



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Announcements & Employment Opportunities

Welcome to Public Health Planner and Epidemiologist, [Aaron Holman-Vittone](#)! Aaron provides research and analysis for BRPC's Public Health Program and the Berkshire Public Health Alliance. He supports public health nurses, assists with the Community Health Improvement Plan, including Healthy Aging, Substance Use Disorders, and Emergency Planning. He has a Master of Science in Epidemiology and a BS in Public Health. Aaron was born and raised in the Berkshires and plans on contributing to the county for many years to come. "I hope to make a positive impact on the health and well-being of as many people in the Berkshires as I can."



Interns 2024 - BRPC is fortunate to have five interns working on various projects this summer:

Arts & Culture: Pittsfield's Cultural Plan + ArtWeek Berkshires

· Liana Rice, UMass Amherst; Sustainable Community Development & Studio Art

Digital Equity: Technology access and skills

· Aleesha Siddiqui, Colby College; Government & History

Gray to Green, Pittsfield: Increasing health equity by prioritizing green planning

· Samantha Elliott, Mass College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences; Health Sciences

Outdoor Recreation: [Berkshires Outside](#) website

· Luke Peplowski, Hamilton College; Environmental Studies & Public Policy

· Peter LaRochelle, Haverford College; Growth & Structure of Cities and Mathematics

[BRPC Employment Opportunities:](#)

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

Regional Employment Opportunities

- [Micro Transit Program Director](#) - southern Berkshire County

Links to Berkshire County municipalities' open positions [HERE](#).

Grants, Opportunities & Announcements

Western Mass Solar Forum June 4, 2024

The Western Massachusetts Solar Forum is a series of public discussions and information-sharing sessions about the opportunities and challenges associated with solar photovoltaic (PV) development and installation in Western Massachusetts. Part I of the Forum was held in the fall of 2023. Part II will be held on Tuesday, June 4, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, and will focus on the recent recommendations from the Commission on Energy Infrastructure Siting and Permitting and their implications for Western Massachusetts communities. Register [HERE](#), questions to <https://solarforum@umass.edu>.

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 applications.



The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program will hold public information meetings June 20 and 21. Details below under Transportation.

Workplace Safety Grant

The Department of Industrial Accidents (DIA) FY25 Workplace Safety Grant applications will be accepted from Monday, June 3 - Friday, June 28, 2024. Applicants may request up to \$25,000 to administer workplace safety training. Applicants are encouraged to download and complete prerequisite application documents before starting their application. Details at:

<https://www.mass.gov/workplace-safety-grant-program>

Cyber Resilient Massachusetts Grant Program

Municipalities are eligible to receive grants of up to \$25,000 to fund narrowly focused cybersecurity technology upgrades identified through a cybersecurity vulnerability assessment. Grants may fund capital equipment, technology, and infrastructure for cybersecurity improvement projects, including vendors/contractors or IT-related staff costs of the municipality performing the upgrades. The [MassCyberCenter](#) will accept applications on a rolling basis starting July 1, 2024 and then review quarterly. A total of \$1.4 million in funding is available.

Note: Improvements that may be funded under the [Municipal Local Cybersecurity Grant Program](#) are not eligible to be funded under this program.

[2024 MassTrails Conference October 20-24, 2024 Call for Sessions and Exhibitors](#)

Got a knack for trails knowledge? Whether you bring planning, construction, community engagement, or just outright trail enthusiasm to the table, share your experience by being a Presenter. Submit an abstract via the above link.

On Multiple Boards with Different Public Entities?

Add organizations to your [State Ethics Commission](#) account or combine two accounts.

- Log in and go to the Profile button.
- Edit the public agency by checking the top box.
- To add an agency, press the Ctrl key before clicking on the new agency. Then click the Update button and the new agency either replaces the old agency or is added to old agency.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates, Alternates and Committee members must keep their biannual Conflict of Interest Certificates current and the annually Acknowledge Receipt of the Conflict of Interest Law.

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.

Community Planning

ADA Evaluation and Planning

BRPC is developing ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plans for the towns of Lee, Alford, and Monterey. The evaluation identifies physical accessibility barriers and programmatic barriers to services in all municipally owned buildings and



properties. The Transition Plans establish a roadmap for towns to increase accessibility, confirm adherence to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and enable the community to seek funding to implement the established goals.

The Massachusetts Office on Disabilities supports communities' efforts to increase accessibility through the [Municipal Americans with Disabilities Act Improvement Grant program](#).

The Massachusetts Office on Disabilities is currently accepting applications for its next round of funding for planning and implementation projects.

Communities interested in developing an ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan or have one and are seeking implementation support have until June 14 to apply. BRPC can assist with the grant application and the development of the plans. Any community interested in obtaining BRPC assistance is welcome to contact Community Planner Andrew McKeever at amckeever@berkshireplanning.org.

