



MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Committee, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
FROM: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director
DATE: December 6, 2023
SUBJ: Supplemental material related to the December 7, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting

Attached is supplemental material for the December 7, 2023 meeting.

IV. Financial Reports

A. Vote to Approve the October 19, 2023 to November 30, 2023 Expenditures Report*

The check register was not ready for distribution when the meeting packet was sent out. It is included in this material.

V. Items Requiring Action

D. Vote to Approve Comments on the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton, and Hinsdale to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA)

The Executive Committee is requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit comments to MEPA on the Draft Environmental Report (DEIR) on the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project), Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton, and Hinsdale submitted by the NSTAR dba Eversource Energy. The Project seeks to improve system reliability by reducing the number of tree fall-in risks in the Right of Way and to create a sustainable environment comprised of vegetation that can safely coexist with the transmission lines. A draft Environmental Review Report is included in this supplemental material. Draft comments will be prepared tomorrow.

E. Vote to Approve Comments on the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI)

The Executive Committee is requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit comments to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute on the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan. MBI is the central broadband office for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Its stated goal is to bring Affordable, high-speed internet to every person in Massachusetts. This plan is the blueprint for how the Commonwealth will spend funds it has received through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

There are two elements related to the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan: the State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) and the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Proposal (BEAD).

The SDEP is more of a planning document and a prerequisite to access the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program. A State Digital Equity Plan must include specific elements outlined by statute and the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

The BEAD proposal seeks to access federal funds to implement (or in the terminology of the MBI deploy funds to implement) items contained in the SDEP, with a major emphasis to fill any remaining gaps, broadly defined, so that "Every resident in Massachusetts has high-speed, high-quality internet availability and can confidently adopt and use the internet regardless of who they are or where they live."

BRPC is working in 14 municipalities on preparing municipal Digital Equity Plans which will be required to access some of the grant funds. Senior Planner Wylie Goodman is the BRPC lead on our digital equity effort and has prepared draft comments on the SDEP which are included and is still preparing comments on the BEAD proposal.

The plan and related documents can be accessed at [Massachusetts Internet for All Plan | MBI \(masstech.org\)](#).

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Check Register

For the Period From Oct 19, 2023 to Nov 30, 2023

Filter Criteria includes: Report order is by Date.

<u>Check #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Payee</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Department Description</u>	<u>Expense</u>
1010	11/20/23	GRAYBEARD LLC	8,750.00	710 CEDAC/MLP	(CEDAC) Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP)	Subcontractor
1275	11/29/23	ALEX KOMLEV	21,015.00	631 DAL/CDBG	Dalton - Community Development Block Grant	Subcontractor
1276	11/29/23	CMV CONTRACTING	5,190.00	631 DAL/CDBG	Dalton - Community Development Block Grant	Subcontractor
1277	11/29/23	ALEX KOMLEV	14,265.00	631 DAL/CDBG	Dalton - Community Development Block Grant	Subcontractor
1278	11/29/23	ALEX KOMLEV	25,650.00	631 DAL/CDBG	Dalton - Community Development Block Grant	Subcontractor
1279	11/29/23	CMV CONTRACTING	29,390.00	631 DAL/CDBG	Dalton - Community Development Block Grant	Subcontractor
1280	11/29/23	ALEX KOMLEV	20,947.50	631 DAL/CDBG	Dalton - Community Development Block Grant	Subcontractor
17485	10/20/23	R3SET ENTERPRISES INC	1,866.00	725 MASSTECH/DE	Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services - PITTSFIELD	Subcontractor
17486	10/25/23	JAMES AYRES	675.39	672 DCHD/HOUSE	DHCD Housing in Berkshire County State Earmark	BERKS HOUSING & FOOD INSECURITY SUMMIT 1/3 PYMT
17487	10/25/23	BECKS PRINTING	788.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Printing
17488	10/25/23	BERKSHIRE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORP	6,249.99	672 DCHD/HOUSE	DHCD Housing in Berkshire County State Earmark	Subcontractor
17489	10/25/23	DONOVAN O'CONNOR & DODIG, LLP	480.00	166 EPA/RLF	Environmental Protection Agency - Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund	Legal
17490	10/25/23	FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOV	155.36	10 GENERAL	General Fund	RURAL AFFAIRS EVENT REIMBURSEMENT 1/5 EXP OF TOTAL
17491	10/25/23	FULL CIRCLE TECHNOLOGIES INC	6,400.00	722 EOAF/OP	Executive Office for Administration & Finance - Online Permitting Upgrade	LAN BLDG PERMIT SOFTWARE UPGRADE
17492	10/25/23	MACFARLANE OFFICE PRODUCTS, INC.	1,416.61	040 ADMIN	Admin	Copying
17493	10/25/23	PFIZER INC	45,080.00	653 BRPC/INSREB	BRPC Insurance Reimbursement - Covid-19	2023/2024 COVID-19 VACCINES

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17494	10/25/23	QUALPRINT	1,220.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	COMMUNICATIONS
17495	10/25/23	REPRO SYSTEMS, INC	549.23	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	PHOTOVOICE EVENT FOAMBOARD
17496	10/25/23	SEQIRUS USA INC	12,247.51	653 BRPC/INSREB	BRPC Insurance Reimbursement - Covid-19	FLU VAC 2023-2024 SEASON
17497	10/25/23	TD CARD SERVICES	10,992.11	040 ADMIN	Admin	<i>October 2023 Credit Card Payment</i>
17498	10/25/23	VALLEY GREEN SHREDDING, LLC	85.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Recycle/Shredding
17499	10/26/23	OUTPOST LLC	12,250.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17502	11/1/23	MCKESSON MEDICAL - SURGICAL	11,502.07	653 BRPC/INSREB	BRPC Insurance Reimbursement - Covid-19	2023/2024 VACCINE SUPPLIES
17503	11/1/23	DAWN SCARBRO	3,000.00	640 NEAETC/CRI	New England AIDS Education & Training Center	Training Completion
17504	11/1/23	AAIM TRAINING AND CONSULTING LLC	192.68	040 ADMIN	Admin	Background Checks
17505	11/1/23	STEFFON ASHLEY	320.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17506	11/1/23	BBE OFFICE INTERIORS	596.48	040 ADMIN	Admin	Office Supplies
17507	11/1/23	BERKSHIRE EAGLE	416.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	SUBSCRIPTION THRU DECEMBER 2024
17508	11/1/23	LAURA BRENNAN	149.04	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17509	11/1/23	DLT SOLUTIONS, LLC	225.93	440 MassDOT/TPL23	MassDOT - Transportation Planning	AUTO CAD SUBSCRIPTION
17510	11/1/23	EAN SERVICES LLC	44.06	650 DPH/SS	Public Health Excellence for Shared Services	CAR RENTAL
17511	11/1/23	FEDEX	23.11	745 SHF/EOHLC/CDBGHR	Sheffield EOHLC - Housing Rehabilitation	POSTAGE
17512	11/1/23	ERIN FORBUSH	413.99	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Supplies Reimbursement

