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## A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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### SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday, October 5, 2023

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and  
Berkshire County Selectmen's Association

### Annual Meeting

Guest Speaker: Anne Gobi, Director of Rural Affairs, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

*More details soon.*

## Employment Opportunities

### Community Engagement Specialist - Digital Equity

The Economic Development Program seeks a part-time temporary Community Engagement Specialist to speak with Pittsfield community organizations and the individuals they serve about their needs regarding internet access and the barriers preventing them from using it to its full potential. The Specialist will participate in activities to build awareness about Massachusetts Internet for All and programs that support digital equity, such as the Affordable Connectivity Program.

### Public Health Emergency Preparedness Senior Planner or Planner

BRPC's Public Health program seeks a full-time Planner or Senior Planner specializing in Emergency Preparedness to assist with a broad range of initiatives related to public health and emergencies. This position will contribute to a multitude of dynamic and complex projects to improve public health outcomes in Berkshire County.

### Public Health Food Specialist

This is a full-time, offsite position for a food protection subject matter expert to enforce the food code and local food-related regulations, conduct environmental health inspections, support the inspectional services program, help develop a new local Public Health Excellence Training Hub, and contribute to a broad scope of dynamic and complex public health inspection and training programs in Berkshire County. Part-time applicants will be considered.

Transportation Senior Planner or Planner 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 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. Part-time applicants will be considered.

## Staff Announcements

BRPC is pleased to announce staff promotions effective July 1, 2023. The



promotions recognize these employees' fine performance!  
From Planner to Senior Planner:

[Jaymie Zapata](#): Public Health

[Marie Brady](#): Public Health

[Seth Jenkins](#): Community Planning

[Laura Brennan](#), in addition to her work as Economic Development Program Manager, has been promoted to Assistant Director of BRPC. She brings a strong skill set and networking abilities to the position. Laura will assist in agency operations, the development and implementation of long-term agency plans and goals, and focus on outreach.

[Adam Sussbauer](#) starts August 7 as an Outdoor Recreation Intern developing content for the upcoming Outdoor Recreation website documenting information about Berkshire County's more than 600 outdoor recreation venues. Adam is an Environmental Science major at Wesleyan University. Passionate about the sciences and not afraid to get dirty, Adam is a certified Master Gardner and Lab Assistant at Wesleyan for Planetary Geology and Environmental Archaeology.

## Grants & Opportunities

### FHWA [PROTECT](#) Notice of Funding Opportunity

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. Due **August 18**.

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

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

Direct questions to: [PROTECTdiscretionary@dot.gov](mailto:PROTECTdiscretionary@dot.gov).

### Energy Efficiency and Cost Reduction for Adams, North Adams, and Williamstown Small Businesses!

National Grid will visit small businesses in Northern Berkshire County from **Tuesday, August 22 to Thursday, August 24** to identify energy-saving solutions. Businesses may schedule st energy assessment in advance at <https://www.energysource.com/take-action>. If you're interested in becoming a Community First Partner, please contact Environmental & Energy Planner, [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](#).

### Funding to replace diesel vehicles and equipment

Through the [VW settlement](#), MassDEP is allocating \$7.5 million for zero-emission technologies. As part of the initiative in the [2030 Solid Waste Master Plan](#), funded by the [Climate Protection and Mitigation Expendable Trust](#) (CMT), MassDEP is allocating \$4 million to replace municipal waste-serving refuse trucks with more efficient options. This competitive Solicitation is due **September 26, 2023, 5 pm**. Details at [guidance document](#).

### Funding to get "shovel ready"

The U.S. Department of Transportation is accepting applications starting on August 14, 2023, to fund pre-development-phase activities such as feasibility studies, preliminary engineering and design work, environmental review, and economic assessments and cost-benefit analyses. Grants can be used to hire staff or procure expert services to conduct the work needed to help projects like highways, bridges, public transportation, wildlife crossings, and highway-railway grade crossing or grade separation get "shovel ready."



Through the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program, grant awards between \$150,000 and \$360,000 will be made to help communities evaluate and develop projects that qualify for federal funding and financing programs. **Applications will be accepted between August 14 and**

September 27, with awards made on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no local match required. Click [here](#) for more information.

