

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

December, 2009

Correction: The Dec. RPCGB Board Meeting is CANCELED

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPC Finance Committee Meeting](#)

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

[RPC Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

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

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)

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

[APCA Steering Committee](#)

NO SCHEDULED MEETING
RPC of Greater Birmingham
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

December 15, 2009

Letter from the Executive Director

Often, elected officials have little time to slow down and imagine their communities as they can be. They are overwhelmed with mundane yet important day-to-day issues such as budgeting, negotiating contracts and getting light bulbs replaced in streetlights. However, during our numerous planning projects, we regularly remind community leaders and residents that a little vision can go a long way. We remind them that vision can help distinguish one



community from its similarly-situated neighbors. Vision can help a community attract people and businesses that have the capacity and potential to locate anywhere. Vision can change a community from a forgettable place to a city with thriving tourist and business centers as has been evidenced by Chattanooga and Franklin, TN, as well as the port city of Charleston.

Speaking of Charleston, on January 27th, the RPCGB will host its annual conference. The theme of this year's conference is: "Great Expectations: Unlocking the Potential for Greatness in Our Communities". We could not think of a more appropriate keynote speaker on such a theme than Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. of Charleston, South Carolina. Mayor Riley has long been a visionary leader in making Charleston a progressive city on the forefront of economic development and revitalization. As our region continues to grow and prosper, we look forward to getting a few words of wisdom on city-building from this master city-builder.

Also, by mid-January, we should know if our In-town Transit Partnership (ITP) project has been funded through the Federal Transit Administration's TIGER grant program. As we stated in our previous newsletter, we are making every preparation possible to ensure the speedy and successful implementation of the ITP should it be funded. On November 23rd, three teams responded to the Request for Qualifications we issued for ITP project management. These teams will soon be invited to respond to the Request for Proposals for project management. The winning team will be engaged as soon as funding for the project is assured. So, please continue to stay tuned!

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

[RPC Board of Directors Meeting](#)

CANCELED
RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:30am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

December 16, 2009
RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Subcommittee Meeting](#)

December 17, 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](#).

Charles Ball

Annual Meeting Just Around The Corner



The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) will host its 2010 Annual Conference, January 27, 2010 at The Club.

The title of the conference is *Unlocking Hidden Potential and Greatness in our Communities* and the keynote speaker will be Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. of Charleston, SC.

Mayor Riley is widely considered one of the most visionary and highly effective governmental leaders in America. First elected Mayor in December 1975, Mayor Riley is serving an unprecedented ninth term. Under his leadership, Charleston has increased its commitment to racial harmony and progress, achieved a substantial decrease in crime, experienced a remarkable revitalization of its historic downtown business district, seen the creation and growth of Spoleto Festival U.S. A., built the beautiful Waterfront Park, developed nationally-acclaimed affordable housing, and experienced unprecedented growth in Charleston's size and population. Mayor Riley has led a city government with an impressive record of innovation in public safety, housing, arts and culture, children's issues, the creation of park and other public spaces, and economic revitalization and development. The City of Charleston is recognized as one of the most livable and progressive cities in the United States.

A brochure with all details will be released in January and will be available on 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.

More information on the conference can be found on the [RPCGB website](#).

Employee Profile -- Ricki Hall, Special Projects Coordinator, CommuteSmart



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Ricki Hall, Special Projects Coordinator, CommuteSmart.

Hometown: Pinson, Alabama

Education: Graduated from Pinson Valley High School in 2001

How long have you been with CommuteSmart?: 2 months

Give a short overview of your job: I am the Special Projects Coordinator for CommuteSmart. I make sure that our commuters get paid that are in the incentive programs. I also enter information into our database to help the commuters find carpool partners.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?: I love helping people. Finding out there needs and helping them find a solution is a very rewarding experience.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I love horses! Outside of my job you can find my family and I at the barn with our horses.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be...": still working and living life to the fullest.

Around the RPCGB in Photos



Danny Patterson spends his weekend promoting APCA and CommuteSmart at the Moss Rock Festival in early November.



RPCGB Executive Director Charles Ball takes a swing at the Friends of Rickwood Old Timers Game at Rickwood Field. Charles is on the board of Friends of Rickwood.



Former RPCGB intern Robert Ellis is honored as the 2009 Mr. Georgia Tech at Homecoming earlier this fall.



Collegeville Neighborhood Association members reviewing the proposed neighborhood plan. The plan is the joint effort of the Auburn Urban Design Studio, The UAB College of Engineering and the RPCGB.