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17513	11/1/23	SIOGA CLUB OF BERKSHIRE COUNTY INC	52.50	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17514	11/1/23	CORNELIUS HOSS	117.55	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17515	11/1/23	DAVID W KELLEY	1,150.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Cleaning Service
17516	11/1/23	LAURA KITROSS	337.43	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17517	11/1/23	KJ NOSH CATERING CO	1,920.00	10 GENERAL	General Fund	BRPC ANNUAL MEETING 100523
17518	11/1/23	MACFARLANE OFFICE PRODUCTS, INC.	68.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Copying
17519	11/1/23	SANDRA MARTIN	78.60	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17520	11/1/23	MASS STATE BOARD OF RETIREMENT	12,584.02	---	---	Retirement
17521	11/1/23	ANDREW MCKEEVER	94.50	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17522	11/1/23	KELLIE MEISL	480.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17523	11/1/23	MIIA HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST	2,341.23	040 ADMIN	Admin	Dental Insurance
17524	11/1/23	MIIA HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST	59,119.45	040 ADMIN	Admin	Health Insurance
17525	11/1/23	PATRICIA MULLINS	300.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Time Served Bonus
17526	11/1/23	MUTUAL OF OMAHA	1,404.14	040 ADMIN	Admin	Life-LTD-STD
17527	11/1/23	CITY OF PITTSFIELD	425.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Parking
17528	11/1/23	RAINBOW DISTRIBUTING COMPANY INC	122.90	040 ADMIN	Admin	Water
17529	11/1/23	THE COOPER CENTER, LLC	8,636.10	040 ADMIN	Admin	Rent
17530	11/1/23	WB MASON COMPANY INC	174.74	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
17531	11/8/23	BECKS PRINTING	799.00	725 MASSTECH/DE	Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services - PITTSFIELD	Printing
17532	11/8/23	BERKSHIRES TOMORROW, INC.	9,360.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Software Lease
17533	11/8/23	BERKSHIRE HEALTH SYSTEMS	14,391.32	653 BRPC/INSREB	BRPC Insurance Reimbursement - Covid-19	120922 VACCINE CLINIC REIMBURSEMENT
17534	11/8/23	VALERIE BIRD	358.94	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17535	11/8/23	MATTHEW BRYAN	51.48	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form

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17536	11/8/23	BRITNEY DANIALS	103.32	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17537	11/8/23	SARAH DEJESUS	457.50	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17538	11/8/23	GABRIELLE DIMASSIMO	320.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17539	11/8/23	LESLIE DRAGER	646.38	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17540	11/8/23	SAMANTHA ELLIOTT	23.65	734 NCOA/VAC	National Council on Aging - Vaccine Initiative	Expenses
17541	11/8/23	EDWARD FAHEY	237.33	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17542	11/8/23	KAMARA FLASCHER	320.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17543	11/8/23	FULL CIRCLE TECHNOLOGIES INC	4,800.00	722 EOAF/OP	Executive Office for Administration & Finance - Online Permitting Upgrade	BKT BLDG PERMIT SOFTWARE UPGRADE
17544	11/8/23	GEMINI CREATIVE LLC	600.00	690 DCR/OUTRECWEB	Department of Conservation and Recreation - Outdoor Recreation Website - State Earmark ARPA	Subcontractor
17545	11/8/23	H TERRY DESIGNS LLC	260.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	BRPC WEBSITE MAINTENANCE
17546	11/8/23	KATHRYN HEEDER HOCKER	1,785.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17547	11/8/23	SETH JENKINS	336.61	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17548	11/8/23	MARINELLA LAMONACA ROMAY	180.00	725 MASSTECH/DE	Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services - PITTSFIELD	Translation Services
17549	11/8/23	KELLIE MEISL	275.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17550	11/8/23	MAEGAN MOYNAHAN	1,156.25	610 HRIA	Health Resources in Action (HRIA) Grey to Green	Subcontractor

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17551	11/8/23	MUTZ, ANN MARIE	1,000.00	646 DPH/MASSCALL3	Department of Public Health MASS CALL 3B - Substance Misuse Prevention Grant Program - Implementation	Subcontractor
17552	11/8/23	NEIWPC	95.00	650 DPH/SS	Public Health Excellence for Shared Services	SOIL EVALUATOR MAKEUP EXAM 111623 - CEASAR, M
17553	11/8/23	NEW ENGLAND NEWSPAPERS, INC	207.60	733.01 MassDOT/SS4A	MassDOT - Safe Streets and Roads for All Action Plan - Leadership Commitment and Goal Setting	COMMUNICATIONS
17554	11/8/23	ANDREW OTTOSON	145.63	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17555	11/8/23	KENDALL, SAMANTHA	457.50	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17556	11/8/23	SAVIDA HEALTH	1,900.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17557	11/8/23	SERVICENET, INC	852.27	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17558	11/8/23	SHAMIA SHEPHERD	1,000.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17559	11/8/23	LYDIA SHULMAN	97.60	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17560	11/8/23	NANCY SLATTERY	402.85	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17561	11/8/23	SPECTRUM HEALTH SYSTEMS	1,542.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17562	11/8/23	JAZU STINE	9.50	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17563	11/8/23	ELIZABETH STRICKLER	2,866.67	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17564	11/8/23	COLIN SYKES	308.07	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17565	11/8/23	TPX COMMUNICATIONS	1,324.74	040 ADMIN	Admin	Telephone
17566	11/8/23	VALLEY GREEN SHREDDING, LLC	85.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Recycling
17567	11/8/23	WB MASON COMPANY INC	202.30	040 ADMIN	Admin	Office Supplies

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17568	11/8/23	TD CARD SERVICES	94.97	040 ADMIN	Admin	Payment
17569	11/15/23	SEEGER WEISS LLP	7,952.60	319 ROR	Rest of River	Legal
17570	11/15/23	ADELSON & COMPANY PC	13,000.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Audit
17571	11/15/23	BACH HARRISON, LLC	375.00	646 DPH/MASSCALL3	Department of Public Health MASS CALL 3B - Substance Misuse Prevention Grant Program - Implementation	PNA REPORTS
17572	11/15/23	JUAN BAENA	1,383.58	737 COMM/ARTBERK23	Communities/Organizations - Cultural Districts - ArtWeek	2023 ARTWEEK PHOTOS
17573	11/15/23	BLUE 20/20	199.15	040 ADMIN	Admin	Vision Insurance
17574	11/15/23	MONASIA CEASAR	185.50	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17575	11/15/23	FULL CIRCLE TECHNOLOGIES INC	7,200.00	722 EOAF/OP	Executive Office for Administration & Finance - Online Permitting Upgrade	OPNMB BLDG PERMIT SOFTWARE UPGRADE
17576	11/15/23	DANIEL HASSETT	212.97	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17577	11/15/23	LAMAR COMPANIES	2,200.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	COMMUNICATIONS
17578	11/15/23	MCKESSON MEDICAL - SURGICAL	6,902.07	653 BRPC/INSREB	BRPC Insurance Reimbursement - Covid-19	2023/2024 VACCINE SUPPLIES
17579	11/15/23	MIRICK O'CONNELL	90.00	545 DHCD/DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance 2022	PROF LEGAL SVCS (R-ROR)
17580	11/15/23	ALEJANDRA BRENDA NOZYCE	320.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17581	11/15/23	LINDSEY ROSA	2,430.00	720 NEA/MCLA	National Endowment for the Arts - Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	Subcontractor
17582	11/15/23	SOURCEPASS	660.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Computer Software
17583	11/15/23	STEPHANIE ZOLLSHAN	600.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17584	11/15/23	MASS STATE BOARD OF RETIREMENT	12,183.86	---	---	Retirement
17585	11/15/23	TD CARD SERVICES	3,985.78	040 ADMIN	Admin	November 2023 Credit Card Payment - Credit Card Detail will be on Next Report

