

Connections Update

January 4, 2008

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

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Working Together

Joint RPC Finance Committee and Program Budget Committee meeting announcement

A Joint Finance Committee and Program Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for January 9, 2008, 9:00 a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. The purpose of the meeting is to review RPC financials and budget modifications.

RPC Board of Directors meeting announcement

The next meeting is January 16, 2007, 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

RPC Annual Meeting – Registration Available January 7th

The RPC will host its Annual Meeting Wednesday, January 30, 2008. Educational seminars are as follows:

9:00 am - 10: 00am *Dodging Traffic: Best Practices in Roadway Access Management or Gateway to Greenspace: Planning for Green Infrastructure*

10:15 am - 11:15am *Tools for Small Town Economic Development or Imagining Your Future: Basics in Community Planning*

11:30am – 1:00pm *Annual Luncheon including election of RPC Board of Directors for 2008-2010.* You can find registration information January 7th at www.rpcgb.org, Meeting Notification link.

Regional Transportation, Planning and Development

New Officers for the Birmingham MPO Transportation Technical and Citizens Committees

In December 2007, the Transportation Technical and Citizens Committees of the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization elected officers for 2008-2009. On December 18, 2007, the Transportation Citizens Committee elected Mrs. Ouida Fritschi Chairman and Ms. Doris Powell Vice Chairman to serve a two-year term beginning January 2008. On December 19, 2007, the Transportation Technical Committee elected Mr. David Hunke Chairman and Mr. Greg Dawkins Vice Chairman to serve a two year term beginning January 2008. The Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization will elect officers at the January 9, 2008 meeting.

Congestion Management Process Task Force meeting scheduled

A meeting of the Congestion Management Process Task Force will be held Monday, January 7, 2008, 1:30 p.m to 3:00 p.m., RPC 1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Ave.

North, Birmingham, Alabama 35203. The following is the tentative agenda items: Review Sample of Field Data Collected; Discuss Congestion Mitigation Strategies; Project Status and Next Step. For more information contact Harry He at hhe@rpcgb.org

Motor Vehicle Crashes and Emergency Response Research

The UAB University Transportation Center Advisory Board has approved a cutting edge research project designed to integrate traffic safety and injury control through improved emergency response. The project will track accidents occurring in vehicles with an Onstar vehicle safety and security system and determine how emergency response and medical treatment can be improved. The UAB program is one of eight new University Transportation Centers funded in 2006 through the U.S. DOT Centers of Excellence initiative. More information can be found at <http://www.uab.edu/utc/>. Bill Foisy, Director of Planning, RPC, is an Advisory Board member and can be contacted at bfoisy@rpcgb.org

Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) update

1. The APCA media campaign is completed for 2007 and now is the time to start working on next year's campaign. The new Marketing Committee will be formed soon and we look forward to creating the next media campaign.
2. Research Strategies conducted the annual year-end surveys for residential and business. These surveys allow APCA to evaluate delivery of the message to the public and what the public is doing to change their actions on alert days. These surveys provide a valuable tool for the Steering Committee to determine the direction of the APCA program for the next year.
 - The residential survey was conducted for those residents that live in Jefferson and Shelby counties.
 - 82.42% of the Jefferson County residents and 77.14% of Shelby County residents indicated that they had seen the air quality forecast and/or air quality alerts this past summer. This showed a 5% increase in awareness for Shelby County residents and no change for Jefferson County residents from the previous survey.
 - The residential survey also indicated that the dominating source for air quality alerts was television news.
 - 37.24% of the residents did make conscious decisions about altering their family's daily activities when a color orange air quality alert was broadcast. This showed an 11% increase from the previous survey.
 - Of the residents surveyed only 35% had seen the television commercials promoting air quality.
 - The business survey consisted of 120 businesses in Jefferson and Shelby counties conducted to gauge the air quality awareness of the businesses, determine the perceptions of these businesses to air quality related issues, and ascertain what precautions each business undertakes when air quality alerts are announced.
 - Most of the businesses indicated that they are somewhat concerned about air quality issues but most do not change their company's actions on air quality alert days.
3. WRATT, who performs emission testing for the APCA program, is excited to announce that Express Oil Change is going to allow WRATT to do emission testing

at all of its 32 locations. We are excited about this partnership and look forward to the benefits that this partnership will provide to the community.
For information concerning APCA contact Scott Tillman at stillman@rpcgb.org

