

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

January, 2010

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPC Finance Committee Meeting](#)

January 6, 2010
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](#)

January 13, 2010
RPC of Greater Birmingham
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[APCA Steering Committee](#)

January 14, 2010
RPC of Greater Birmingham
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

January 20, 2010
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

Letter from the Executive Director

On November 12th, 2009, Mrs. Willa Dean Forrest of Pratt City passed away after a four-year battle with cancer. Dean, as she was called by her family, was a generous woman of tremendous faith. She was a retired corporate secretary, a loving sister, mother, aunt, a Birmingham-Southern alumnus and a world traveler. She was also my cousin.



About three years ago, because of complications from her treatments, this fiercely independent lady found herself in the unenviable position of often having to rely on our region's under-funded and erratic transit services. Because of this, the always punctual Dean was frequently hours late for doctor appointments. Trips to the drugstore and supermarket were day-long ordeals. It was an experience that left Dean humiliated, frustrated and drained. It was an experience no community should subject its citizens to, particularly the most vulnerable. I would like to be able tell you Dean's story is an isolated one, but I cannot. It is a daily reality for many.



Charles Ball and Willa Dean Forrest

Dean's story is also a precursor of what may await many of the roughly 300,000 Baby Boomers (45-64 year-olds) in our region, most of whom still drive. This group has grown by 24 percent since 2000. According to a study by the Texas Department of Insurance, 50 year-olds see only half as well as 20 year-olds. Their sense of hearing and their reflexes are also diminished - few surprises here! However, according to the American Association of Retired Persons, by age 55, adults are only able

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

January 26, 2010
RPC of Greater Birmingham
10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Subcommittee Meeting](#)

January 28, 2010
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](#).

to drive half as much as when they were younger. And more importantly, by age 65, half no longer drive at all. So, how will our region respond? How will we keep Dean's story from being repeated with both our existing and future transit-dependent populations? Here's what's in the works:

- The BJCTA will soon purchase 17 new vehicles for its fixed-route and paratransit services using \$8.7 million in federal stimulus funding and \$1.5 million from the City of Birmingham.
- A great deal has already been written about the \$65 million TIGER grant application for the In-Town Transit Partnership Bus Rapid Transit project. The award announcements will be made on January 15th.
- The RPCGB will soon initiate an Alternatives Analysis (AA) process to explore public transit and congestion management options for the U.S. 280 corridor. We will also initiate an AA for the U.S. 11/Bessemer Road corridor, from Downtown Birmingham to Downtown Bessemer. The project will explore transit and redevelopment opportunities. Future studies will address the Downtown Birmingham-to-Downtown Trussville corridor.

All of these projects are elements of the [Regional Transit System Plan](#) which addresses existing transit deficiencies as well mobility challenges to come. As a region, we must work together to ensure the successful implementation of these projects. But we must work even harder to secure adequate and sustained funding to implement the Regional Transit System Plan in its entirety. This will increase transportation options for Boomers and non-Boomers, the elderly and the young, commuters, business travelers and tourists alike.

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.

The conference will feature a look at Complete Street Networks, a presentation on the Shelby County comprehensive plan, form based code zoning and grant writing. Participants can choose between attending the full conference or only the luncheon featuring the keynote speaker. The registration deadline is January 20th.

The keynote speaker for the luncheon is 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 is currently available on the [RPCGB website](#).

Revolving Loan Fund Recipient Enters Into International Venture

Vaxin Inc., a recipient of the RPCGB Revolving Loan Fund and an emerging vaccine company announced in late 2009 that it has entered into a joint venture with South Korean biomedical company, AnC Bio Group to develop, manufacture and commercialize Vaxin's current pipeline of novel vaccines throughout Asia, the Middle East and Oceania. This strategic alliance is expected to produce vaccines against seasonal and pandemic influenza, anthrax and Alzheimer's disease, as well as other indications.

Under the terms of the agreement, the joint venture will conduct clinical trials with Vaxin's vaccines in South Korea and/or other licensed territories. While facilitating development of these novel vaccines in South Korea and territories covered under the joint venture, these trials will also add important data to Vaxin's clinical studies planned for the United States and elsewhere, helping to accelerate the company's global development and commercialization strategies.

Birmingham-based Vaxin Inc. is an emerging biotechnology company developing vaccines and other biological products to address market and public health needs. The company uses proprietary technology for non-invasive delivery to the nasal passages or to the skin.

The RPCGB operates a Revolving Loan Fund that provides supplemental financing for expanding and new businesses located in the six-county region whose projects will result in the creation of new, permanent jobs. To find out more information on the Revolving Loan Fund, visit the [RPCGB Economic Development page](#).

Employee Profile -- Greg Wingo, Marketing Specialist



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Greg Wingo, Marketing Specialist.

Hometown: Birmingham, Alabama

Education: Graduated from the University of Alabama in 2001

How long have you been with the RPCGB?: Over a year

Give a short overview of your job: I coordinate all marketing and public relations efforts for the RPCGB, MPO, CommuteSmart and the Alabama Partners for Clean Air.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?: I really enjoy the people I work with. It's very important to work with people you respect and enjoy being around.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I helped coach the Hoover High School lacrosse team to the last two state championships.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be...": still with the RPCGB and living a happy, productive life.

