

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

May, 2009

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPC Finance Committee Meeting](#)

May 6, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
9:00am, Conference Room A

[RPC Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

My 13, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:00am, Conference Room A

[Alabama Partners for Clean Air Steering Committee Meeting](#)

May 14, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPC Board of Directors Meeting](#)

May 20, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:30am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

May 20, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham

Letter from the Executive Director

Since our last edition of Connections much has happened here at the Commission and in the Region. Notable among those events was the hosting of a meeting of the Southern High Speed Rail Commission. This meeting was well attended by many who see the long-term value in implementing High Speed Rail between New Orleans and Atlanta via Birmingham. If this project can move toward fruition, Alabama and the Birmingham Region will be poised to see a major increase in economic development, especially in the area of tourism. High-Speed rail combined with the planned effects of the In-Town Transit Partnership would greatly facilitate the movement of people from their homes to job centers around the area, thus allowing companies access to the strong workforce we have in the Region and more importantly it would allow our citizens access to much needed employment. Your Commission will continue to work diligently toward those efforts as we move forward. However, it is also important of us to pause for a moment to reflect on the past.

During April, we said goodbye to two very strong advocates of the projects just mentioned, as well as the Region at large. Ms. Sylvia Jenkins of the BJCTA and Councilor Miriam Witherspoon of the Birmingham City Council both passed away leaving a void for all of us that came into contact with these two women who were so pleasant and delightful to be around. We will miss them greatly and express our condolences to their friends and family.



Charles Ball

Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

May 27, 2009

RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Subcommittee Meeting](#)

May 28, 2009

RPC of Greater Birmingham
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

High Speed Rail Meeting Rolls Through Town



The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham hosted the quarterly meeting of the Southern High-Speed Rail Commission on Friday, April 24. Commission Chairman, Richard Finley, and Executive Director, Karen Parsons, led a discussion of

Commission members that explored existing and emerging funding opportunities, confirmed the priority of corridors, looked at major issues and obstacles to success, identified opportunities for collaboration, and discussed strategies for advancing the corridor's development.

The proposed rail corridor would run from New Orleans through Birmingham to Atlanta. The next step for the commission is to put together a plan for the Federal Railroad Administration that shows a potential economic impact of as much as \$5 billion in Alabama with the addition of high-speed rail. *For more on the Southern High-Speed Commission, visit there website at www.southerhsr.org*

RPC Adds New Economic Development Website

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham has launched its brand new Economic Development web site! This site contains information on RPC's development programs and services, provides a snapshot of the region through various economic and labor market data, and features RPC's latest projects and funding news for member governments.

Additionally, the site will ultimately act as a virtual version of the Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Information and video of RPC's most recent CEDS meeting is available on the site. *Visit today at www.rpcgb.org/rpced*

RPC Hosts National Charrette Institute Training



The RPC hosted a 3-day professional training event, starting April 14 and ending April 16, 2009. David Brain of the National Charrette Institute (NCI) taught the NCI's Charrette System Training to a group of 32 professionals representing a myriad of organizations spanning 6 states in the southeast. The literal translation of charrette means "on deadline," and course participants learned how to plan highly interactive charrettes for use in both public forums and internally with private companies using real life case studies from the Birmingham region as their model. All of the course participants said that they found the NCI training extremely useful and stated that the skills learned would

be immediately useful to their daily jobs. All course participants that completed the 3 day training received NCI Charrette System certification. AICP and ASLA members also received 18 CMs and/or 18 CEUs. Stay tuned for the next RPC hosted professional training event.

Murray Completes Professional Certification



In April 2009, RPC staff member Yvonne Murray was certified by the National Development Council (NDC) as an Economic Development Finance Professional (EDFP). Yvonne attended four, week-long courses over the past eight months and successfully completed examinations on business credit analysis, real estate finance techniques, loan packaging procedures, negotiating and problem solving skills, and deal structuring techniques.

