



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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30

DAY

May

MONTH

24

YEAR

BRPC'S 5TH THURSDAY RETURNS

Join us on May 30th for a 5th Thursday networking and educational event.

Making the Connection. For those without a car or unable to drive, getting around Berkshire County for the basic necessities of life is extremely difficult. Microtransit is a form of flexible transit where riders can request a pick-up and drop-off anywhere in a given service area. Come and learn how it is successfully being used.

Microtransit Presenters:

Megan Rhodes, AICP - [Franklin Regional Council of Governments](#)
Tate Coleman - Microtransit Program Director, [TriTown Connector](#)

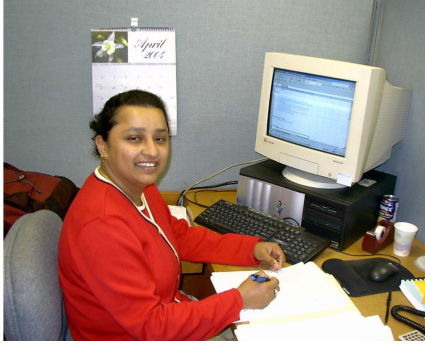
4 pm - 6 pm at Mazzeo's Ristorante, 1015 South Street, Pittsfield
(Program begins at 5 pm)
hors d'oeuvres reception and cash bar

Tickets: \$15/person

[Get Tickets](#)

Staff Announcements & Employment Opportunities

Join us in congratulating and celebrating Principal Transportation Planner [Anuja Koirala](#), AICP, on her 20th anniversary with BRPC! Anuja has degrees in Transportation Planning and Civil Engineering. She uses her expertise to support the County's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which determines government funding for roads, bridges, transit, trails, etc. She also focuses on traffic/transportation studies and rail services, particularly the Berkshire Flyer.



Anuja says that her long-term commitment to this work comes from the satisfaction of helping residents and communities improve their quality of life. She especially enjoys the TIP process, which starts with project identification, evaluation & prioritization, analysis and design, and ends with concrete results of implementing improvements. Seeing results that make a real difference in people's lives is also true of her transit work, which supports access to buses, taxis, etc.

[Sophie Carnes Jannen](#) joined BRPC in April as a public health nurse educator. She holds bachelor's degrees in psychology and nursing as well as a master's degree in nursing. As a nurse, Sophie has worked in community health with experience in both mobile health care and harm reduction. She has also taught health and nursing classes at the college level. In her current position, Sophie will assist in county-wide health promotion through local education and wellness programs. In her spare time, she enjoys doing yoga, cooking, and spending as much time outside as possible. She lives in Williamstown with her husband, Billy, and their dog, Artie.



BRPC Employment Opportunities:

- [Public Health Community Social Worker](#)
- [Bi-lingual Community Outreach Specialists:](#)

BRPC, in collaboration with the George B. Crane Memorial Center, seeks up to two temporary contractors fluent in Spanish and English to serve as [Community Outreach Specialists](#) from May 2024 - February 2025 in Pittsfield. See above link for details.

Regional Employment Opportunities

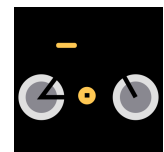
- [Lee Town Planner](#)
- [Microtransit Program Director](#) - Southern Berkshire County

Easily access links to employment opportunities in all Berkshire County municipalities [HERE](#).

Grants, Opportunities & Announcements

May is Bay State Bike Month see www.massbike.org/bike-month for events in Berkshire County and statewide.

- May 13-19: Bike to Work Week
- Friday, May 17: Bike to Work Day



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

Clean Water Act Section 604b and 319 Grants - due May 8 and May 24(respectively)
 This program funds planning and implementation to address water quality through non-point source pollution implementation projects. Think stormwater, green infrastructure, and flood mitigation. There is *no match* for either program. [RFRs are at this link](#). Contact Environmental & Energy Principal Planner [Courteny Morehouse](#), 413-442-1521 x26, for assistance with either grant proposal - we can help!

FY 2025 Woodland Partnership (WP) Grant Program is accepting applications to promote sustainable forestry and natural resource-based tourism or to increase forest conservation. Eligible applicants include members of the Woodlands Partnership (WP) and Regional Planning Agencies or regional environmental, cultural, or economic development organizations named as WP Board members or working in the WP region. Email [Vanessa Farny](mailto:Vanessa.Farny@state.ma.us), Forest & Land Grant Program Manager, MA Division of Conservation Services with questions.

Deadline: Thursday, May 9 at 3 pm

Housing Advisory Council & Commission on Unlocking Housing Production

EOHLC Statewide Housing Plan Listening Session **Wednesday, May 15, 1:30 pm**

Berkshire Community College, 1350 West Street, Pittsfield, MA, The Boland Theatre

Check-in & networking begin at 1:30 pm

Session begins at 2 pm

Parking: Central Campus lot that abuts The Boland Theatre

Register [HERE](#)

Additional in-person and virtual listening sessions can be found on the [Council & Commission's web page](#).

