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**A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region**

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**SAVE THE DATE**



**BRPC'S 5TH THURSDAY RETURNS!**

Save the date of May 30th for a 5th Thursday networking and educational event.

**Microtransit Presenters:**

Megan Rhodes, AICP - Franklin Regional Council of Governments  
Tate Coleman - Microtransit Program Director, TriTown Connector

4 pm - 6 pm at Mazzeo's Ristorante, 1015 South Street, Pittsfield  
(Program begins at 5 pm)  
hors d'oeuvres reception and cash bar

Tickets: \$15/person

[Get Tickets](#)

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**Staff Announcements, Employment Opportunities & Solicitation**

Join us in welcoming [Brett Roberts](#), Senior Housing Planner! Brett will support municipalities in tackling housing issues. Brett is originally from northern Indiana. He received his Master's in Public Affairs (MPA) with a concentration in Community and Economic Development from Indiana University - Bloomington. Brett's experiences include managing Indiana's water infrastructure revolving loan fund, planning and grant writing services for a rural four-county Council of Governments, and administering Community Development Block Grant funds in non-entitlement communities. He lives in Stockbridge with his husband Sam Vaught, the priest at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and their cat, Missy. They are excited to be near Sam's extended family in Sheffield and get to know Berkshire County and the rest of New England. [broberts@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:broberts@berkshireplanning.org), 413-442-1521 x25



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We are also thrilled to welcome **Sophie Carnes Jannen**, as a Public Health Nurse Educator. She starts today, April 1. The May Common Ground e-newsletter will have a full introduction.

### **Employment & Internships Opportunities:**

- [Public Health Community Social Worker](#)
  - [Digital Equity Internship](#)
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BRPC, in collaboration with the George B. Crane Memorial Center, seeks up to five temporary, individual contractors to serve as **Community Outreach Specialists** from April - January 2025. The specialists focus on reducing personal and systemic substance use-related risks for three priority communities in Pittsfield: BIPOC community members, Spanish-speakers, and young adults (18-25) not engaged in full-time college. 10-12 hours/month, flexible hours, \$320/month. To apply, submit a paragraph or two on why you are interested and your background/ experience to Andy Ottoson at [aottoson@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:aottoson@berkshireplanning.org) and Kellie Meisl at [the gbcmc1@gmail.com](mailto:the gbcmc1@gmail.com).

## **Grants, Opportunities & Announcements**

OIG Academy (Office of Inspector General) [upcoming classes](#).

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### **Clean Water Act Section 604b and 319 Grants - Due April 8 and April 24 (respectively)**

This program addresses water quality through non-point source pollution implementation projects. Think stormwater, think green infrastructure, think flood mitigation. This is federal grant funding through Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for planning and implementation. There is *no match* for either program. Contact BRPC for assistance with either grant proposal - we have funding to help! Both [RFRs are at this link](#). You can also just get in touch with Environmental & Energy Senior Planner [Courteny Morehouse](#), 413-442-1521 x26; we'll help you out!

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**Southern Berkshire Energy Efficiency Forum, April 10, 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.**

[Berkshire South Regional Community Center](#), Great Barrington

Join us for a dynamic panel discussion with experts to guide you through cost-saving measures for your home and vehicles. Learn practical tips and sustainable strategies to make your lifestyle more energy-efficient. Participants will have the opportunity to sign up for no-cost home energy assessments with HomeWorks and CET. **Free event, dinner provided, registration via [Eventbrite](#) required.**

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### **Culvert and Small Bridge Replacement Grant Opportunity - Division of Ecological Restoration (DER)**

The Division of Ecological Restoration (DER)'s Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grant Program and Training Site Initiative is seeking proposals from municipalities, local government units, and federally recognized and state acknowledged Tribes interested in replacing or removing undersized, perched, and/or degraded culverts or bridges in the public way and areas of high ecological value. **Applications are due Friday, April 12 at 4:00 p.m** Construction awards range from \$25,000 - \$400,000. Planning, permitting and/or construction activities: \$2,000,000 - \$3,000,000 for FY25.

- Application materials at: <https://www.commbuys.com/bs0/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-24-1046-DER-FWE01-99813>
  - Additional resources, including recently updated FAQs, can be found on DER's website here: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/culvert-replacement-municipal-assistance-grant-program>
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The [Municipal Fiber Grant Program](#) assists municipalities with the construction of municipal fiber broadband infrastructure; match required. Applications are due by **April 12**. Contact [Sean Cronin](#), Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services, with questions.

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**Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant - Due April 24**

The State's biggest funding opportunity for climate adaptation and resilience is back and bigger than ever with \$7 million additional in the pot for inland flooding. For towns listed in Attachment M of the RFR there is *no match*. For everyone else, the match has been reduced to 10% this year. A good first step is to check out the [FY25 MVP Funding Round Webinar](#) on their [Action Grant Page](#). The deadline is coming up fast - if you're contemplating applying - contact Environmental & Energy Senior Planner [Courteny Morehouse](#), 413-442-1521 x26 soon!