I-22 Corridor Development Commission held their Kick-Off meeting

On December 11, 2007, the I-22 Corridor Development Commission held their Kick-Off meeting at the Beville State Community College in Jasper, AL. The Commission, which is an initiative of Governor Bob Riley's Alabama Rural Action Commission (ARAC), is designed to foster regional cooperation in economic development, workforce development, education and healthcare. The Commission will be led by former State Senator Gerald Dial and Co-chaired by State Senator Charles Bishop and Bob Woods of Alabama Power Company. Mary Grace Lewandowski of RPC spoke at the meeting on the Corridor X Access Management and Development plan completed on behalf of the Corridor X Task Force <http://corridors.uah.edu> and highlighted the need for communities to manage access around interchanges while promoting their great quality of life and the qualities that set them apart from other areas in the state. For additional information contact Mary Grace Lewandowski at mgl@rpcgb.org

Beltline Intersecting Roadways Plan

Community planning meetings are scheduled in the Cities of Graysville, Hueytown and Clay to develop a vision for the intersecting roadways with the future Northern Beltline. The consulting firms of Gresham Smith and Partners and Renaissance Planning Group will use innovative visualization techniques to create development scenarios that reflect the community's vision for the area and what the roadway could look like in the future.

City of Graysville focusing on US 78 will be held on Tuesday, January 22, 2008 from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Graysville Public Library.

City of Hueytown focusing on CR 46 (Warrior River Road) will be held on Wednesday, January 23, 2008 from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Hueytown City Hall.

City of Clay focusing on CR 30 (Old Springville Road) will be held on Thursday, January 24, 2008 from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Clay Community Center.

For additional information contact Mary Grace Lewandowski at mgl@rpcgb.org

RPC is generating a GIS-based tool to aid in early stage environmental screening

RPC is generating a GIS-based tool to aid in early stage environmental screening for projects and to generate more precise environmental impact statements. The goal is to ultimately be able to alert project sponsors, decision-makers, and the public of possible environmental hazards in the early stages of projects in order to determine the best course of action. This GIS-based tool will map the six-county member area and include factors such as: floodplains, wetlands, land use, critical habitats, historic sites, protected areas, mining, soils and geology, watersheds, drinking water supplies, existing infrastructure, topography, and other relative data. RPC is currently gathering and compiling its existing data and identifying sources of additional data. This task is to

fulfill Environmental Considerations of the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Long-Range Transportation Plan and to satisfy requirements set by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A tentative meeting date of January 22, 2008, has been set for a cooperative and informative discussion on the matter. RPC will be willing to share the data tool with contributors of data; additional access will be determined after the meeting. For questions, please contact Yvonne Murray, Planner, at ymurray@rpcgb.org or (205)251-8139.

Heart of Alabama Rural Planning Organization (HARPO) update

The Heart of Alabama Rural Planning Organization (HARPO) met with its four member counties (Blount, Chilton, St. Clair, and Walker) in late November/early December in order to identify and prioritize potential projects and program solutions for transportation issues to be conveyed to ALDOT. Issues and needs in terms of traffic congestion, highway and pedestrian safety, roadway maintenance, public transit, freight movement, airports, environmental impacts, the population, and goals for the future, that were identified earlier in 2007 have been broken down by specific location and are being mapped prior to the spring meetings for each individual county. The potential projects and solutions identified will be compared to those projects on ALDOT's STIP in order to determine the necessary course of action to address issues and needs. HARPO will meet tentatively in March 2008 with each county in order to present the maps and discuss funding and projects with ALDOT representative(s). If you need additional information, please contact Darrell Howard (205) 264-8441 or email dhoward@rpcgb.org

