

Connections Update

February 3, 2009

**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

RPC Finance Committee meeting announcement

The next scheduled meeting is February 4, 2009, 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.

RPC Program Budget Committee meeting announcement

The next scheduled meeting is February 11, 2009, 9:00 a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1st Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. The purpose of the meeting is to review RPC programs and projects and consider budget amendments.

RPC Board of Directors meeting announcement

The next scheduled meeting is February 18, 2009, 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's 2009 Annual Conference

RPC's 2009 Annual Conference was a sellout!! All workshops were well prepared presented and attended. During the Luncheon Former City of Leeds Mayor James Whitfield was presented a plaque in honor of his service as RPC's Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the Personnel Committee. Mr. Reginald Holloway, Manager of Community Services for Shelby County was presented a plaque in honor of his service as RPC's Treasurer and Chairman of the Finance Committee. A special presentation was made in memory of Board Member Mr. Randall Gammon, who passed away last year and is greatly missed by everyone for his service and friendship. Mr. Fred Porter accepted the award. The following Officers and Board members were elected for a two year term:

Honorable Valerie Abbott, City of Birmingham, Chairman
Honorable Waymon Pitts, Blount County, Vice-Chairman
Honorable Bettye Fine Collins, Jefferson County, Secretary
Mr. Tom Barnett, City of Birmingham, Treasurer
Mr. Reginald Holloway, Shelby County
Honorable Bruce Hamrick, Walker County
Honorable Tim Mims, Chilton County
Honorable Delor Baumann, City of Hueytown
Mr. Devon Laney, City of Birmingham
Honorable Wayne Gross, Town of Parrish
Honorable William Hereford, City of Pell City
Honorable Thomas Henderson, City of Center Point
Ms. Eunice Rogers, City of Birmingham

They join the following Board members who have one remaining year of service:

Honorable Larry Langford, City of Birmingham
Honorable Bobby Humphries, Jefferson County
Honorable Jim Carns, Jefferson County
Honorable Robbie Hayes, Shelby County
Honorable Stan Batemon, St. Clair County
Honorable David Standridge, Blount County
Mr. Tim Westhoven, City of Hoover
Mr. Chester Jolly, City of Warrior
Mr. Ray Hamilton, Town of Vincent
Honorable Theoangelo Perkins, Town of Harpersville
Honorable Eddie Reed, Town of Jemison

Regional Transportation, Planning and Development

Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings

- The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the **Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** for February is cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 1:30pm, RPC, 1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham.
- The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the **MPO Transportation Citizens Committee** will be held on Wednesday, February 18, 2009 12:00 Noon, RPC, 1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham.
- A meeting of the **MPO Transportation Technical Committee** will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2009, 10:00 a.m., RPC, 1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham.
- A meeting of the **Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Subcommittee** will be held on Thursday, February 26, 2009 1:30 p.m., RPC 1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham, Alabama.

For meeting information, including postings of any meeting notices and cancellations please visit the MPO website at www.bhammpo.org

Human powered transportation has its rewards!

A year or so ago Butch Ferrell and RPC Environmental Planner Tom Maxwell conversed about Butch's challenges traveling around the city and surrounding suburbs. Due to a health condition Butch is unable to drive a motor vehicle. Interestingly, Butch uses a pedometer to track how far he walks on a daily basis. Not only does he stay fit by burning unwanted calories, he also collects money along the many roadways, parking lots and other public spaces he travels. According to Butch's 2008 travel log, he collected a total of \$87.23 (in change and paper bills) and walked approximately 2,500 miles.

While more routes, service areas, number of buses and other forms of public transportation are desperately needed to move the region forward on the mass transit front, Butch acknowledged other mobility problems in what planners and urban designers often refer to as "the pedestrian realm". A general lack of well maintained sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian signals and other transit-supportive infrastructure

including shelters and/or seating at bus stops also pose significant barriers to transit access.

Butch is a Fairfield resident and local transit advocate. He serves on the Birmingham MPO's Transportation Citizens Committee (TCC). . Kudos to Butch Ferrell and everyone else out there who frequently utilizes human powered transportation!

