

# ***Connections Update***

**March 3, 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 auditors present FY2007 audit with excellent findings**

We are pleased to report that the FY 2007 audit has been completed and the report shows significant financial improvement over last year (FY 2006). Auditors A.V. LaRocca and Bill Bach presented the audit report at meetings of the RPC Finance Committee and RPC Board of Directors, noting that the report was completed well ahead of mandated reporting deadlines. Most importantly, the audit was an unqualified opinion with no material findings. Additionally, the report stated that RPCGB is in compliance with requirements applicable to each major program and no material weaknesses in internal controls. The Finance Committee and Board of Directors are to be commended for their dedication and attention to detail. Our thanks are extended to RPC Finance Chairman Reginald Holloway for his enthusiastic leadership; and, to the entire RPC staff for its hard work in achieving these outstanding results. For additional information, contact Ray Morris, Director of Operations, [rmorris@rpcgb.org](mailto:rmorris@rpcgb.org)

### **Cultural Diversity -- Lessons for a Growing Community**

The RPC participated with Birmingham Area community leaders in discussion on cultural, socio-economic and diversity issues with representatives of the Henry County, Georgia Chamber of Commerce Cultural Diversity Committee. Over 50 participants were hosted at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute to learn how Birmingham has transitioned through the civil rights era and how they can apply these lessons to their growing community. Henry County is one of the fastest growing counties in the country, and with a minority population of 30% has similar regional, county and community level issues as the Birmingham region. For additional information contact Bill Foisy at [bfoisy@rpcgb.org](mailto:bfoisy@rpcgb.org)

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

The RPC Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for March 5, 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**

The RPC Program Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2008, 8:30 a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, Conference Room A, 1731 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. The purpose of the meeting is to review work program and budget modification.

### **RPC Board of Directors meeting announcement**

The next meeting is March 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)

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

### **Incentives Available to Beat High Gas Prices**

Gas prices are on the rise again, and CommuteSmart continues to offer incentive programs to help Birmingham residents fight the financial strain of commuting. GetGreen offers commuters \$2 per day, up to \$120 over a 90-day period, to anyone willing to change their commutes from driving alone to a qualified commute alternative (such as carpooling, teleworking, taking transit, walking and biking). Commuter Club is another incentive program that offers \$25 gift cards on a quarterly basis to commuters who log at least 20 qualified commute trips during the course of the quarter. Signing up is easy, and with nearly 5,000 commuters signed up in the ridematch database, finding a carpool partner may be one click away. Applications are available on [www.commutesmart.org](http://www.commutesmart.org) or by calling 1-87-RIDEMATCH.

### **RPC/BJCTA Forge Agreement for Improved Rideshare Program**

RPC Executive Director Charles Ball and BJCTA Board Chairman Brian Hamilton have completed an agreement to report the vanpool mileage of the Rideshare Program to the National Transit Database. This will allow the region to secure additional Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds of approximately \$350,000 per year that will be used to capitalize the Rideshare Program and provide greater opportunities for funding other projects in the Transportation Improvement Program, including those for the Transit Authority. With vanpool formation increasing monthly due to a comprehensively structured service and rising gasoline costs, the available FTA funds could be even higher than the estimate that is based on the existing number of vanpools. For additional information contact Charles Ball at [cball@rpcgb.org](mailto:cball@rpcgb.org)

### **Congestion Management Process Task Force meeting scheduled**

A meeting of the Congestion Management Process Update Task Force will be held on Monday, March 17, 2008, 2008, 1:30 p.m., RPC 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room. The meeting will focus on review of field data collected, identifications of congested corridors, and potential mitigation strategies. For more information contact Harry He at [hhe@rpcgb.org](mailto:hhe@rpcgb.org)

### **Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) update**

APCA Steering Committee met on February 14, 2008 and elected new officers. The Chairman is Mr. Charles Ball with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham and the Vice-Chairman is Don Lupo with the City of Birmingham. The next meeting of the APCA Steering Committee is Thursday, March 13, 2008, 1:30 p.m.,

Regional Planning Commission, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL

**An APCA partner is seeking Volunteers** - The Waste Reduction and Technology Transfer Foundation (WRATT) is seeking retirees to assist the group with their programs, including waste reduction, recycling, energy efficiency and air pollution. Interested? Call Danny Patterson at 205-824-8797 or email wrattd@aol.com For more information about WRATT visit [www.wratt.org](http://www.wratt.org)

