

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

October, 2009

CORRECTION

The Building Communities Conference will take place on **Thursday, November 5th.**

We also apologize if you received multiple newsletters last week. This should be the last one for this month!

In This Issue

RPCGB Submits ITP Grant Application
Building Communities Conference
Around the Corner
Employee Profile
CommuteSmart Update
Economic Development and Loans
Transportation Planning Update
RPCGB Conducting Robinson School
Study
RPCGB AND CAWACO Team Up on
Conference

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPC Finance Committee Meeting](#)

October 7, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPC Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

October 14, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
CANCELLED

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)

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

[RPC Board of Directors Meeting](#)

October 21, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham

Letter from the Executive Director

This month, I would like to talk about some terrific RPCGB programs and a conference that impacts two things Birmingham residents do a lot of; breathing and driving.

The RPCGB supports a number of programs that improve air quality, including CommuteSmart and the Alabama Partners for Clean Air. These initiatives work to reduce vehicles on the roads through carpooling/vanpooling and educate the public on ways to improve air quality. The Alabama Partners for Clean Air has initiated the "Idle Free Zone" campaign which urges parents not to idle their engines while waiting to pick their children up after school. This, subsequently, reduces harmful automobile emissions around the schools. To date, eight school systems in the region are participating in the program. Because of these and numerous other programs, the air in our region is cleaner than it was ten years ago. However, improvement will only continue if: 1) we remain mindful of the EPA standards for the region; and 2) if we take deliberate steps as individuals, households, industries and organizations to maintain this momentum.

An upcoming event that we are excited about at the RPCGB is the 2009 Building Communities Conference. The focus of the conference will be the pros and cons of roundabouts. A roundabout is a circular intersection with specific design and traffic control features. Modern roundabouts provide safe and efficient forms of traffic control and are cost effective solutions that increase beautification of the traffic flow they control and safer accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

One of the world's leading experts on roundabouts, Michael Wallwork, will impart his knowledge on this traffic-control option. The conference will take place Thursday, November 5 at the



10:30am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

October 21, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

October 28, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Subcommittee Meeting](#)

October 29, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

For meeting information, including postings of any meeting notices and cancellations please visit the [RPCGB website](#).

McWane Science Center and registration can be found on the RPCGB website later this week.



RPCGB Submits ITP Grant Application



In September, the RPCGB completed and submitted the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant application with a request of \$65 million in funding for

the project to the Department of Transportation. 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 RPCGB 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.

View the actual ITP TIGER grant application at <http://www.itp-project.com/tiger.htm>.

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

Building Communities Conference Around the Corner

The RPCGB is proud to present the 2009 Building Communities Conference: **Modern Roundabouts - A New Perspective**. The conference will provide an opportunity for participants to learn the pros and cons of modern roundabouts, when and where they are appropriate, and discuss existing roundabouts in local and remote locations. An optional case study of a local intersection will be held at the end of the session to provide hands-on training experience with roundabout planning and design. **Michael Wallwork, P.E., principal of Alternate Street Design, P.A. (Orange Park,**

FL) and widely respected multimodal street designer and traffic engineer will lead and facilitate the program.

A roundabout is a circular intersection with specific design and traffic control features. A modern roundabout is significantly different from the older style traffic circle both in its operation and design. The modern roundabout represents a substantial improvement in terms of operations and safety compared to older rotaries and traffic circles. Well designed modern roundabouts provide the safest and most efficient form of traffic control and support other community development goals such as traffic calming, cost savings, beautification, reduced carbon footprint, and safer accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

While several roundabouts exist in Alabama and metropolitan Birmingham, the vast majority of intersections are designed with conventional traffic signals, signs, and pavement markings- especially at intersections with thoroughfares. Across the nation and the globe, public agencies and private developers are realizing the many benefits of modern roundabouts as a safer and sometimes more efficient alternative.

CORRECTION: The conference will take place on **Thursday, November 5th** at the McWane Science Center. *Registration will be available on the [RPCGB website](#) later this week. Also visit www.roundabouts.net to learn more about Michael's work and expertise.*

Employee Profile -- Darrell Howard, Principal Transportation Planner, RPCGB



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Darrell Howard, Principal Transportation Planner, RPCGB.

Hometown: Chicago, Illinois

Education: Bachelor of Arts - Western Illinois University
Masters of City Planning - Georgia Institute of Technology

How long have you been with the RPCGB?: Over 5 years

Give a short overview of your job: I'm a project manager and project developer. That is, I either lead (directly or through delegation) the development of the MPO's transportation planning products, identify new planning products to produce. I am also the unofficial staff training officer.

