

Connections Update

March 2, 2009

**Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB)
Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
1731 First Avenue North Suite 200- Birmingham, Alabama 35203
For RPCGB meeting schedules and information visit www.rpcgb.org
For MPO meeting schedules and information visit www.bhammpo.org**

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Working Together

RPC Finance Committee meeting announcement

The next scheduled meeting is March 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 cancelled

There will not be a Committee meeting in March. The next scheduled meeting is April 8, 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 March 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 redesigned conference room

The month of February saw the completion of the redesigned RPC main floor conference room. Tackable wall boards and dry erase boards compliment the addition of new chairs and tables. Newly painted walls give the room an updated and fresh appearance. The handicap-accessible room has a 100 person capacity and the ability to hold many different functions, meetings and events. Future plans include the addition of audio/visual components, but the room is currently set up for a portable video screen and microphone. For more information about renting the RPC main floor conference room, please contact Cynthia Barton at cbarton@rpcgb.org.

RPC annual audit report

At the February 2009 Board of Directors' meeting, the Board accepted the RPC annual audit results for fiscal year ending September 2008 from the firm of DiPiazza, LaRocca, Heeter and Co. The report stated that the RPC qualified as a low risk auditee due to fact that it has had no findings in review of its major programs for the previous two years and is in compliance with A-133 guidelines as it relates to federal awards programs. The RPC has also been properly accounting for the Revolving Loan Fund and fixed assets in the current year. No management letter comments were issued during the current year under audit.

Regional Transportation, Planning and Development

Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meetings

- The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the **Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** is 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** is Wednesday, March 18, 2009 12:00 Noon, RPC, 1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham.
- The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the **MPO Transportation Technical Committee** is Wednesday, March 25, 2009, 10:00 a.m., RPC, 1st Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham.
- The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the **Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Subcommittee** is Thursday, March 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

Transit Means Growth Summit

Over 100 persons attended the inaugural **Transit Means Growth Summit** held on February 2, 2009 in Birmingham. The purpose of the summit was to discuss the economic development potential of a fully-funded, fully-functional statewide transit system. The event was hosted by the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority; transit authorities from Decatur, Dothan, Opelika, Muscle Shoals, Tuscaloosa, Gadsden, Mobile, Huntsville and Anniston; the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham; and the Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce. One of the Summit's top priorities is to develop a state commission on transit to examine the urban and rural economic benefits of transit and to develop a consensus for state transit funding as Alabama is currently one of four states that does not provide state funding for transit.

Local mayors, citizen and governmental organizations, and Alabama legislators conducted panels on the "Need for a Functioning Public Transit System", the "Importance of Local Matching Funds for Transit", the "State Constitution and its Impact on Transit Funding", and the "Need for a Commission on Public Transportation". Congressman Artur Davis provided the keynote address on the opportunities under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Congratulations to Chris Lewis, BJCTA Board Chairman, for organizing this event!

Heart of Alabama Regional Planning Organization (HARPO) meetings

HARPO Public Participation meetings are scheduled to provide progress updates on the transportation projects listed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) by County. In addition, there will be a review of potential projects that may be

included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The meetings are sponsored by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.

Chilton County

March 24, 2009, 10:00a.m., Clanton City Hall, 502 2nd Avenue North, Clanton, AL 35046.

Blount County

March 31, 2009, 10:00am, Frank Green Building, Auditorium, 415 5th Avenue East, Oneonta, AL 35121

St. Clair County

Date and time in April to be determined

Walker County

Date and time in April to be determined

For additional information contact Cissy Edwards Crowe, cedwards@rpcgb.org.

Catching a ride

Several local companies started out 2009 getting a little more familiar with CommuteSmart. ALDOT, Infinity Insurance, Alabama Power and Balch & Bingham, LLC were all participants in Vanpool Appreciation or indoor Try-It Days administered by the CommuteSmart team. Employees from the different companies got a chance to try vanpooling and learn more about the benefits of commuting smarter. For more information on how your company can get involved in Try-It days, please contact Sean Saffle, CommuteSmart Project Manager, at ssaffle@rpcgb.org

I-65/US 31 Mobility Matters Project update

The Mobility Matters Project Steering Committee met February 17, 2009 to discuss the results of the Tier 1 Analysis project. The Project is analyzing a wide range of alternates to improve mobility in the I-65/US 31 Corridor from Valleydale Road to Downtown Birmingham. Alternatives include High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes, General Purpose Lanes, Managed Lanes and Premium Transit. The draft Tier 1 Report is available at the project website: <http://www.i65-us31mobilitymatters.com>. In addition, comments from those who travel the corridor are welcomed at: <http://www.i65-us31mobilitymatters.com/survey.htm>. For additional information contact Mary Grace Lewandowski, mgl@rpcgb.org.

Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) 2035 Demographic and Socioeconomic Projections available

The recently updated 2035 Demographic and Socioeconomic Projections report consists of population, housing, and employment statistics for the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) counties of Jefferson and Shelby. The report includes county and sub-county 2005 estimates and 2035 projections. This data is developed for use in the regional traffic assignment model and is utilized for the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan and other transportation products. The report can be found at <http://www.bhammpo.org/whatsnew/whatsnew.htm>. For additional information contact Brett Isom, RPC GIS Administrator, bisom@rpcgb.org

Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) Steering Committee meeting

The next scheduled meeting for the Alabama Partners for Clean Air Steering Committee is March 12, 2009, 1:30p.m. - 2:30 p.m., Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL. APCA. Alabama Department of Environmental Management will present an air quality update and Partners will present their monthly activity reports.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) 2035 progressing

The staff of the Birmingham MPO is rapidly progressing in its development of the *Birmingham On Course: Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for 2035*. During the month of February, MPO staff actively engaged the MPO's Transportation Citizens Committee in order to identify issue areas to address within the RTP outside of the traditional roadway issues normally identified. The Citizens Committee identified public transportation, its narrow service area, and the lack of access to existing services as issues that the RTP should provide more focus. At the same time, they also indicated that non-motorized traveler facilities and non-motorized traveler safety were also issue areas where the plan should consider providing additional attention.

Birmingham MPO staff also actively engaged the MPO's Transportation Technical Committee in a manner similar to what they had done with the Transportation Citizens Committee. Technical Committee Members were asked to identify their top three regional projects which they felt needed to be advanced in the RTP. Overwhelmingly, Technical Committee members identified projects that added capacity to the Birmingham region's roadways. This was followed by improvements to the region's public transportation system.

Finally, MPO staff is completing analysis of projects, both in the current RTP and proposed for inclusion into the RTP, in order that these projects might be evaluated as to how well they address the region's expressed transportation system development goals. Project analysis is expected to be completed in the month of March, in time to begin testing of transportation system development scenarios.

For additional information about the RTP please visit the project's website at www.bhammpo.org/on%20course.html or contact RTP project manager, Darrell Howard at dhoward@rpcgb.org.

Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) Care Program – Emissions Testing

The month of February saw over 300 cars receive emissions testing as a part of the Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) Care Program. Over 35 cars qualified for repairs, with 21 actually receiving repairs. The testing and repairs were administered by the Waste Reduction and Technology Transfer Foundation (WRATT), in partnership with APCA. Testing occurred at 13 different oil change establishments in Jefferson and Shelby counties. The Car Care Program pays 80% of the qualified repairs, up to \$1,000, with the vehicle owner covering the remaining 20%. Repairs that qualify under the

program include the oxygen sensor, catalytic converter, diagnostics and others deemed necessary by the pilot program shop. Vehicles under a manufacturer's warranty or other expended warranty do not apply. For more information on emissions testing, please contact Danny Patterson, WRATT Executive Director at policyexfd@aol.com or 824-8797.

RPC partners with Jefferson County Health Action Partnership to target roadside litter

RPC, through Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) funding, partnered with the Jefferson County Health Action Partnership (www.jcdh.org) to air a targeted media campaign Public Service Announcement (PSA) regarding roadside litter. This media campaign acknowledges the SAFETEA-LU transportation planning goal to "protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation and improve the quality of life." When communities or groups are asked what is the most pressing environmental problem, "roadside litter" frequently tops the list. Litter surveys performed by other states (Georgia, Tennessee and Texas) indicated that young adults, between the ages of 16 and 30, were statistically most likely to litter.

A media campaign, funded by the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, was developed by The Modern Brand, a local marketing firm. Litter surveys performed by other states (Georgia, Tennessee and Texas) indicated that young adults, between the ages of 16 and 30, were statistically most likely to litter. The litter campaign began by surveying 100 teens from different socio-economic and geographic backgrounds regarding their litter habits. For the television spot and the testimonial interviews, teens were invited to participate from all city and county schools. In total, over 40 teens participated in the making of the television commercial and provided testimonial interviews about their views on litter. A website was developed for young adults to share their views on litter and obtain more information about local initiatives (www.whatislitter.com). Visitors to the website can sign a pledge not to litter.