Birmingham On Course: Regional Transportation Plan for 2035

The Birmingham MPO staff continues to work diligently on completing tasks related to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for 2035, entitled Birmingham On Course. In January, the Transportation Strategies Technical Advisory Work Group (TAWG) met to review a second iteration of the initial project evaluation questions that will be used to screen, evaluate, and prioritize projects within the RTP. Included in this iteration were the initial review of both written criteria and maps for defining regional activity centers and regionally significant transportation facilities. These areas are envisioned to be priority investment areas for the the RTP. Following the initial review, the TAWG recommended that the criteria and maps be put before the MPO's Transportation Technical Committee for review and comment. This was done in January meeting of the Transportation Technical Committee. Comments are currently being processed and modifications made for the next iteration of review by the TAWG.

In addition to the Transportation Strategies TAWG meeting in January, the full Birmingham MPO was presented with the final three RTP goals and a number of objectives for each. MPO staff engaged the MPO's membership in an interactive exercise designed to have the MPO's membership provide input about the priority and placement of each of the objectives under the three goals. The MPO completed the exercise, with much discussion and debate occurring. From some of the conversations that occurred, it can reasonably assumed that the MPO also had fun.

Birmingham MPO staff has since processed the results of the exercise and finalized the objectives for each of the three RTP goals. In addition, the MPO staff has taken the input from the MPO and further revised the project evaluation questions to be reflective of the placement and priority of the objectives established by the MPO. The initial testing of the questions is currently underway on a sample set of projects, the results of which will be reviewed by the Transportation Strategies TAWG at their next meeting. The Transportation Strategies TAWG will meet on Wednesday, February 11 at 1:30 pm in the 1st Floor Conference Room of the Center for Regional Planning, 1731 1st Avenue South.

Please contact Darrell Howard at 205.251.8139 ext. 441 or dhoward@rpcgb.org for additional information. Information is also available at www.bhammpo.org/oncourse.html

Bike to Work and Save Money in 2009

Travel by two wheels instead of four in 2009! Bicycle commuters can now take advantage of a \$20 per month tax benefit for riding to work, thanks to the federal Bicycle Commuter Act. A provision attached to the Financial Rescue Package, this provision

offers cyclists \$240 a year to spend on everything from a new bicycle to a bike lock, helmet and maintenance – everything you need to make your bicycle commute *work*. CommuteSmart bicycle commuter Elisa Munoz, who was recently featured in *The Birmingham News* and on CBS 42, plans to use her benefit to cover tune ups and maintenance costs. Ready to get started? Sign up now for CommuteSmart's Effective Cycling class and find a "bike pool" to join via the ridematching database. For more information, visit www.commutesmart.org or call 1-87-RIDEMATCH.

Final Congestion Management Process Task Force Meeting Held

The Birmingham MPO held its final meeting of the Congestion Management Process (CMP) Task Force on January 29th at the offices of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. The meeting presented the final CMP document, its recommendations, and proposals for next steps. Birmingham MPO staff highlighted that several of the strategies implemented over the course of the previous 5 years had resulted in improvements to congested travel. They also noted that there were additional challenges facing the region in its battle against congestion and that some very real and hard decisions were going to need to be made as to how to combat some of the region's more severely congested corridors. Next steps include initiating a permanent MPO Congestion Management Committee with the solicitation of members from the MPO's Transportation Technical Committee. Next steps also include the development of a congestion management policy application guide, integration of the Incident Management Function into the CMP, and incorporation of transportation systems operations. For additional information, contact Harry He at 205.251.8139 ext. 443 or hhe@rpcgb.org. The final document and maps may be obtained by visiting www.bhammpo.org/CMP.html

Statewide Public Transit (Study) Commission

The RPC, in cooperation with the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority, is providing technical guidance to local legislators on draft legislation for the creation of a Statewide Public Transit Commission for the purpose of determining how public transit systems can be established and funded in the state of Alabama. Transportation and transit study commissions to address funding are common across the country. The need for a Study Commission is to (1) respond to the mobility needs for a growing and every changing urban workforce, (2) meet the needs of rural communities, respond to the mobility needs of the elderly, disabled and low income in both urban and rural areas, (4) attract new riders, (5) spur economic development and urban revitalization with public transit as a core transportation element, (6) respond to rising energy costs and growing traffic congestion, and (7) control health care costs by making routine health care more accessible. If you have any questions, contact Darrell Howard, dhoward@rpcgb.org

Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) Steering Committee meeting for February - cancelled

The February meeting of the Alabama Partners for Clean Air Steering Committee is cancelled. The next meeting will be Thursday, March 12, 2009, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m., Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL. At their meeting January the following was presented:

1. The Alabama Partners for Clean Air had a very successful media campaign which began the first of August and ended in October. The campaign objective was to increase participation in the CommuteSmart program and motivate people throughout Jefferson and Shelby counties to make a change from driving alone to carpooling or vanpooling. Promoting the CommuteSmart website was the focus of both the radio and television spots. Radio was the primary medium chosen to reach people while they are in their cars commuting to and from work. Traffic sponsorship is a high interest item for commuters so the campaign had a big focus on sponsoring as many traffic spots as possible. During the three month period radio had 21,911,900 impressions, traffic sponsorship had 17,217,342 impressions and television had 16,351,400 impressions. The message was very effective in directing individuals to visit the CommuteSmart website which experienced a 130% increase in visitors. Total dollars spent on the campaign was \$289,903 with an additional added value of \$224,645 from the radio and television stations.
2. The Alabama Partners for Clean Air received the results from a business and residential survey which was performed after the conclusion of the medial buy. Name recognition of the CommuteSmart program was 34% which was a great baseline number for the first CommuteSmart Ad campaign. The next media buy will start in February and end at the end of March. Since air quality is a year round problem the Alabama Partners for Clean Air will continue to promote the CommuteSmart program year round.
3. Alabama Partners for Clean Air Vehicle Voluntary Emissions Testing program is underway again. For information concerning 2009 date, time, location and general information visit <http://www.alabamacleanair.org/testing.html>

For additional information concerning any APCA activities contact Scott Tillman, stillman@rpcgb.org.

I-65/US 31 Mobility Matters Project – Moving Right Along!

The Mobility Matters Project is analyzing a wide range of alternates to improve mobility in the I-65/US 31 Corridor from Valleydale Road to Downtown Birmingham. The Steering Committee will meet on February 17, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. at RPC to discuss the results of the Tier 1 Analysis. Materials to be distributed at the meeting are available at the project website: http://www.i65-us31mobilitymatters.com/project_information.htm. In addition, comments from those who travel the corridor are welcomed at: <http://www.i65-us31mobilitymatters.com/survey.htm>. If you have any questions, contact Mary Grace Lewandowski, mgl@rpcgb.org

In-town Transit Partnership Project Achieves Milestone

The In-town Transit Partnership (ITP) Project achieved a key milestone in its journey towards implementation. The Federal Transit Administration concurred with the Birmingham MPO's assessment that the ITP project qualified for a Documented Categorical Exclusion under the National Environmental Protection Act. In short, FTA agreed with the Birmingham MPO that the ITP project posed no significant impact to the natural, built, or social environment. This finding clears the way for the ITP project to proceed to the next step of the federal funding process and implementation, provided that an adequate source of local funding is obtained. In order to proceed to the next step in the

federal funding process, an adequate source of local funding will need to be identified. Local funding should cover at least 50% of the project's capital expenses and 100% of the operating expenses over a period of 25 years. It should also be adequate enough to provide for much of the supporting infrastructure and services needed to ensure the success of the services proposed in the ITP project. For additional information you may contact Darrell Howard at 205.251.8139 ext. 441 or dhoward@rpcgb.org. You can also obtain information from www.itp-project.com.

Birmingham City Center One-Way Street Conversion public meeting

The City of Birmingham hosted a public input meeting (with 50 attendees) on Tuesday January 27, 2009 at 5:30pm at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit community input on One-Way to Two-Way Street conversions in the City Center. The purpose of this study is for the City of Birmingham to evaluate the feasibility of converting several streets located in the Central Business District and Birmingham City Center/UAB activity centers from one-way vehicular traffic to two-way vehicular traffic. The feasibility analysis will demonstrate how such a change might affect the immediately adjacent land uses and the overall street network flow. The recently updated City Center Master Plan identified the corridors for consideration. They are: 2nd Avenue North, 3rd Avenue North, 4th Avenue North, 13th Street, 14th Street, 17th Street, 18th Street. The City of Birmingham cooperating with Operation New Birmingham (ONB), the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPC) and the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) are conducting this study. If you have any questions, please contact Steve Ostaseski, RPC, Principal Planner, smo@rpcgb.org