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17586	11/16/23	PROPRIETORS LODGE	2,593.80	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	MEETING
17587	11/16/23	WAMC NORTHEAST PUBLIC RADIO	960.00	737 COMM/ARTBERK23	Communities/Organizations - Cultural Districts - ArtWeek	Advertising
17588	11/21/23	1BERKSHIRE	1,000.00	737 COMM/ARTBERK23	Communities/Organizations - Cultural Districts - ArtWeek	2023 ARTWEEK SUPPORT
17589	11/21/23	JUAN BAENA	150.00	737 COMM/ARTBERK23	Communities/Organizations - Cultural Districts - ArtWeek	2023 ARTWEEK PHOTOS
17590	11/21/23	LAMAR COMPANIES	375.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Advertising
17591	11/21/23	CHRISTINA LANE	8,000.00	690 DCR/OUTRECWEB	Department of Conservation and Recreation - Outdoor Recreation Website - State Earmark ARPA	Subcontractor
17592	11/21/23	MACFARLANE OFFICE PRODUCTS, INC.	533.99	040 ADMIN	Admin	Copying
17593	11/21/23	MHOA	75.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	COMMUNICATIONS
17594	11/21/23	NONPROFIT CENTER OF THE BERKSHIRES, INC	1,000.00	708 DONATIONS/BFF	Donations to BRPC	Advertising
17595	11/21/23	PITNEY BOWES GLOBAL FINANCIAL SVCS LLC	148.05	040 ADMIN	Admin	Postal Meter
17596	11/21/23	rites of passage and empowerment inc	6,250.00			
17597	11/21/23	THE COOPER CENTER, LLC	1,643.24	040 ADMIN	Admin	Utilities
17598	11/21/23	VALLEY GREEN SHREDDING, LLC	85.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Recycling
17599	11/21/23	DONOVAN O'CONNOR & DODIG, LLP	390.00	716 EPA/RLF2	Environmental Protection Agency Revolving Loan Fund 2022	Legal
17600	11/30/23	MARIA ARIAS	960.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17601	11/30/23	VOID		VOID	VOID	VOID

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17602	11/30/23	VOID		VOID	VOID	VOID
17603	11/30/23	BERKSHIRE THEATRE GROUP	500.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	RENTAL DEPOSIT - HEALING COMMUNITIES STUDY-FILM & PANEL
17604	11/30/23	CITY OF PITTSFIELD	500.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17605	11/30/23	FULL CIRCLE TECHNOLOGIES INC	3,200.00	722 EOAF/OP	Executive Office for Administration & Finance - Online Permitting Upgrade	Windsor Upgrade; One Time Upgrade Fee
17606	11/30/23	KATE HILL TAPIA	197.76	---	Varied Projects	Expense Form
17607	11/30/23	MASS ASSOCIATION OF PLANNING DIRECTORS	90.00	545 DHCD/DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance 2022 - North Adams Open Space Rec Plan	MAPD MEMBERSHIP DUES = CJHOSS 2023 2024
17608	11/30/23	MUTZ, ANN MARIE	1,000.00	646 DPH/MASSCALL3	Department of Public Health MASS CALL 3B - Substance Misuse Prevention Grant Program - Implementation	Subcontractor
17609	11/30/23	OUTPOST LLC	6,125.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Subcontractor
17610	11/30/23	QUALPRINT	944.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	FACES OF NALOXONE CAMPAIGN BANNERS (6) - PTS
17611	11/30/23	SHAMIA SHEPHERD	2,000.00	646 DPH/MASSCALL3	Department of Public Health MASS CALL 3B - Substance Misuse Prevention Grant Program - Implementation	Subcontractor
17612	11/30/23	VOID		VOID	VOID	VOID
17613	11/30/23	VOID		VOID	VOID	VOID
EFT	10/31/23	DELUXE FOR BUSINESS	582.93	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
EFT	11/16/23	UNANET TECHNOLOGIES	9,531.90	040 ADMIN	Admin	Timesheet Software
EFT	10/30/23	YOUR LOCAL EPIDEMIOLOGIST	50.00	284 BPHN/PHN	Public Health Nursing	NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

Total 489,771.88

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CREDIT CARD EXPENSES 10/1-10/31/23

Reference	Date	Date	Jrnl	Trans Description	Debit Amt	Credit Amt
CCARD	10/1/23	AMAZON.COM	180.89	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/1/23	AMAZON.COM	69.53	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/1/23	AMAZON.COM	401.01	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/1/23	META PLATFORMS INC	44.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Communications
CCARD	10/2/23	BJS WHOLESALE CLUB	32.08	010 GEN	General	MIIA Grant - Healthy Snacks
CCARD	10/2/23	UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	6.15	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Naloxone Kit Postage
CCARD	10/3/23	AMAZON.COM	0.30	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/3/23	BJS WHOLESALE CLUB	1,079.00	725.02 MassTech/DE-SBC	Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services - Southern Berkshire County	SBC OUTREACH EVENT GIFT CARDS
CCARD	10/4/23	STAPLES	315.53	734 NCOA/VAC	National Council on Aging - Vaccine Initiative	VACC CLINIC SIGNAGE
CCARD	10/5/23	BJS WHOLESALE CLUB	161.85	010 GEN	General	MIIA Grant - Healthy Snacks
CCARD	10/5/23	UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	6.15	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Naloxone Kit Postage
CCARD	10/6/23	AMAZON.COM	35.57	010 GEN	General	MIIA Grant - Healthy Snacks
CCARD	10/6/23	UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	6.15	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Naloxone Kit Postage
CCARD	10/6/23	BIG Y SUPERMARKET	32.43	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	MEALS - PHOTOVOICE EVENT (PTS)
CCARD	10/8/23	BJS WHOLESALE CLUB	132.17	010 GEN	General	MIIA Grant - Healthy Snacks
CCARD	10/9/23	CODE42	9.99	040 ADMIN	Admin	Computer Software
CCARD	10/10/23	AMAZON.COM	46.70	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/11/23	AMAZON.COM	32.25	040 ADMIN	Admin	Computer Supplies
CCARD	10/11/23	BJS WHOLESALE CLUB	22.28	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/11/23	HOME DEPOT	84.96	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Check Register

For the Period From Oct 19, 2023 to Nov 30, 2023

Filter Criteria includes: Report order is by Date.