For additional information on APCA contact Scott Tillman at [stillman@rpcgb.org](mailto:stillman@rpcgb.org)

### **U.S. 280 Transit Analysis**

The MPO Subcommittee has concurred with a scope of work to identify and evaluate land use and transit improvements along the U.S. 280 Corridor. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was defined as a potentially viable option in the U.S. 280 Corridor in 2004 under the Birmingham Regional Transit Alternatives Analysis. BRT is defined as a fully integrated bus-rapid transit system that utilizes state-of-the-art technology and equipment to provide a level of service typically only experienced with more sophisticated systems such as light rail and heavy rail systems. Given that the Alabama Department of Transportation in 2007 developed a preliminary concept for a proposed elevated roadway, a more refined transit element will be developed for the MPO's Long-Range Transportation Plan. This analysis is consistent with other corridor analyses for high technology transit such as the In-Town Transit Partnership that recommends BRT in the downtown Birmingham Area as the backbone of a regional system, and high-occupancy vehicle lanes and bus rapid transit in the I-65 corridor. For additional information contact Bill Foisy at [bfoisy@rpcgb.org](mailto:bfoisy@rpcgb.org)

### **Heart of Alabama Rural Planning Organization (HARPO) county outreach meetings scheduled**

The public is invited to review and discuss maps and charts of the potential projects and solutions to issues and needs that were identified at the Winter meetings. The **Alabama Department of Transportation** will review the projects included in the FY2008-2011 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The following are meeting dates:

- Blount County, March 10, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m., Frank Green Building, Oneonta, Alabama
- St. Clair County, March 18, 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m., Jefferson State Community College, St. Clair Economic Development Council office, Pell City, Alabama
- Chilton County, April 1, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., United Methodist Church, Clanton, Alabama. Meeting is in conjunction with the Chilton County Chamber of Commerce and reservations are necessary.
- Walker County, April 8, 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m., CHS Building, Jasper, Alabama

If you have any questions, please contact Cissy Edwards Crowe, (205) 264-8402, email [cedwards@rpcgb.org](mailto:cedwards@rpcgb.org)

### **Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) holds Public Involvement Meeting for their Draft Public Participation Plan**

A Public Involvement Meeting was held February 20, 2008 for the Draft Public Participation Plan (Plan) for discussion and comments. The comment period is open until

April 7, 2008. The new Plan was developed in cooperation with the MPO's Transportation Citizens Committee (TCC) Public Involvement Subcommittee. The new Plan expands on the current Plan to meet federal guidelines under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). To view and to submit comments on the Draft Public Participation Plan visit [www.bhammpo.org](http://www.bhammpo.org), "Public Involvement, How To Get Involved" link. The deadline for comment submission is April 7, 2008. For more information contact Cissy Edwards Crowe at [cedwards@rpcgb.org](mailto:cedwards@rpcgb.org)

## **Building Communities**

### **RPC's Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is partnering with Bevill State Community College in Jasper**

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is partnering with Bevill State Community College in Jasper. The partnership has allowed Bevill State to open the doors of the Carl Elliott Museum located in downtown Jasper. **Carl Atwood Elliott** (December 20, 1913–January 9, 1999) was a U.S. Congressman from the state of Alabama. He was elected to eight consecutive terms in office, serving from January 1949 to January 1965. The SCSEP enrollee place with the museum is receiving training in political history, public safety and security for museum artifacts, interfacing with members and the public. Bevill State will also provide training for basic computer skills for participants. SCSEP is presently seeking a participant that lives in the Jasper area interested in receiving training in these areas. The person must be fifty years or older and meet income guide lines. If interested please call 205-251-8139 and ask to speak to a staff member with the Senior Community Employment Program.

### **RPC Awards ceremony held February 13, 2008 for RPC Community Planning Assistance Grant Program**

An Award Ceremony was held February 13, 2008 to recognize recipients of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham's (RPC) Community Planning Assistance Grants. The RPC received 21 applications and the following 17 were selected for a total investment of \$423,000:

City of Pelham: *Subdivision Regulations Update*

Town of Brookside: *Master Plan Update*

City of Clay: *Retail Market Opportunity Analysis*

Blount County Commission: *Retail Market Opportunity Analysis*

St. Clair County EDC: *Retail Market Opportunity Analysis (Ashville & Springville)*