Data & Information Services

2023 US Census Bureau Population Estimates

The US Census Bureau has released the population estimates for 2023. Berkshire County now has an estimated population of 126,818, 1.7% less than the 2020 Census, which amounts to a loss of 2,221 people. Massachusetts also lost population during the last few years, but only 0.4%. Among Berkshire County municipalities, almost all have lost population, with North Adams having the highest percentage of -3.7% and Pittsfield losing the most at 862. A handful of communities stayed level (Egremont and Savoy), and a few gained (Great Barrington +21, New Ashford +1, Washington +3). The average change was -69 people, with a median of -16 people. More information can be found online at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

Economic Development



BEAD Challenge Process: June 20th - July 20th

June 10th: State Broadband Map Published and Portal Registration Begins

The BEAD Challenge Process is a crucial step to ensure the accuracy of internet availability maps for the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), which will deploy \$147 million in funding to expand broadband access across the state. Your participation can help provide a precise picture of broadband needs in Massachusetts.

Federal rules prohibit residents from submitting challenges directly to MBI. Residents must participate in the Challenge Process by submitting their challenges through an eligible entity. Local governments can express interest and register to receive regular updates through [this form](#).

Please register for the June 5th (12:30-1:30 pm) Technical Assistance Webinar [HERE](#) to learn more about the BEAD Process and how [Sanborn Broadband Navigator](#) (the national firm selected by MBI to manage the statewide process) can work with your town and its residents. Town leaders will then be equipped to inform residents and business owners about how they can report slow or inaccessible internet service.

Visit [THIS PAGE](#) to find all the necessary resources to participate in the Challenge Process.



For more information about the BEAD Challenge in Berkshire County, email [Wylie Goodman](#).

Public Health



Youth Advisory Board Students Visit State Government

On April 24th, twenty local high school students (13 from Taconic and 7 from Pittsfield) spent the day in Boston visiting the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the State House. The trip was open to Youth Advisory Board (YAB) students through the Central County Youth Prevention Coalition, an initiative funded through a DPH Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) MassCALL3B grant aimed at preventing substances of first use (e.g., alcohol, cannabis, nicotine) among middle and high school ages.

The YABs have played a crucial role in developing the grant's strategic plan, and one thing they expressed interest in at the beginning of the 23-24 school year was youth empowerment and learning how to make their voices heard. Back in December, Rep. Tricia Farley-Bouvier, a strong advocate for youth prevention initiatives, met with the Pittsfield High School students to deliver an Advocacy 101 course. This course was a sort of "precursor" to the State House trip, where the students got to meet up with her again and tour the various rooms and chambers. The ongoing goal is for more young people to feel confident in their ability to make positive changes in their communities; in turn, this may increase prosocial involvement and feelings of empowerment

among youth, which can increase self-esteem and other protective factors that reduce the likelihood of substance misuse.

The students also had a "round robin"-style session with folks from DPH's Harm Reduction Unit, Youth and Young Adults Unit, Tobacco Control, and more. They were extremely engaged in the conversations, asking the DPH staff lots of questions, and one student mentioned afterward that she learned about how awesome a career in public health is! It was a full circle moment for the students, who got to talk with one of our grant contract managers, who is the Substance Misuse Prevention Unit Lead Program Coordinator at BSAS—this really enforced the importance of centering youth voices, as we explained that what we learn directly from them (the students) goes into our strategic plan, which then gets feedback and approval from BSAS, who funds us to be able to provide programming that directly benefits local youth. We are thrilled that the students and adults enjoyed a successful day in Boston!

Transportation



The **Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)** grant program will hold public information meetings to help build a Safety Action Plan for Berkshire County. These public information opportunities are available in-person or via Zoom. Signups for hybrid meetings will be available online soon at berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/ss4a/

- **Thursday, June 20, 12:00 pm**
Location to be confirmed in northern Berkshire County
- **Thursday, June 20, 5:30 pm (Spanish interpretation available)**
Dalton Public Library, 40 Field Street, Dalton
- **Friday, June 21, 10:00 am**
Great Barrington Firehouse, 37 State Road, Great Barrington

[Berkshire County Bridge Condition Report](#)

Transportation Planning staff recently completed an assessment of bridge conditions in the region. The [Berkshire County Bridge Condition Report](#) details local bridges, including their overall condition and bridges that are either fully closed or reduced to one lane (partial closure). Since there are hundreds of bridges in the Berkshires, it can be hard to keep an inventory of all of them - and their state of repair. BRPC has produced this report to inform residents and municipal officials about bridge conditions and bring attention to future improvements needed for local infrastructure.

Data on local bridge conditions was obtained from MassDOT's bridge inventory. As of May 1st, BRPC has identified thirteen fully closed bridges and five reduced to one lane capacity. While these restrictions do not cause an immediate threat to public safety or travel, increased closures of bridges on the region's transportation network could cause inconveniences and worsen travel times. BRPC staff will continue to monitor bridge conditions and ensure that the inventory data is maintained.

As part of the effort, BRPC also identified 21 bridges scheduled for repairs or replacements

between 2024-2028. In addition, 34 bridges have been rebuilt over the past five years. These projects have been funded through various programs, including the annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which BRPC is responsible for overseeing through funding provided by MassWORKS and the Municipal Small Bridge Program. As part of our mission, we will continue efforts to improve the conditions of our bridges.

June 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6 Commission Development Committee 3:00 Executive Committee 4:00	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 Metropolitan Planning Organization 4:00	25	26 <i>Tentative:</i> Regional Issues Committee 3:30	27	28	29
30						

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org



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