MA Department of Environmental Protection - Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants

MassDEP is offering grants of up to \$10,000 for short-term waste reduction projects (≤ 1 year).

Eligible projects must focus on reducing waste generation and prolonging product lifespan through donation, rescue, reuse and/or repair. Composting and recycling projects are not eligible. **Due May 15 and November 15.** Learn more and [apply here!](#)

Second Chances Job and Resource Fair, Wednesday, May 22, 4 - 6 pm

Berkshire Community College, in collaboration with the Berkshire County Jail and House of Correction, 2nd Street, Berkshire District Attorney's Office, and MassHire Berkshire Career Center, will hold a Second Chances Job and Resource Fair on Wednesday, May 22, 4 - 6 pm at The Berkshire Innovation Center, 45 Woodlawn Ave, Pittsfield, MA. [Register here.](#)

This job fair will bring together people with criminal records, especially the formerly incarcerated, and employers looking to access this talented and untapped pool of workers can bring great value to employers and communities when given the opportunity to thrive and succeed in the workplace.

Your participation in this CORI-friendly job fair is not just a chance to fill positions; it's an opportunity to contribute to a more equitable and supportive workforce environment. Together, let's build bridges to employment that empower individuals and foster a culture of understanding and second chance.

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 pm.

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

visit www.mass.gov/onestop. Questions: onestop@mass.gov.

BRPC staff are available to assist with EOIs and applications.



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.

The BRPC Community Development Program is happy to announce that we are accepting applications for the FY22-23 Sheffield CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program. This Program provides low to moderate-income Homeowners with 0% interest, deferred payment, forgivable loans to support projects that address deferred maintenance on their homes. The FY2022-23 Program will rehabilitate up to 15 homes in Sheffield. Projects may include items such as replacement of roofs, windows, siding, septic systems and wells.

Interested Homeowners may receive additional information and apply to the Program by contacting Christie Lewis, CDBG Program Associate, at 413-442-1521 x 23, or by emailing clewis@berkshireplanning.org. A program guide is also on [BRPC's website](#).



CONTACT US
Christie Lewis
413-442-1521 ext. 23
clewis@berkshireplanning.org

MAY UPDATES

MAY IS HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH.

Did you know that H.D. is a genetic disorder with no cure, causing a progressive breakdown in brain cells? Our Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) is an important resource for those living with Huntington's by providing 0% interest loans for home accessibility improvements. Learn more about how the program can help create a safer and more comfortable living environment for those affected by this disease.



MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH!

Did you know that our Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) might be able assist individuals dealing with mental health challenges? Check out our heartwarming video featuring an ADU addition to provide support and stable housing for their son. HMLP helps make it possible to create safe and supportive environments for everyone.



DID YOU KNOW?

HMLP offers no interest loans so property owners can make necessary home accessibility improvements. This state-funded loan makes installing a ramp, stairlift or walk-in shower more possible than ever! Find out if you qualify today at www.cedac.org/find-out-if-you-qualify.

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL



We feel just very very grateful that the program was there. Hopefully, others can get involved with that and find stable housing as well. We couldn't have done it without the program.

HMLP Borrower
for an Accessory Dwelling Unit



Find out if you qualify at
www.cedac.org/find-out-if-you-qualify

LEARN MORE



State of the County Update 2024

Berkshire Benchmarks has released the **2024 State of the County Update**, available online at BerkshireBenchmarks.org. This update highlights notable changes in the regional indicators, including comparisons to comparable counties, when possible. Highlights include a continued increase in self-employed, households making over \$75,000, and the percentage of conservation framework land protected. The region has also seen a decrease in asthma-related emergency department visits and the percentage of people age 65 and older living alone. Some more significant topics Berkshire Benchmarks is watching include housing, population change, and mental health. For more information, contact GIS, Data & IT Program Manager, [Mark Maloy](#).



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 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. [Register ASAP](#) for the session on **Friday, May 10th, from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm** at **Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsfield** to explore digital equity solutions for urban, suburban, and rural areas of the county.



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/>

Environmental & Energy

Air Quality Monitoring Opportunities

Air pollution poses significant health risks, particularly from fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and carbon monoxide (CO). Monitoring air quality provides data to identify pollution sources, mitigate risks, and implement measures that benefit vulnerable populations and the environment.



NO COST Opportunities for Municipalities:

MassDEP Grant:

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection is offering a grant for tribes, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, and municipalities to receive, at no cost, between five and ten PurpleAir sensors to measure PM2.5 levels in outdoor air. The program aims to monitor air quality for at least one year, with applications accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until funding runs out.

BRPC Initiative:

BRPC is establishing an EPA-funded regional-scale air monitoring initiative in economic justice communities. The initiative will focus on indoor and outdoor levels of CO and PM2.5.

Towns are encouraged to contact BRPC for support or collaboration under the MassDEP grant or to participate in the EPA project. Please contact Environmental & Energy Planner [Britney Danials](#), 413-442- 1521 x 12 if you are interested in starting air monitoring in your town.