What is your favor part of your job?: I'm a project junkie. I love getting into the heart of a problem and solving it.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: My first real job was selling ice-cream in the park on one of those ice-cream bikes. It taught me to appreciate hard work, help me get good at math, and to really understand that I needed to work in an air conditioned environment.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be...": still having fun doing something that I love, but getting paid a lot more to do it.

CommuteSmart Update



Jeniese Hosey joined the CommuteSmart team as an Outreach Coordinator in October. Originally from Birmingham, Jeniese graduated from The University of Alabama in 2001 with a degree in Communications.

For the past eight years, she has held positions in event planning and public relations for universities, non-profit and retail industries. Jeniese is very active in her community working with her Sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority, Inc. Jeniese resides in Birmingham.

CommuteSmart Try-It Days

This month CommuteSmart will hold several Try-It days around Jefferson County and surrounding areas. Try-It days feature members of the CommuteSmart staff at different companies and locations giving out information to prospective carpoolers and vanpoolers. The staff also rewards current van and carpoolers by giving them various gifts (bags, lunchboxes, t-shirts, etc.) as they arrive to work. *For more information on Try-It days or to set-up your own Try-It day for your company contact Lindsey Gray at lgray@rpcgb.org.*

One of the things focused on during Try-It days is the vanpooling commuter program called. Vanpooling consists of a group of 7 to 15 commuters who voluntarily participate in a ridesharing arrangement. Passengers make one trip to work and one trip home; they also share the cost of operating the van. The benefits of vanpooling vary from saving your car from wear and tear to saving money on gas to catching a nap just before you get on the job. *To get your own vanpooling started contact Lisa Williamson at lwilliamson@rpcgb.org.*

CommuteSmart Participates in St. Vincent's Benefits Fairs

CommuteSmart had the pleasure of participating in the Annual St. Vincent's Hospital Benefits Fair Sept. 30th - Oct. 2nd. This 3-day event reached more than 800 St. Vincent's employees with 136 individuals completing rideshare applications.



APCA Steering Committee Notes

The Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) Steering Committee met on September 10th to discuss air quality issues and programs. Reports by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) touched on non-attainment designations and air quality forecasts. The JCDH is also currently conducting a School Air Toxins study, with results coming at a later APCA Steering Committee meeting. *For more information on APCA and its partners, go to the [APCA website](#).*

Economic Development and Loans

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Update

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Economic Development District is now available. The document can be found at the [RPCGB website](#) or in print at the RPCGB front desk.

Receivables Lending Program

The RPCGB 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.

Transportation Planning Update

I-65/US 31 Mobility Matters Project

The RPCGB and its project consultant held a meeting for the Project Steering Committee on October 1st. Information from the Teir 1 alternatives analysis was presented to the Committee. The project will begin the more detailed Teir 2 analysis and comments from the Committee members were solicited. The Committee was presented with a list of goals from which the alternatives would be analyzed and scored for comparison purposes. The Committee agreed to these goals and recommended that each goal be compared individually between alternatives. *For more information on the project, please go to the [I-65 Mobility Matters website](#).*

US 280 Corridor Transit Study

The Project Selection Team interviewed three short-listed consulting teams and the project was awarded to the Reynolds, Smith, & Hills (RS&H) team. The RPCGB has discussed the selection with each of the consulting teams, with the project getting underway this fall. Scoping and contract negotiations have been initiated with RS&H and a scoping meetings have been scheduled for mid-October.

RPCGB Adds New Human Services Coordinator to Staff



Laurel Land joins the RPCGB as the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Planner. She was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Laurel and her family moved to Birmingham two months ago to take advantage of job and schooling opportunities. Laurel has lived primitively in the jungles of Belize, Central America; plays the accordion and loves coffee and chocolate. Laurel plans to use her education and experience to improve community transportation and to help promote the RPCGB and its initiatives.

RPCGB Conducting Robinson School Study

The RPCGB is conducting a study of the potential adaptive reuse of the historic Robinson School. This public participation event, a Revitalization, Reuse, and Reunion workshop, is part of a series of speakers and alumni meetings centered on the future use of historic Robinson School. In the effort to keep this historic structure functioning as an important fixture in the community, the RPC along with the Friends of Historic Robinson School hosted a public participation event on Saturday, October 3, 2009 at the current Robinson Elementary located on the same site as the historic structure.

The historic Robinson School began service as a six-room structure in 1909. The school has seen a variety of additions over the past 100 years. The addition facing 1st Avenue South was constructed in 1921 and 1922 and was designed by William Leslie Welton. Notable Birmingham area buildings attributed to Welton include the John A. Hand Building (1912), the original Tutwiler Hotel (1914), the

Massey Building (1910), the Rialto Theater (1915), and the BEBCO Building (1926).