TIP Subcommittee Meeting Scheduled

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Subcommittee will meet on Thursday, February 5, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. at RPC. The group will discuss the status of projects scheduled in the TIP for FY 2009. The Group will also discuss the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and associated preparedness that is required. The FY 2009 Rebalanced FY 2008-2011 TIP can be found at: <http://www.bhammpo.org/longrangeplan/improvementplan.htm>. For more information contact Mary Grace Lewandowski, mgl@rpcgb.org

Building Communities

Attention RPC local governments – are your boundaries up-to-date with the Census Bureau? Are in jeopardy of not qualifying for federal dollars?

The US Census Bureau is awaiting the boundary changes for nearly 13,000 non-responsive government entities who have not submitted their Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) to the Bureau's Geography Division. The BAS Survey packages returned by March 1, 2009 will be included in the Population Estimates Program and the American Community Survey. For those who have not submitted their updated information, the Census Bureau will have to use previous boundary data. This means

there will be governmental entities who cheat themselves out of federal dollars by receiving erroneous population estimates. Could you be one of them? RPC will begin calling non-responders beginning the week of February 9th to remind them to please complete and submit their BAS to the Census Bureau.

RPC participated in the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) Call for Projects

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham and the Birmingham MPO has submitted a list of 87 projects with total estimated cost of \$447,245,383 for inclusion in the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) 2nd Round call for Projects under the proposed federal stimulus program. The NARC call for projects was for the purpose of including, among other functional areas, adequate funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for projects such as roadways, bridges, aviation, transit, public school facilities, environmental infrastructure (water, wastewater), energy, housing, education and job training. Around half of the projects submitted by the local governments in the Birmingham Area were for transportation projects including highway infrastructure, bridge replacement, transit and pedestrian. See www.narc.org for the latest information on the federal economic recovery legislation.

Cahaba Heights Neighborhood Plan adopted

The City of Vestavia Hills City Council passed a resolution in December 2008 to approve the final report of the Cahaba Heights Neighborhood Plan. The final report will be placed on the RPCGB website, www.rpcgb.org and available for download. For additional information contact Lindsay Smith at lsmith@rpcgb.org

Town of Locust Fork Master Plan

The Regional Planning Commission met with the Town of Locust Fork Planning Commission on January 20, 2009 to review the final draft of the Town's Master Plan. The Town of Locust Fork looks forward to adopting the Master Plan in the upcoming months. Please contact Richard Amore, a Senior Planner with the RPC, ramore@rpcgb.org or the Town of Locust Fork for further details regarding the planning efforts in Locust Fork.

Town of Harpersville update

RPCGB Senior Planner Lindsay Smith submitted an Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage nomination form to the Alabama Historical Commission in January for the Town of Harpersville. The nomination was to create a "Town of Harpersville Historic District". As of February 2, 2009, the nomination had been "approved with stipulation." For additional information contact Lindsay Smith lsmith@rpcgb.org

Town of Thorsby partners with Cawaco RC&D

Amy Feger and Patti Pennington of Cawaco RC&D presented the Town Of Thorsby with a \$5,000 "big check" for completing Phase I of a restoration project for the town's old elementary school. The Thorsby Historical Committee now has a master plan and an artist's rendering for its dream to restore the town's old elementary school. The committee unveiled the depiction of the renovation project at a reception Tuesday inside one of the old school's classrooms. Over 40 people attended the celebration, including

the new Mayor, Dearl Hilyer, and several Peach Queens. Representatives from the Chamber of Commerce were also on hand for the festive occasion. Committee chairwoman Tracia Bussey said she's glad officials are finally beginning to see the value of the project. Bussey said the goal is to renovate the 10,000 square-foot facility and turn it into a community center complete with several meeting rooms and a large auditorium. Thorsby has very few historic landmarks and the building is important to the community. Bussey explained that the Committee will be seeking further funds to complete the second phase of the project. Barry Falls, of Grimes Architects said the first phase will be to stabilize the building. That includes installing a new roof and boarding up windows to protect them. "The building is very sound structurally," Falls said. "The foundation is in very good shape." After the building is stabilized, Falls said the interior of the building will be renovated. That will include removing walls that were added after the original construction, converting existing restrooms into mechanical rooms and creating new restrooms. The final phase will include landscaping and additional cosmetic repairs to the exterior of the building. Cawaco RC&D has grants available to non-profits for educational and community projects. To learn more, and to download a grant application, go to www.cawaco.org.