Image from Flaticon [Saepul Nahwan](#)

Public Health

[Avian Influenza Situation Report](#)

With the recent rise in H5N1 (HPAI: Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) and the reported transmission to other livestock animals, there has been an increase in concern regarding the current situation. The Berkshire County Boards of Health Association (BCBOHA) remains steadfast in its goal of serving the County's 32 municipalities and disseminating timely pertinent situational updates. In pursuit of this objective, we have developed a situation report for the current spread of H5N1 among livestock that we are now seeing. Kindly refer to this link: [H5N1 Advisory](#) for any additional information.

Pasteurized milk is considered safe to drink as the pasteurization process is known to inactivate viruses. Tests are being conducted to verify that H5N1 is inactivated by the normal milk pasteurization process. Influenza viruses are also not known to be readily transmitted in foods. Consumers are advised to avoid raw (unpasteurized) milk.

We encourage you to share this information with your municipality's Animal Inspector, other officials, and residents as you see fit. Additionally, please see the [monthly calendar](#) of upcoming trainings and events that may be relevant to you. For more Information, contact [Matthew Bryan](#), BCBOHA Public Health Emergency Preparedness Senior Planner.

Transportation

Freight and Goods Movement Survey

As part of its commitment to ensuring an efficient regional transportation system and facilitating economic development in Berkshire County, BRPC has recently initiated a Freight and Goods Movement Survey to acquire stakeholder input. The survey will provide information for a multi-faceted study to identify key factors to improve freight and goods movement in Berkshire County. The insight gained from this survey will be used to develop a freight and goods plan to improve regional goods movement and further regional economic growth.

The first step in this process is soliciting feedback from stakeholders regularly transporting freight and goods throughout the region. As such, BRPC has assembled a cohort of the region's logistics managers, trucking and shipping companies, major distributors and shippers, freight rail customers, and other entities that transport large amounts of freight and goods to and from Berkshire County. By identifying the common logistical challenges businesses confront, BRPC is confident that a roadmap can be developed to provide effective methods, resources, and recommendations for eliminating these barriers and promoting further economic development.

The Freight and Goods Movement Study will continue through the end of the year. Stakeholders involved with freight and goods movement are encouraged to participate in the survey. For more information, please get in touch with Transportation Planner [Ryan Griffis](#).

Berkshire Flyer 2024 Pilot

The Berkshire Flyer is a weekend service operated on Fridays and Sundays between New York Moynihan Train Hall and Pittsfield Station via Albany/Rensselaer by Amtrak with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and New York State Department of Transportation.



Berkshire Flyer 2024 service will resume on Friday, June 21, and run through Monday, September

2, for Labor Day weekend after two successful pilot years in 2022 and 2023. On Fridays, the train departs Moynihan Train Hall at 3:16 pm and arrives at Joseph Scelsi Intermodal Transportation Center in Pittsfield at 7:27 pm via the Albany-Rensselaer Station. The Sunday return trip will depart Pittsfield at 3:35 pm and arrive in New York at 7:55 pm.

In addition, for the first time this year, the Berkshire Flyer includes a train from New York City to Pittsfield on Sunday mornings. The new Sunday Berkshire Flyer train from New York City to Pittsfield will depart Moynihan Train Hall at 10:50 am and arrive in Pittsfield at 3:15 pm.

In 2022, over 819 passenger trips occurred over a ten-week season; tickets sold out each weekend. In 2023, over 1,271 passenger trips occurred over a twenty-week season. The 2023 pilot service ran from Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day weekend. The ridership patterns were the same in 2023 as in 2022 - dominated by trips between New York City and Pittsfield, with less than 10% of riders to/from Albany or other stations. July and August saw the highest ridership.

The riders' survey shows they are here for various purposes: to attend art & cultural events, visit families, and enjoy the natural beauty and adventures in Berkshire County. Berkshire Flyer riders are of all age groups, from millennials to older adults, some new and some visiting again, as riding the Berkshire Flyer train is convenient.

Berkshire Flyer service creates another opportunity to bring visitors to the region and increase tourism. Berkshire County businesses will benefit from continued Berkshire Flyer service in 2024. It improves transportation connections for Berkshire residents by providing a train connection between Pittsfield, Albany/Rensselaer, and other NY destinations. With the popularity of this seasonal service, reservations should be made as early as possible. Tickets for the 2024 season are on sale on Amtrak's website: <https://www.amtrak.com/home>.

May

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Executive Committee 4:00	3	4
5	6	7	8 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee 1:00	9	10 Berkshire County Digital Equity Summit 9:30	11
12	13	14	15	16 Commission 7:00 pm	17	18
19	20	21 Transportation Advisory Committee 4:00	22 Regional Issues Committee 3:30	23	24	25
26	27 Metropolitan Planning Organization 4:00	28	29	30 5 th Thursday: Microtransit 4:00	31	

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