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### [One Free Designee Public Procurement Training](#)

The Office of the Inspector General is offering public procurement training at no cost to every municipality in the Commonwealth. The chief municipal officer (Mayor, Town Manager/Administrator or Select Board Chair) must complete an [online form](#) indicating the employee to receive the training.

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### 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](#).

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# BERKSHIRE Funding Focus

## Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF)

BFF is a regional initiative that supports municipalities, small businesses, nonprofits, and schools seeking government grants. Learn more at [berkshirerefundingfocus.org](http://berkshirerefundingfocus.org). Sign up for the BFF weekly e-blast [HERE](#).

## Commission FY 2024

### Officers were elected at the July 20th meeting:

- Malcolm Fick, Chair
- John Duval, Vice Chair
- Sheila Irvin, Clerk
- Buck Donovan, Treasurer

**Many thanks to John Duval for his leadership as Chair for fiscal years 2022 and 2023!**

### Committee chairs and at-large Executive Committee members were also confirmed:

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) - Kyle Hanlon
- Environmental Review - Roger Bolton
- Finance Committee - automatically is the Treasurer, Buck Donovan
- At-Large Executive Committee members:  
Kyle Hanlon, North Adams; Sam Haupt, Peru

To be confirmed at the September 21 meeting: Commission Development & Regional Issues committee chairs. Please contact [Laura Brennan](#) if you are interested in joining a committee.

## Community

### Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Improvement Grant Program

The Massachusetts Office of Disability's Municipal ADA grant program is now open through **September 15, 2023**. This grant program is designed to provide planning and/or implementation funding for projects improving access to community facilities for persons with disabilities. The MOD is holding an **informational session on Tuesday, August 8, 2023** from 1 to 2 pm. If interested, you can register [here](#). Details on the program and the application form can be found [here](#). Whether interested in a community self-evaluation or implementing capital improvements to remove barriers to accessing community facilities, this grant program is a great opportunity to address community needs. Please feel free to reach out to Senior Planner [Seth Jenkins](#) to discuss your project and how BRPC could be of assistance.

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### Subsidized Housing Inventory Update

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (former DHCD) has released a list of registered subsidized affordable housing units by community under the Subsidized Housing

Inventory per Massachusetts General Laws 40B ([click here for more information on 40B](#)).

From EOHLC:

*The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is used to measure a community's stock of low-or moderate-income housing for the purposes of M.G.L. Chapter 40B, . . . This data set deducts seasonal/recreational housing units. In addition, the EOHLC has completed a complete update on units that qualify for the SHI.*

[Subsidized Housing Inventory document link](#); [EOHLC webpage](#)

Please contact [Phil DeMartino](#) or [Margaux LeClair](#) if you have any questions.

## Data & Information Services

### Municipal IT Information Sharing

BRPC is hosting virtual Information Sharing sessions on the fourth Thursday of every month from 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm. These sessions, which often feature guest speakers, allow municipalities to learn about statewide IT and cybersecurity initiatives that may impact them. The meetings also allow municipalities to discuss IT-related issues they may be dealing with. For more information or to obtain the Zoom link for the next meeting, contact [Mark Maloy](#), GIS, Data & IT Manager.

## Economic Development

### MA Digital Equity Survey - Please share far and wide!

The [Massachusetts Broadband Institute](#) (MBI) has launched the MA Statewide Digital Equity Survey to help MBI develop a comprehensive Digital Equity Plan for the state and ensure that all Massachusetts residents can benefit from using computers and the internet.

It is critical that Berkshire County residents respond to this survey so that our voices and perspectives can be included. Please:

1. [Complete the online survey HERE](#) (about 5 minutes).
2. Share the link with your friends, colleagues, and community members.

This [map](#) tracks municipalities' responses to date. For more information and to ensure your town is fully represented, contact Economic Development Senior Planner [Wylie Goodman](#).



October 14-22, 2023

### [ArtWeek Berkshires](#)

BRPC is providing staff support to a collaborative effort of the five Berkshire County Cultural Districts. Now in its third year, [ArtWeek Berkshires](#) is a county-wide, crowd-sourced, celebration of creativity. Artists and cultural organizations are invited to participate by offering an interactive, hands-on, or participatory event between October 14th and 22nd, 2023. Promotion of ArtWeek is coordinated by 1Berkshire.