Check #	Date	Payee	Amount	Department	Department Description	Expense
CCARD	10/11/23	BIG Y SUPERMARKET	200.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	HEALING COMM GIFT CARDS
CCARD	10/12/23	ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS, INC	40.00	040 ADMIN	Admin	Communications
CCARD	10/12/23	AMAZON.COM	85.98	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/12/23	UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	20.60	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Naloxone Kit Postage
CCARD	10/12/23	BOOKSHOP.ORG	210.53	646 DPH/MASSCALL3	Department of Public Health MASS CALL 3B - Substance Misuse Prevention Grant Program	BOOKS FOR PYPC BOOK CLUB
CCARD	10/12/23	JIMINY PEAK MOUNTAIN RESORT LL	100.00	724 HAN/MVP	Hancock - Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness	EVENT SPACE DEPOSIT
CCARD	10/12/23	PADDLE.NET	12.00	734 NCOA/VAC	National Council on Aging - Vaccine Initiative	COMP SOFTWARE - WIDGET
CCARD	10/13/23	GOTPRINT.COM	164.24	040 ADMIN	Admin	BUSINESS CARDS -JAZUDANMATTOB
CCARD	10/14/23	STRAIGHT TALK WIRELESS	37.72	040 ADMIN	Admin	BRPC CELL PHONE SVC
CCARD	10/15/23	AMAZON.COM	79.95	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/16/23	AMAZON.COM	51.16	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/16/23	AMAZON.COM	36.96	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/17/23	EASEUS	31.82	040 ADMIN	Admin	UNLOCK IPAD SOFTWARE
CCARD	10/18/23	LULUS TINY GROCERY	84.00	350 BCBOHA/SUP	Berkshire County Boards of Health Association - Support Services	BCBOHA EXEC BOARD MEETING
CCARD	10/19/23	UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	8.50	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Naloxone Kit Postage
CCARD	10/19/23	BIG Y SUPERMARKET	500.00	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	HEALING COMM EVENT GIFT CARDS
CCARD	10/19/23	PAPA JOE'S RISTORANTE	93.05	610 HRIA/G2G	Health Resources in Action - Grey to Green	EVENT - G2G TRAINING
CCARD	10/20/23	AMAZON.COM	59.99	040 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/20/23	GOTPRINT.COM	85.68	41 ADMIN	Admin	BUSINESS CARDS -JAZUDANMATTOB
	10/20/23	BJS WHOLESALE CLUB	89.53	010 GEN	General	MIIA Grant - Healthy Snacks

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Check Register

For the Period From Oct 19, 2023 to Nov 30, 2023

Filter Criteria includes: Report order is by Date.

Check #	Date	Payee	Amount	Department	Department Description	Expense
CCARD	10/20/23	COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF WESTERN MA	250.00	668 PHIWM/RECB	Public Health Institute of Western MA - Racial equity Capacity Building Phase 2 - Women of Color Health Equity Collective	RACIAL EQUITY MEETING
CCARD	10/22/23	AMAZON.COM	118.11	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	PTSFA OUTR SPEC SUPPLIES (PTS)
CCARD	10/23/23	HEWLETT-PACKARD COMPANY	4,285.33	42 ADMIN	Admin	COMP EQU-LAPTOP & DOCK STATION
CCARD	10/23/23	META PLATFORMS INC	36.61	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Communications
CCARD	10/24/23	DUN & BRADSTREET	1,556.10	43 ADMIN	Admin	Subscription
CCARD	10/24/23	AMAZON.COM	55.26	44 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/24/23	CONSTANT CONTACT, INC	81.00	45 ADMIN	Admin	NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION
CCARD	10/24/23	WRITESONIC	20.00	690 DCR/OUTRECWEB	Department of Conservation and Recreation - Outdoor Recreation Website - State Earmark ARPA	AI FOR OUTRECWEB DESCR
CCARD	10/25/23	AMAZON.COM	133.33	46 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/26/23	HEWLETT-PACKARD COMPANY	-243.63	47 ADMIN	Admin	COMP EQU-LAPTOP & DOCK STATION - Credit For Tax
CCARD	10/26/23	AMAZON.COM	72.62	48 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	10/26/23	UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE	31.65	606 BMC/PTSFA	Boston Medical Center - Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities	Naloxone Kit Postage
TOTAL:			11,087.08	11087.08		

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Environmental Review Report

December 6, 2022

SUBJECT: Transmission Right-of Way Reliability Project
EOEEA#: 16567
LOCATION: Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton and Hinsdale
REVIEW TYPE: DEIR
PROPONENT: NSTAR d/b/a Eversource Energy
COMMENTS DUE: December 8, 2023

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Transmission Right-of-way Reliability Program (TRRP) is a long-term transmission system reliability and resiliency program that increases the maintained width of the WT-02 ROW to the easement edge. The intent of the program is to improve system reliability by reducing the number of tree fall-in risks and to create a sustainable environment comprised of vegetation that can safely coexist with the transmission lines. The long-term management objective of the TRRP is to manage these newly cleared areas as early succession habitat and encourage the growth of grasses, forbs, and shrubs.

It is important to note that, in addition to the WT-02 ROW, the Program-Wide Western Massachusetts TRRP includes 6 additional ROW's between 2023 and 2027 and another 11 ROW's with a timeline to be determined. The MEPA Office has determined that this does not constitute segmentation; however, in conversations with the MEPA Office, Eversource agreed to provide a list of cumulative impacts within the DEIR. Otherwise the DEIR is limited to the WT-02 ROW and any references to the "Project" refer to the WT-02 ROW.

The Project exceeds review thresholds set forth by the MEPA regulations requiring an ENF and a mandatory Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The request that MEPA allow the preparation of a Single EIR in accordance with 301 CMR 11.06(8) was denied and the preparation of a Draft EIR was required. The Secretary's Certificate stated that the EENF contained an inadequate alternatives analysis and a limited description of mitigation measures. The Secretary required that the DEIR provide further analysis of alternatives which avoid impacts to sensitive resources and describes a robust package of mitigation for project impacts. A carbon analysis of tree clearing activities should also be provided.

The Project will be within the existing Right-of-Way (ROW), which runs from the NY state border in Hancock through the towns of Lanesborough, Cheshire, and Dalton, to the Berkshire substation in Hinsdale. The Project area is approximately 14.5 linear miles within the ROW, which contains Line 393, a 345-kV overhead transmission line. The ROW is 300 feet wide and has an existing maintained width between 125-150 feet. Conditions within the Project area consist of upland and wetland areas with generally shrubby and herbaceous vegetation communities. Mature woody vegetation exists along the edges of the corridor. Water resources, including wetlands and streams, were delineated within the Project area in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022. The Project also crosses five priority habitats of state-listed species. Land use adjacent to or within the Project area includes agricultural, lower-density residential, and several land conservation areas.

Required Permits & MEPA Thresholds

The Project exceeds review thresholds set forth by the MEPA regulations requiring an ENF and mandatory Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Thresholds met or exceeded include Land and Wetlands,

Waterways and Tidelands due to the alteration of 50 or more acres of land, the alteration of one or more acres of bordering vegetated wetlands, and the alteration of 10 or more acres of any other wetlands.

State agency actions include a 401 Water Quality Certification by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and Orders of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act from the local conservation commissions of the five municipalities crossed by the Project. The Project also crosses an Environmental Justice (EJ) community in Lanesborough, which is designated due to income and is subject to the new MEPA requirements for EJ communities.

Project Design

Tree clearing will permanently convert 137 acres of forested land to successional scrub-shrub habitat; this includes 18 acres of bordering vegetated wetlands (BVW) and 11 acres of other wetlands (i.e., isolated vegetated wetlands [IVW], bordering land subject to flooding [BLSF], and riverfront area [RFA]). Further, the placement of construction mats to support equipment through wetlands during tree clearing activities will temporarily impact 8 acres of BVW and 3 acres of other wetlands.

The Project will permanently convert 9 acres of state-listed rare species designated Priority Habitat from forested land to successional scrub-shrub habitat as a result of tree clearing. Temporary impacts to 1 acre of Priority Habitat will result from the placement of construction mats.

