

# Connections Update

October 1, 2008

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**Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham**  
**1731 First Avenue North Suite 200- Birmingham, Alabama 35203**  
**For RPCGB meeting schedules and information visit our**  
**website at [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org)**

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## **Working Together**

### **RPC Finance Committee meeting announcement**

RPC Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for October 1, 2008, 9:00 a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. The purpose of the meeting is to review RPC financials.

### **RPC Program Budget Committee meeting announcement – October meeting cancelled**

RPC Program Budget Committee meeting scheduled for October 8, 2008 is cancelled. The next scheduled meeting is November 12, 2008, 9:00 a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. The purpose of the meeting is to review RPC programs, projects and consider budget amendments.

### **RPC Board of Directors meeting announcement – October meeting cancelled**

RPC Board of Directors meeting scheduled for October 15, 2008 is cancelled. The next scheduled meeting is November 19, 2008 10:30 a.m., First Floor Conference Room, Center for Regional Planning and Design, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, 35203. The primary purpose of this meeting is to consider reports and recommendations from Committees. For meeting information, including postings of any meeting notices and cancellations please visit the RPCGB website at [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org)

### **RPC participates in the BIG trip to Austin**

Regional Planning Commission Executive Director Charles Ball and Planner Yvonne Murray recently joined 100 other leaders from our region on the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce BIG Trip to Austin, Texas. The delegation was treated to presentations from and panel discussions with a number of Austin leaders touching on four major topics: Leadership, Regional Transportation, Technology Transfer and Education. Speakers included Austin Mayor Will Wynn (that's his actual name), Leander, Texas Mayor John Cowman, Austin City Schools Chief Dr. Pascal Forgione, Texas State Senator Kirk

Watson, Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority VP/COO, Andrea Lofye and attorney-turned entrepreneur-turned community leader, Pike Powers. Austin leaders repeatedly referenced the decreasing relevance of county and municipal boundaries to economic development prospects. Because of this, they said it is even more important for leaders to cooperate on a regional basis. They view themselves competing not just as a collection of counties and cities, but as an economic unit. Leaders shared perspectives on community successes such as residential and retail growth in Downtown Austin and the growth of high-tech jobs, as well as past failures such as the deterioration of inner city schools, lackluster economic development efforts and an unsuccessful referendum for transit improvements. Those failures have now been largely overcome with a great deal of public debate and consensus-building, and with cooperation among Austin's leaders in the public and private sector. Obviously, many of Austin's challenges and strategies are applicable to the Magic City.

### **RPC Workshop Survey – we need to hear from you**

RPC is setting their workshop schedule for 2009 and would like to know your areas of interest and workshop topics. Please visit [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org) and take our survey. It is easy and simple to do! Thank you for your participation.

## **Regional Transportation, Planning and Development**

### **Comment period open following transportation public involvement meeting**

A public involvement meeting was held September 17, 2008 to obtain public comments on the Air Quality Conformity Determination on Amendments to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program for Jefferson and Shelby Counties. A comment period is open until October 7, 2008, 5:00 p.m. To review the documents and the information presented at the meeting visit [www.bhammpo.org](http://www.bhammpo.org). "Upcoming Events." A comment form is available for faxing to (205) 328-3304 or you can email your comments to [mpo@rpcgb.org](mailto:mpo@rpcgb.org).

### **I-65/US 31 Mobility Matters Project – We want to hear from you!**

Mobility matters! The I-65/US31 Mobility Matters Project, sponsored by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, is examining a number of transportation alternatives along the I-65/US31 corridor from Valleydale Road to the City Center/UAB area. An example of possible improvements would be additional highway lanes to include the option of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

A website is available to distribute project information in a timely manner and to solicit public comment. Please visit the site to learn more about the project, register to be included in the mailing list and participate in our on-line survey.

For more information visit [www.i65-us31mobilitymatters.com](http://www.i65-us31mobilitymatters.com) or contact Bill Foisy at [bfoisy@rpcgb.org](mailto:bfoisy@rpcgb.org).

