



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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

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.

[Public Health Inspector and Housing Specialist](#) Seeking a housing subject matter expert with building code or housing inspection experience, to enforce the housing code and local housing regulations, conduct environmental health inspections, support inspectional services program, and help develop a new local Public Health Excellence Training Hub. Offsite, full-time with benefits preferred, part-time possible.

View *BRPC Internship Opportunities* [HERE](#).

Grants & Opportunities

Community One Stop FY24 Application Portal

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**. For assistance preparing a One Stop application, please [CONTACT US](#) immediately.

MassDOT Transportation Innovation Conference May 2 - 3

A forum for innovative transportation systems, management ideas, and initiatives with a focus on MassDOT's investment in infrastructure. DCU Center 50 Foster St., Worcester. Register at [MassDOTInnovation.com](#).



May 6, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm Lenox Community Center

Climate change is increasing mosquito and tick-borne diseases like Lyme and arboviral encephalitis. Disease ecologist Shannon LaDeau will discuss how changing environmental conditions affect tick and mosquito populations and ways to reduce and safeguard yourself so you can enjoy the outdoors. Free and open to the public with [complimentary lunch provided](#) and

chance to win a bat box for your own yard. Seating is limited - please RSVP.

<https://bit.ly/whenbugsbite> Check it out or share on [Facebook](#)!

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has [released](#) the PROTECT Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). Applications are due via grants.gov by **August 18**.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law established the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Discretionary Grant Program to help make surface transportation more resilient to natural hazards, including climate change, sea level rise, flooding, extreme weather events, and other natural disasters through support of planning activities, resilience improvements, community resilience and evacuation routes, and at-risk coastal infrastructure. This NOFO offers up to \$848 million from Fiscal Years

2022 and 2023. It is on grants.gov at:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=347585>.

More information: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/discretionary>.

Applicant questions should be directed to: PROTECTdiscretionary@dot.gov.

FHWA webinars for those interested in applying:

Monday, May 8, 1-2 pm ET; Registration Link:

https://usdot.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_wpq8qcrVQz67DqdjPCar1A

Thursday, May 11, 1-2 pm ET; Registration Link:

https://usdot.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_nvoQgZCFTwCWdS_FYTH5kg

Grants Workshop Series 2023

Join State officials to learn about state, federal, and non-profit grant opportunities. Questions? Contact [Laura Brennan](#).

USDA Rural Development

Friday, May 12, 9:30 am

Registration here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMpf-ygpzoqH9x-rz6xshFbBZReVkiWcPi#/registration>

FEMA Fire Response

Monday, May 15, 9:15 am

Registration here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpduCvrj8iH9CCyXcMd8RuKCrhnEO8OuzN#/registration>

[Working with High School Interns Workshop](#)

Tips, guidance and strategies for providing internships at your workplace. **May 12, 9 - 10:30 am**, Berkshire Health Systems Hillcrest Campus, Pittsfield Contact [Kat Toomey](#), Youth Program Specialist, with questions, to register or request 1:1 session.



The Western Massachusetts Passenger Rail Commission will hold two hearings on **May 16**.

[Links to the hearings](#).

10 am, Worcester State University

2 pm, Natick, Morse Institute Library

The legislature established this commission to investigate and receive 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.

Please note that Zoom Webinar attendees will join in listen-only mode. When a remote participant is called on to address the Commission, the meeting organizer will unmute them for the purpose of providing their testimony. Additionally, you may submit written testimony to commission staff at: Siobhan.Morrissey@mahouse.gov.

Long Island Sound Futures Fund RFP is open. Awards range from \$50k - \$1.5M with a focus on nitrogen reduction in the Housatonic and Connecticut River Watersheds. Deadline: **May 19**.

[Long Island Sound Futures Fund 2022 Request for Proposals | NFWF](#)

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. Full program details and application [HERE](#).

Click this image for details about fun events across Massachusetts!

May 1st-31st, 2023
Berkshire Bike Month

Find events across Massachusetts at www.baystatebikemonth.org

Events all month long!