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Massachusetts Municipal Association Western and Rural Mass Conference  
April 27, 8:30 - 1:00, Hotel Northampton. [Select Board Association Western and Rural Massachusetts Conference - Massachusetts Municipal Association \(MMA\)](#). Not a MMA Member? Call Anneke Craig to register via the phone Mon - Fri 9:00 - 5:00 (pay by check at the event): 413-426-7272 extension 104, [acraig@mma.org](mailto:acraig@mma.org)

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FY 2025 Woodland Partnership (WP) Grant Program to promote sustainable forestry and natural resource-based tourism or to increase forest conservation grants. Eligible applicants include municipalities that have voted to join the Woodlands Partnership and Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs), or regional environmental, cultural, or economic development organizations named as WP Board members, or working in the WP region. An information session will be held virtually on Wednesday April, 10th at 2:00 p.m. Email [Vanessa Farny](#), Forest & Land Grant Program Manager, MA Division of Conservation Services for the MS Teams invitation.  
Grant Deadline: Thursday, May 9 at 3:00 p.m.

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### May is Bay State Bike Month

Resources are available to help plan bike-friendly events: [www.massbike.org/bike-month](http://www.massbike.org/bike-month)

- Wednesday, May 1: [Massachusetts Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day](#)
- Sunday, May 5: [National Ride A Bike Day](#)
- May 13-19: Bike to Work Week
- Friday, May 17: Bike to Work Day

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### Community One Stop for Growth FY25 Round

The One Stop will begin accepting applications on May 6, 2024.

The submission deadline is June 5, 2024 at 11:59 p.m.

Log in at: [IGX system](#).

For more information visit [www.mass.gov/onestop](http://www.mass.gov/onestop).

Questions: [onestop@mass.gov](mailto:onestop@mass.gov).

BRPC staff are available to assist with EOIs and applications.



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## BERKSHIRE Funding Focus

Overwhelmed? Reach out to your BFF (Berkshire Funding Focus) for help navigating grant applications! Take a look at additional grant opportunities and resources on our website: [www.berkshirefundingfocus.org](http://www.berkshirefundingfocus.org).

## Community Planning

### District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program 2024 Projects

The DLTA Program enables BRPC staff to provide assistance to Berkshire County municipalities, with a focus on advancing municipal partnerships, planning for housing and growth, and supporting Community Compact and Housing Choice. The following projects have been accepted for 2024:

- Clarksburg - initiate Master Plan development (potential grant application match)
- Cheshire - finalize the Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Dalton - assist with zoning to meet housing needs
- Egremont - create a Housing Production Plan
- Great Barrington - update the Open Space and Recreation Plan (potential grant match)
- Lanesborough - prepare Master Plan (match to town and grant funding)
- Lee - completion of Hazard Mitigation planning
- Monterey - analyze housing needs and provide options for increased development

- North Adams - finalize Open Space and Recreation Plan
- North Adams - prepare short-term rental database and application process
- New Marlborough - guidance on affordable housing policies and strategies
- Peru - update Zoning Bylaw (match proposed to be provided by town)
- Pittsfield - update Open Space and Recreation Plan (potential grant application match)
- Pittsfield - Green Communities assistance
- Sheffield - assist with housing-related Zoning Bylaws (potential grant application match)
- Washington - update Zoning Bylaws (potential grant application match)
- West Stockbridge - finalize Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Windsor - prepare subdivision regulations and review housing zoning
- Williamstown - finalize Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Regional - Mobile Farmers' Market (match to grant funding)
- Regional - economic development (potential grant application match)
- Regional - shared services support (match to grant funding)
- Regional - Planning Board training

BRPC, along with fellow regional planning agencies across the Commonwealth, advocate for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding in each state budget. DLTA directly funds technical assistance for cities and towns on projects they can't take on alone. DLTA is uniquely flexible - supporting planning and implementation projects from zoning and housing production to economic development, resiliency, and more.



Above: Executive Directors including BRPC's own Thomas Matuszko, and staff from Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) in Massachusetts gathered at the State House for DLTA Day on Tuesday, March 26th.

## Data & Information Services

The US Department of Agriculture has released the **2022 Census of Agriculture**. Some Berkshire County highlights from the 2022 edition include 471 farms, a loss of 4 farms since 2017. The land in farms has risen from 58,647 in 2017 to 71,860 in 2022, likely due to a change in methodology. Most of the farms in the Berkshires are in the 10 to 49 and 50 to 179-acre categories. The agricultural products' market value is \$36,008,000, an average of \$76,449/farm. 191 of these farms make less than \$2,500/year, while 50 make \$100,000 or more. The main crops for our farms include animals (188 farms), grain (8), forage (196), and vegetables (123).



Additional information at <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2022/>.

