



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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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.

Staff Announcements



A warm welcome to **Monasia Ceasar** who starts June 12 as a full-time, offsite, Public Health Inspector & Housing Specialist for Hampden County. Monasia will focus on developing a new local Public Health Excellence Training Hub and providing mentorship and field training to inspectors. She has a Master's in Public Health from Bridgeport University and most recently served as South Hadley, MA's Health Compliance Specialist. For leisure, she likes to travel, exercise, and try new restaurants.

Congratulations to **Britney Danials** who started as an Environmental & Energy Program Intern in October 2022 and has been promoted to a Planner as of April 2023. Britney focuses on research, fieldwork, communication strategies for sustainability, energy opportunities, climate change impacts, natural hazards, and protecting the natural environment. Photo: Arbor Day 2023 Durant Park Pittsfield



We wish **Allison Egan**, Public Health Principal Planner, well as she wraps up an impressive eight years with BRPC in mid-June to take on a new challenge as the Director of Public Health for Easthampton, MA. Allison started with BRPC in July 2015 as an Associate Public Health Planner working on smoke-free worksites. Recently, she has been focusing on emergency preparedness activities and leading the Pittsfield Gray to Green project.

Public Health Inspector Training Specialist **Ned Saviski** left BRPC in May to become an inspector in Westfield. Ned conducted environmental and sanitarian inspections in Berkshire Public Health Alliance (BPHA) contracted municipalities full-time since August 2022 and part-time since July 2021. We appreciate his critical work and wish him the best!

BRPC is delighted to introduce a talented group of Summer 2023 Interns!

Evan Boyle is a Philosophy major from Williams College concentrating in Public Health, and

Justice and Law Studies. He has served on undergrad committees at Williams and Harold Washington College, including Diversity and Community, and Honor and Discipline. Evan is the founder of the Bookstore Accessibility Fund, which distributed \$10,000 in financial aid for educational materials to students in need. He will work on and offsite as a **Public Health Intern** helping local Boards of Health with permitting data and documents from June 5 through the end of July.

[Michael Keegan](#) is an Environmental Studies and Comparative Literature major from Williams College. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience as a caretaker for Hopkins Forest, a class Hiking PE instructor, and a Field Botany teaching assistant. Michael is also a board member of the Williams Outing Club and an active "Mountain Day" Committee member. He begins his role June 12 as an **Outdoor Recreation Intern** developing content for the upcoming Outdoor Recreation website.

[Avery Kolenski](#) is a Geography major at the University of Massachusetts Amherst with a concentration in GIS. Avery fell in love with the Berkshires during her time as a retail store merchandiser. Her technological expertise and passion take the form of developing a personal blog and a website hosting her full-length novel. Extending internet and broadband to marginalized communities is close to her heart. She begins her role as a **Digital Equity Intern** with BRPC on June 14.

[Alison Zhang](#) is a History major at Williams College. Avery's enthusiasm for the cultural landscape of Berkshire County and interest in the tourism and hospitality field will serve her well as she interns with the Economic Development Program to support the Cultural Districts of the Berkshires' "ArtWeek 2023" collaborative project. Alison begins her role as a **Cultural Districts Intern** on June 19.

We hope all staff and Commission members have an opportunity to welcome the interns and provide mentorship, enhancing their experiences and contributing to the professional growth of the incoming workforce.

Grants & Opportunities

Northern Tier Passenger Rail Study Briefing, Monday, June 5, 2 pm on the study to examine the relaunch of passenger rail along the Route 2 / Northern Tier / Patriot Corridor. This is an update, review of the process, timeline, and potential for local, state, and federal officials, and economic development stakeholders. It's *critical* that stakeholders engage in the study process to help shape and drive the outcome. Zoom registration, <https://bit.ly/NorthernTierRail>

Roles and Responsibilities of Planning and Zoning Boards of Appeal, Monday, June 12, 5:30 pm. Designed for new Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals members and building inspectors, this webinar will launch you into your role as a local official, introducing you to the functions of the two boards and the main planning and zoning tools. This session will also include an introductory discussion of the Open Meeting, Public Records, and Conflict-of-Interest Laws. Presenter: Pam Brown, Esq., Brown & Brown, P.C. [Register here.](#)