According to the DEIR, Eversource has carefully designed and sited the proposed Project to avoid and minimize environmental impacts. Existing access roads and other improved surfaces will be used by vehicles and equipment to the maximum extent practicable. Where crossing wetlands or watercourses is unavoidable, temporary construction mats will be used to minimize impacts. Contractors will be required to use low-impact tree clearing methods that incorporate a variety of approaches to minimize site disturbance, including clearing by hand in certain sensitive areas where appropriate. Sediment and erosion controls and other best management practices (BMPs) will be employed to minimize the potential for any adverse indirect environmental impacts. Any disturbed areas will be restored to existing grades and allowed to revegetate with compatible species. Protection measures, including habitat enhancements and time-of-year restrictions, are being developed with NHESP to minimize impacts to state-listed species and avoid a Take Determination.

Summary of Changes Since the EENF Filing

Project design changes since the filing of the EENF have included the following:

- Previously proposed wetland and stream crossings (and associated construction matting) were reviewed to identify locations where these temporary impacts can be eliminated. Some crossings were eliminated as a result of this effort.
- One off-ROW access road at Taylor Road was eliminated.
- Wetland delineations and cultural resources due diligence were conducted along off-ROW access roads. The cultural resources due diligence report was scheduled to be submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) in November 2023.
- The Appalachian Trail crossing was reviewed with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Eversource added construction matting at the crossing and prepared an Appalachian Trail Protection Plan based on coordination with DCR and other interested stakeholders.

- The proposed crossing of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail was reviewed with DCR. An off-ROW access road was identified that avoids crossing the rail trail by equipment.
- Eversource has coordinated with the Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) to develop an off-site compensatory wetland mitigation plan.
- The existing tree line within the ROW was refined based on updated aerial photographic imagery. Aerial interpretation was then spot-checked in the field to confirm existing conditions. This resulted in a refinement of the proposed tree removal impact areas.
- A light detection and ranging (LiDAR) survey and modeling of the ROW were performed to identify trees at risk of striking the Line 393 infrastructure, both currently and within a 40-year timeframe (the expected life span of the existing line). This analysis was used as part of an Alternatives Analysis to assess different vegetation management widths and led to the adoption of the “100-foot Modified Alternative,” which consists of clearing trees up to 100 feet from the outer conductor, except in specific areas where this width could be reduced due to a low risk of tree fall in. In some locations, the reduction in tree removal areas allowed for a reduction in the placement within sensitive areas.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

To evaluate alternatives for tree removal limits that balance the stated project goal and minimize impacts to the environment, Eversource conducted a LiDAR survey and modeling of the ROW to identify trees at risk of striking the Line 393 infrastructure, both currently and within a 40-year timeframe. Eversource was then able to compare the number of trees that would remain a fall-in risk under various tree clearing scenarios, including:

- No Action Alternative – the WT-02 corridor would continue to be maintained at its current width;
- 50-foot Alternative – the WT-02 corridor would be widened to 50 feet from the outer conductor or to the edge of Eversource’s easement, whichever is less;
- 75-foot Alternative – the WT-02 corridor would be widened to 75 feet from the outer conductor or to the edge of Eversource’s easement, whichever is less;
- 100-foot Alternative (Preferred Alternative presented in the EENF) - the WT-02 corridor would be widened to 100 feet from the outer conductor or to the edge of Eversource’s easement, whichever is less; and
- 100-foot Modified Alternative (DEIR Preferred Alternative) – the WT-02 corridor would typically be widened to 100 feet from the outer conductor or to the edge of Eversource’s easement, whichever is less, except in specific locations where the LiDAR analysis indicates that risk of tree fall-ins is low (e.g., due to topography).

Based on the results of the Alternatives Analysis, Eversource selected the 100-foot Modified Alternative as the new Preferred Alternative to the Project, as it minimizes tree fall-in risk compared to the No Action, 50-foot and 75-foot Alternatives, while also reducing environmental impacts compared to the 100-foot Alternative.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Tree removal will permanently convert 122.7 acres of forested land to successional scrub-shrub habitat; this includes 14.4 acres of bordering vegetated wetlands (BVW) and 11.0 acres of other wetland

resource areas (i.e., isolated vegetated wetlands [IVW], bordering land subject to flooding [BLSF], and riverfront area [RFA]). Further, the placement of construction mats to support equipment through wetlands during tree removal activities will temporarily impact 5.9 acres of BVW and 2.2 acres of other wetland resource areas.

The Project will permanently convert 7.0 acres of state-listed rare species designated Priority Habitat from forested land to successional scrub-shrub habitat as a result of tree clearing. Temporary impacts to 1.0 acre of Priority Habitat will result from the placement of construction mats; however, because NHESP has determined that the activity (with conditions) will not result in a “Take” of a listed species the MEPA threshold for rare species is not triggered.

SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES

According to the DEIR, Eversource has carefully designed and sited the proposed Project to avoid and minimize environmental impacts. Existing access roads and other improved surfaces will be used by vehicles and equipment to the maximum extent practicable. Where crossing wetlands or watercourses is unavoidable, temporary construction mats will be used to minimize impacts. Contractors will be required to use low-impact tree removal methods that incorporate a variety of approaches to minimize site disturbance, including clearing by hand in certain sensitive areas where appropriate. Sediment and erosion controls and other best management practices (BMPs) will be employed to minimize the potential for adverse indirect impacts to water quality and wetland functions and values. Disturbed areas will be stabilized appropriately and allowed to revegetate with compatible species. Protection measures, including habitat enhancements and time-of-year (TOY) restrictions, have been developed in coordination with NHESP to minimize impacts to, and avoid a “Take” of, state-listed rare species.

Compensatory Mitigation

A compensatory mitigation plan, consisting of the permanent preservation of 170 acres of land is proposed as the primary means of compensatory wetland mitigation, in consultation with the MassDEP Western Regional Office (WERO) and the local conservation commissions. Eversource has teamed with the Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) to select an approximately 182-acre developable parcel to purchase and protect from development in perpetuity as compensation for WT-02 wetland and waterbody resource impacts. The property is located in the Town of Lanesborough, less than 500 feet from the WT-02 ROW. The property is undeveloped and has a mix of wetland and upland habitats, intermittent headwater streams, and Priority Habitat for Rare Species. The DEIR includes a comparison of the Project’s impacts and the mitigation site area.

With Eversource’s funding, BNRC is purchasing this property, which will provide a critical link between adjacent conservation lands to the west and the east and will allow the further development of BNRC’s High Roads Initiative, which is intended to develop a continuous public trail that allows for eastwest connection between the Taconic Crest Trail and the Ashuwillticook Trail, elevating outdoor recreational opportunities in the Berkshires and expanding access to nature for underserved communities.

It is important to note that this property is also crossed by an existing overhead transmission line easement operated by another regional utility company; all land within the easement has been eliminated from the Project mitigation calculations, as the utility will be allowed to continue to maintain and improve their corridor in accordance with their easement.