Transportation Updates

US 280 Corridor Transit Study

The US 280 Corridor Transit Study will be underway in January, 2010. The focus of the study is to analyze a variety of non-single occupant transportation alternatives for the corridor. The alternatives to be analyzed include bus rapid transit, light rail, and high occupancy vehicle lanes (HOV). The scope of work also includes examining existing and future land use in the corridor and its relationship to the various transportation alternatives. The study area will include the entire length of the US 280 corridor in both Jefferson and Shelby Counties. This work is being conducted with funds authorized under a Federal Transit Administration New Starts grant in support of the recommendations of the Birmingham Regional Transportation Alternatives Analysis completed in 2004. *For more information please contact Mike Kaczorowski, Transportation Planner, at kaz@rpcgb.org.*

MPO Stimulus Projects Update

Nearly 85% of the Stimulus funding allocated to the Birmingham MPO area has been obligated. Two additional projects have been selected to receive Stimulus funds as a result of low bids from the original list of projects. The two additional projects are:

- Jefferson Ave. from Birmingham City Limits to 50th St. (in the City of Birmingham)
- Chapel Lane Extension from current terminus to New Road (in City of Hoover)

These were determined to be the most "shovel ready" projects and would therefore be able to meet the Stimulus funding deadline of March 2, 2010. These additional projects and other Stimulus projects not yet obligated are scheduled to be obligated in January, 2010. *For more information please contact Mike Kaczorowski, Transportation Planner, at kaz@rpcgb.org.*

Community Updates

Collegeville Neighborhood Plan

In early December, the RPCGB staff, with the Auburn Urban Design Studio and the UAB College of Engineering presented a plan for the Collegeville Neighborhood of Birmingham. The attendance was excellent with over 75 neighborhood members present.

Elements of the plan considered by the neighborhood included a pedestrian underpass on Shuttlesworth Drive, a vehicular and pedestrian bridge on 34th Street and a recommended Fire Station on the northeast corner of 34th Street.

The planning team is finalizing the plan and the finished product will include all conceptual designs and funding recommendations. These projects combined with the Finley Boulevard Extension will begin to correct decades of isolation for this historic neighborhood.

This project is funded through the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Building Communities Program. *For additional information please contact Steve Ostaseski at smo@rpcgb.org.*

16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan

The RPCGB is evolving the draft of the 16th Street Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan for Fountain Heights. The RPCGB met with the City of Birmingham in December to discuss the draft and move forward with the study. The RPCGB looks forward to another public meeting in the coming month to present the draft plan to the residents of Fountain Heights. 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 Leeds Master Plan

The Leeds Master Plan is moving forward with the completed 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 met with the Planning Commission and the Leeds Area Chamber of Commerce to gather input into the master plan process in December. The RPCGB looks forward to kicking off the public involvement meetings in the coming months to gather input from the residents of Leeds. The City of Leeds have requested assistance from the Regional Planning Commission 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 Fairfield Master Plan

The RPCGB Community Planning Department is working with the City of Fairfield to develop a new Master Plan. The RPCGB will be working closely with the Economic Development Department in Fairfield to look at downtown redevelopment, interstate access, greyfield redevelopment and neighborhood improvement initiatives. *For additional information please contact Philip Amthor, Planner with the RPCGB at pamthor@rpcgb.org.*

City of Bessemer Master Plan

The RPCGB continues to work with Bessemer on a new Master Plan, focusing on neighborhood redevelopment strategies, commercial redevelopment oriented to US 11/Bessemer Superhighway, and transit plans connecting newer development near I-459 and I-20/59. *For additional information please contact Philip Amthor, Planner with the RPCGB at pamthor@rpcgb.org.*

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

SmartCode Corner

The SmartCode does combine zoning and subdivision approval process in one very neat package. SmartCode does not and is not intended to deal with the design and construction. This duty falls squarely on the shoulders of your Municipality's design and construction guidelines.

One issue that plagues cities is uncompleted streets in emerging subdivisions. This downturn in the economy has made that problem even more evident. A change in a city or county's design guidelines can help correct this issue. RPCGB is currently drafting design and construction guidelines that will require the developer to have a minimum pavement buildup of 6 inches of base course, 2.5 inches of binder and a two inch wearing layer. One of the two inches will be put down prior to the approval of the final plat and the second inch will be bonded and put in place before final acceptance of the streets for maintenance by the municipality. We will discuss bonding concepts next month.

If you have regulatory questions or have a problem you wish to discuss please contact Steve Ostaseski, Richard Amore or Philip Amthor at the RPCGB. Steve may be reached by phone at 205.264.8422 or by email at smo@rpcgb.org. Richard may be reached by phone at 205.264.8447

or by email at ramore@rpcgb.org. Philip may be reached by phone at 205.264.8421 or by email at pamthor@rpcgb.org.

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