## **Call for Projects” to be funded with FTA Section 5316 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and FTA Section 5317 New Freedom Funding**

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham on behalf of the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization has issued a “**Call for Projects**” to be funded with FTA Section 5316 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and FTA Section 5317 New Freedom Funding. For the Full Application, visit: [www.bhammpo.org/publicinvolvement/doingbusiness.htm](http://www.bhammpo.org/publicinvolvement/doingbusiness.htm). An application workshop October 14, 2008 at 10:00 am 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference room at the RPC, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. For more info contact Darrell Howard at [dhoward@rpcgb.org](mailto:dhoward@rpcgb.org)

## **Birmingham Regional Transportation Plan advancing closer to completion**

The Birmingham Regional Transportation Plan, *On Course: Birmingham 2035*, is continuing to move towards completion. Transportation Planners have completed a draft version of a process to screen and select project for entry into the Regional Transportation Plan's (RTP) fiscally constrained and visionary plans. This methodology also enables selected projects to be rated and prioritized according to need as well as how well they accomplish regional goals for the development of the transportation system. A sample set of projects is currently being analyzed and both the methodology and the results of the analysis will be presented to the RTP's technical advisory work group in October. In addition to the project selection and ratings methodology, planners have been busy developing an environmental consultation process for the RTP. The consultation process is a new requirement under SAFETEA-LU, the federal transportation act that governs metropolitan transportation planning. Under the consultation process, projects included in the RTP must be shared with federal, state, and local resource agencies who provide consultation on the RTP, the potential impacts that included projects might have on historic, cultural, environmental/natural resources, protected lands, and populations identified in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1966. selected for entry, and possible mitigation measures. No date has been set for introducing this environmental consultation process to the resource agencies. However, the RTP will need to be reviewed by these groups and receive their comments in order to be approved. For additional information please visit [www.bhammpo.org/oncourse.htm](http://www.bhammpo.org/oncourse.htm) or contact Darrell Howard at [dhoward@rpcgb.org](mailto:dhoward@rpcgb.org)

## **Congestion Management Process nears end of first phase**

The Birmingham Regional Congestion Management Process has completed its initial phase of development by finalizing a report on roadway congestion information. This information, collected in 2007 and 2008, presents a composite of the region's roadways and is intended to identify areas of congestion and their causes. The first phase of the project also provides a toolbox of strategies that may be accessed by project sponsors to begin addressing congestion. Finally, the first phase lays out a road map for continuing monitoring of the transportation system and an administrative process for reviewing

projects in order to ensure that they adequately address congestion. Federal regulations requires that a congestion management process be used and that all reasonable options be explored before a roadway is considered for a capacity addition (widening). Further, the Birmingham MPO congestion management process includes a requirement that all roadway projects include a congestion management strategy in order to be eligible to receive federal funding. For additional information contact Darrell Howard or Harry He at [dhoward@rpcgb.org](mailto:dhoward@rpcgb.org) or [hhe@rpcgb.org](mailto:hhe@rpcgb.org)

### **Review period open for Coordinated Human Service Plan**

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham completed the update of the region's Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. The Plan, which is a requirement of SAFETEA-LU, is meant to provide guidance to the Alabama Department of Transportation, the Alabama Department of Senior Services, and the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization about programs, projects, and funding priorities for both local and regional human service transportation initiatives. The plan is posted at <http://www.rpcgb.org/HARPO/index.htm> and will be open for comment until October 24th, 2008.

### **RPC enters into agreement with City of Birmingham for feasibility analysis**

The purpose of the One-Way to Two-Way Street Conversion Feasibility Analysis is to determine the feasibility of converting several downtown streets from one-way vehicular traffic to two-way vehicular traffic and how such a change might impact the immediately adjacent land uses and the overall street network flow. This study should frame the “one-way or two-way” question so that more detailed design work can be scoped and funded to interface with the other critical studies on form-based code for the right-of-way and elevation studies. The operational and design goals of the City Center Master Plan articulate strong urban design in the public and will be enhanced by these street conversions. The conversion of one-way streets to two-way traffic should create pedestrian-friendly environments conducive to investment in residential developments, restaurants, shops and a range of appropriate urban investments. The general study area is the portion of Birmingham’s City Center roughly bounded by I-65; I-20/59, U.S. 31, and railroad.. The one-way streets to be analyzed in this study include: 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue North one-way pair, the 13<sup>th</sup> Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Street one-way pair, and the 17<sup>th</sup> Street and 18<sup>th</sup> Street one-way pair. The analysis shall evaluate the full length of each one-way street from its beginning to its terminus.

### **Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) Steering Committee**

The next meeting of the Alabama Partners for Clean Air Steering Committee is Thursday, October 9, 2008, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m., Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL. For additional information contact Scott Tillman, [stillman@rpcgb.org](mailto:stillman@rpcgb.org)  
Visit [www.alabamacleanair](http://www.alabamacleanair) for dates, times and locations for emission testing!