The [Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program \(WCPP\)](#) federal grant program's goal is to reduce Wildlife Vehicle Collisions while improving habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species. Some eligible entities are: State DOTs, Metropolitan Planning Organizations; units of local government, and regional transportation authorities. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m., ET, **August 1.**

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

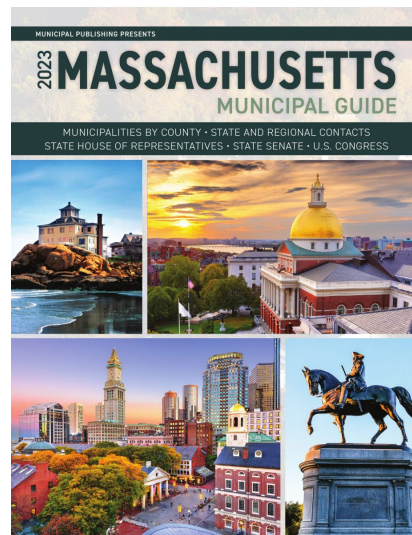
The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law established the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Discretionary Grant Program to help make surface transportation more resilient offering up to \$848 million from Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023.

[https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=347585.](https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=347585)

More information: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/discretionary.](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/protect/discretionary)

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](#).



Community Development & Housing

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP)

BRPC's Community Development & Housing Program administers the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) for Berkshire County. This state-funded loan program, in collaboration with Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC), provides financing to homeowners and small landlords for accessibility renovations to keep a household member with a disability or an older adult in their own home and community. This is not a home repair program. Projects funded by HMLP include ramps and lifts, bathroom and kitchen adaptations, sensory integration spaces, fencing, and accessory dwelling units.

Loans are \$1,000 to \$50,000 at 0% interest with no monthly payments. Repayment is required when the property is sold or transferred. Landlords with fewer than ten units may be eligible for a 3% loan for a tenant. The contract is through June 30, 2023, but an extension may happen. Visit www.cedac.org/hmlp to learn more about the eligibility requirements or contact [Christie Lewis](#), 413-442-1521, x23.

Economic Development

BERKSHIRE Funding Focus

Berkshire First Five

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. Learn more at www.berkshirefundingfocus.org.

Western MA Grant Workshop Series

Recordings are now available from all four government grant-focused workshops this spring:

[Community One Stop for Growth](#) (April 21st)

[USDA Rural Development](#) (May 12th)

[FEMA Fire Response](#) (May 15th)

[EPA and DEP](#) (May 30th)

Presentation slides and associated links can be found on BRPC's website [HERE](#).

This workshop series is co-organized by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Franklin Regional Council of Governments, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and Congressman Jim McGovern, and co-sponsored by members of the western Massachusetts state legislative delegation.

Data & Information Services

2020 Census Release

The US Census Bureau has released the Detailed Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC) and Demographic Profile for the 2020 Decennial Census. This release contains detailed age, sex, race, ethnicity, household type, relationship to householder, housing occupancy, and housing tenure. This release is the first release of detailed information. The new data is available online at data.census.gov. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

Environmental & Energy

Regional Culvert Grant Wraps Up

This month wraps up two years of effort to provide Road Stream Crossing Management plans in four communities. Lenox, Pittsfield, Stockbridge, and New Marlborough partnered with BRPC, Housatonic Valley Association, Greenagers, Trout Unlimited, and Mass Audubon under a State Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant to assess all the culverts and bridges for flood risk both current and in the future given climate change, as well as aquatic organism passability. The towns took a look at where flooding is most vulnerable and how to manage floods not just at the crossings but throughout the watersheds storing stormwater wherever possible. To see an overview of this project check out the [Housatonic Regional Flood Resilience Storymap](#). If you're interested in the results or doing a similar project in your community, get in touch with [Courteny Morehouse](#).



