

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

June, 2010

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPCGB Finance Committee Meeting](#)

June 2, 2010

RPCGB Office

9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPCGB Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

June 9, 2010

RPCGB Office

9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)

June 9, 2010

RPCGB Office

1:30 pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPCGB Board of Directors Meeting](#)

June 16, 2010

RPCGB Office

10:30 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

June 16, 2010

RPCGB Office

Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

Letter from the Executive Director

There are many aspects of summer we look forward to -- warmer weather, peaches, watermelons and water-skiing, to name a few. However, this season also brings things we would rather do without such as ozone alert days. But have no fear! The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham supports a number of programs, projects and initiatives that help improve our region's existing air quality and offer the hope of cleaner air in the near future.



The RPCGB's popular CommuteSmart program hosted an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) Workshop on May 25th. ETCs serve as liaisons between the CommuteSmart program and our partnering companies. More than twenty ETC's from companies throughout Jefferson and Shelby counties learned how CommuteSmart partners with more than 60 companies to help alleviate traffic congestion and reduce air pollution in Jefferson and Shelby counties. Each workday morning, vans and carpools commute to employment centers in Greater Birmingham from places like Prattville, Tuscaloosa, Cullman, Gadsden and other cities. With thirty vans and a database of 2,668 participants, CommuteSmart is currently the closest thing we have to a regional transit system.

In our region, when we discuss the expansion of our transportation network, we often overlook non-polluting modes of transportation like cycling. So, in an effort to increase awareness about cycling and to increase the visibility of cyclists, the RPCGB partnered with CommuteSmart to host the 7th Annual Bike-to-Work Day on May 21st. Later that day, thirty individuals participated in the Bikeways & Walkways Route Planning Workshop. The workshop focused on identifying existing and proposed pedestrian activity centers and regional bikeways. In addition to all these activities, the RPCGB and the MPO are funding greenway and trail projects for cyclists and pedestrians around the region.

In previous editions of Connections, we informed you of the exciting corridor transit studies underway for U.S. 280 and U.S. 11. These studies will eventually lead to the implementation of projects that will aid commuters in those corridors (both drivers and non-drivers) and improved air quality.

June 23, 2010
RPCGB Office
10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning
Organization Subcommittee
Meeting](#)

June 24, 2010
RPCGB Office
1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

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

And finally, efforts to improve our region's transit service and air quality received a big boost on May 24th when the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority welcomed new Executive Director, Peter Behrman. Behrman brings to our community a wealth of experience from a diverse range of transit systems and communities. He has worked in Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Pittsburgh and Vancouver. Now, Birmingham is his home. We believe our region will benefit greatly from Mr. Behrman's expertise and the RPCGB looks forward to working with him in the near future.

Charles Ball

Hitting the Road!



On May 21st, a bicycle convoy of nearly 50 cyclists rode through Birmingham's City Center from Five Points South to Regions Center Plaza at the corner of 20th and 5th South to promote Bike-to-Work Day. The ride concluded with a Green Eggs & Ham Breakfast hosted by the Green Resource Center of Alabama.

The ride highlights the benefits of cycling, which acts as an emission-free form of "active transportation" that is good for both air quality and public health. The riders were treated to a police escort throughout the ride and live music at the finish.

Tom Maxwell, Senior Environmental Planner at the RPCGB, was able to get over Red Mountain with little effort thanks to Cahaba Cycles. Tom rode their new electric-assisted demo bike called the Ride+ manufactured by Trek.



Tom Maxwell at Bike-to-Work Day

"I was very impressed with the Ride+. It delivers a turbo-charge that is soundless and emission-free," Maxwell said. "Electric-assisted bikes such as this will become increasingly popular for some commuters, law enforcement officials and recreational cyclists."

Following the Bike-to-Work Day group ride, approximately 30 members of the Birmingham MPO's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Jefferson County Greenways Commission and the Community Foundation's new Active Transportation Task Force convened for a bikeways and walkways route planning workshop at the RPCGB. The workshop focused on identifying existing and proposed pedestrian activity centers and regional bikeways. Information derived from this workshop will be utilized to update the Birmingham MPO's Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenway Plan and expand upon the Active Transportation Program in the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan for Jefferson and Shelby Counties.

If you are interested in riding in this fun event, be on the lookout for Bike-to-Work Day in May, 2011. If you are interested in the benefits of riding a bike to work, visit the [CommuteSmart website](#).

CommuteSmart Holds ETC Training



CommuteSmart hosted an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) Workshop held at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham office on Tuesday, May 25th. More than 20 ETC's from companies around the Jefferson and Shelby counties learned about the CommuteSmart program and the impact it has on our region.

The ETC's serve as liaisons between the CommuteSmart program and our partnering companies. "The CommuteSmart team is grateful to all the supportive partner companies and our ETC's, who participated in this event," said Allison Nichols,

CommuteSmart's Program Manager. CommuteSmart partners with more than 60 companies to help alleviate traffic congestion and reduce air pollution in Jefferson and Shelby counties. If you or

someone in your company would be interested in acting as an ETC, please contact the CommuteSmart team at commutesmart@rpcgb.org



ETC training participants



Ouch!

Employee Profile -- Harry He, Transportation Engineer, RPCGB



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Harry He, Transportation Engineer.