## **More Park & Ride Locations Needed**

The RPCGB has established Park & Ride locations at eight regional churches and more locations are still needed in the following transportation corridors: US 280 (Inverness or Shelby County), I-65 North and I-20 East. For additional information or to suggest a location, please contact Lindsay Smith at [lsmith@rpcgb.org](mailto:lsmith@rpcgb.org) or 264-8421.

## **CommuteSmart upgrades incentives and online service**

Last month, CommuteSmart announced two upgrades aimed at increasing program participation. First, the Commuter Club financial incentive has been expanded. Previously, each carpool was only eligible for one gift card per quarter. Now, CommuteSmart pays each *carpooler* a \$25 gift card for participation. So a four-person carpool can earn \$100 in gift cards per quarter. Additionally, clean commuters can now track their commute online. No more paper tracking forms. It's quick, easy and better for the environment (less paper!). CommuteSmart hopes the move will encourage more people to sign up and log their commutes while we also conserve thousands of pieces of paper each year. And be sure to check in with the CommuteSmart Web site for an interactive park & ride section launching soon! For more information about CommuteSmart, please visit [www.commutesmart.org](http://www.commutesmart.org) or call 1-87-RIDEMATCH or contact Sean Saffle, [ssaffle@rpcgb.org](mailto:ssaffle@rpcgb.org)

## **International Walk to School Day information**

Each October, hundreds of children, parents, teachers and community leaders across Alabama walk to school to celebrate International Walk to School Day. It is an energizing event, reminding parents and children alike of the simple joy of walking and biking to school. It also serves as an opportunity to focus on the importance of physical activity, safety, air quality and a more walkable community. This is why Walk to School events can be a great way to jumpstart a Safe Routes to School Program in your community. For more information about this event visit <http://www.walktoschool.org/>.

## **New Traffic Count maps available for Jefferson and Shelby Counties**

New maps are available and can be obtained by contacting Harry He, RPC Transportation Engineer at [hhe@rpcgb.org](mailto:hhe@rpcgb.org) or (205) 264-8443. To view the maps visit <http://www.bhammpo.org/docsandmaps/trafficcount.htm>

## **Building Communities**

### **City of Pinson successful public meeting**

The RPCGB and the City of Pinson conducted a successful public meeting on September 22, 2008 at the Council Chamber of the Pinson City Hall. The public meeting was the visioning process for the City's master plan. Thirty-eight residents of Pinson participated in the meeting to help guide the future development of Pinson. Please feel free to contact Lindsay Smith, a Senior Planner with the RPCGB for further information regarding the master plan process in Pinson at [lsmith@rpcgb.org](mailto:lsmith@rpcgb.org).

### **Cahaba Heights Neighborhood Plan**

The City of Vestavia Hills Planning Commission will meet on October 9, 2008 to vote on the final draft of the Cahaba Heights Neighborhood Plan. For additional information contact Lindsay Smith at [lsmith@rpcgb.org](mailto:lsmith@rpcgb.org)

### **US Census Bureau will host workshop at RPC**

The US Census Bureau will host a workshop concerning the 2010 Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP) November 12, 12:30pm – 4:30pm, Regional Planning Commission, 1731 First Avenue North, First Floor Conference Room, Birmingham, AL 35203.

The PSAP allows participants, following Census Bureau guidelines and criteria, to review, update, and delineate new census tracts, block groups, census designated places (CDPs) and census county divisions (CCD). Regional and local governments and organizations are best qualified to review and update the PSAP geographic entities.

For additional information contact Brett Isom, [bisom@rpcgb.org](mailto:bisom@rpcgb.org) or visit [http://www.census.gov/geo/www/psap2010/psap2010\\_main.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/psap2010/psap2010_main.html)

### **Employ Older Workers - *Age is an asset and experience is a benefit***

The goal of our Senior Community Service Program (SCSEP) is to provide community services for area community service agencies and part-time work based training for our seniors. The program has a goal of placing into unsubsidized jobs the number of participants equal to 30 percent of our authorized positions. Program participants perform on the job training at an average of 20 hours a week, and are paid minimum wage. They are placed in a wide variety of community service activities at non-profit and public facilities, including day-care centers, city halls, libraries, schools and neighborhood community centers. It is intended that these community service experiences serve as a bridge to other employment positions that are not supported with Federal funds.