Environmental Justice Communities

According to the DEIR, Eversource will continue outreach efforts to EJ populations, municipal officials, and landowners. To date, the following EJ commitments have been made by Eversource as a response to concerns raised to date by the community:

- Eversource has committed to donating 50 cords of firewood each to the Lanesborough and Hancock communities, acquired from trees removed as part of this Project. In coordination with the Department of Public Works (DPWs) of each town, the wood will be provided to residents free of charge to pick up at the DPW facility in each town.
- The proposed compensatory wetland mitigation site is located in Lanesborough, adjacent to the previously mapped EJ community; it is also located within 2.5 miles of existing EJ communities in Pittsfield. This property will offer recreational trail opportunities to the public, expanding access to nature for these nearby underserved communities.

State-Listed Rare Species Habitat

Tree removal in designated Priority Habitats for Rare Species will result in the permanent conversion of 7.0 acres of forested land to scrub-shrub habitat. Utilization of construction matting for access to work areas will result in 6.1 acres of temporary impacts to Priority Habitats.

A survey was conducted to document locations of dwarf scouring rush populations in April 2022, following an approved survey protocol and scientific collection permit with NHESP. According to the DEIR, it was determined that no dwarf scouring rush individuals/populations exist within its associated Priority Habitat within the Project area; therefore, direct impacts to this species will be avoided. NHESP determined that the following protection measures must be implemented to avoid a Take of other state-listed species that may be present within the Project area. In addition to these measures, a contractor training program will be implemented to educate all contractor personnel on species life history, identification, and protection protocols.

Jefferson Salamander

No work will occur within Priority Habitat for the Jefferson salamander between February 1 – October 31 of any year, unless otherwise approved by NHESP. To enhance habitat within 100 feet of certified and confirmed vernal pools within the Priority Habitat for this species, Eversource will strategically place five-foot to eight-foot sections of coarse woody debris under the guidance of an on-site wildlife biologist.

Little Brown Bat

No work will occur within Priority Habitat for the little brown bat between May 1 – July 31 of any year, unless otherwise approved by NHESP.

Wood Turtle

No work will occur within Priority Habitat for the wood turtle during the turtle active season, between April 15 – October 31 of any year, unless otherwise approved by NHESP. If any work is proposed during the turtle active season, a Turtle Protection Plan must be submitted for review and written approval by NHESP. The Protection Plan must be developed and implemented by a NHESP-approved qualified biologist. Any changes to this Plan must be pre-approved by the NHESP in writing.

Dwarf Scouring Rush

A pre-construction field survey for dwarf scouring rush was conducted, in accordance with protocols approved by NHESP. On April 14, 2022 it was determined that no dwarf scouring rush species exist within its associated Priority Habitat within the Project area; therefore, any direct impacts to dwarf

scouring rush as a result of the Project will be avoided. A detailed report of the survey effort was submitted to NHESP on August 3, 2022.

RESPONSES TO BRPC COMMENTS ON THE EENF

BRPC Comment: BRPC encourages the proponent to work with the Towns and to work with Town Managers/Administrators, DPW, and other boards in addition to the conservation commissions when determining compensatory compensation.

Response: A compensatory mitigation plan has been developed in consultation with MassDEP, the local conservation commissions, and other stakeholders to mitigate permanent wetland conversion. The plan and its development are described in Section 7.2.3 of the DEIR.

BRPC Comment: There are a number of ongoing activities that the proponent should take into consideration as they may identify potential sites for compensatory mitigation, such as BRPC's Nonpoint Source Regional Coordinator, the Berkshire Clean Cold Connected Restoration Partnership, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection project for Pathogen and Total Nitrogen Pollution Reduction in the Housatonic River Watershed.

Response: Eversource's consultant has been actively coordinating with the Berkshire Natural Resource Council to develop the compensatory mitigation plan described in Section 7.2.3 of this DEIR.

BRPC Comment: On the 24 maps in Attachment 2, show the width of the line, which is 30-35 feet between outer conductors, more accurately, consistent with the map's scale of one inch = 100 feet. This would show the line as a thin stripe rather than a line.

Response: Attachment 2 of the DEIR contains the updated WT-02 TRRP MEPA DEIR Map Set. The updated map set illustrates the width of the transmission line as a thin stripe rather than a line to be consistent with the map's scale of one inch = 100 feet.

BRPC Comment: Provide additional information regarding the compensatory mitigation plan that will be developed in consultation with MassDEP, the towns, and the local conservation commissions to mitigate for permanent wetland conversion.

Response: The proposed compensatory mitigation plan is described in Section 7.2.3 of this DEIR and consists of the permanent preservation of 170 acres of undeveloped land in Lanesborough.

BRPC Comment: Clarify how areas will be converted to palustrine scrub-shrub (PSS) and whether areas will be restored with native seed mix application and/or shrub plantings.

Response: Within the Wire Zone and Border Zone, vegetation that has mature heights greater than 15 feet and 30 feet, respectively, is considered incompatible. Expanding the existing, maintained (cleared) width of the ROW to an average width of 200-250 feet will involve removing those non-compatible trees and shrubs, leaving the remaining low growing shrub cover. Upon removal of construction mats, areas will be allowed to revegetate, as the existing seed stock in the soil will remain intact. No shrub plantings are proposed, as access for watering is difficult in these remote ROWs and, therefore, survivability is expected to be low. Additional restoration efforts will be implemented, if and as necessary, at the discretion of a wetland scientist and may include smoothing or raking of any ruts, seeding with a wetland

seed mix, or addition of straw mulch. Restoration of the Project corridor is described in Section 2.2.3 and Attachment 8 of the DEIR (Eversource BMP Manual).

BRPC Comment: Clarify how the newly cleared areas will be managed as early succession habitat, including how the growth of grasses, forbs, and shrubs will be encouraged as stated within the EENF.

Response: Eversource will continue to manage its maintained ROW per its integrated vegetation management plan (see Attachment 8), which aims to enhance suitable habitat for compatible low-growing species.

BRPC Comment: Clarify whether any temporary access roads will be needed, and how they will be revegetated if applicable.

Response: The majority of the ROW includes well maintained gravel access roads, which will be used to the maximum extent practicable. However, access routes to specific tree removal areas within the ROW may require mowing and tree removal equipment on unimproved surfaces. The access routes will be used solely by offroad vehicles with the ability to travel overland without improved roads. Off-road vehicles include tree harvesting equipment such as tree fellers, forwarders and skidders, and various types of mowers. Access routes are temporary and will not be improved or maintained either during or after tree work. Generally, stump removal or grading will not be required to establish these access routes. Temporary stabilization measures (e.g., mulch or hydroseed) will be implemented immediately as appropriate in any areas of exposed soil that will be temporarily inactive. Permanent stabilization measures (e.g., loam and permanent seeding) will be implemented immediately in any areas of exposed soil where construction activities have permanently ceased.

BRPC Comment: Clarify what methods will be used to minimize the potential for the introduction of invasive species.

Response: While tree work is in progress, Eversource will apply invasive species management techniques to minimize the introduction of invasive plant species within the Project work zone through the use of BMPs that will include the following: 1) requiring that the equipment and vehicles arrive at the work site clean and free of soil and debris capable of transporting seeds or other propagules; 2) requiring the construction contractor to use weed-free straw bales for sediment barrier installations and/or mulch; and 3) using weedfree seed mixes, if needed, for restoration.

BRPC Comment: Clarify the proposed plan to control potential invasive species.

