

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

November, 2009

In This Issue

RPCGB Accepting RFQ's for ITP Project

Building Communities Conference A Hit

Funding for Non-Motorized Transportation Projects Recently Amended

Transportation Planning Update

Alabama Partners for Clean Air Update

CommuteSmart Update

Economic Development and Loans

Community Updates

SmartCode Corner

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Letter from the Executive Director

January is around the corner, which means that the award announcement for the In-Town Transit Partnership TIGER grant is quickly approaching. In anticipation of a favorable announcement, we have issued a Request for Qualifications for an ITP Project Manager. Should the grant be awarded to the RPCGB, a Request for Proposals will be immediately issued for a Project Manager who would coordinate the design and construction of the ITP project. The TIGER-funded projects must be operational by early 2012. More details on the RFQ can be found on the RPCGB website link located in the story below.



The RPCGB was proud to host the 2009 Building Communities Conference at the McWane Science Center. The conference focused on the benefits of roundabouts. A roundabout is a circular intersection that improves safety, reduces congestion, pollution and fuel use, and often improves the aesthetics of its surroundings. The conference featured one of the world's leading experts on roundabouts, Michael Wallwork and was very well attended. We were excited about the positive reaction from conference attendees and look forward to another successful conference in 2010.

Charles Ball

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPC Finance Committee Meeting](#)

November 4, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPC Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

November 10, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)

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

[APCA Steering Committee](#)

November 12, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

November 17, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham

Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPC Board of Directors Meeting](#)

November 18, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:30am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

November 18, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
CANCELLED

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Subcommittee Meeting](#)

November 19, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
CANCELLED

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

RPCGB Accepting RFQ's for ITP Project



The RPCGB is now accepting statements of qualification (RFQ) for a Design Project Manager for the In-Town Transit Partnership Design-Build Project (ITP). The RPCGB will accept these statements up until 12:00 pm on November 23, 2009. The ITP is a project that involves the construction of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that will operate within the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC) area, the downtown business and financial districts, the Civil Rights District, the medical center district, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) medical and educational facilities, as well as establish reliable and timely neighborhood service in the immediate surrounding areas. *The full RFQ can be found the [RPCGB website](#).*

Building Communities Conference A Hit

The RPCGB presented the 2009 Building Communities Conference: **Modern Roundabouts - A New Perspective** on November 5th at the McWane Science Center. The conference provided an opportunity for participants to learn about modern roundabouts, when and where they are appropriate, and discuss existing roundabouts. Participants also took part in case studies of a local intersections providing 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 conducted 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. Visit www.roundabouts.net to learn more about Michael's work and expertise.



Employee Profile -- Katrina Edmond, Communication Intern, RPCGB



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Katrina Edmond, Communication Intern, RPCGB.

Hometown: Mobile, Ala
Education: My major is Mass Communication with a concentration in Journalism and my minors are English and Communication Management. I will be graduating from the University of Alabama on December 12, 2009.

How long have you been with the RPCGB?: I started my internship with the RPCGB at the end of August of this year.

Give a short overview of your job: I am the Communication Intern and my main job is to gather and write stories for the newsletter. I also pitch in a helping hand with CommuteSmart marketing activities and anywhere I can help around the RPCGB.

What is your favorite part of the job?: My favorite part of the job is having the responsibility of the newsletter itself. It's like it's my own little project. It makes me feel accomplished when it comes out each month.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I am a navy baby. I was born in Virginia Beach, VA and lived there until I was about 5. After that, we moved to Charleston, SC for a few months and then I moved to Mobile, AL, where I was raised.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be..." done with school and pursuing a career in teaching. I would also like to have my own magazine up and running.

Funding for Non-Motorized Transportation Projects Recently Amended

In 2007 the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) set up the Building Communities Implementation (BCI) program in order to provide local governments with federal transportation funds for projects identified in local plans and corridor studies. Federal funds for the

construction of the following four non-motorized transportation projects were recently amended to the MPO's BCI program for FY 2010:

Inverness Community Greenway, Phase 1: Shelby County project includes a 1.8-mile multi-use trail along Inverness Parkway from Inverness Park and Hoover Fire Station #7 to Hoover's proposed Inverness Nature Park near Inverness Center Parkway and US 280. Project was identified in the Inverness Community Greenway Corridor Feasibility Study.