For kids & families	For all ages & abilities	For experienced riders
<p>Every Monday, 3:30 - 6 pm NORTH ADAMS BIKE CLINIC AND DOWNTOWN BIKE-AROUND North Adams Armory</p> <p>Thursday, May 11 BIKE TO SCHOOL DAY - CONTE COMMUNITY SCHOOL Students and parents of Conte Community School in Pittsfield are invited to bike!</p> <p>Thursday, May 18 @ 5 pm PITTSFIELD: THIRD THURSDAY All-ages ride, bike rodeo and more!</p> <p>Saturday, May 20, 9:00 am - 12 noon ADAMS TRAIL DAY A morning of activities at the Adams Visitors Center on the Ashwillitcook Rail Trail</p> <p>To be announced ASHWILLITCOOK SCAVENGER HUNT Crane Ave. Trailhead, Pittsfield</p>	<p>All month long PITTSFIELD: BIKES MEAN BUSINESS Visit participating businesses on your bike and be entered for a drawing at the end of May.</p> <p>Monday, May 1 @ 5 pm BIKE MONTH KICK-OFF RALLY AND RIDE With remarks from Mayor Linda Tyrer and BBPC President Marge Cohen. Park Square, Pittsfield</p> <p>Friday, May 5 @ 5 pm PITTSFIELD: FIRST FRIDAY Bike repair clinic, lights giveaways, and coffee along with local art exhibits around downtown!</p> <p>Friday, May 19 LEAVE YOUR CAR AT HOME DAY</p> <p>Saturday, May 27 @ 7:30 pm THE BREWS CRUISE Casual downtown Pittsfield loop starting and ending at Hot Plate Brewing Co.</p> <p>Monday, May 29 @ 10:30 am DOMINGO BRUNCH RIDE Casual downtown Pittsfield loop starting and ending at Dottie's Coffee Lounge</p>	<p>Every Monday @ 6 pm GROUP MTR RIDE AT PITTSFIELD STATE FOREST - LULU TRAILHEAD Check Berkshire Bike and Board for details</p> <p>Every Tuesday @ 6 pm GROUP A-B-C PACE ROAD RIDES Starting at the Berkshire Bike and Board Great Barrington shop</p> <p>Every Thursday @ 5:30 pm KENNEDY PARK A-B-C MTR TRAIL RIDES Starting at Arcadian Shop in Lenox. Check arcadian.com/events for details.</p> <p>Sunday May 7 @ 5:00 pm SUNDAY SUNSET RIDE 25-mile loop around Sheffield Plain, starting at True Wheels. Some gravel roads. Arrive early to rent an e-bike at a discount!</p> <p>Friday, May 26 @ 8:00 am BASIC ROAD CYCLING RIDE New to road cycling or just want a more casual ride? Take a 15 mile loop around southern Berkshire County with a lunch stop.</p>

Find all event details, times, locations, and register for reminders at calendar.online/berkshirebikemonth
Check back often as events are subject to change and new events will be added!

Have an event you want to feature? Send an email to info@berkshireplanning.org with the subject "Bike Month Event."

Community Planning

FY 2024 Planning Assistance Grants

In April, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) announced the Fiscal Year 2024 round of the Planning Assistance Grant Program. This program provides communities funding up to \$50,000 to assist with improving zoning land use practices. As part of this program, Regional Planning agencies are encouraged to work with municipalities to update and implement policies that conserve, regulate (zone), and plan according to the Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles.

While the program specifically prioritizes funding related to multiple types of zoning amendments related to housing, smart growth, land conservation, energy use, and greenhouse gas emissions, the following types of projects are also eligible:

- Master Plans, Neighborhood Plans, and Open Space and Recreation Plans;
- Rezoning for consistency with master plans and master plan implementation; and,
- Subdivision regulations and complete streets policies that prioritize safe neighborhoods and streets.

Proposals are due by **May 26 at 4:00 pm**. Communities commit to a minimum non-state match of 25%, though District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) and Unified Planning Work Program money are eligible to assist with a match. Regional projects involving collaboration between several municipalities are also eligible for funding. Grantees must seek appropriate approval for any plan or regulation produced via a grant from this Program, but EEA recognizes that the outcome of the vote cannot be guaranteed.

Each community can submit one application, with questions accepted by EEA until May 12, 2023, at 5 pm. Questions should be addressed to: Kurt Gaertner, kurt.gaertner@mass.gov, with answers posted to COMM-BUYS. The grant period will be through either June 30, 2024 or June 30, 2025, depending on the proposed scope of work and schedule.

Communities interested in applying and discussing how BRPC could assist with an application and/or project are welcome to contact [CJ Hoss](mailto:CJ.Hoss@brpc.org), Community Planning Program Manager.

Economic Development

Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF)

BFF has launched a weekly e-blast called the "Berkshire First Five" sent every Monday. Each edition will contain five quick tips about upcoming federal and state grants, training sessions, and opportunities for advocacy. Sign up [HERE](#).

Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF), a regional initiative housed at BRPC, supports Berkshire County towns, businesses, nonprofits, and schools seeking state and federal funds to aid with recovery and rebuilding efforts. Learn more here: www.berkshirefundingfocus.org.

Have questions? Contact Recovery Grant Specialist [Karen Pelto](#). We look forward to helping you find opportunities and resources that are right for your municipality or school.

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](#).** Accompanying materials, including an executive summary, a 3-minute introductory video, and a self-paced overview using ArcGIS StoryMap, as well as resources translated into Spanish, are available [HERE](#).

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.

Data & Information Services

Home Sales

In 2022, the number of 1-Family homes sold in Berkshire County dropped to 3,660. This total is the lowest since 2011 and 1,646 (31%) below the peak in 2020. Even with this drop, home prices continued to increase. The median sales price for a 1-Family home was \$300,000, an increase of \$25,000 since 2021 and \$50,000 since 2020, a 20% increase. Contact [Mark Maloy](#) for more information.

