

Connections Update

May 2, 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

RPC Finance Committee meeting announcement

The RPC Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for May 7, 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.

RPC Program Budget Committee meeting announcement

The RPC Program Budget Committee meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2008, 8:30 a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, Conference Room A, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. The purpose of the meeting is to review budget modifications.

RPC Board of Directors meeting announcement

The next meeting is May 21, 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

RPC Personnel Committee meeting announcement

The RPC Personnel Committee will meet May 8, 2008, 8:00a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. Conference Room A, 1731 1st Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203. The purpose of the meeting is to handle reviews.

RPC Board adopts 5-Year Strategic Plan

At their April Board meeting, the RPC Board of Directors adopted RPC's 5-Year Strategic Plan. Below are the highlights. For more information visit www.rpcgb.org, What's Hot.

Vision

“The members of the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham will benefit from professional, innovative and high quality resources. Using its expertise, we will collectively and progressively ensure that all localities have the capacity to fully participate in economic growth and development, respectful of each community's values and objectives. Ultimately, we are committed to creating a region with access to meaningful employment and healthy communities.”

Core Values

- We are dedicated to the betterment of our members, partners and communities.
- We are committed to collaboration and mutual respect

- We uphold the diversity and identity of our natural, social and built environments

Mission Statement

“To serve as a catalyst for regional leadership, cooperation and sustainability in Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair and Walker Counties”

Goals Developed for Six Functional Areas:

Revenue, Administrative, Service, Communications, Personnel and Governance

Each Goal Supported by Objectives and Each Objective Includes:

Timetable for Implementation, Responsible Parties and Target Completion Dates

RPC Board adopts budget modifications

At the April Board meeting, the RPC Board of Directors adopted the following budget modifications.

- Local Assistance/Enterprise Funds

The total revenue available has been adjusted from \$261,500 to \$234,750 to reflect the 15 community planning assistance contracts amounting to \$166,500, six local planning projects totaling \$58,250, and \$10,000 from the Alabama Association of Regional Councils/Alabama Department of Transportation for an updated rural social service transportation plan. A dues match of \$2,500 is required for the AARC/ALDOT program.

- ARC/State TA

The total revenue available has been increased by \$20,000 from \$240,000 to \$260,000 to reflect a higher annual contribution by the Appalachian Regional Commission.

- Senior Aide Agency Contracts (Birmingham Municipal Court/Birmingham Police Department)

Revenues for Birmingham Municipal Court for contract workers have been increased by \$34,000, increasing the total expenditures for Senior Aide Agency Contracts from \$59,704 to \$93,704.

- FTA 5309 – I-65

Total expenses for this project have been decreased from \$3,656,750 to \$71,000 to reflect that the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority, not the RPC, is paying third party contractors. Payment is upon verification and authorization by the RPC staff.

RPC Planner receives award

Yvonne Murray, a planner with the RPC, will be honored as the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Public Administration Outstanding Graduate Student of the Year at the UAB Honors Convocation on May 2, 2008. She just completed her term as the student association president and is a candidate for her Master of Public Administration at the end of the summer of 2008. Additionally, Yvonne was recently inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha, the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration.

Cawaco RC&D Council, Inc.- quarterly meeting

Wednesday, May 14, 2008, 9:30 – Registration; 10:00 – Business Meeting; 11:45 -Lunch Center for Regional Planning & Design, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203 , Historic Young & Vann Building

RSVP – by Friday, May 9, Annette Drummonds, 205 264-846,
cawaco_annette@hotmail.com

Alabama Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting

The Alabama Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting was held April 14-16 at the Four Points Sheraton in Tuscaloosa Alabama. Agenda items included presentations "What is RC&D" by Cawaco's Kellie Johnston, "Area Plans" and "Board Members responsibilities"- by National President Donna Hunter, and field trips to three successful projects sites. To see a slideshow of the meeting visit www.cawaco.org

Regional Transportation, Planning and Development

In-town Transit Partnership Develops Transit District and Parking Strategies

The Birmingham MPO hosted two workshops for stakeholders of the In-town Transit Partnership in order to continue development of a Transit District Plan and parking strategies for the district. The Transit District is defined as the area within two blocks on either side of the In-town Transit Partnership corridor (see map). The purpose of the Transit District Plan is to identify and coordinate urban design characteristics which are applicable specifically to the transit district, as well as to identify opportunities for increased capital investment to induce and/or bolster development within the district. Parking strategies being explored within the Transit District are considering ways to better meet the parking needs of the BJCC, the City Center, and UAB while at the same time supporting public transit. Some strategies being considered include pricing differentials for both on-street and off-street parking, encouraging remote parking locations, and reforms to regulations that limit and/or restrict shared use parking. Both the Transit District Plan recommendations and parking strategy recommendations are being finalized and are expected to be completed in July 2008. The next meeting for the Transit District Plan will be held on Monday June 23, 2008 at 10:30am at the Center for Regional Planning and Design. For additional information about the ITP project please visit www.ITP-Project.com or contact Darrell Howard dhoward@rpcgb.org