Response: Eversource understands the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's desire to avoid the spread of invasive species. However, based on extensive experience with electrical transmission and distribution maintenance projects, the reduction or elimination of existing invasive species populations from utility ROWs is typically impractical when extensive populations exist within and, in particular, adjacent to the managed ROW. Eversource's lawful ability to manage site conditions is limited to the boundaries of legal easements. Where significant populations of invasives currently exist, the application of herbicide or mechanical removal will ultimately be ineffective, and the best course of action is to implement the BMPs listed in response to limiting the introduction and spread of invasives as a result of Project activities.

BRPC Comment: Clarify whether EJ communities will continue to be engaged as onsite activities occur.

Response: Prior to the commencement of work, Eversource representatives will continue to contact municipal officials within the Project area to advise of the upcoming activities. Additional pop-up events and open houses (both public and virtual) will be offered prior to the commencement of work to update the local EJ community and abutting landowners and residents along the corridors in each municipality about project details and development. Door-to-door outreach will also continue through the Project's lifecycle, and communications tools, such as a website, hotline, and email portal, will be established to allow for direct communication between these stakeholders and Eversource/the Project team, allowing for the prompt resolution and mitigation of any issues. Additionally, site visits for landowners and abutting residents will be offered and encouraged. Finally, a data management system will be maintained by Eversource / the Project team to catalog questions, commitments, and requests for future resolution.

BRPC STAFF COMMENTS ON DEIR

Comments are intended for incorporation into the Final EIR to provide greater clarity and/or improve the planning and design of the Project.

1. BRPC understands that vegetation greater than 15 feet-30 feet is considered incompatible within the Wire Zone and Border Zone. BRPC further understands that expanding the existing, maintained (cleared) width of the ROW will involve removing those non-compatible trees and shrubs, leaving the remaining low growing shrub cover. It is stated with the DEIR that upon removal of construction mats areas will be allowed to revegetate and no shrub plantings are proposed because access for watering is difficult in these remote areas and survivability is expected to be low.

Mitigation measures for upland areas are described with the DEIR and include seeding, covering with a layer of straw mulch, and erosion controls. The Final EIR should include greater detail with regard to how the areas will be stabilized and ensure that they are successfully converted to scrub-shrub habitat providing the habitat that would be expected.

2. BRPC previously commented requesting clarification of how the newly cleared areas will be managed as early succession habitat, including how the growth of grasses, forbs, and shrubs will be encouraged. The response in the DEIR stated that Eversource will continue to manage its maintained ROW per its integrated vegetation management plan which aims to enhance suitable habitat for compatible low-growing species.

The Final EIR should include, at a minimum, a summary of the measures that will be taken as part of this project rather than referring to a regular maintenance plan.

3. The Final EIR should specifically address mitigation in the form of culvert and stream enhancements, which was requested within the Secretary's Certificate. The DEIR is deficient with regard to both culverts and stream enhancements and should to be addressed in the Final EIR.
4. As requested by the MEPA Office, the DEIR includes a list of each ROW segment managed by Eversource in Western Massachusetts, along with a conceptual, quantitative overview of impacts from the program in its entirety. The TRRP Western Massachusetts Program-Wide cumulative impacts include an estimated 260.7 total acres of tree removal within the 200-ft Riverfront Area. Tree removal within the WT-02 ROW totals 7.1 acres.

Measures proposed within the Final DEIR to avoid, minimize, and mitigate potential adverse impacts to surface waters include maintaining existing low-growing, compatible vegetation in place on stream banks to the extent practicable and land preservation.

Tree removal on riverbanks would be expected to result in increased water temperatures and alterations to habitat, at a minimum. The Final EIR should address measures to minimize impacts to riverbank and proposed mitigation measures that specifically address the impacts resulting from the project.

5. BRPC previously commented requesting clarification regarding what methods will be used to minimize the potential for the introduction of invasive species and control potential invasive species. BRPC understands that Eversource's lawful ability to manage site conditions is limited to the boundaries of legal easements.

Invasive species management techniques are listed in the DEIR but are limited to the period of time while tree work is in progress. The Final EIR should clarify that these techniques, when applicable, will be utilized once tree work is completed. The Final EIR should address whether there will be a greater likelihood that invasive species will spread as a result of this project. If this project is expected to result in the expansion of existing invasive species the Final EIR should include potential mitigation measures (including financial measures).

6. BRPC understands that no work will occur within Priority Habitat for the wood turtle during the turtle active season, between April 15 – October 31 of any year, unless otherwise approved by NHESP. BRPC further understands that if any work is proposed during the turtle active season, a Turtle Protection Plan must be submitted for review and written approval by NHESP.

BRPC remains concerned with regard to potential impacts to wood turtle habitat and nesting sites. The Final EIR should provide an additional explanation regarding the impacts to wood turtle habitat that will occur regardless of the time of year that the work will be conducted. The Final EIR should provide information regarding the minimization and mitigation of impacts to habitat AND the resulting impacts to wood turtles.



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

MALCOLM FICK, Chair
JOHN DUVAL, Vice-Chair
SHEILA IRVIN, Clerk
BUCK DONOVAN, Treasurer
THOMAS MATUSZKO, A.I.C.P.
Executive Director

December 7, 2023

Massachusetts Broadband Institute
Attn: MBI Public Comment
75 North Drive
Westborough, MA 01581

Below are the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's comments on the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan. Paragraph numbers are related to and refer to specific sections of the Plan.

State Digital Equity Plan Comments

2.1. Unified Vision for Digital Equity in Massachusetts

Current: Every resident in Massachusetts has high-speed, high-quality internet availability and can confidently adopt and use the internet regardless of who they are or where they live. This universal connectivity will ensure that everyone has the support they need to enjoy full personal, civic, and economic digital participation throughout their lives with safety and security.

Comment: The current vision statement emphasizes "availability" without addressing the equally if not more critical challenges for covered populations of "affordability" and "literacy." By emphasizing availability -- and presuming that this and universal connectivity "will ensure" covered populations' full participation -- leads the State to focus on the most logistically complex aspect of the digital divide - broadband infrastructure - while overlooking more realistic and achievable goals related to lowering the cost of high-speed, high-quality internet for all residents and ensuring all residents have the knowledge and skills they need to access the economic, civic, educational, health, and personal opportunities high-speed internet provides."

2.2.1. Grant Programs

Comment: Fourteen of 32 Berkshire County cities and towns chose the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to be their digital equity planning consultant to develop municipal plans and six others chose VHB. However, 12 communities are not participating in the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's planning grant and, therefore, are at risk of being left out of future funding through the Partnership program. Berkshire County is the most rural area of the Commonwealth and the communities have limited capacity to stand up new or expand current programming. We recommend that MBI consider incentivizing regional collaboration and fostering the formation of regional digital equity coalitions that span municipal boundaries and include representation from key sectors such as healthcare, workforce development, and higher education. Since municipalities may not always see digital equity as core to their work, having funding go directly to community-based organizations ensures programs more quickly reach the people who need them, reinforces the importance of coalition-building as a successful strategy, builds sustainability, and helps successful models more readily be replicated statewide.