Environmental & Energy

Green Communities Annual Report Preparation

As the end of the fiscal year approaches, towns are gearing up for town meetings and end-of-year reporting. For Green Communities, in particular, it is important to remember the annual reports due for the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) in the fall. These reports are necessary for towns to remain eligible for green communities grant funding.



It is helpful to collect a variety of information to ensure that your town's Green Community annual report is as accurate and complete as possible. For instance, you need to know your town's municipal fuel usage data for buildings and vehicles. Additionally, make note of any changes in fuel vendors since FY22. If you have added or replaced vehicles in your municipal fleet or plan to do so before November, be sure to collect the make, model, and year of these vehicles. Finally, if there have been any changes in your town's building stock, note that information as well.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission works with Berkshire County municipalities to complete their annual reports and provide technical assistance. For additional resources or technical assistance, contact [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](#), Environmental and Energy Planner, 413-442-1521 x42.

Equity in Emergencies

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Public Health Program, with funding and support from the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC), has completed a report to the Council on the potential equity related issues in emergencies in Western Mass and recommended mitigation strategies. Berkshire County Boards of Health Association also provided funding and support as the Berkshire Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Coalition. The project focused on collecting quantitative and qualitative data on individuals and groups in the four Western Mass counties likely to be at greater risk during emergencies because of specific circumstances such as age, income, geographic location, access to cell and internet services, disabilities, education, race, ethnicity, or ability to speak or read English. Public Health Program planners surveyed the extensive data now available quantifying equity related issues in local communities. Staff also conducted targeted interviews with hospitals, police, emergency management, town officials, boards of health, schools, and other responder officials to verify the research and identify priorities.

In addition to a draft Western Mass Equity Report, four county level draft reports with town/city specific data were completed. The next steps include identifying specific projects to improve equity outcomes in emergency planning and response in the region. For example, planners could hold neighborhood forums to discuss emergency planning and response issues with individuals likely to need additional or different assistance in an emergency. Emergency plans could then specifically detail strategies for evacuating and sheltering target groups such as older adults, people with disabilities, individuals without resources, or those without the ability to shelter-in-place. It is especially important to identify the trusted sources of information for each at-risk group. Emergency exercises could then stage the next emergency drill in a low-income neighborhood or near a retirement facility to ensure that the specific needs of these groups are considered, and individuals can receive emergency information.

This is an ongoing project of the Public Health Program to engage the whole community in eliminating disparities and equitably improving outcomes for everyone. For more information, contact the BRPC Public Health Program.

Transportation



Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program

The Berkshire MPO released the FFY 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) document for a 21-day public comment period on April 25, 2023.

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.

You can review the [Draft FFY 2024-2028 TIP document](#) on BRPC's website and provide comments during the comment period, which ends on **May 18, 2023**.

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](#).

image by macrovector on [Freepik](#)

Berkshire Region Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan (CHST)

The Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan (CHST) focuses on the transportation needs of seniors, persons with disabilities, and persons with low income, provides

strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation. Every four years, BRPC reviews and adjusts the CHST Plan, which accurately reflects stakeholder feedback on the evolving transportation needs of Berkshire County residents. Creating and updating a CHST plan allows Berkshire County municipalities access to state and federal funding sources that sustain and program initiatives to further the goal of providing accessible transportation for all residents.

On April 26, 2023, Berkshire County transportation providers and the Berkshire Regional Coordinating Council on Transportation met to discuss ongoing programs and activities and refined the county's transportation priorities outlined in the CHST Plan. The Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the primary transportation policy-making organization for the county, will release the CHST Plan updates for a 21-day comment period on May 23, 2023. BRPC will post the draft CHST plan on the website for public review and comments.

After reviewing public comments, the MPO will make necessary revisions and endorse the CHST Plan updates in June. The updated transportation priorities will be incorporated into the decision-making process concerning the county's funding allocation and programming projects.



Berkshire Flyer Rail Service Resumes!

In conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), Amtrak is selling tickets for the Berkshire Flyer. This seasonal passenger rail service operates between New York City and Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The service, which began as a successful pilot last summer with 819 single rides, resumes on Friday, May 26, and will operate on weekends through the summer and early fall until Columbus Day

weekend.

Tickets are available for purchase on [Amtrak.com](https://www.amtrak.com), the Amtrak app, Amtrak ticket desks and kiosks, and through 1-800-USA-RAIL. For local details visit the [Berkshire Flyer](https://www.amtrak.com/berkshire-flyer) website.

May							2023
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
	1	2	3	4 Executive Committee 4 pm	5	6 When Bugs Bite! 11 am - 1 pm	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17 CEDS 1 pm	18 Commission 7 pm	19	20	
21	22	23 Transportation Advisory 4 pm	24 Regional Issues 4 pm	25	26	27	
28	29	30 Metropolitan Planning 4 pm	31	June 1 Executive Committee 4 pm			

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission | 1 Fenn St., Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA 01201

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