Jemison Trail/Shades Creek Greenway Connection: Mountain Brook project includes 0.6-mile sidewalk along the north side of Shades Creek Parkway (SR-149) from Windsor Drive in Homewood to Jemison Trail at Cahaba Road in Mountain Brook. The project will provide a pedestrian connection between Jemison Trail, Colonial Brookwood Village, and the Homewood Shades Creek Greenway. Project was identified in the Mountain Brook Walkways Master Plan.

Hackberry Lane Sidewalk Extension: Hoover project includes 0.7-mile sidewalk and safe route to school connecting Regent Forest neighborhood and Shades Mountain Elementary. Project was identified in A Corridor Study for the Hackberry Lane Sidewalk Extension.

Reed Harvey Greenway Corridor Project: Center Point project includes a 0.4-mile sidewalk along Polly Reed Road from Center Point Parkway to Reed Harvey Park. Project was identified in the Reed Harvey Greenway Corridor Feasibility Study.



Reed Harvey Greenway Corridor Project



Hackberry Lane Sidewalk Extension



Jemison Trail Greenway Connection



Inverness Community Greenway

Transportation Planning Update

Transportation Improvement Program

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) requested five projects added to the 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The five projects pull from various programs such as a safety project, transportation enhancement project, two from the High Priority and Congressional Earmark Projects, and another Surface Transportation Program. The projects consist of two sidewalk and landscaping projects along Cahaba Road, a sidewalk project along AL-25 and US 280 in Harpersville, a project to build sidewalks near Martha Gaskins School, and a traffic study on McAshan drive accessing Norfolk Southern Railroad yard freight corridor access from Eastern Valley Road.

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 now 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.

US 280 Corridor Transit Study

The Project Selection Team for the US 280 Corridor Transit Study 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 and the project will get underway this fall. Scoping and contract negotiations have been initiated with RS&H and scoping meetings have been scheduled for mid-October.

Workshop on RFP for FTA Section 5316 and 5317

On October 30th, the RPCGB held a workshop for potential applicants applying for project funding from FTA Section 5316 (Job Access Reverse Commute) and 5317 (New Freedom) programs.

To be eligible, a project must improve or expand transportation options for elderly and disabled residents in the Birmingham urbanized area. Applications can only be received from private nonprofit organizations, state or local governments, or operators of public transportation services. *Detailed information and an application can be found on the [MPO website](#). Applications are due at noon on November 30, 2009.*

Alabama Partners for Clean Air Update

RPCGB and APCA Recognized in Report

The U.S. Department of Transportation conducted an Evaluation and Assessment of Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) project for the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and referenced the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) as a part of their assessment process. The assessment called upon the assistance of the RPCGB when reporting noteworthy CMAQ implementation practices. The partnership between the RPCGB and Alabama Partners for Clean Air (APCA) is cited and it focuses on allocation of \$1.4 million of CMAQ funding that is used to support projects that would improve air quality within the Greater Birmingham area.

One of the projects that the assessment focused on was the Birmingham Truck Stop-Electrification project that focused on improving the air quality by reducing the exhaust from idling engines. The

project allowed truck drivers to shut off their engines, but still be able to run electricity, heating and cooling services, and communications services by hooking up to a window adaptor. This project has been in place since 2004 and has been estimated to have saved 178,000 gallons of diesel fuel in 2007.

The reports are available on the Federal Highway Administration's [CMAQ website](#).

CommuteSmart Update

CommuteSmart Assists with UAB Walk Challenge

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) brought its annual Walk Challenge to a close Tuesday, Nov. 3. The challenge was an eight-week program that encouraged participants to integrate walking into their daily routine to help promote a healthier lifestyle and minimize the use of personal vehicles on campus, which helped improve traffic flow and increased the amount of available parking.

Although 2009 numbers are not yet available, the 2008 version of the Walk Challenge included 1,864 registered faculty, staff and students who logged a grand total of 90,295 miles, equivalent to circling the globe 3.5 times.

CommuteSmart served on the UAB Walk Challenge committee this year to help plan the event and donated prizes for winning participants. Prizes donated included (3) Ipod Nanos, (5) \$100 gas gift cards, and (1) \$500 airline voucher.

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.