Public Health

The [Gray to Green Project](#) is an urban climate resiliency project focused on community-led innovations in Pittsfield's Westside and Morningside neighborhoods. This initiative contains many facets; below are updates on the major components:

Stride and Take Pride: This neighborhood auditing program outfits residents with a digital tablet to record audio and photo footage of their neighborhood. As of right now an astounding **56 volunteers have completed 96 audits** of the streets in these neighborhoods! Through these audits we have learned about safety concerns, traffic patterns, sidewalk conditions, tree cover, and resident ideas of how they would like their neighborhood to look. Immediate safety concerns

are shared with the City, while less immediate observations are grouped, analyzed, and shared back with community members to determine neighborhood updates. If you're not following the initiative on Facebook and wish to do so, [please find us here!](#)

Francis Ave Parklet and Stairwell: Following concerns voiced by members of the Westside around the safety of a vital public stairway on Francis Ave, BRPC, Habitat for Humanity, and the City of Pittsfield have secured funding to install a small park at the top of the stairs and recently submitted a Municipal Vulnerability Program Grant to do a full redesign of the stairwell to address structural integrity, stormwater flooding, invasive plants, and accessibility features. Community meetings will be conducted for resident input to inform the designs.

Morningside Elementary: This initiative was started by Morningside Elementary and involves student and community engagement in reimagining the back field area of the school. A survey was sent home with students in January, and feedback was gathered from students and families at school events. On June 8, initial plans developed from the input will be shared back to the school community at Morningside on Parade.

Wilson Park: This initiative aims to make improvements to the recreational area of Wilson Park, starting with the basketball court and hoping to expand based on community input. An application for funding through the Community Preservation Act was successfully submitted and approved to be put before the City Council for a vote. A decision should be made by summer's end.



Arbor Day 4/29/2023: This clean-up of the Westside's Durant Park was a joint effort between the City of Pittsfield, Gray to Green, and Municipal Vulnerability Program. Volunteers picked up trash in and around the park, leaving it nice and clean for residents to enjoy. In addition, a new tulip tree was planted in the park and fifteen were given away to Pittsfield residents to plant in their yards.

Transportation

Transportation Plans to be Released for Public Review

The [Draft Regional Transportation Plan](#) and the Draft Unified Planning Work Program are scheduled to be released by the Berkshire MPO at their meeting on June 27, 2023. Transportation Planning staff have prepared an update to the region's long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is a long-range plan with a 20-year planning horizon and is updated every four years. The RTP serves as the County's overarching transportation planning document and is required to ensure the region remains eligible for federal transportation funding. The RTP employs a systematic approach to evaluate the performance of the transportation system, identify 'needs' or deficiencies, and develop solutions that best address any existing gaps.



The [Unified Planning Work Program \(UPWP\)](#) is a one-year budget and planning document that lists the research projects, technical assistance, and other activities the Berkshire Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff will undertake over the next federal fiscal

year. The primary focus areas of the UPWP are safety, carbon reduction, complete streets, bicycle facilities, micro transit, and passenger rail.

The drafts of the RTP and UPWP will be posted on BRPC's website following the MPO's authorization of a comment period; comments must be submitted by July 18. Please see BRPC's website for dates and locations of public meetings about the RTP. Please contact [Nick Russo](#) with questions on the RTP. For questions regarding the UPWP, please contact [Clete Kus](#).

New MassDOT Capital Investment Plan

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) recently completed its annual five-year Capital Investment Plan (CIP), which guides the prioritization and funding of local and statewide transportation projects. MassDOT's priorities are focused on safety while improving reliability, accessibility, sustainability, resiliency, and maintaining equity of the network. This plan incorporates strategies and investments to align with the Commonwealth's strongly held goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to ensure a more resilient Commonwealth. It includes all capital expenditures planned for the next five years for all MassDOT's Divisions.

More information on the CIP can be found at [MassDOT's CIP website](#). The MassDOT Board is scheduled to approve the CIP at their meeting on June 21.

2023 Draft Massachusetts Freight Plan

The Draft 2023 Massachusetts Freight Plan is available for a 30-day public comment period. It is a planning document that will define short and long-term visions for the Commonwealth's freight system. The plan includes multimodal elements such as:

- Air
- Rail
- Truck
- Maritime transport
- Intermodal Transportation (transportation by more than one mode)

The plan is available in an [online interactive format](#) and as a [downloadable PDF](#). The comment period ends **June 29**. Please submit comments via the [Plan Comment Form](#).

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



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