This certification will allow Murray to better evaluate loan candidates for the agency's Revolving Loan Fund. *For more information on the Revolving Loan Fund, please contact Yvonne Murray at 205-264-8428 or ymurray@rpcgb.org.*

Employee Profile -- T. Ray Mauldin, VPSI Project Manager



Each month, we will look at the profile of an RPC employee. This month's profile is T. Ray Mauldin, VPSI Project Manager

Hometown: Birmingham, AL

Education: University of Alabama

How long have you been with the RPC?: 1 year and 1 month

Give a short overview of the vanpool program: A vanpool is a group of 7 to 15 commuters who voluntarily participate in a ridesharing arrangement. The van must make just one trip to work, and one trip home and 80% of the total vehicle miles must be used

for commuting to and from work. The group shares in the cost of operating the van. Currently we have 36 vans in service. Also, to help with the growth of our vanpool program we recently hired Lisa Williamson as an Account Coordinator. Lisa's 10+ years work experience and her desire to succeed by working hard with a great attitude, will be a tremendous asset for VPSI and the RPC.

What is your favor part of your job?: The people I work with, (RPC, VPSI,) and the variety of responsibilities involved. From calling on prospects, operations, customer service, conducting formation meetings, to preparing vans for delivery (washing, maintenance etc..) It's a great job.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I've flown in the Goodyear blimp.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be...": 1. Celebrating my 29th wedding anniversary with Rebecca, my beautiful wife. 2. Continued to be blessed with a healthy family and working for VPSI with the RPC.

Get in Gear for Bike-to-Work Day!



Make your morning commute to work a little more energized!

Bike-to-Work Day is on Friday, May 15 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 6-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, 1731 1st Avenue North, where there will be a photo opportunity, news media, cold drinks, and distribution of giveaway items for all participants.

The event is sponsored by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham with support from the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Birmingham Bicycle Club, Vulcan Triathletes, Jefferson County Department of Health, Alabama Partners for Clean Air and CommuteSmart. Citizens throughout America 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 for better health. Taking your bike to work instead of the car improves regional air quality by reducing vehicular emissions and can result in weight loss, stress reduction and improve cardio-vascular function. 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!

Carpool to the Regions Charity Classic



Carpool to the golf tournament and get a better parking spot! CommuteSmart is partnering with the Regions Charity Classic to encourage carpooling to the event. All cars that arrive at the public parking lot (Regions Park) May 14 - 17 with four or more individuals will receive preferred parking that is closer to tournament shuttles. *For more information, visit the CommuteSmart website at www.commuter.org*

Walkable Communities Expert Presents in Birmingham

Urban designer Dan Burden of Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin, Inc. in Orlando, Florida, a nationally recognized authority on bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs, presented in Birmingham on April 7th and 8th. Burden brings together many disciplines and issues - street design, traffic calming, public safety, bicycling, and greenways into a holistic vision for creating healthy, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly communities. The Jefferson County Department of Health and the YMCA USA's Pioneering Healthier Communities initiative commissioned Burden to Birmingham. Tom Maxwell, Senior Environmental Planner for the RPC, provided planning and logistical support before and during Burden's visit.

During the evening of Tuesday April 7th Burden conducted a presentation at Sloss Realty's Pepper Place on 2nd Avenue South where he unveiled his proposed "complete street" transformations with computer generated photo-morphings applied to the following Birmingham streets: (1) 2nd Avenue South at Pepper Place; (2) Cahaba Road b/w the Birmingham Zoo and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens; (3) 3rd Avenue West near Legion Field; (4) and West Boulevard at the Eastern Health

Center in East Lake. During the afternoon Wednesday April 8th, Burden also presented his four proposed corridor transformations along with a wealth of other sustainable community design information at the Health Department's Health Action Summit at Cahaba Grand Conference Center on US Highway 280. *For a version of Burden's presentation for download, go to www.rpcgb.org.*

Alabama Legend Honored with Humanitarian Award



Randy Owen of Fort Payne, Alabama, has been chosen by the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) to be the recipient of its first Donald R. Myers Humanitarian Award. The DDAA is a membership organization for those like RPC who receive Local Development District funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

The award was dedicated by the DDAA in 2009 in memory of Donald Myers, who was the executive director of the Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association and president of the Eastern Ohio Development Alliance. Known as a dedicated public servant and champion of the people of Appalachia, Myers exemplified the humanitarian spirit the award was created to recognize and honor.

Born and raised in Appalachia, Owen garnered fame as the lead singer of the legendary country music group Alabama and performs today as a solo artist. He continues to reside in Fort Payne and has maintained his strong bond to the Appalachian Region through numerous charitable activities. Those activities have included founding a series of concerts to raise funds for fire and police departments and school music and scholarship programs. The Fort Payne city school system alone has received over \$400,000 since the first "June Jam" charitable concert. Owen's charitable work also includes service to the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Over \$345 million dollars has been raised through the "Country Cares for St. Jude Kids" program Owen cofounded in 1989.