CommuteSmart Offers a Free Ride to Work

CommuteSmart is now accepting commuters for its *Two for the Road* vanpool promotion. *Two for the Road* lets commute get to work for free, for two weeks. With a minimum of four people (including a driver), CommuteSmart will provide commuters with a free van for their ride to work. CommuteSmart is sweetening the deal with \$40 worth of gas cards to get the van started and also covering the cost of maintenance and insurance. The *Two for the Road* vanpool promotion runs through March 31, but don't waste any time because it's first-come, first-served. If CommuteSmart runs out of vans, you'll be waitlisted for the next available vehicle. To sign up or get help forming a new vanpool, please contact T. Ray Maudlin at 205-264-8462 or tmauldin@rpcgb.org, and get on the road to a better commute!

Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers (BUMP) receives grant from Bikes Belong Coalition to leverage Shelby County grant

The Birmingham Urban Mountain Pedalers (BUMP) will receive \$10,000 to help build the Lake Trail in Oak Mountain State Park. Bikes Belong funds will leverage a Shelby County Grant for the project, helping BUMP to connect two sections of singletrack that are currently linked by a roadway while creating a 3-mile mountain-bike loop specifically for beginners. Oak Mountain State Park receives more than 500,000 visitors annually. BUMP, which has gained and maintained mountain-bike access in the park since 1990, anticipates that many of these outdoor enthusiasts would try mountain biking if beginner options were available. They hope the Lake Trail will bring new riders to their sport and encourage more people to actively enjoy the park. For more information on Bikes Belong Coalition visit www.bikesbelong.org

Building Communities

Smart Code Corner

As RPC professionals visit and work within your communities, they may discuss smart codes or form-based codes. The concepts of smart codes or form-based codes are an emerging trend throughout the nation and here in Alabama. What are they and how would they work in your community? **Smart Code Corner** will be a recurring section of your Connections newsletter. RPC staff will compile monthly articles on smart code and formed-based code. Our goal is providing you information to help you understand smart code and formed-based code. With an understanding of the concepts, you can determine how these tools may help you shape your community.

What is smart code or form-based code?

Form-based codes have developed over several decades. The SmartCode is a model form-based code originally developed by the preeminent architectural firm Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Co., to guide the development of the Florida resort town of Seaside. Form-based codes regulate land development with more emphasis on controlling urban form and less emphasis on controlling land uses. The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both diagrams and words. Form-based codes are always accompanied by a regulating plan. Most of us have in place a zoning code that is know as Euclidean zoning. Conventional Euclidean zoning regulates land development with the most emphasis on controlling land use. Form-based code does concentrate on the form of the built environment and not exclusively on the use.

SmartCode is a formed-based code. SmartCode moves beyond regulating only the form of a specific piece of land and instead further regulates how a singular form fits into the larger context of a region, this concept is know as the transect. The transect recognizes that development fits within the context of the region not just the individual site. SmartCode brings the transect and form-based code together. It folds zoning, subdivision regulations, urban design, public works standards, and basic architectural controls into one compact document. It is a unified ordinance, spanning scales from region to community to building. Ultimately, a form-based code is a tool; the quality of development outcomes is dependent on the quality and objectives of the community plan that a code implements.

If you have SmartCode questions please contact Lindsay Smith or Richard Amore at RPC. Lindsay may be reached by phone at 205.264.8421 or by email at lsmith@rpcgb.org. Richard may be reached by phone at 205.264.8447 or by email at ramore@rpcgb.org.

RPC kicks off project with the City of Chelsea

The RPC met with the City of Chelsea Planning Commission on February 23, 2009 to kickoff a project for a Major Street Plan, Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations update. For additional information contact Lindsay Smith, RPC Senior Planner, lsmith@rpcgb.org.

City of Calera updating Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations

The KPS Group conducted a successful Public Meeting on February 17 to update Calera's comprehensive plan and development regulations. The update to the city's comprehensive plan and development regulations are funded by the RPC through the Building Communities Grant Program. This was the first meeting of a series of meetings held at City Hall over the next few months. The next meeting is on March 17 at 6:00pm at City Hall. We encourage the citizens of Calera to attend this meeting as public input is vital to the success of the City of Calera's planning efforts. For additional information contact Jason Fondren with the KPS Group, jfondren@kpsgroup.com or Richard Amore, RPC Senior Planner, ramore@rpcgb.org

Highland Park Neighborhood Plan - Public Meeting

The Highland Park Neighborhood Plan public meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2009, 7:00p.m.at the Highland Park Golf Club, 3300 Highland Ave S., Birmingham, AL 35205. Gresham, Smith & Partners will be presenting the draft plan of the neighborhood assessment, zoning review and zoning update. For additional information contact Lindsay Smith, RPC Senior Planner, lsmith@rpcgb.org.