Transportation Updates

Transportation Improvement Program

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) requested two projects be added to the 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). These two projects pull from utility and construction. They consist of a project on Jefferson Ave in Birmingham to 50th Street, and another project in Hoover consisting of a Chapel Lane Extension from Current Terminus to New Road.

MPO Adopts Rail Resolution

The MPO approved a resolution on inter-city rail presented in November. Robert Smith of the City of Montgomery and the Montgomery MPO presented a request from the Montgomery MPO to the Birmingham MPO to approve a resolution of support for an inter-city rail line from Mobile to Birmingham. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) has submitted a grant application to the Federal Railroad Administration for assistance in the development of a Railroad Corridor Transportation Plan for a Mobile to Birmingham corridor. Previous north-south service existed in Alabama until 1995. Inter-city passenger rail can promote environmental quality by alleviating travel congestion, provide service to communities with inadequate commercial air transportation, promote economic development through increased tourism, and support interconnected livable communities.

Rail-Volution Conference Updated Presented to Citizens Committee

John Stewart of Gresham Smith & Partners and Transportation Citizens Committee Vice Chairman Doris Powell presented a report from the 2009 Rail-Volution Conference held in Boston, MA October 29 - November 1, 2009 to the Transportation Citizens Committee on November 17, 2009. Rail-Volution is an Annual Conference that was started in Portland, OR 13 years ago. It is held in a different city each year and the primary focus is on transit development and urban planning. The conference included workshops that took place on public transit throughout the city, as well as in the class room.

Photos from the Rail-Volution Conference



Alabama Partners for Clean Air Update

Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition Receives Clean Cities Designation

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) recently announced that the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition has been approved for a Clean Cities designation. The DOE now recognizes the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition as its latest National Clean Cities Coalition. The coalition presented a program plan and interview presentation which illustrated the coalition's accomplishments, understanding of National Clean Cities priorities, and commitment to continue building markets that will reduce the nation's dependence on petroleum. The Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition is a partner in the Alabama Partners for Clean Air initiative. Congratulations to the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition on this latest designation!

APCA Summer Media Buy Highlights

APCA contracted with **al.com** for online advertising of APCA from June 1-September 30, 2009. The campaign had a great impact:

- Impact Ads - up to Ten "Ozone Alert" Days on al.com's home page
- Ad Impressions: 4,653,546 for four months
- 3-Day Weather Report Sponsor Tile: 300,368 impressions for four months
- Site-wide Text Links: 3,249,925 for four months

APCA also did a summer radio campaign on many Birmingham area stations. This campaign was also highly successful and reached a very large audience. Stations included WBHM, WDJC, Cox and Cox Urban stations, Citadel stations and Clear Channel Stations. Added value in the campaign was almost equal to the amount spent, a very good return on investment.

CommuteSmart Update

CommuteSmart Keeps Growing

Here are a few highlights for CommuteSmart in the month of November:

- CommuteSmart added 77 new commuters to its Ride Match database in the month of November
- The Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity signed on as a new partner.
- CommuteSmart asked to sit on the Region 4 Workforce Organization Council for the Birmingham Business Alliance starting in 2010.
- CommuteSmart teamed up with the Alabama Partners for Clean Air to promote both initiatives at the Moss Rock Festival on November 8th.

Community Updates

RPCGB Planner Gains National Certification

The RPCGB is pleased to announce the recent induction of Senior Planner Richard Amore into the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). To attain the AICP designation, planners must pass a rigorous three-hour examination that measures knowledge in major subject areas such as community planning, land use law, environmental planning, transportation planning, and ethics in planning. The exam is offered twice a year. Just over 10,000 planners have the AICP designation worldwide. Congratulations to Richard on his great achievement!

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

SmartCode Corner

A SmartCode challenge often encountered concerns industrial sites or larger retail developments. How do we fit the assembly plant, warehouse or large retail site into the SmartCode? We can calibrate a special district in SmartCode and place liner buildings on shallow but narrow lots that provide space for small national chain stores and services. These liner buildings should be at least two stories tall and can include offices or loft-style residences above.

Big box stores are located immediately behind the liner buildings but face them in a perpendicular direction. A small portion of the big box store may extend to the urban street if the retailer desires to have a presence there. In this way, a big-box store's blank walls do not negatively impact the neighborhood.

Large surface parking lots are arranged behind liner buildings but directly adjacent to the big boxes. This way big box customers can park directly in front of their chosen retailer without having vast parking lots facing the urban street.

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