Owen has also supported the Alabama Sheriffs' Youth Ranches and the construction of the Kelly Owen Women and Children's Pavilion at DeKalb Regional Medical Center in Fort Payne.

Need a Grant?

If you plan on applying for grants, register for Grants.gov today!

Grants.gov provides information on over 1,000 grants and more than \$500 billion in funding. This web site provides applicants and providers with a medium for transferring information through detailed grant postings and provision of electronic application submission. Additionally, registration for Grants.gov requires registration with Central Contractor Registration (CCR), providing an avenue for transfer of funds post-award. Registration can be lengthy, so it is important to register well before you turn in your grant application. Some of the things you will need to register are:

Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number (<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>)
Legal Business Name/Doing Business As
Tax Identification Number
Address Information
Business Start Date
Fiscal Year End Date
Average # of Employees

Average Annual Income
Bank Account Information
Accounts Receivable Contact Information
Primary Point of Contact Information

For additional information, please visit Grants.gov. For any further questions, please contact Yvonne Murray at 205-264-8428 or ymurray@rpcqb.org

Community Development Block Grant

Applications for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) competitive, community enhancement, and planning funds are due June 3, 2009. *For more information, visit www.rpcqb.org/rpced*

Emergency Shelter Grants

Applications for Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) are now available! *For more information, visit www.adeca.alabama.gov/C1/ESG%20Manual/default.aspx.*

Assistance to Firefighters Grants

Applications for Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) are due May 20, 2009. AFG's do the following:

- provide financial assistance to fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations to enhance their capabilities with respect to fire and fire-related hazards
- help fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations meet their firefighting and emergency response needs
- support organizations lacking the tools and resources necessary to more effectively protect the health and safety of the public and their emergency response personnel

Additional information can be found at www.firegrantsupport.com/afg.

Tony Hawk Foundation

This summer, the Tony Hawk Foundation will be accepting applications for funding assistance of up to \$25,000 for the construction of public skateparks. The deadline for applications is October 1, 2009. *For additional information, please visit www.tonyhawkfoundation.org/grant_application.asp*

For more information on any of the above grants, please contact Yvonne Murray at (205)264-8428 or ymurray@rpcqb.org.

SmartCode Corner

When speaking of SmartCode we sometimes search for a description of the development that may be realized when SmartCode is in place as a regulating tool. SmartCode communities are best described as **Complete, Compact, and Connected**.

They are complete because they include residential, commercial and civic space. They are compact developments that conserve land and energy by reducing infrastructure costs and land consumption and are developments that are sustainable over time. They are developments that are connected where automotive travel is integrated with pedestrian, transit, and bike; they are communities connected through multiple routes.

Most importantly they are communities that developers want to build and communities where consumers want to live.

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.

Community Updates

City of Graysville adopted Form Based Code

The City of Graysville adopted the Form Based Code for Downtown Graysville on Tuesday April 21st. The Form Based Code was completed by Robert & Company and was funded by the RPC through the Building Communities Grant. *For additional information contact Richard Amore, RPC Senior Planner, ramore@rpcgb.org.*

City of Calera updating Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations

The KPS Group conducted a successful Public Meeting on April 21st to update Calera's comprehensive plan and development regulations. The next public meeting will occur on Tuesday May 19th. The update to the city's comprehensive plan and development regulations are funded by the RPC through the Building Communities Grant *For additional information contact Richard Amore, RPC Senior Planner, ramore@rpcgb.org or Jason Fondren with the KPS Group, jfondren@kpsgroup.com*

Highland Park Neighborhood Plan - Public Meeting

A Highland Park Neighborhood Plan public meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 12, 2009, 7:00p.m.at the Highland Park Golf Club, 3300 Highland Ave S., Birmingham, AL 35205. Gresham, Smith & Partners will be presenting the final report of the Neighborhood assessment and Form-Based Code Overlay. *For additional information contact Lindsay Smith, RPC Senior Planner, lsmith@rpcgb.org.*

City of Pinson Master Plan

The City of Pinson Planning Commission adopted the City of Pinson Master Plan on April 23, 2009. *For additional information contact Lindsay Smith, RPC Senior Planner, lsmith@rpcgb.org.*