

# CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the  
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham  
September, 2009

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### [RPC Finance Committee Meeting](#)

Sept. CANCELLED  
RPC of Greater Birmingham

### [RPC Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

Sept. 9, 2009  
RPC of Greater Birmingham  
9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

### [Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)

Sept. 9, 2009  
RPC of Greater Birmingham  
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

### [APCA Steering Committee Meeting](#)

Sept. 10, 2009  
RPC of Greater Birmingham  
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

### [RPC Board of Directors Meeting](#)

Sept. 16, 2009  
RPC of Greater Birmingham  
10:30am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

### [Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

Sept. 16, 2009

## Letter from the Executive Director

The RPC has been extremely busy since the last issue of Connections, working diligently on the In-Town Transit Partnership (ITP).

Public and private-sector support for the ITP has been outstanding. We have received over 40 letters and resolutions pledging support for the project, and we continue to receive more of them daily. With the assistance of many of our partners, including the BJCTA, we are preparing a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant application requesting \$65 million in Recovery Act funding to jump start the ITP.



This project will provide enormous benefits to the region. First, the local economy will benefit from an injection of \$65 million. Second, residents, workers and students will be able to move more efficiently throughout Downtown/UAB and adjacent neighborhoods, thereby expanding access to jobs, education, shopping and healthcare. Third, this project represents one of our best efforts at regional cooperation. This is extremely important not only for leveraging funds, but for demonstrating what we can accomplish when we work towards a common goal. We need to maintain this spirit of cooperation to move the region forward and provide citizens with tangible benefits from our economic development efforts.

Thank you to all that have participated in the ITP planning process. All of us at the RPC look forward to many more projects that require this level of cooperation.

*Charles Bell*

RPC of Greater Birmingham  
Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical  
Committee Meeting](#)

Sept. 23, 2009

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

[Metropolitan Planning  
Organization Subcommittee  
Meeting](#)

Sept. 24, 2009

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

## RPC Continues Preparing for ITP Grant



The RPC spent the months of July and August meeting with different groups, businesses and organizations throughout Birmingham to inform them about the proposed In-Town Transit Partnership

(ITP). The support of these groups, businesses and organizations is vital to creating a successful downtown transit system.

The RPC is completing the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant application with a request of \$65 million in funding for the project. The grant application must show that the project will provide short-term and long-term economic development benefits, as well as job creation. It must also provide letters and resolutions of support from different businesses, organizations and groups throughout the region. The RPC has received over 40 letters and resolutions to date in support of the ITP and continues to see more on a daily basis. Businesses and organizations already providing letters and resolutions include: Children's Hospital, Community Foundation, Jefferson County Department of Health, United Way of Central Alabama and UAB among others.

The grant would cover the cost of the transit system, estimated at \$65 million. Job creation will occur as a result of the ITP and the system will provide better connections to existing jobs. The grant application must also show the environmental benefits of the project, such as improved air quality. Notification of grant approval will occur in January, 2010 and the ITP must be completed by 2012. Businesses and organizations interested in supporting the grant for the ITP can submit a resolution of support. A sample letter of resolution can be found on the [RPC website](#) and submitted to the RPC office at 1731 First Avenue North, Suite 200, Birmingham, AL 35203, Attn. Darrell Howard.

*Learn more about the [In-Town Transit Partnership](#) or see the [ITP video](#) on the [RPC website](#).*

## Employee Profile -- Yvonne Murray, Economic Development Specialist, RPC



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPC employee. This month's profile is Yvonne Murray, Economic Development Specialist, RPC.

**Hometown:** Birmingham (Oak Mountain)

**Education:** I have two degrees - a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with a concentration in American Government and a minor in Urban Affairs and a Master of Public Administration. I am also a certified Economic Development Finance Professional.

**How long have you been with the RPC?:** Just under two years as a staff member, but I also interned here during my undergraduate work for about six months.

**Give a short overview of your job:** I am the Economic Development Specialist. My work is primarily focused on managing the regional

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Additionally, I provide support for our agency's revolving loan fund, grant-writing assistance, stimulus proposal processing, and administration of the Governor's Region 4 Workforce Development Council.

**What is your favor part of your job?:** Each day there is something new. I need to be constantly challenged, and this job definitely fulfills that need.

**Tell us one thing we don't know about you:** I love motorsports - cars, motorcycles, ATV's, etc. The first couple of years that I was in college I actually sold aftermarket car performance parts at a shop here in town. That's how I met my husband. Cars are definitely our biggest past time.

**Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be...":** officially done with school. I love to learn, but I'm worried that I might just spend the rest of my life pursuing the next degree!