Schools, libraries, and community-based groups are especially encouraged to participate! To learn more and access the online registration form, click [HERE](#).

## Environmental & Energy

### Green Communities Annual Reporting Assistance

As we get closer to fall, it is time for municipalities with Green Communities designation to think about annual reporting. This year DOER is working to streamline the reporting process to make it easier for smaller municipalities to complete their annual reporting. They are working to implement the entirety of the Annual Report process through Mass Energy Insights. There isn't definitive guidance on how this will change the process, and BRPC will continue to work with our

Municipalities to provide technical assistance.

Participating Green Communities will still need to upload their deliverable fuel usage to Mass Energy Insight to make sure the process goes smoothly. Municipalities must also collect information about Building Stock and Municipal Fleet changes. *It is helpful to start collecting this information before October to ensure there is plenty of time for corrections before the November deadline.* Municipalities who have sought technical assistance funding through DOER's Regional Energy Planning Assistance program will be contacted by September and informed of what projects will be funded through DOER for the 2023-2025 funding round.

If your Municipality didn't participate in the summer Regional Energy Planning assistance application through BRPC and would like to take advantage of the opportunity to receive technical assistance through BRPC, please contact [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](#) by phone or email, 413-442-1521 x42.

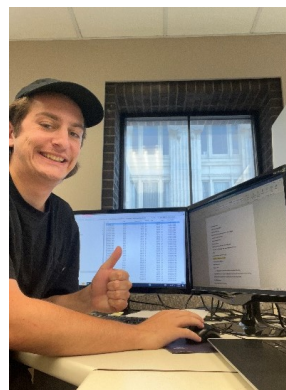
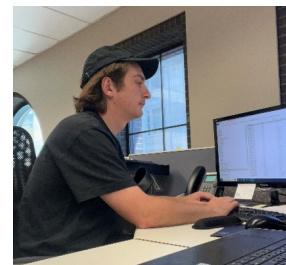
## Public Health

### Intern Update!

This summer I was able to immerse myself in the public health sphere of the Berkshires by working with everyone here at the BRPC! My experience had me help with many projects instead of focusing on a singular issue, so I was able to see a wide variety of what it means to do public health work at a county-wide level.

My favorite moments this summer though have been working on the CHIP (Community Health Improvement Plan), the Grey to Green project—which looks at greening our urban areas in Pittsfield, and getting out in the field by shadowing health inspectors in North Adams and Peru! I was also able to get a better understanding of what goes into public health work by sitting in on regional meetings, doing community outreach, and cataloging equipment.

Overall, I am extremely thankful to the entire BRPC staff for helping me acclimate to the public health world and setting me up for success as I return to the classroom this fall! - [Evan Boyle](#), Williams College



## Transportation

### New Statewide Vehicle Data Tool

MassDOT has developed the *Massachusetts Vehicle Census* (MVC) database. The MVC is a state-level dataset that joins vehicle-level odometer readings with vehicle attributes and registration transaction histories. This powerful resource allows policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders to understand state and local trends in vehicle usage and ownership.



Some questions that this dataset can answer about actively registered vehicles in the state include:

- Are electric vehicles driven more or less than gas-powered vehicles?
- How many vehicles were added (or subtracted) from my city or town between 2021 and 2022?
- What is the difference in the number of passenger vehicles versus commercially registered vehicles?



Since the first iteration of the MVC was first produced by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in 2014, the data has been used in several projects and research studies. However, the adoption of a new RMV data management platform known as ATLAS in 2018 and the significant economic and policy emphasis on sustainable transportation technologies - especially electric and zero-emission vehicles - renewed the urgency to expand and update this dataset. The development of this product responds to the legislative requirements defined in Chapter 179 of the Acts of 2022 and is a significant accomplishment for MassDOT and our partners.

<https://geodot-homepage-massdot.hub.arcgis.com/pages/massvehiclecensus>

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**Due to August vacations and lack of quorums, there are no BRPC meetings this month. To be confirmed if the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will meet August 22 @ 4 pm.**

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**Berkshire Regional Planning Commission**  
[www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org)



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