Grant and Workshop Information

Charrette System™ Certificate 3 Day Training – visit www.rpcgb.org to for registration information

April 14 – April 16, 2009, 9am – 4pm each day. Training services provided by the National Charrette Institute and hosted by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham located at 1731 1st Avenue North, 1st Floor Conference Room, Birmingham, AL 35203. Visit www.rpcgb.org to obtain registration form and for online registration with a credit card.

This 3-day training is a fresh, new course that illustrates the capability of the NCI Charrette System for all aspects of community planning. Participants learn the practical NCI Charrette System skills, tools and techniques through new interactive, hands-on exercises practiced on four case study types:

- Sustainable community planning
- Regional/comprehensive planning
- Transportation/infrastructure planning
- Transit oriented development planning

Who should take this course: The training is ideal for planners and designers specializing in sustainable development, transportation, public works, and transit as well as citizen advocacy.

Course Content: The purpose of this training is to teach the tools and techniques for planning and running a successful project using a NCI charrette and to give participants a practical understanding of the power of the NCI Charrette System to create sustainable communities. It is an advanced course for serious planning practitioners, developers and community advocates. The course begins with a comprehensive overview of the entire NCI Charrette System including a day-by-day account of the process and products of a recent charrette. This overview sets the framework for the in-depth case study exercises, conducted in a small team format. The goal of the exercises is to teach the essential tools

for assessing and planning a project using a NCI Charrette, including: Project Touchstones, Objectives and Measures, Stakeholder Analysis, Project Roadmap, Charrette Ready Plan and Charrette Schedule. Also covered are discussions of charrette team capabilities and chemistry, charrette studio set-up, budgets and stories from famous charrette successes and failures. One major benefit of this training is meeting and working with your fellow students. NCI trainings consistently attract top practitioners in the field from across the US and abroad. Students report that one of the most valuable aspects of the course is learning from each other and establishing beneficial relationships with others in the field of community planning. You will gain a practical, working knowledge of the most advanced tools and techniques used by the leaders in community planning. Depending on your skill and experience level, upon completion of the training you will be able to host or conduct a NCI charrette.

Application workshop for FY2010 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs is sponsoring an application workshop for the LWCF and RTP Programs. The workshop is scheduled for **Wednesday, February 25, 2009**, at the Center for Commerce, 7th Floor Auditorium, 401 Adams Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama. Registration will begin at 12 noon and the workshop will begin at 1:00 p.m. and end by 5:00 p.m. Participants can access the Center for Commerce parking deck from the Hull Street entrance by entering the code (**543***). Everyone that is interested in competing for LWCF or RTP grant assistance during this funding cycle is encouraged to attend. A draft agenda will be available on our web site at www.adeca.alabama.gov under Recreation Programs by February 6th. To confirm your attendance, please call Jody Waites at 334-353-4384 (Fax 334-353-3527) or email her at jody.waites@adeca.alabama.gov by February 13, 2009. Please provide the name(s) of the workshop attendees and the organization they will represent. The workshop will be accessible to all persons. If you have a disability that requires special services, materials, or assistance please notify Jody when you pre-register. We look forward to working with you during the next funding cycle for recreation programs.

Application workshop for PY2009 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

The PY2009 CDBG Application workshop will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Montgomery, AL on Thursday, February 26, 2009. All persons attending this workshop should pre-register with The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs by calling Sandra Peavy at 334-353-1893. Registration for the workshop at the hotel will begin at 9:00 a.m. and the workshop will be between 10am and 4pm. The workshop will be accessible to all persons. If you have a disability that might require special services, materials or assistance, please notify Sandra when pre-registering. The Embassy Suites is located at 300 Tallapoosa Street in downtown Montgomery and may be reached at 1-800-362-2779 or online at ww.embassysuites.com. The code assigned to our group is ADE to alleviate confusion during the registration process. The room rate is \$125 for single or double. The cut-off date for reservations is February 13, 2009.

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