City of Graysville public workshop

The RPC along with consultants Robert and Company will host a public workshop on March 31, 2009, in the City of Graysville. Robert and Company will present a draft of the Form Based Code for downtown Graysville and gather public comments about the plan. For additional information contact Richard Amore, RPC Senior Planner, ramore@rpcgb.org

Town of Locust Fork Master Plan

The RPC will meet with the Town of Locust Fork Planning Commission on March 3, 2009, 6:00 p.m., at City Hall to work towards adoption of the Town's Master Plan. For additional information contact Richard Amore, RPC Senior Planner, ramore@rpcgb.org

Economic Development

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Strategy Committee meeting

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Strategy Committee meeting will be held Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 10:30am – 12:00 at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. This meeting will focus on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 recently signed by the President on February 17, 2009 in relation to Alabama's economy. The keynote speaker is Dr. Samuel N. Addy, Director, University of Alabama's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER). He will be discussing the current and forecasted state of Alabama's economy. Additionally, following Dr. Addy's presentation, a panel will discuss the impacts of the legislation in the areas of transportation, economic development and energy. A list of panelists will be included in a subsequent email.

The session will be repeated the same day, March 11th, 1:30 p.m. at the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting. The MPO meets at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham 35203.

Seating is limited in both sessions.

Grant and Workshop Information

Charrette System, Certificate 3 Day Training – visit www.rpcgb.org to for registration information – accredited with AICP for 18 CM credits and AIA for 18 CES units

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.

Cawaco Resource Conservation & Development Council is seeking grant applications

Cawaco Resource Conservation & Development Council is seeking grant applications for the Challenge Grant Program and Educational Grant Program in Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker Counties. Grant applications and additional information can be found on the Cawaco website at www.cawaco.org. To be considered, all proposals must be received by March 31, 2009.

Challenge Grant Program

The Council offers small Challenge Grants (\$1,000 - \$5,000) to assist public and other 501(c)(3) agencies in their efforts to serve community needs. Projects funded support Council and USDA-NRCS Goals that promote the economic and community development and the responsible use of the area's resources. **High priority will be given to projects that will assist with the implementation of community development plans.** Previously funded projects include community gateways, tornado sirens, tracking bracelets for alzheimers patients, and nature trails.

ACES Educational Challenge Grants

The Council partners with ACES / Alabama Cooperative Extension System to offer small Educational Challenge Grants (\$1,000 - \$5,000) for projects that provide information and/or instruction to children and adults. Educational Challenge Grant projects must:

- Be consistent with the mission of the RC&D program, which is to "help people protect and develop their economic, natural, and social resources in ways that improve their area's economy, environment, and quality of life"
- Include one or more clearly defined educational objectives (a description of what you are trying to teach people)
- Clearly describe the intended audience

- Be intended to teach people how to use natural resources to improve the quality of life in the community without adversely affecting the environment.
- Have significant community benefit

Stream education workshop field day April 3, 2009: Jasper, Alabama, The Natatorium

Cawaco RC&D is hosting a workshop to address basic streamside management techniques. Park officials, municipal employees, landscape maintenance personnel, and landowners concerned about streams on their property are encouraged to attend.

Topics Include:

- Protecting your stream from erosion
- Floodplain function and buffers
- Plant selection
- Restricting access
- Economic benefits
- Wildlife interactions
- Maintaining aesthetics
- Local sources for native plants

Registration is \$25.00. Register online @ <http://cawaco.org/registration.html>

Partners include: Black Warrior Clean Water Partnership, Cahaba Clean Water Partnership, Walker County SWCD, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, North Carolina State University and the City of Jasper.

2009 Your Town Alabama workshop is scheduled for June 3 – 3, 2009 at Camp McDowell

This is our 11th year anniversary! The focus of the workshop aims specifically to introduce small town and rural technical assistance providers and decision makers to the role of design in community planning. The workshop consists of highly informative presentations and problem-solving activities for participants. It is also a wonderful opportunity to network with other community leaders and make contacts with presenters who work throughout Alabama in the planning, design, economic development, and resource preservation fields. Former participants remark that the workshop is FUN and invigorating and opened their minds to many possibilities. If you or other community leaders are interested in attending this workshop, please complete the application and return by **April 30, 2009**. Participants are limited so you are strongly encouraged to apply as early as possible. You can now register and securely pay online using a credit card through RegOnline.com. Visit www.regonline.com/63369_701584F and simply follow the instructions. If you wish to register via mail, you can [download the application in Microsoft Word format here](#). Please print or type the application and mail it with your check to the address on the application.

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