St. Clair County EDC: *Retail Market Opportunity Analysis (Moody and Pell City)*

Leeds Commercial Development Board: *Corridor Management Plan*

City of Graysville: *Zoning Code Update*

Town of Harpersville: *Historical Preservation Study*

Town of Locust Fork: *Master Plan Update*

City of Pinson: *Master Plan, Subdivision Regulations, Zoning Ordinance*

City of Vestavia Hills: *Capital Improvements Plan*

City of Hueytown: *Area Revitalization Plan /TIF District Data Assembly*

City of Jasper: *Analysis of the Townley Interchange on Corridor X*

City of Fairfield: *Historic Preservation Analysis*

City of Oneonta: *Industrial Boulevard Extension Traffic Analysis*

Blount County Commission: *Rural Road Improvement Plan*

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. Each local government was required to match the dollars requested in its grant applications. For additional information, contact Steve Ostaseski at [smo@rpcgb.org](mailto:smo@rpcgb.org)

### **Water Resource Assessment meetings**

The Regional Planning Commission, under contract with Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs/Office of Water Resource, is holding educational work sessions on water resources. Each work session will be geared towards informing local decision-makers on the assessment and recommendation report produced by Malcolm-Pirnie for the region. A partial schedule is as follows:

- Blount County, March 10, 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Frank Green Building, Oneonta, Alabama
- Chilton County, April 1, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., United Methodist Church, Clanton, Alabama
- Walker County, April 8, 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., CHS Building, Jasper, Alabama

For additional information contact Yvonne Murray, [ymurray@rpcgb.org](mailto:ymurray@rpcgb.org)

### **Birmingham Historical Society - 'Olmstead Files'**

At this year's annual meeting of the Birmingham Historical Society, the organization featured a new book *Hand Down Unharmed - Olmstead Files on Birmingham Parks*. Find out how you can purchase this wonderful story of "green" history in Birmingham by visiting - <http://www.bhistorical.org> .

### **Save the Date - Brookside Greenway Festival**

Saturday, April 5, 2008

New this year-Metric Half Century Bicycle Race – the Frenchie Negrón Classic

Duathlon run-bike-run – Wild Boar Duathlon. All proceeds go to support the Brookside Greenway! Watch [www.brooksidealabama.com](http://www.brooksidealabama.com) web site for the latest information about the festival.

## **Community/Economic Development**

### **Youth Forum**

Southern Growth Policies Board held a community forum on February 26<sup>th</sup> at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. The forum titled Youth—the Real Future of the South focused on issues related to the support and development of youth in the region. As today's workforce ages, it is critical that the Southern region cultivate the vision, talents and passions of our youth. Developing the potential of Southern youth, listening to their views, and inspiring them to take action in our communities is vital to the economic future of our region. Southern Growth Policies Board is a regional public policy think tank representing 14 Southern states that develops

and advances visionary economic development policies. For more information on Southern Growth Policies Board, visit [www.southern.org](http://www.southern.org).

## **Workforce Development**

In an effort to provide more efficient workforce development services to Alabama communities, Governor Bob Riley has enacted the Regional Workforce Development Council. The Regional Council's role is to provide strategic planning and direction on regional workforce development activities and services for the Alabama Workforce Development System. The Regional Council is made up of 10 distinct regions located throughout the state. The Regional Workforce Development Council represents a group of business, economic development, and professional leadership in each of the ten local regions. For more information contact the Alabama Office or Workforce Development at (334) 353-2940.

## **Legacy Project: Homeless Connect**

On Saturday, April 5 approximately 500 volunteers, public servants, non-profit agencies, faith-based organizations, and citizens will assemble under one roof to help people who are homeless in our community through Project Homeless Connect. This innovative one-day event is about breaking the cycle of homelessness, increasing access to services and ending chronic homelessness in Central Alabama. For one day, Project Homeless Connect will give people experiencing homelessness the opportunity to access an array of services in a system which is often difficult to understand and navigate. Project Homeless Connect (PHC) links homeless individuals, veterans, and families to housing, medical services, identification services, veterans' services, employment services, pet care and haircuts. Be a part of Birmingham's solution to homelessness. For more information contact Hands on Birmingham at [www.handsonbirmingham.org](http://www.handsonbirmingham.org).