Community Updates

16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan

The RPCGB and the City of Birmingham conducted a successful public meeting on the 16th Street Corridor Study for the Fountain Heights Neighborhood on Tuesday, November 3rd. The RPCGB presented a overview of the project, the results from the Visual Preference Survey, and displayed conceptual alternatives based on the comments from the September 12th Fountain Heights Neighborhood Association Meeting. The residents of Fountain Heights comments and public input were insightful for guiding the future development of the 16th Street Corridor Plan. 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 adopted Subdivision Regulations

The City of Calera and the KPS Group conducted a successful public hearing on the City of Calera's subdivision regulations on Tuesday, November 3rd. The City of Calera's Planning Commission adopted the subdivision regulations on November 3rd and recommended the regulations to the City Council. The update to the city's zoning and subdivision regulations are funded by the RPCGB through the Building Communities Program. *For additional information please contact Richard Amore, RPCGB Senior Planner, ramore@rpcgb.org or Jason Fondren with the KPS Group, jfondren@kpsgroup.com.*

City of Leeds Master Plan

The RPCGB met with the City of Leeds Planning Commission of October 8th to go over the first installment of the draft Master Plan. The draft of the first installment of the Master Plan includes a community assessment that shows the existing conditions, which include the environmental analysis, a demographic study and an overview of the City of Leeds services and infrastructure.

The RPCGB will meet with the City of Leeds Planning Commission on Thursday, November 12th to collect any comments from the Commissioners, Councilors and City Staff. The RPCGB and the City of Leeds are seeking a date in December for a public meeting on the Master Plan. The public meeting date will be confirmed in the next few weeks. The City of Leeds have requested assistance from the RPCGB through the Building Communities Program to complete the Master Plan for the City. *For additional information please contact Richard Amore, Senior Planner with the RPCGB at ramore@rpcgb.org.*

City of Irondale to Examine Commercial Corridor Areas

The City of Irondale has contracted with the RPCGB and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) to examine the land use and transportation issues along three important commerce corridor areas within the City of Irondale. The project will examine and report findings within concentric drive time areas for the three geographic targets defined by the City. Through a comprehensive analysis of the community's economy and demography, RPCGB will compile an inventory of existing retail businesses and identify the most promising types of retail prospects for economic development for the market. In addition to a market assessment, RPCGB will also develop a transportation plan for the City of Irondale which will include a circulation review, roadway assessments, and improvement recommendations.

City of Jemison Master Plan Completed

The City of Jemison's Master Plan was completed and adopted in recent months. The plan addresses growth and future development within the next twenty years and examines the city's current policies that relate to the changing conditions in the area and region. To look at the City of Jemison's Master Plan please visit the [RPCGB website](#).

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

SmartCode Corner

Often we are asked about the challenges communities struggle with when reviewing and calibrating SmartCode for their city or town. Two themes often arise in the discussion of SmartCode developments and mixed use projects in general. One is the financing of mixed-use development and the second is the long term municipal responsibility of improvements constructed within the public frontage.

The tightening of underwriting standards and changes in interest rates has altered financing capabilities for mixed-use properties. This makes the financing of mixed-use properties challenging. The development team must help bankers and investors feel comfortable with the project and how its various components will fit together to create a successful development. If the community is committed to changing development patterns, then the case can be made that mixed-use development will provide incremental benefits to the community in which the development sits. Secondly, the case can be made that mixed-use projects provide long term benefits the public in ways that single-use developments do not. Local government may play an important role in providing ongoing support, zoning flexibility, and/or creative financing for mixed-use projects.

SmartCode diagrams typically delineate private frontage and public frontage. This delineation should not be confused with sidewalk maintenance responsibility. Sidewalk maintenance can be designated as the responsibility of the adjoining property owner. In fact §11-48-65 of the Code of Alabama states, "Nothing in this article shall be so construed as to take from any city or town or in any manner affect the power and authority to compel the property owners, by penal ordinance or otherwise, to repair the sidewalks in front of their property in such manner and with such material as may be directed under the supervision of the engineer or other officer or agent of the city or town or to cause such repairs to be made at the expense of the property owner, such expense to be collected as in the case of taxes". The issue of sidewalk maintenance does not need to stand in the way of SmartCode Development.

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.

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Find out more at www.rpcgb.org