Potential employers can select from a pool of mature workers with diverse work backgrounds. Employers who hire these workers can expect to gain employees who are experienced dependable, committed, hard working and loyal. Most program participants are seeking part-time employment, but a percentage wants full-time work. If interested in our pool of employee' please contact Sheila Baker, Director of Senior Employment at (205) 264-8470.

### **Special Combined Meeting - Black Warrior River Clean Water Partnership and Cahaba River Clean Water Partnership**

October 14, 2008, 10am—12noon, Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, 1st Floor Conference Room, Please RSVP by email to [cahabacwp@hotmail.com](mailto:cahabacwp@hotmail.com) by October 5th, 2008

*Toolbox for the Future: Water Availability and Basin Assessment Modeling Black Warrior and Cahaba River Basins*

Speakers: Brian Atkins, Director- ADECA-Office of Water Resources and Kenneth Odom, Studies Section Chief-US Geological Survey

In an effort to study past, present, and future water availability needs, the Office of Water Resources within the ADECA and USGS are partnering to develop a water availability toolbox for Alabama. The framework of the project will be built on the 12digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) level which means that each 12digit HUC will have its own water availability model. Initial focus of the study will be Choctawhatchee, Pea and Yellow Watersheds, followed by the Black Warrior and Cahaba River Watersheds. Other regional initiatives will be presented. If you have an initiative that you would like others to be aware of please contact Patti Pennington at [cahabacwp@hotmail.com](mailto:cahabacwp@hotmail.com) (205) 264-8453.

### **Town of Locust Fork**

On September 2nd, the Locust Fork Planning Commission met with Senior Planner Richard Amore with the RPCGB, to finalize recommendations for the town's Land Use Plan. The RPC is moving forward with evolving the Town of Locust Fork's Master Plan. For more information about this project please contact, Richard Amore at [ramore@rpcgb.org](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org).

### **City of Hueytown adopts project plan and ordinance**

The City of Hueytown held a public hearing for the establishment of its first tax increment district, the *Hueytown Eastern Tax Increment District*, on September 9, 2008. The project plan and ordinance were adopted by resolution of the City Council on September 23, 2008. Copies of the plan and ordinance are available upon request. For more information, please contact Yvonne Murray ([YMurray@rpcgb.org](mailto:YMurray@rpcgb.org)).

## **Community/Economic Development**

### **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) adopted**

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was adopted by the RPC Board on September 17, 2008. The final document is available upon request and can be found on the agency web page. Additionally, project proposals will be accepted on an ongoing basis through the survey form on the web page. The CEDS Strategy Committee will meet on a quarterly basis beginning this fall. For additional information, please contact Yvonne Murray ([YMurray@rpcgb.org](mailto:YMurray@rpcgb.org)).

## **Grant and Workshop Information**

### **Brownfields Assessment, Cleanup and Revolving Loan Fund Grants**

Deadline for Proposals is November 14, 2008.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program empowers communities, Tribes, States, and other stakeholders to work together in a timely manner to assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. The Brownfields Program provides grant support for revitalization efforts by funding environmental assessments, individual site cleanups, and community-based revolving loan funds for brownfields cleanup. Applicants submit a proposal for each grant type that they are applying for. Each

proposal must address the selection criteria outlined in the guidelines. Electronic copies of the new 2009 Proposal Guidelines are available from the EPA Brownfields Web site at: [www.epa.gov/brownfields](http://www.epa.gov/brownfields). Frequently asked questions can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/publications/fy2009faqs.pdf>

### **Brownfield grant writing seminar**

EPA Region 4 Will be Conducting an On-Line Interactive Grant Writing Workshop on October 2, 2008, 1 - 3 pm. We will present tips for Cleanup and Revolving Loan Fund grant applicants. Spaces are limited, so please register at: [www.cluin.org/conf/tio/r4bfgrantwriting/](http://www.cluin.org/conf/tio/r4bfgrantwriting/)

### **CAWACO RC&D COUNCIL'S FY2009 Grant Window is now open!**

Cawaco Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc. is seeking grant proposals for the **Challenge Grant** and **ACES Educational Grant Programs** in Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker Counties. To be considered, complete applications must be received by October 15, 2008. Visit [www.cawaco.org/grants.html](http://www.cawaco.org/grants.html) for complete details, guidelines, forms and a list of recently approved projects.