## RPC Bowling Team Wins Title!



Congratulations to the "**Van Poolers**" bowling team for their wins in the Merchants Bowling League! Ray Morris, Sean Saffle, T. Ray Mauldin, and Yvonne Murray, with the assistance of Charles Ball and Brian O'Dell, took first place in the Summer Bowling League. Additionally, team members won various awards for individual achievements.

Sean Saffle scored a 196 in the fall game to secure the victory for the team. Championship trophies will be on display at the RPC office for all to see.

## CommuteSmart Adds News Employees



CommuteSmart added two new employees at the beginning of September.

Lindsey Gray joins the CommuteSmart team as an Outreach Coordinator. Originally from Birmingham, Lindsey graduated from Troy University in 2004 with a degree in Communications. For the past five years, she has held positions in public relations/marketing in the telecommunications, non-profit and health care industries. Ms. Gray is a board member of the Mid-Alabama Region of American Red Cross and chair of Team Red.

Lindsey resides in Clay with her dogs, Catcher and Bailey.

Ricki Hall joins the CommuteSmart team as the Special Project Coordinator. Mrs. Hall is a native of Pinson, AL. For the past three years she has held positions in customer service and administration for various industries. Ricki enjoys attending her church Pinson First Baptist. Ricki lives with her husband Justin and daughter Caley. She is expecting her second child in March 2010.

### **Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition to Conduct Biodiesel Workshops**

The Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition (ACFC) will conduct three free Biodiesel Workshops in Scottsboro, Madison and Jasper, September 15-17. The objective of the workshops is to educate fleets, municipalities, school systems, public gas station owners and distributors etc. about the features and potential economic benefits of providing and using biodiesel. State and national experts will speak to quality, production, biodiesel myths, and fuel sources. Information on grants and incentives to put in and/or update infrastructure needed to dispense biodiesel will be provided.

ACFC has also received an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant to provide up to \$2500 to 30 public gas stations along corridors X and V in north Alabama to add biodiesel. Complete info on the grant is available at [the ACFC website](#). In addition, 50% of up to \$50,000 is available as a tax credit for any qualifying expense for installation of biodiesel infrastructure...i.e. dispensers, tanks, lines, installation etc. An ADECA grant is also available for school systems desiring to implement biodiesel.

Please register at [the ACFC website](#) to ensure we have an accurate head count for each free Workshop. The Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition is a non-profit, membership based, 501(c)3 organization and is the principal coordinating point for alternative fuel activities in Alabama, as well as a partner of the Alabama Partners for Clean Air.

### **Economic Development and Loans**

#### **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update**

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Economic Development District will be available for comment September 1, 2009 through September 30, 2009. The document can be found at [the RPC website](#) or in print at the RPCGB front desk.

#### **Receivables Lending Program**

The RPC has a new loan program! The receivables lending program provides incubator tenants with quick, low-cost loans that meet the immediate receivables needs that traditional lending sources cannot. The program provides up to \$20,000 financing of receivables collateralized by the pledge of the receivables, which can be no older than thirty (30) days at the time of closing and personal guarantee(s) of the borrower's owner(s) or principal(s). Loans are made at no more than 80% of the value of the receivables pledged. Loans are due when the pledged receivable is remitted to the loan recipient. Interest rates and terms vary.

*For more information on any of the above grants, please contact Yvonne Murray at (205)264-8428 or [ymurray@rpcgb.org](mailto:ymurray@rpcgb.org).*

### **Transportation Planning Update**

#### **August MPO TIP Amendments**

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) requested four projects be added to the 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). All four projects were part of the Transportation Enhancement Program. Included are a landscaping project on SR-119 in Shelby County, another landscaping project at the US 31/I-65 Interchange in Hoover, a pedestrian bridge in Mountain Brook, and a rail-road car renovation in Calera. *For more information on these*

amendments, please go to the [MPO website](#).

### **Projects selected for Building Communities Implementation Program**

The Building Communities Implementation Program will fund five projects in 2010. All of the projects enhance existing programs for pedestrian travel with either trails or sidewalks. The five projects are spread throughout the MPO area with locations in several areas including Center Point, Tarrant, Fultondale, Gardendale, Brookside, Graysville, Hoover, Mountain Brook, Shelby County, and parts of unincorporated northwest Jefferson County. *For additional information please contact Tom Maxwell, Environmental Planner with the RPC at [tmaxwell@rpcqb.org](mailto:tmaxwell@rpcqb.org).*

### **I-65 Mobility Matters Stakeholder Group meeting set for October**

The Stakeholders Group for the I-65 Mobility Matters project will meet October 1st to discuss high-occupancy vehicle lane and transit options in the I-65 South corridor. The consultants will provide data from the analysis and show visual descriptions of the alternatives for the corridor. For more information on the project, please go to the [I-65 Mobility Matters website](#).