SmartCode Corner

Why does SmartCode continue to grow in popularity? Its primary appeal is adaptability to given situations and the ongoing discussion on improving and modifying the code. An excellent way to keep abreast of changes is to attend a SmartCode Workshop and subscribe to the Smart Code ListServ. To find out more about the next SmartCode Workshop, go to <http://www.smartcodecomplete.com/learn/next.html>.

To join the Smart Code ListServ and be part of the continued online conversation for individuals who have attended a SmartCode Workshop request inclusion by emailing to cemerson@faulkner.edu.

If you have SmartCode questions please contact Steve Ostaseski or Richard Amore at RPCGB. Steve may be reached by phone at 205.264.8421 or by email at smo@rpcgb.org. Richard may be reached by phone at 205.264.8447 or by email at ramore@rpcgb.org.

Community Updates

Community Planning for Collegeville

The RPCGB is working with Auburn University's Center for Architecture and Urban Studies, UAB's Civil Engineering Department and the Collegeville community on several initiatives to improve transportation, housing capacity, community open spaces and urban design.

Among the opportunities for planning and design is the location of Collegeville's Bethel Baptist Church on the City of Birmingham's Civil Rights Trail. The team will design and plan for increased tourism and event opportunities in and around Bethel. The team will also work to add vehicle and pedestrian bridges needed for transportation over the various railroad tracks the surround and run through the community. Plans are also in the works for the extension of Finley Boulevard through the southern part of the community that will include bridges over several railroad tracks increasing vehicle traffic in the neighborhood. The RPCGB will collaborate on all initiatives and will focus on the implementation strategies for the various plans and projects. *For additional information please contact Philip Amthor with the RPCGB at pamthor@rpcgb.org*

16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan

The RPCGB and the City of Birmingham conducted a successful meeting with the Fountain Heights Neighborhood Association on Saturday September 12th 2009. The residents of Fountain Heights completed a Visual Preference Survey for the 16th Street Corridor Study. The results of the Visual Preference Survey will be presented at the next Neighborhood Association Meeting on Saturday October 3rd at 10am at the Chapel in the Oak Hill Cemetery. 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 RPCGB at ramore@rpcgb.org.*

City of Calera Public Meeting

The City of Calera will conduct a public meeting on the City of Calera's Zoning and Sign Ordinance on October 19th at 6pm at City Hall. The update to the city's comprehensive plan and development regulations are funded by the RPCGB through the Building Communities Program. *For additional information please contact Richard Amore, RPCGB Senior Planner at ramore@rpcgb.org or Jason Fondren with the KPS Group at jfondren@kpsgroup.com.*

Jemison Adopts New Zoning Code

The Jemison City council recently adopted their new Zoning Code. In a meeting on Monday September 21st the City Council adopted the new code prepared by RPCGB. This concludes months of work on the part of the City of Jemison Planning Commission.

International Walk to School Day

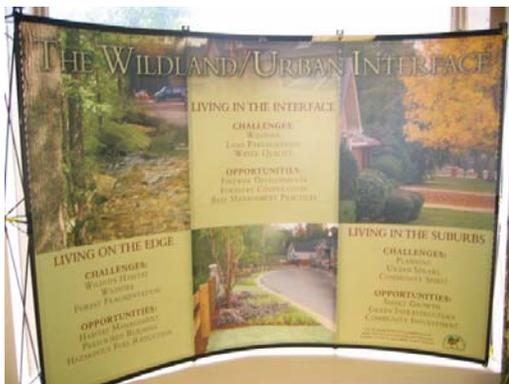
On October 7, 2009 the RPCGB will co-sponsor the International Walk to School Day at Leeds Elementary. The event is held once a year and is used to help promote physical activity, pedestrian safety and concern for the environment. They will hold a coloring contest, puppet shows that will emphasize walking, biking, school buses and parent-drop off at school. The walk will start at 8:30 a.m. with the activities following the walk.

To see a complete list of community planning projects completed in 2009, visit the Community Planning section of the

RPCGB AND CAWACO Team Up on Conference

Sustaining Alabama Forests within Growth and Development Conference

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham and CAWACO R&D in conjunction with the Alabama Forestry Commission hosted a seminar on September 17, 2009 at the RPCGB. The seminar addressed the challenges and constraints facing land use practices on Alabama's natural resources. Presentations were made by Tom Maxwell of RPCGB and Kellie Johnston of CAWACO R&D, along with various members the Alabama Forestry Commission, and the Alabama Urban Forestry Association. There were 40 registered participants in attendance and each registered participant received five CEU credits for attending.



CONNECTIONS is brought to you by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
Find out more at www.rpcgb.org