On Course: Birmingham 2035 Kicks Off

The Birmingham MPO kicked off the update of the metropolitan planning area's long range transportation plan with meetings of the plan's three technical advisory work groups on March 31 and April 2. On Course: Birmingham 2035, is the regional transportation plan that, when adopted, will replace the existing Birmingham 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. The work groups are intended to provide the Birmingham MPO with technical guidance in the development and modifications to the regional transportation plan's components. The three work groups include:

Human Service Transportation Work Group

The Human Service Transportation work group will provide guidance for the update of the human service transportation plan, and direction about how to incorporate this element into the regional transportation plan.

Transportation Strategies Work Group

The Transportation Strategies work group will provide guidance about MPO priorities, program and project types, program and project selection methodologies, and the development of financial plan.

Regional Development Plan Work Group

The Regional Development Plan work group will provide guidance to the MPO in the development of regional land use/land development scenarios. These development scenarios will be used to help shape MPO policy regarding funding priorities for transportation infrastructure that supports sustainable growth.

Work Group members have been provided with a virtual workspace via a Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham sharepoint site. Here work group members can communicate with one another, share information, and provide feedback to Birmingham MPO staff. A public website is available at www.bhammpo.org/oncourse.html Please visit it for additional information or contact Darrell Howard dhoward@rpcgb.org Work Groups will meet again in May.

Transportation Committees Hear Update on Corridor X/Future I-22 Open to Traffic Status and Completion Schedule

MPO staff provided an update on the Corridor X/Future I-22 open to traffic status and completion schedule. Based on information obtained from ALDOT, Corridor X is currently open to *through* traffic from the Mississippi state line near Hamilton to US 78 at Graysville. The roadway is open to *local traffic only* between US 78 and Cherry Avenue near Republic. The construction of the portion between Cherry Avenue and Coalburg Road will begin upon completion of grading work. In order to accommodate Corridor X, construction is underway on I-65 between 16th Street and 41st Avenue. The ALDOT expects to let the portion from 41st Avenue to Walkers Chapel Road in late 2008 or early 2009. The expected open to traffic date of Corridor X from the state line to I-65 is anticipated in late 2011 or early 2012.

I-65/US 31 Corridor Alternatives Analysis

The RPC and the consulting firm of PBS&J have entered into a contract to conduct an Alternatives Analysis of roadway and transit improvements in the I-65/US 31 corridor in Metropolitan Birmingham. The analysis will evaluate High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and express bus in the corridor between Valleydale Road and I-20/I-59. More information will be forth coming as the project gets underway.

Congestion Management Process

The Birmingham Congestion Management Process is nearing completion and the Birmingham MPO, along with its consultant Jacobs Carter-Burgess, are preparing the draft final report for review by the Congestion Management Task Force. The Congestion Management Process (CMP) is a critical component of the regional transportation plan, and is used to help prioritize transportation system improvements. The final report will include (a) a procedures and policy document, (b) technical report that details methodologies and results, (c) a map book that illustrates the location of congestion in both the morning and afternoon peak travel periods, and (d) a strategies toolbox that includes guidance for agencies and local governments about appropriate congestion management and/or mitigation strategies. A separate State of the System report will be

developed to provide a general overview of the findings in layman's terms to elected officials and the public. The next Congestion Management Task Force meeting is tentatively set for May 26, 2008 at 1:30pm at the Center for Regional Planning and Design. A formal letter confirming the meeting date, time, and location will be sent to Task Force members. For additional information contact Darrell Howard dhoward@rpcgb.org or Harry He hhe@rpcgb.org

