Municipal Conference](#) on Saturday, **April 1** in Holyoke. The registration fee is \$35.

MassDOT Transportation Innovation Conference May 2 - 3

The annual MassDOT Transportation Innovation Conference will be at the DCU Center 50 Foster Street Worcester. This conference provides a forum for innovative transportation systems, management ideas, and initiatives with a focus on MassDOT's investment in infrastructure. Register at [MassDOTInnovation.com](#). A limited virtual attendance option will be provided for some conference presentations and speakers.

[2023 Local Solutions: Climate Migration](#), May 16 - 17, Keene, New Hampshire

The goal of this event is to convene stakeholders to build capacity in the Northeast region for socially just and equitable migration and enhanced regional climate resilience, creating a region that can become a climate refugia that is resilient, revitalized, socially just, and decarbonized.

Long Island Sound Futures Fund RFP is now open. Awards range from \$50k - \$1.5M with a focus

Community

Planning Assistance Grants RFP

In March, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) related to its annual Planning Assistance Grant program. EEA offers communities funding to assist with improving land use practices. Regional Planning Agencies are also encouraged to work with municipalities to conserve, regulate (zone), and plan according to the Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles.

Since 2018, the state has annually awarded communities \$1-1.5 million to +/-30 applicants to fund a variety of projects. Project funding has ranged from \$5,000 to \$150,000, with most projects receiving less than \$50,000. Priorities for the program include a reduction in energy and natural resource consumption. This includes zoning for sustainable housing production, mixed-use, Accessory Dwelling Units, and climate resilience projects that encourage compact growth and a mix of land uses.

BRPC recently helped Sheffield receive \$25,000 to implement their Housing Production Plan (see the [October 2022 Common Ground](#)). And \$37,500 for the towns of Great Barrington, Lanesborough, Lenox, Monterey, and Williamstown to Decarbonize Berkshire County through solar, battery storage, and EV charging stations through a variety of strategies.

The RFP for the FY24 planning grants will be announced in March 2023, and proposals are due in May. Grant awards are generally announced fairly quickly (mid-summer) and typically have a two-year window for execution. More information on the program, past projects, and the RFP (later this month) will be posted to [Planning Assistance Grants | Mass.gov](#)

Please also feel free to reach out with questions to [CJ Hoss](#), Community Planning Program Manager.

Data & Information Services

Municipal IT

The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council is funding BRPC to work with local communities to establish a pilot regional municipal cybersecurity program. Over the next five and a half months, BRPC will work with the participating communities to understand existing IT services that are employed, the IT policies a community may have adopted, and what training of employees occurs. An inventory of existing hardware, software, backup, printers, routers, etc., will also occur. These assessments will then be compared to the MassCyberCenter's Municipal Minimum Baseline of Cybersecurity and determine actions a community should take for improvements. A discussion will also occur on the best method for long-term Municipal IT support, such as municipal sharing of staff, BRPC staff providing services, municipalities hiring IT consultants individually, or regional hiring of IT consultants. For more information or to have your community participate, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

Economic Development

2023-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) approved by EDA

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) identifies regional economic goals and priorities and establishes a framework for measuring progress in the region. The resulting 5-year CEDS for Berkshire County was approved by the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) in February 2023. **The full 2023-2027 CEDS can be viewed [HERE](#).**

BRPC has developed several resources to help you make the most of the new CEDS, including:

- A 2-page summary highlighting CEDS Goals, critical objectives, and key projects [HERE](#).
- An introductory video (2:50) introducing the new CEDS and explaining its purpose [HERE](#).

- A self-guided overview of major CEDS components to scroll at your own pace [HERE](#).

CEDS resources are also available in Spanish:

<https://berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/berkshire-comprehensive-economic-development-strategy-ceds/>

We look forward to exploring the CEDS and how it can support economic resiliency with your community at an upcoming meeting - please [contact us](#) to schedule a visit from BRPC staff.