CommuteSmart Can Help With New Year's Resolutions

Now that you've made it through holiday traffic, it's time to start facing your New Year's resolution. CommuteSmart has a few great ideas to help you lose weight and put away some extra spending money. Try walking or biking! What better way to get in your daily exercise than to commute with your own two feet? And what better way to save money but to share the ride to work? Sharing the ride not only reduces your commute expenses, but CommuteSmart is offering \$2 per day (up to \$120) to anyone willing to leave their solo drive behind and try a commute alternative. Call 1-87-RIDEMATCH or visit www.commutesmart.org for assistance in finding an easier way to commute.

Five Mile Creek Greenway Partnership wins Phoenix Award

Brownfield redevelopment of lands along the Five Mile Creek Greenway has won the prestigious Phoenix Award for Region 4 of the US Environmental Protection Agency. The Freshwater Land Trust received a Brownfields grant in 2005 to test sites along potential public use sites along the proposed Five Mile Creek Greenway. The award is given to projects using innovative and creative techniques to revitalize blighted, contaminated lands to a productive, new use. The Freshwater Land Trust with the help of Alabama Power Company created a 15 minute video as part of the award application. The video, "Five Mile Creek: Decline and Renewal," is available on www.YouTube.com, an on-line video web site. The link to this video can also be found on the Five Mile Creek web site: www.cawaco.org/fivemilecreek. The project participants will be honored at an awards ceremony during *Brownfields 2008* in Detroit, Michigan, May 5-7, 2008. During the environmental conference with an expected crowd of 7,000 participants, Phoenix

Award winners will showcase their projects with case study presentations and exhibits. Created in 1997, this prestigious award honors individuals and groups who are working to solve the critical environmental challenge of transforming blighted and contaminated areas into productive new uses. The Phoenix Awards are widely recognized as the outstanding award for achievement of excellence in Brownfield redevelopment, and often are called “the Brownfields equivalent of Hollywood’s Oscar. The awards are open to any individual, group, company, organization, government body or agency. Criteria for The Phoenix Award focuses on the magnitude of the project, innovative techniques, solutions to regulatory issues, and impact upon the community. A panel of environmental professionals and business, academic and government leaders select the winners.

“EPA’s Phoenix Award to the Five Mile Creek Greenway Partnership further validates the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of real regional cooperation at the watershed level,” said Tom Maxwell, RPC Environmental Planner. “Brownfield redevelopment has become an overarching community revitalization strategy for the Partnership. Congratulations to everyone who made this award possible!”

Article from *Five Mile Creek Currents*, December 2007, by Francesca Gross (Partnership Facilitator)

Draft Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) Public Participation Plan

The MPO Subcommittee adopted the Draft Public Participation Plan and agreed that a public involvement meeting be held in accordance with the MPO’s current public involvement procedures. The public involvement meeting will be held in February and opens the 45-day comment period. The new Public Participation Plan was developed in cooperation with the MPO’s Transportation Citizens Committee (TCC) Public Involvement Subcommittee. The new Public Participation Plan expands on the current Plan to meet the federal guidelines under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). To view the Draft Public Participation Plan visit www.bhammpo.org “What’s New” link. For more information contact Cissy Edwards Crowe at cedwards@rpcgb.org

Walker County Transportation Task Force at work

The Walker County Transportation Task Force was hoping to increase ridership on ClasTran buses. They organized free rides for one week in December. The goal is that citizens who do not usually ride the bus will give it a try and begin using this means of transportation on a regular basis. The results were a 64% average daily increase in the Walker County rural route and a 16% average daily increase in the Jasper route. For additional information contact Ron Tanner, Interim Executive Director **ClasTran**, rtanner@clastran.com

Coordinated Human Service Transportation meeting

Per the Project Management Plan submitted to the Federal Transit Administration for the administration of Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316) and New Freedom (Section 5317) grant funds, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham is convening a Human Service Coordinating Committee on January 10, 2008 at 10am in the 1st Floor Conference Room of the Center for Regional Planning and Design, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham. The Coordinating Committee will provide policy oversight

to the SAFETEA-LU required competitive selection process for awarding the aforementioned funds.