Birmingham Bike-to-Work Day 2008 Event

May is **National Bike Month!** The League of American Bicyclists is promoting Bike-to-Work Week from May 12-16 and **Bike-to-Work Day on Friday, May 16**. On **Friday, May 16 at 7:00 a.m.**, a bicycle commuter convoy will **depart** from the fountain at Five Points South (Birmingham's Southside). The group will ride a 7-mile route throughout Birmingham's City Center to tour ongoing and future downtown revitalization projects and to raise cycling awareness. The ride **will terminate between 7:45 and 8:00 a.m. at the Center for Regional Planning and Design, 1735 1st Avenue North**, where there will be a photo opportunity, news media, cold drinks, and distribution of giveaway items for all participants. For complete route information visit the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization's website: www.bhammpo.org The event is sponsored by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham with the support of the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Birmingham Bicycle Club, GC Cycling, Vulcan Triatheletes, Jefferson County Department of Health, and CommuteSmart. Citizens throughout many American cities and towns participate in this annual initiative by conducting "group rides" to highlight the benefits of cycling as a viable mode of transportation and means of regular exercise. Bicycling is one of the most popular activities in the United States, and it's healthy too! Bicycling can help in weight loss, reduce stress and improves cardio-vascular function. Taking your bike to work instead of the car also improves regional air quality by reducing vehicular emissions. Biking to work can be an efficient, safe and fun way to get the exercise you need while also providing a broader public health benefit. For many bicycle commuters across the country, biking to work makes for good use of commute time and reduces costly fuel consumption. For metro Birmingham it makes more sense than ever! The League has set up an event website providing information on events all across the nation at www.bikemonth.com.

Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) Steering Committee meeting

The next meeting of the Alabama Partners for Clean Air Steering Committee is Thursday, May 8, 2008, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m., Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, First Floor Conference Room, 1731 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL. For additional information contact Scott Tillman, stillman@rpcgb.org

APCA and Partners participate in Earth Day activities

The Alabama Partners for Clean Air were exhibitors for Auntie Litter's 17th Annual Earth Day Parade and Celebration on Tuesday, April 22, 2008 at Kelly Ingram Park. This celebration is considered to be one of the best environmental educational programs in Alabama. Over 3,000 children from all over the greater Birmingham area enjoyed musical entertainment, environmental exhibits, hands on activities, costume contests, and

the big parade, marching eight city blocks with First Lady, Patsy Riley, who served as Grand Marshal.

The WRATT Foundation participated in the Vulcan Earth Day event on April 22nd. This event was successful because of the news coverage from all the Birmingham stations. The publicity resulted in over 147 cars tested which set a record for the most cars tested in one day. Of those tested, 29 failed the minimum standard. The cars that failed the emission test and qualify under the car care program we hope will be fixed. There are at least two free emission testing events each week for the next 4 months. The emission testing schedule can be found on the APCA website at www.alabamacleanair.com. For additional information contact Scott Tillman, stillman@rpcgb.org

Program participation spikes in light of record gas prices

As gas prices continue to break records week after week, interest in CommuteSmart's services continues to climb. More people are registering to find carpool and vanpool partners: applications increased more than 250 percent from March to April, with over 700 applications accepted. Commuter Club applicants are also up. In April, forty new commuters started tracking their alternative commute modes as part of the GetGreen program. GetGreen offers commuters \$2 per day, up to \$120 over a 90-day period, to anyone willing to change their commute from driving alone to a qualified commute alternative (such as carpooling, transit, teleworking and more). Additionally, applications for CommuteSmart's Commuter Club, which rewards clean commuters with quarterly \$25 gift cards, were also up. Signing up is easy, and applications are available on www.commutersmart.org or by calling 1-87-RIDEMATCH.

Building Communities

Town of Vincent's comprehensive plan update

The Town of Vincent's Planning Commission adopted the Final Draft of its Comprehensive Plan on Tuesday, April 8, 2008. The Final Draft will be in various locations in the Town for review by residents for the next two weeks. Upon adoption of the Comprehensive Plan by the Town Council, Shelby County Development Services in conjunction with RPC will begin Phase II of the Vincent Project which will be an update of the Town's Zoning Ordinance.

Town of Argo zoning ordinance update

Town of Argo Argo's Town Council held the First Reading of the Town's Zoning Ordinance Thursday, March 27, 2008. On Thursday, April 24, 2008 Planners Robyn Jackson and Darrell Howard met with the Planning Commission to discuss Phase II of the Argo Project; the creation of Subdivision Regulations. The Town is very excited about adopting its new Zoning Ordinance and has already had a meeting with a potential developer who needs land rezoned.

Water Resource Assessment project in final stages

The RPC is wrapping up its contract with ADECA's Office of Water Resources. Public meetings were held for all six of the region's counties geared towards educating decision-

makers and generating feedback on regional water resource management. RPC's next steps will be to analyze the results of the meetings and produce a scope of work for the creation of a regional water resource management plan. This process will be undertaken in order to better understand the feasibility and ease with which a plan can be created and implemented in the six-county region. Additionally, RPC will complete a water service area mapping exercise that examines who delivers water where in the region.