### **RPC's Community Planning Assistance Grant Program FY2009 funding cycle – Visit [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org) for application**

This program is designed to assist county and municipal governments within RPC's planning area which includes Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, St. Clair, Shelby, and Walker Counties with the development, adoption, and implementation of various community planning projects. Grant funds will be used to provide local governments with planning assistance for the development of **comprehensive plans**, **area plans** such as town center and neighborhood studies, and **management tools** such as zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations. Funds can also be used to undertake relevant studies and analyses including economic, retail/market, historic preservation, and transportation-related analyses. Each local government will be required to match the dollars requested in its grant applications. Grant documentation is posted on website [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org).

### **FY 2009 Building Communities Projects - Request for Projects**

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) of Greater Birmingham, on behalf of the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), announces its second round of Building Communities Grants, designed to address the relationship between transportation and land use, recognizing that land use decisions have impacts to the transportation system and vice-versa. Specifically cited under 23 U.S.C. 450.306 is that the metropolitan transportation planning process shall promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns. It is, therefore, the intended purpose of the Building Communities Program to provide grants to local communities within the MPO Planning Area of Jefferson and Shelby Counties for projects, strategies and services that support the SAFETEA-LU planning factors, including transportation and land use integration, economic vitality, safety and security, accessibility and mobility, environmental/air quality, and system preservation. It is also the purpose of the Program to identify physical projects that can be funded under a Building Communities Implementation

Program. For the full RFP visit: [www.bhammpo.org](http://www.bhammpo.org), click on Doing Business with the MPO (upper left hand corner of the homepage)

### **Jefferson County Office of Community Development – Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application information**

The Jefferson County Office of Community Development will receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications September 16, 2008 – January 30, 2009 from municipalities, non profit organizations and citizens groups located in Jefferson County, Alabama outside the cities of Birmingham, Bessemer, Hoover, County Line and West Jefferson. Information pertaining to the proposal content is available upon request from the Jefferson County Office of Community Development, 716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. No., Suite A-430, Birmingham, 35203. They will also receive Emergency Shelter Grant applications from approved local non profit providers of homeless assistance in Jefferson County. All applicants must attend one of the following public meetings prior to submitting an application:

10-14-08 – Irondale City Council Chambers 6:00pm

11-18-08, Gardendale City Council Chambers – 6:00pm

12-8-08 – Graysville City Council Chamber – 6:00pm

1-14-09 – Jefferson County Courthouse, Birmingham – 10:00am

For additional information call 325-5761.

### **The Year of Alabama Small Towns & Downtowns**

Governor Bob Riley invites you to celebrate your town in 2010 by participating in the statewide promotion of The Year of Alabama Small Towns & Downtowns.

- Invite former residents back for a special Homecoming Weekend
- Unveil a locally written historic marker on the history of the town.
- Lead a walking tour of the historic area.
- Dedicate a completed civic project, such as a new park or restored landmark building or other needed public project.

Submission Deadline: Submit your celebration date in 2010 by the deadline of December 1, 2008 to be certified as an official “Year of Small Towns and Downtowns” participant. To see the full brochure visit [www.alalm.org](http://www.alalm.org)

### **FY2009 Transportation Enhancement grant**

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) is soliciting applications for Transportations Enhancement (TE) projects for FY2009. Applications were mailed to Mayors of Cities and Towns, County Commission Chairmen, Presidents of Universities and Colleges. Enhancements (TE) activities are federally funded, community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. TE projects must be one of 12 eligible activities and must relate to surface transportation: 1. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities; 2. Pedestrian and bicycle safety and educational activities; 3. Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites; 4. Scenic or historic highway programs including tourist and welcome centers; 5. Landscaping and scenic beautification; 6. Historic preservation; 7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities; 8. Conversion of abandoned railway

corridors to trails; 9. Inventory, control, and removal of outdoor advertising; 10. Archaeological planning & research; 11. Environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provision of wildlife connectivity; 12. Establishment of transportation museums. For more details on these 12 areas of eligibility visit [www.enhancements.org/12\\_activities.asp](http://www.enhancements.org/12_activities.asp). The federal government provides funding for TE projects through our nation's surface transportation legislation. **The closure date for submittal of applications and support documents is Friday, October 3, 2008, 5:00 p.m.** If you need further information, please contact Tom Maxwell, [tmaxwell@rpcgb.org](mailto:tmaxwell@rpcgb.org)

*If you would like to include information in the RPCGB Connections Update contact Cissy Edwards Crowe, Public Information Officer, at [cedwards@rpcgb.org](mailto:cedwards@rpcgb.org) or call (205) 251-8139. If you would like to be removed from this distribution please email [cedwards@rpcgb.org](mailto:cedwards@rpcgb.org)*