## **RPC staff attend Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application Procedure workshop**

On February 21-22, 2008, RPC Planner Robyn Jackson and RPC Community Development Specialist Karen McCoy attended the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application Procedures Workshop in Mobile, Alabama. The workshop was very well attended and prospective grant writers were from all over the state of Alabama. This two day workshop included various presentations from representatives of the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs as well as representatives from Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Emergency Management Agency of Alabama (EMA). All the presentations were informative and generated excitement among both Jackson and McCoy who are ready to use this training to begin implementing comprehensive plans and Capital Improvement Plans of communities within our six-county region. Robyn Jackson can be reach at [rjackson@rpcgb.org](mailto:rjackson@rpcgb.org) and Karen McCoy can be reached at [kmccoy@rpcgb.org](mailto:kmccoy@rpcgb.org).

## **Grant and Workshop Information**

### **CAWACO RC&D Council's FY2008 grant window is now open!**

Cawaco Resource & 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, proposals must be RECEIVED by March 31.* Check [www.cawaco.org](http://www.cawaco.org) for complete details, guidelines, forms and a list of recently approved projects.

### **Green Resource Center for Alabama – Saving Our Water conference**

March 25, 2008, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Saving our Water offers business leaders, government officials, planners, developers, builders, architects, building owners and interested citizens an excellent opportunity to explore the expanding water needs in the Birmingham Region and how to sensibly meet these needs through planning for sustainability, conservation and cooperation. For more information and to register visit [www.greenalabama.org](http://www.greenalabama.org)

### **Watershed Leadership Conference**

The Alabama Rivers Alliance will be holding their annual Watershed Leadership Conference on March 14-16, in Fairhope, Alabama at Camp Beckwith on Week's Bay. For conference details visit <http://www.alabamarivers.org> .

### **CNU XVI: New Urbanism and the Booming Metropolis conference**

Congress for New Urbanism, April 3-6, 2008, Austin, Texas

How do we make New Urbanism flourish in the suburbs and boomtowns of high-growth America? How can regions preserve their local character and environment while creating vital new and renewed communities? From new rail systems to infill transit-oriented development to the downtown high-rise boom, Austin is the place to see how New Urbanism is making a difference on the front lines of American growth. Attend the premier gathering of new urbanists. Discounted registration deadline is March 5<sup>th</sup>. Conference info: <http://www.cnu.org/cnuxvi>

### **Innovative workshops scheduled for Jasper**

The City of Jasper and the Black Warrior Clean Water Partnership will be hosting two innovative workshops to improve water quality. For more information or register online visit the Partnership's website at [www.warriorcwp.org](http://www.warriorcwp.org).

- *Stormwater Best Management Practices Academy* – April 16, 2008  
Topics in the Stormwater BMP Workshop will include : Overview of Stormwater wetlands, bio-retention, permeable paving and green roofs; Functions, regulations, engineering standards, and vegetative requirements of stormwater BMPs
- *Stream Restoration Construction* – April 17, 2008  
The workshop will center on Town Creek Tributary, an urban stream in the City of Jasper bordering Maddox Middle School and will be conducted during construction of an urban stream restoration project at the School. Participants will learn about plan sheet development, construction specifications, permitting, and construction oversight while observing channel grading and structure installation. The workshop will be split between classroom and extensive field work.

## **2008 National Clean Water Policy Forum**

May 4 - 7, 2008, Renaissance Mayflower Hotel, Washington, DC

Join your colleagues in Washington, DC, for the 2008 National Clean Water Policy Forum, where on May 4 – 7, the Water Environment Federation and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) will provide an exceptional opportunity to access the latest federal legislative, regulatory, and legal developments in the Nation's capital. The Forum is well-timed as the 2008 campaign season will be in full-swing this May. The shift to a Democratic-led House and Senate last year has resulted in increased attention to clean water issues — including Clean Water Act jurisdiction, sewer overflow notification, chemical facility security, clean water funding, and climate change. Policy Forum panelists and speakers will discuss and debate these and other issues, providing attendees with a level of detail and insight only available at the Forum. In addition to a program focused on critical issues with current information, the Policy Forum will include opportunities for networking and discussion. The Technical Roundtable Breakfast will feature key policymakers from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies as breakout session leaders on specific clean water issues, and the Utility Executives Forum will provide a unique occasion for top utility leaders to explore priority issues. Don't miss this opportunity to learn about current and emerging legislative and regulatory issues being considered by our Nation's leaders today that may impact clean water utilities tomorrow. Plan now to attend! A detailed preliminary agenda and online conference registration will be available soon at [www.wef.org](http://www.wef.org) and [www.nacwa.org](http://www.nacwa.org)

## **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](http://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](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)*