Five Mile Creek trail location study released

The final draft of the Five Mile Creek Trail Location Study was released at the Five Mile Creek Greenway Partnership meeting on Thursday, May 1st at the City of Center Point, City Hall. Tom Maxwell, Sr. Environmental Planner at RPC worked closely with Francesca Gross, Partnership Facilitator and other members of the group to map and describe proposed key route and destination information in the report. A copy of the report will soon be posted on the Partnership's website, www.cawaco.org/fivemilecreek

Town of Thorsby Historical Preservation Committee update

The Thorsby Historical Preservation Committee is working with the Chilton County Soil & Water Conservation District and NRCS to begin the first steps in restoring the historic Thorsby Elementary School Building. Larry McRay of the NRCS will be providing technical expertise for the project. Committee members met with Butch Grimes of Grimes Architects on April 8, to discuss the process of restoring the historical structure. The school will be restored according to Alabama Historical Committee guidelines. A work day was held at the school on April 27, and donated yard sale items that were not sold were taken to a senior center for resale. Volunteers removed particle board from the detached lunchroom building, and secured the windows. The Thorsby Historical Preservation Committee meets on the third Monday of each month at 6:30pm at Thorsby United Methodist Church on Iowa Avenue. The public is invited to attend.

City of Pinson update

The City of Pinson kicked off their Community Planning Assistance Grant project on April 24, 2008, at its monthly Planning Commission meeting. Steve Ostaseski and Yvonne Murray of the RPC met with the Planning Commission and Mayor Hoyt Sanders to discuss the process of creating the City's Master Plan (also known as "comprehensive plan"), Zoning Ordinance, and Subdivision Regulations. A project website will be linked to the RPC and City of Pinson websites soon. RPC's community planning team expects to hold a public meeting in order to conduct a visual preference survey for the City at the end of May or beginning of June. For more information, please contact Yvonne Murray, YMurray@RPCGB.org or (205) 251-8139.

Community/Economic Development

Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Graduation Program

The Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) Program is a comprehensive three-phase approach to economic and community development for cities with populations between 2,000 and 12,000. With the mission of helping Alabama's smaller communities

to plan, grow and prosper, ACE partners from the private sector, governmental agencies, and universities work with each community to successfully achieve the vision and goals created during the ACE program. The ACE Program will hold its 2008 Graduation Ceremony on Monday, May 19 during the Alabama League of Municipalities Annual Convention in Birmingham, Alabama. The ceremony will announce the 2008 communities that have completed the ACE Program's three phase approach to obtain the prestigious title as an Alabama Community of Excellence. For more information regarding the ACE Program, please contact Karen McCoy at (205) 264-8405.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development programs help with low interest loans and grants for housing, water and wastewater systems, community facilities, energy projects, and business development. Through the community and infrastructure programs, loans and grants are available to non-profits and public bodies to construct, extend or improve water and waste disposal systems in rural areas and towns, as well as to assist with projects such as health care, public safety, and public services. For more information regarding the more than 40 programs and services offered by USDA, please contact Karen McCoy, Community Development Specialist at (205) 264-8405.

North West Jefferson Chamber of Commerce

There is a new chamber in town! The Northwest Chamber of Commerce was recently established by local business owners and Ron Brooks, Chamber President. The chamber services businesses and development initiatives in Forestdale, Graysville and Adamsville communities. Mr. Brooks is an innovative leader who plans to get ahead of the expected growth in these areas before the completion of the Northern Beltline. For more information or to get involved with the Northwest Chamber of Commerce, please contact Ron Brooks at (205) 674-9415.

Grant and Workshop Information

Stream Restoration Workshop Scheduled for May 29, 2008

Join us for 'Stream Restoration Construction' workshop held in Jasper, Alabama May 29, 2008. Time: 9 a.m -4 p.m. Registration will begin at 8:30. The workshop will center on Town Creek Tributary, an urban stream in the City of Jasper bordering Maddox Middle School. This workshop 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. Instructors will emphasize urban stream conditions specific to the southeastern U.S. Workshop instructors have experience working on more than 40 stream assessments and restoration projects throughout the Southeast. **Learn more or register online now at the CAWACO website! www.cawaco.org**

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Tentative timetable - FY2008 State of Alabama CDBG Program

The Alabama Department of Economic Development (ADECA) held its 2008 CDBG Program Training and Information Workshop in Mobile, Alabama in January. The tentative CDBG applications deadlines of grant categories are:

- County large and small city funds (New Submissions)— Noon May 15
- Economic development fund (Roll Forward)—Continuous
- Community enhancement fund - noon August 1
- Planning fund—noon August 15

For additional information regarding the 2008 CDBG funding process please contact Karen McCoy at 205-264-8405 or kmccoy@rpcgb.org

2008 Your Town Alabama workshop is scheduled for June 18 – 20, 2008 at Camp McDowell

This is our 10th year anniversary! The workshop consists of highly informative community development 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. 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. 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 on the Your Town website (www.yourtownalabama.org) and return by May 31, 2008.

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