Comment: BRPC is honored to be a host site for a Lead for America Fellow. The American Connection Corp fellow brings invaluable knowledge and skills and amplifies the scope of the municipal planning process. Regional Planning Commissions will struggle to find as-qualified personnel to continue digital equity work beyond 2024 to assist with responsibilities outlined later in the report (e.g., 5.3.1: Maintaining the Plan As a Living Document and 5.3.2. Ongoing Program Evaluation and Key Performance Indicators Tracking) once the ACC fellow's placement expires. We strongly encourage MBI to continue funding the ACC Fellowship Program to support a regional coalition as described above. BRPC supports the goal of BEP3. Lead for America: (pg. 146) to expand the program to mid-career professionals. Later in the report, (5.2.3. Proposed Program Key Performance Indicators) MBI notes that the "number of fellows hired in digital equity jobs after their fellowship ends" will be a KPI, but for RPAs or small, rural municipalities, without grant funding this is an unsupportable proposition.

Comment: BRPC recommends that MBI reimagines three of the five Partnership Program areas.

1. Connectivity Initiative for Economic Hardship: This initiative may require additional feedback from homeless individuals to ensure they agree that hotspots will enhance their lives and can be safely transported to new environments without the risk of them going missing or being broken, stolen, or destroyed.
2. Device Distribution, Refurbishment Program, Education: This program should include a training component so that organizations that receive refurbished devices to distribute are also encouraged to identify 1-2 people from the covered populations they serve to be trained in device repair so that the program includes a workforce development component.
3. Wi-Fi Access Initiative: Developers and affordable housing providers appear to have many questions about this program, particularly about who will pay for it after Year 1. For this program to work and for developers to want to participate, they will need more information from MBI about what is required of them and who is responsible for ongoing and future maintenance.

2.2.3. Advancing Statewide Goals through Digital Equity

Comment: BRPC strongly supports the Economic and Workforce Development goals articulated in the SDEP.

Comment: Digital Equity Working Group – BRPC recommends MBI do more to connect Digital Equity Working Group members with the planning consultants working in their region. For example, BRPC was unaware that Carol Allman-Morton from Berkshire Community College was on the Digital Working Group until reading the SDEP and has not yet reached out to her to inform our municipal digital equity plans.

Comment: Under Education, BRPC suggests that "assess current curriculum and update to include digital skills" be further clarified to add from "grades K to 12."

Comment: Under Healthcare, BRPC believes that "developing a digital skill training

program" for healthcare workers is overly ambitious given the challenges of finding healthcare workers or requires a clearer explanation as to what this training would involve. It may be more efficient to educate healthcare workers about the relationship between digital equity and social determinants of health and then connecting patients/clients with outside digital support services offered by partner CBOs. BRPC also recommends the facilitation of jointly-operated regional centers of digital equity to facilitate people in covered populations having to go to a single rather than multiple locations to access a range of digital supports from computer classes to device distribution to private rooms where they can conduct secure telehealth or court sessions.

Comment: BRPC supports the Housing goals.

Comment: The goal to "Understand and fulfill infrastructure needs in rural areas" requires further explanation, given that many rural communities lack the capacity to develop municipal infrastructure and commercial internet service providers are uninterested in addressing rural infrastructure needs.

2.3. Measurable Objectives

Comment: BRPC supports the Plan's objectives

Comment: Under *Affordability and Market Competition in Massachusetts*, MBI cites the *Broadband Infrastructure Gap Networks Grant Program*, which will direct resources to address the critical digital needs of towns and cities, with a particular focus on communities with substantial low-income households and disadvantaged populations. However, based on BRPC's reading of this grant opportunity, we have little indication that competitor ISPs have an interest in or will be responsive to addressing the final unserved locations in rural communities, while municipalities are unable to take on the complexity of the grant requirements. We are therefore concerned that most of the money will be directed to concentrated urban communities while leaving scattered, more geographically challenging rural areas and their residents behind or left to their supporting a legacy provider, perpetuating monopoly environments and depressing future market competition.

3.2.4. Needs and Barriers by Covered Population

Comment: While households with language barriers appear to be quite small in the Berkshires, we see strong evidence of those numbers growing exponentially as more immigrants and refugees relocate to the Berkshires. This will mean that more intensive digital wraparound support will be needed for this population and potentially delivered in concert with major immigrant-serving organizations, who will require extra staff and/or support and training to be able to meet this need.

Comment: While the ACP Program helps lower the cost of internet for the most financially challenged households, many individuals and households in the Berkshires more accurately fall under the category of the working poor, meaning they do not qualify for ACP but still struggle to pay their internet bill. The SDEP demonstrates that people in the Berkshires pay more for internet and report lesser quality service, such that people just above ACP's income qualification levels are paying more than people in other parts of the Commonwealth. For these individuals, there appear to be few options to help them lower their bills without the equivalent of a state subsidy or greater competition. It might therefore

be interesting to pilot creating a program that would lower internet bills for the working poor through a state-funded subsidy for a year in exchange for their taking and passing a vetted and approved digital literacy course, thereby linking digital skill-training that might help people improve their economic status with a rate reduction that helps them transition.

Comment: Rural residents rightly note (pg. 63) that small rural libraries are often less equipped to provide digital equity support than larger urban libraries. As such, rural Berkshire County libraries will likely need more funding and/or access to online resources elsewhere if they lack the staff, space, capacity, or devices to fully offer their residents the digital support they need.

Long-Term Outcomes by Statewide Goals

Comment: BRPC supports the long-term outcomes by Statewide Goals.

3.2.5. Regional Snapshots

Comment: BRPC supports the conclusions of the Regional Snapshot, while noting that attendance at the Berkshire County regional listening session was limited and should not be construed as being entirely representative of the region.

3.3. Digital Equity Gaps in Massachusetts

Comment: Overarching the recommendations in this section, BRPC recommends MBI develop a statewide searchable database that regional partners would need to help keep current pointing residents to digital services such as classes, including free online do-it-yourself courses, device distribution, speed tests, cybersecurity resources, and ACP enrollment. The alternative is having individual communities or regions create their own websites at significant cost to them, which is far less efficient than having MBI serve as the statewide hub all this data specific to its mandate.

Comment: BRPC requests that a Berkshire County organization such as Berkshire Community College be added to the list of Assets and Programs, citing for example: <https://www.berkshirecc.edu/academics/online-learning.php>

3.4.1. Assets Supporting Digital Equity in Massachusetts - Overview

Comment: BRPC supports the items noted in the Overview section.

5.2.1. Proposed Programs

Comment: BRPC supports the series of programs proposed by MBI to achieve the unified vision and produce digital equity in Massachusetts. BRPC recommends that MBI be more specific about how it intends to support the regional coalition that will need to be put in place to ensure that these proposed programs are carried out and goals achieved. At present, the process of "handing off" municipal digital equity plans from consultants to towns does not ensure that a stakeholder group is fully established nor that this group fully understands what its mandate is nor who or what agency it is beholden to for results. Likewise, without a stipend or other financial support for this group or coalition, there is a risk that existing staff at CBOs will be overstretched by this unfunded responsibility and, over time, lose interest in carrying the work forward.

5.3.1. Maintaining the Plan As a Living Document

Comment: BRPC strongly supports the recommendation in this section, especially providing access to key elements from the SDEP on a user-friendly website. See earlier note regarding website recommendation. However, as noted earlier in these comments, while it is admirable for MBI to aim to continue ongoing surveying, establish Advisory Committees, and support ongoing data collection and tracking (see footnote 91, pg. 94) without compensation for partner organization staff to do this work, it is unlikely to be sustainable.