In-Town Transit Partnership (ITP)

The In-town Transit Partnership continues to advance towards completion and is expected to finish the appropriate environmental documentation necessary to achieve eligibility to compete for Federal Transit Administration Small Starts (Section 5309b) funding. ITP considerations include the addition of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services along 18th Street between the BJCC and 5 Points South, and along 5th Avenue South between the UAB Park and Ride lot and 18th Street. The project's financial plan is also being completed. The development of an associated Transit District Development Plan will begin later this month. For additional information visit the ITP website at www.ITP-Project.com.

Transit Planning – refined concepts

The RPC, in coordination with the BJCTA, Operation New Birmingham, and the Greater Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce is assisting the City of Birmingham with identifying options for the development of an initial minimum operating segment for a streetcar line. As part of this coordinated effort, the RPC refined the conceptual transit services/routes connecting with the City Center based on identified projects, both programmed and visionary, within the adopted Birmingham 2030 Regional Long Range Transportation Plan and the adopted Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority's Comprehensive Transit Development Program (CTDP). A map of the refined services can be found at www.bhammpo.org, click on the “What’s New” link.

The RPC is also developing, in partnership with the Alabama Department of Transportation 3rd Division, the BJCTA, Jefferson and Shelby Counties, and the Cities located along/within the US 280 corridor, a scope of work to complete a transit alternatives analysis for the US 280 corridor. This builds upon previously identified strategies from the Birmingham Regional Alternatives Analysis completed in 2004 which were adopted into the Birmingham 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan's visionary element. Since the ALDOT has recently proposed geometric modifications in the corridor such as an elevated roadway, additional lanes and access management improvements, a reassessment of feasible transit projects is needed.

Finally, the RPC is beginning the alternatives analysis for I-65 and US 31 south corridors between I-20/59 and Valleydale Road. This is a continuation of the initial feasibility study, MAGIC-65, which was completed previously.

Building Communities

RPC Community Planning Assistance Grant Program update

The RPC's newly established Community Planning Assistance Grant Program received 21 grant applications by the program's December 28 deadline. Applications will be reviewed and scored by mid-January; grant awards are expected to be announced by February 1. The grant 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 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 is required to match the dollars requested in its grant applications. For additional information, visit RPC's website and look for the "What's Hot" link. Contact Kay Argo and 205-264-8421 or KArgo@rpcgb.org

2008 CAWACO grants awarded for community projects

Cawaco Resource Conservation and Development Council is pleased to announce the award receipts of the 2008 Challenge Grant program:

Leeds Scenic Byway Management Team – Leeds Stagecoach Route – Phase II. This project will create a marked tour called "Hometown Heroes and Stars," and place informational signs about famous people of Leeds along the Leeds scenic byway. The project goal is to promote low impact development in the old part of Leeds by producing a green tourism industry that will create and/or keep jobs.

Thompson Middle School - Adaptive Playground & Fitness Zone. Specifically designed for kids with special needs, the playground will focus on the physical, social and sensory needs of 10 to 15 year old children with autistic, multi-disability, cerebral palsy, Downs syndrome and mental retardation.

Urban Ministry, Inc. – West End Urban Garden. The West End Urban Garden project intends to educate and empower youth and families in the Arlington/West End Neighborhood by providing food security, encouraging healthy eating habits, teaching environmentally protective gardening practices, promoting small business opportunities and providing employment in a new cannery for two neighborhood residents. Urban Ministry, Inc. will partner with Jones valley Urban Farm and local master gardeners to provide training for local youth who will learn how to prepare, plant, tend and harvest an organic garden. Vegetables will be shared with neighborhood senior citizens and will be sold at East Lake Farmers' Market.