### **RPC Adds New Community Planner to Staff**



The RPC has added a new member to the Community Planning team. Phillip Amthor is a recent Auburn graduate with a Bachelors of Architecture degree and a Masters of Community Planning degree. Philip brings some interesting experience as a recent graduate. He has intern experience in Shanghai and New Zealand, and has worked on projects as far flung as a school campus in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. Philip also had local assignments here in Birmingham with Giattina Adcock Architecture Studio and Stout Architecture, Inc.

Philip brings an interesting perspective to regional planning and a commitment to public service. He has hit the ground running and is working diligently on the Bessemer Transportation Plan and special district code. Look for Philip at a future public meeting near you.

### **SmartCode Corner**

The Smart Code continues to evolve and expand. Many new modules have been added to increase the effectiveness and usefulness of the Smart Code. Like all of the Smart Code, the additional modules are permissive not prescriptive. It allows the designer or more aptly the design team can develop good designs of future great places. Some of the modules that can be included in your SmartCode include:

**Affordable Housing Policy**, Jennifer Hurley, Hurley-Franks & Associates

**Regional Watersheds**, Paul Crabtree, Crabtree Group, Inc.

**Flood Hazard Mitigation**, William Wright, Balch & Bingham

**Natural Drainage**, Plan Green -Mary Vogel

**Light Levels and Noise Levels**, DPZ & Co.

**Complete Streets Thoroughfare Assemblies**, DPZ & Co. with Rick Chellman, Rick Hall, Peter Swift

All modules are available from [The Center for Applied Transects](#).

While the SmartCode is powerful and easy to use, is not plug and play, it must be calibrated for your local community. The RPC will be happy to assist your community in a Smart Code effort.

*If you have SmartCode questions please contact Steve Ostaseski or Richard Amore at RPC. Steve*

may be reached by phone at 205.264.8421 or by email at [smo@rpcgb.org](mailto:smo@rpcgb.org). Richard may be reached by phone at 205.264.8447 or by email at [ramore@rpcgb.org](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org).

## Community Updates

### **Kick off 16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan**

The RPC will kick off the 16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan on Saturday September 12th at 10:00am at the Chapel at Oak Hill Cemetery during the Fountain Heights Neighborhood Association monthly meeting. The RPC will give a project overview of the 16th Street Corridor Study and conduct a Visual Preference Survey to allow residents to give input on the planning and design process for 16th Street. The Fountain Heights Neighborhood Association and the City of Birmingham have requested assistance from the Regional Planning Commission through the Building Communities Program to complete this study. *For additional information please contact Richard Amore, Senior Planner with the RPC at [ramore@rpcgb.org](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org)*

### **City of Calera adopts Comprehensive Plan**

The City of Calera's Planning Commission adopted the City of Calera Comprehensive Plan on August 11th. The City Council looks forward to adopting the Comprehensive Plan later this month. The update to the city's comprehensive plan and development regulations are funded by the RPC through the Building Communities Program. *For additional information please contact Richard Amore, RPC Senior Planner, [ramore@rpcgb.org](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org) or Jason Fondren with the KPS Group, [jfondren@kpsgroup.com](mailto:jfondren@kpsgroup.com).*

**To see a complete list of community planning projects completed in 2009, visit the Community Planning section of the [RPC website](#).**

## CAWACO Update

### **Sustaining Alabama Forests within Growth and Development**

The Alabama Forestry Commission, in conjunction with the RPC and CAWACO, is hosting a seminar addressing the challenges and constraints facing our land-use practices on Alabama's natural resources. The seminar will be held September 17th, 8:30AM - 3:45PM, at the RPC. More information on registration can be found at the [RPC website](#).

### **CAWACO RC&D FY2010 Grant Cycle**

CAWACO Resource Conservation and Development Council is seeking grant applications for the Challenge Grant Program and ACES Educational Grant Program in Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker Counties. Grant guidelines, applications, a list of recently funded projects and additional information can be found on the [CAWACO website](#). To be considered, all proposals must be received by September 30, 2009.

#### Challenge Grant Program

The Council offers small competitive 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.

#### ACES Educational Challenge Grants

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

**CAWACO RC&D Celebrates National RC&D Week - September 21-27, 2009**

Join CAWACO RC&D in celebrating National RC&D Week-September 21-27, 2009. The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program was established by the Food and Agriculture Act of 1962. to accelerate the conservation, development and use of natural resources, improves the general level of economic activity, and enhances the environment and standard of living in designated RC&D areas. Current program objectives focus on improvement of quality of life achieved through natural resources conservation and community development.

CAWACO RC&D Council, Inc. entered into a cooperative agreement on August 1, 1975 with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. The purpose of the Memorandum of Agreement was to work in cooperation with the regional planning commission and to provide assistance to, and complement projects of the Commission in support of local communities.

CONNECTIONS is brought to you by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham  
Find out more at [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org)