Massachusetts Broadband Institute [Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program](#)

BRPC is a pre-qualified consultant to provide services to municipalities participating in MBI's Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. The program is appropriate for last-mile towns that have high-speed broadband to most residences and towns that do not yet have this service.

Participating in the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program will:

- Help guide decision-making and investments related to services and infrastructure that increase access, adoption, and usage of the internet for populations most impacted by the pandemic.
- Prepare your community to submit grant proposals to existing or forthcoming state or federal opportunities related to solving the digital divide. Full program details and application [HERE](#).

Environmental & Energy



FREE Workshops: Homeowner Resilience in the Face of Climate Change - All are welcome!

Berkshire Regional Planning is partnering with Lenox and New Marlborough to host two free workshops to help residents "Climate Proof Their Home." The first workshop will be on Saturday, **April 1**, 11 am - 1 pm at the Lenox Community Center, and the second on Wednesday, **April 19**, 6 - 7:30 pm at the New Marlborough Fire Department.

These workshops will teach homeowners methods to manage increased stormwater, reduce nuisance flooding, and identify home quality hazards to improve energy efficiency. Attendees will also learn how to prepare for the local impacts of climate change and save money on energy bills. Food will be provided, and attendees can win a \$100 gift card to local hardware stores. RSVP links can be found at: <https://bit.ly/lenoxDIY>
<https://bit.ly/newmarldiy>

Turning up the Heat: Why Berkshire County's Old Homes Need a Makeover (and a Sweater)

Berkshire County's winters can be brutal, leading to high energy bills that can significantly burden low-income families and renters. This situation can force individuals to choose between paying for energy bills, rent, food, and other necessities, leading to housing insecurity and potential health issues. Many old homes in the area lack proper insulation and heating systems. The lack of upgrades results in drafts, inconsistent temperatures, and indoor air pollution that can negatively impact public health.

Fortunately, there is a solution. BRPC and area towns are participating in the Community First Partnership offered by the Sponsors of Mass Save, Berkshire Gas, and National Grid to provide cost-saving energy efficiency solutions to residents and small businesses. Mass Save, a statewide initiative, offers free energy assessments to identify areas of energy waste in homes and suggests improvements to reduce energy bills. The initiative also provides financial incentives such as up to 100% off insulation and air sealing costs, rebates on high-efficiency heating and cooling equipment, and low-interest loans for energy-efficient upgrades. Low-income homeowners and even renters and landlords can benefit! These resources will help reduce energy bills, improve living conditions, and promote a more sustainable future. Anyone in the Berkshires can get started by visiting this [Berkshire County Mass Save link](#).

Public Health

Implementing the [Berkshires Equity Toolkit](#) - Training Opportunity

Providers involved with treatment, recovery, harm reduction, and medical and behavioral health are encouraged to take one of these free online trainings to promote equitable thinking related to treating those who struggle with substance misuse and/or are in treatment and recovery. The workshops are also meant to help evaluate and identify any gaps in care related to race, ethnicity, language, disability, orientation, gender identity, and the social determinants of health. Come and join us! Paper copies of the toolkit are available upon request from [Andy Ottoson](#).

[Tuesday, 3/14, 9:00 -10:00](#)

[Thursday, 3/16, 12:30 -1:30](#)

[Thursday, 3/16, 4:00 - 5:00](#)



State Opioid Response - Prevention in Early Childhood Retreat: A Day of Creativity, Connection, and Empowerment for Young Girls of Color

The Berkshire Early Childhood Community Circle, an initiative funded through the [SOR-PEC](#) grant to raise protective factors and prevent future substance use, held a five-hour “retreat”-style event for girls of color ages 5-11 on Saturday, February 11. Berkshire Community College, Flying Cloud, and ROPE helped to make it a memorable day for all involved. BCC’s two student facilitators, alongside their advisor, hosted the event in their Early Childhood Education lab.