## Economic Development



### Save the Date for Digital Equity in the Berkshires!

[The Alliance for Digital Equity](#), a four-county western MA coalition, in partnership with State Senator Paul Mark, State Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier, and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission invites you to join us for the first-ever convening about advancing digital equity and closing the digital divide in the Berkshires.

This will be a community-oriented gathering of municipal leaders, Councils on Aging, libraries, and nonprofits. **Please hold Friday, May 10th, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsfield** to explore digital equity solutions for urban, suburban, and rural areas of the county. More information to be announced soon!



BRPC is working with the five Cultural Districts of Berkshire County (Williamstown, North Adams, Pittsfield, Lenox, and Great Barrington) and 1Berkshire to coordinate and promote ArtWeek Berkshires 2024. This county-wide, crowd-sourced celebration of creativity will run from **May 17-27th** this year and is FREE for participating artists and organizations.

Please encourage your local arts-related residents and entities to learn more at <https://berkshires.org/artweek-berkshires/>

## Public Health

### Rural Vaccine Equity Initiative - Social Determinants of Health

In January 2024, the Public Health Program entered its third year of funding for the Rural Vaccine Equity Initiative administered by the New England Rural Health Association. This grant program addresses the social determinants of health needs of individuals in the rural towns of the central Berkshires by providing aid to direct-service organizations. These funds aim to increase the overall health and well-being of persons in the central Berkshires with a multi-faceted approach that targets key demonstrated barriers to health.

In consultation with stakeholders throughout the central Berkshires, priorities in this region were identified as child care, food insecurity, and support for older adults. So far this year, BRPC has received requests from and funded the following organizations and programs based on those priorities:

**Becket YMCA:** Day camp scholarships for families to send their children to summer camp

**Berkshire Pride:** Technology purchases to expand and support their online Safe Spaces training capacity

**Child Care of the Berkshires:** Child care subsidy for staff retention and recruitment

**Central Berkshire Regional School District:** Provisions for the nurses' offices in all five district schools

**Richmond Consolidated Schools:** Technology items for the library curriculum, gym equipment upgrades, and furniture for the health office

Applications for funds are rolling throughout the year. If there is a direct service in Becket, Dalton, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Richmond, Peru, or Washington that you want to refer to explore supplementary program funding, please contact Senior Public Health Planner [Jaymie Zapata](#).

## Transportation

## Roundabouts Prove Safer and More Favorable Once Established in Communities

The use of roundabouts in the Commonwealth has grown over the past several decades. Since 2000, 87 roundabouts have been constructed on Massachusetts roads, according to a [database](#) maintained by Kittleson and Associates. As these intersections have been studied, they have proven safer, modern, and cost-effective options in the transportation engineering toolbox and have grown more favorable in the public eye.



Every roundabout is unique in terms of the amount of traffic it handles, the context of the land around it, the urban or rural character of the roads, the number of lanes and approaches it handles, and the size of the circle itself. In Berkshire County, the first modern roundabout was constructed in Adams in 2015. Since then, others have been built in Pittsfield and Great Barrington, with another breaking ground in Pittsfield in the summer of 2024.

It is important to note that modern roundabouts are different from *rotaries* that existed in the state long before 2000 and are considered obsolete. Rotaries are large circles, up to and exceeding 300 feet in diameter, contain multiple lanes, and are sometimes controlled by traffic signals. The only junctions that could be considered true “rotaries” in the Berkshires are in Williamstown, at the junction of Route 7 and Route 2, and formerly in Pittsfield, at Park Square.

As with adopting any new convention, there is often apprehension toward the unknowns that come with it. This is true in the Berkshires, as with anywhere. The Transportation Research Board [found](#) that attitudes toward roundabouts consistently shifted from majority opposed (54%) to majority in favor (69%) within one to five years after construction. Modern roundabouts in Europe did not enter service until the 1970s and 80s, with just under two dozen between Norway and Switzerland in 1980, according to the USDOT. The Netherlands cautiously adopted roundabouts in sparsely populated areas in the early 1980s. By 2001, there were at least 1,500 roundabouts in the Netherlands. By comparison, North America is a couple of decades behind in following this convention. The first modern roundabout in the U.S. was constructed in 1990. As of 2024, there are now an estimated 10,000+ across the country.

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has found that in a sample of Massachusetts roundabouts of similar size and scope to those in Berkshire County, injury-causing crashes consistently declined after the roundabout was constructed. In Adams, there have not been any recorded injury crashes at the roundabout since 2019. One to two crashes were recorded in each of the six years before the roundabout was installed. We expect similar trends at the Berkshires’ newer roundabouts and those constructed in the future.

# April

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4 Executive Committee 4:00 Commission Development Committee 5:00	5	6
7	8	9	10 CEDS 1:00	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23 Transportation Advisory Committee 4:00	24	25	26	27 Rural & WMass MA SB Association Conference 8:30 – 1:00
28	29	30 Municipal Planning Organization 4:00				

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



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