Hayden High School – Mission Possible. Hayden High School students will landscape and improve the external appearance of the campus. The project will foster an environment which increases pride in the school and include the creative incorporation of plants, landscape architecture, and student created features.

Fighter Training Tower - McAdory Area Fire District. The goal of this project is to build a firefighter training tower that will be readily available to the McAdory Area Fire District and five surrounding fire companies, none of which have a training tower. Additionally, the tower will assist McAdory in obtaining additional ISO points (the basis from which homeowners policy premiums are calculated).

Fairfield Historic Building Survey – Fairfield Mainstreet, Inc. The objective of this project is to survey and document all city of Fairfield buildings that are 50 years old or older. The historic buildings survey will include a map, survey, photographs of each structure and inventory. Upon completion, a Fairfield Historic District nomination to the National Registrar of Historic Places will be prepared and submitted to Alabama Historic Commission for Review. This project is part of an overall strategy being undertaken by the Fairfield Mainstreet, Inc., City of Fairfield, and Fairfield Historic Commission to document and preserve its historic buildings and places.

Graysville Community Walking Track – City of Graysville. The project goal is to locate, grade and surface a ¼ mile walking track that serves the citizens of Graysville. The project will serve the health and wellness of the Graysville community by providing a safe place to walk and exercise.

Locust Fork Learning Lab – Locust Fork High School. All of the Locust Fork High School faculty has received outdoor classroom training at workshops and through professional development activities. Project “Locust Fork Learning Lab” will: provide faculty and students an opportunity to take learning outside the traditional classroom; increase student’s knowledge of best practices as they apply to stewardship of soil, air, and water resources; provide hands-on science instruction in Alabama’s flora, fauna, and natural resources; increase student’s awareness of the diversity of Alabama’s natural resources; motivate students’ interest in Alabama’s history, heritage, and future.

Tri-Fold Tourist Brochure – Blount County-Oneonta Chamber of Commerce. This project will result in the creation of a tri-fold brochure depicting Blount County sites: covered bridges, and county and state parks. The brochure will increase the general public's knowledge of Blount County's historic and beautiful sites and will attract additional tourists to the area.

People Helping People Urban Farms – People Helping People Urban Farms. This project will provide support to the PHPUF Bessemer garden. The garden, staffed with volunteers from the community, allows community members to help each other feed the underserved. The Farm strives to meet the needs of people by increasing their access to fresher, more nutritious food supplies, increasing the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs, and promoting comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. The garden is approximately 1 ½ acres and planted in organic produce that will provide education to local community members and others regarding organic gardening.

Cane Creek Fire Hydrants – Cane Creek Volunteer Fire Department. The project goal is to provide adequate fire protection by installing fire hydrants in an unincorporated community. For additional information contact Kellie Johnston at warriorcwp@hotmail.com

Grant and Workshop Information

Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham announces workshops - “Turn Your Passion Into Profits!”

These workshops are funded through a grant received from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) whose goal is to promote and increase business opportunities for Individual Artists. **Workshop topics include:** Planning Your Business; The Business of Being an Artist; Contracts & Copyrights -- Know the Law; Marketing your Art for Profit Workshops details can be found at www.activeculture.info

Northeast Brownfields Development Forum

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) Present the Northeast Brownfields Development Forum February 12, 2008 Philadelphia Marriott Hotel. To register please visit ICSC's website at:

http://www.icsc.org/apps/meeting_display.php?meeting=2008S03

The morning will feature educational sessions on contaminated property redevelopment including financing, the regulatory environment, obstacles and incentives. The afternoon property transaction forum will give property owners, redevelopment agencies, and communities an opportunity to market their contaminated properties to the retail industry.

Dates set for 2008 Your Town Alabama (10 Years Strong in 2008)

Any Alabama Citizen is eligible to participate in Your Town Alabama. Deadline is usually about 30 days prior to the next workshop but last year's class filled up way before the deadline. Next workshop is June 18-20, 2008 at Camp McDowell. Watch www.yourtownAlabama.org for news that we are accepting applicants.

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