Activities included a morning and closing circle, collaborative paintings, designing a mini “you,” a book called “I Love My Hair” by Natasha Tarpley, and more. Flying Cloud Institute taught the girls how the brain works and led engaging hands-on activities demonstrating neurotransmitters and circuitry. The girls learned how to make hand sanitizer, and they loved picking out which essential oil scents to include

in theirs. The overall goal of this program is to establish a growing community and support system for girls of color in Pittsfield, with the intention that increased support and protective factors may reduce the likelihood of future substance use. We are excited to hold our next event on March 4, again at Berkshire Community College, and continue to watch the group flourish.

Transportation

Regional Transportation Plan: Survey Insights

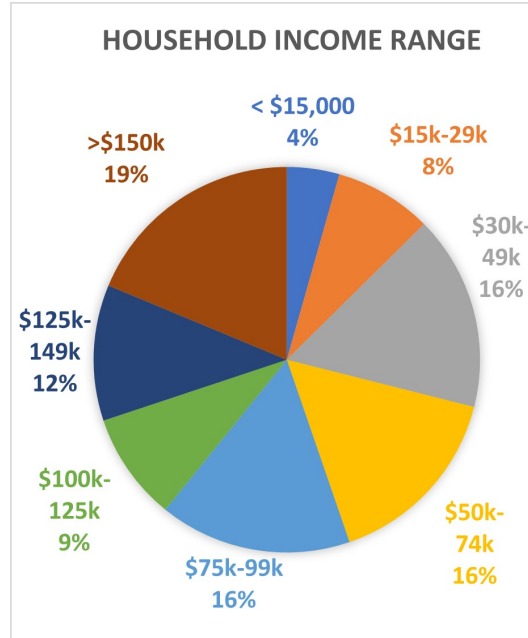
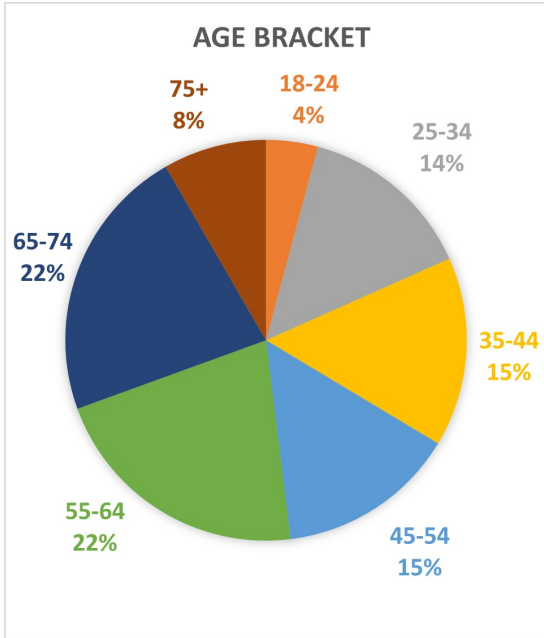
Public input is a key component of the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) currently under development. The RTP will lay out the regional priorities for transportation investments over the next twenty years. Listening to and learning from Berkshire County residents helps us gain a fuller understanding of what transportation investments should be made.



To gain community input, BRPC administered a Community Transportation Survey across Berkshire County between November 2022 and January 2023. This survey was one of the major sources of public feedback to inform our work on the RTP. Along with the survey, BRPC staff hosted three in-person information sessions in Great Barrington, Pittsfield, and North Adams. Staff identified several key takeaways from the 360 survey responses. Follow [this link](#) for the full article, a summary of responses, and key takeaways.

Survey respondent demographics:

Over half of the survey respondents (52%) were 55 and older, and 48% were between 18 and 54. Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported a household income of \$50,000 or above.



March

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
				Executive Committee 4 pm		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
				Full Commission 7 pm		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
		Transportation Advisory Committee 4 pm	Regional Issues Committee 4 pm			
26	27	28	29	30	31	
		Metropolitan Planning Organization 4 pm				

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org



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