Hometown: Sichuan, China

Education: Master's Degree in Civil Engineering

How long have you been with the RPCGB?: 17 years

Give a short overview of your job: I am highly involved in various transportation planning activities at the RPCGB. From running travel demand forecast models and traffic simulation model for the Birmingham MPO area to producing reports on air quality conformity determinations. I also oversee the traffic count database for the congestion management system and maintain the long range transportation plan project database.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?: Helping people obtain the information they are looking for as well as the moment just before a project is completed.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I took 2nd place in Class B of the North Alabama Table Tennis 2010 Closed Tournament.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be..." a candidate for the USA Table Tennis Senior Olympics.

RPCGB Video Receives Recognition

The RPCGB received recognition in May for an informational video on the organization. The video, titled *"Who is the RPCGB?"* and produced by Red Fox Media in Birmingham, won Bronze at the 2010 Telly Awards. The Telly Awards honor the very best local, regional, and cable television commercials and programs, as well as the finest video and film productions, and work created for the Web. Since 1978, the mission has been to strengthen the visual arts community by inspiring, promoting, and supporting creativity. The Telly Awards received over 13,000 entries from all 50 states and 5 continents.

The informational video focuses on the overall mission of the RPCGB and can be viewed on the front of the [RPCGB website](#).

Economic Development Specialist Makes the Grade!



The RPCGB would like to congratulate economic development specialist, Yvonne Murray (center), who graduated from the Tennessee Basic Economic Development Course in May 2010. The course is a precursor to enrollment in the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Economic Development Institute at the University of Oklahoma. **Congrats, Yvonne!**

Alternative Fuel Educational Workshop

It's hard to beat **FREE** but that is just what this Alternative Fuel Educational Workshop will cost You!

The Alternative Fuels Education Workshop is being brought to you by the national trade associations of the alternative fuels industry and the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition, a partner with the Alabama Partners for Clean Air.

New and exciting speakers are coming to Alabama from around the country to provide information and insight on how we can increase our energy independence, increase economic development and improve our air quality through the use of domestically produced alternative fuels.

The workshop will cover many topics on all fuels: ethanol, compressed natural gas (CNG), propane, biodiesel and advanced technologies.

Workshop subjects will include fuel quality, infrastructure, available vehicles, sustainability, energy balance, safety, incentives available and environmental impacts.

Those involved in fleet management, state/city/county government, fuel retailing and/or distribution, school pupil transportation or are just looking to understand fueling options and become involved, are strongly encouraged to attend this full day workshop.

**WHERE: Hoover Public Safety Center
2020 Valleydale Road, Hoover, AL 35244**

WHEN: June 24, 2010

TIME: 8AM - 4:30PM

(8AM Registration - Workshop begins at 8:30)

Lunch and Refreshments Provided

REGISTER [HERE](#)

A Toolbox to Successful Grants Workshop

Announcing!

A Toolbox to Successful Grants Workshop

**Presented by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
(ADECA)**

June 15, 2010, 8:30am - 12:30pm

Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

1731 First Avenue North, First Floor Conference Room, Birmingham 35203

- Funding for Community Development!
- Funding for Economic Development!
- Funding for Education Improvement!

To make your reservation, email grants@rpcgb.org. Deadline for reservations, June 10, 2010.

Community Updates

16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan

The RPCGB and the Fountain Heights Neighborhood Association presented the 16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan to the City of Birmingham Planning Commission and City Council. The City of Birmingham Planning Commission adopted the 16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan on May 5th, 2010. The City of Birmingham City Council adopted the 16th Street Corridor Study and Conceptual Streetscape Plan on May 11th, 2010. 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 RPCGB continue to move forward on the City of Leeds Master Plan 2010. The RPCGB met with several stakeholders during the month of May and is moving forward with the stakeholder involvement process during the month of June in guiding the future direction of the Master Plan. The RPCGB is in the process of putting together a stakeholder advisory committee for the City of Leeds Master Plan. The RPCGB looks forward to kicking off the public involvement meetings in the coming

months once the existing conditions analysis is completed. The City of Leeds has 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.*

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

Friday Brown Bag Lunch and Learn's

The Central Section of the Alabama Chapter of the APA, in partnership with the Utah Chapter of the American Planning Association, announces a series of Friday Brown Bag Lunch and Learn's. Beginning on Friday, June 3, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham will host the Central Section's broadcast of the 2010 Professional Development Webcast Series. Webcasts will be shown in the 1st floor conference room of the RPCGB office. Sessions will run from noon to 1:30pm.

Each of the remaining 2010 webcast sessions is worth 1.5 AICP certification maintenance credits. At present, there are a total of 27 CM credits available through the end of calendar year 2010. Sponsors interested in hosting the webinars on the dates where the location is identified as TBD can contact Darrell Howard at dhoward@rpcgb.org.

Please RSVP for the June webinar series by clicking on the link(s) for the dates you wish to attend:

[June 11](#): **Bus Rapid System: The Inside Story of the New York BRT**
Sponsored by the Transportation Division of APA

[June 18](#): **MyFace, Spacebook, Linking, Twitter....What?**

[June 25](#): **Understanding the Unserviced Workforce**

As a brown bag lunch series, participants should bring their own lunch to the events. For more information, please contact Darrell Howard at dhoward@rpcgb.org

Greenway Project Moves Forward



A long anticipated greenway project has taken another step towards completion with help from RPCGB. In April 2009, a Building Communities Grant was awarded to complete a "Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Five Mile Creek Trail Location Study." The implementation study will be modeled after the PATH Foundation, a 501c3 nonprofit organization in Atlanta with a mission of develop a system of interlinking greenway trails from commuting and recreation.

Plans for the Five Mile Creek Greenway began with an 8-mile section of greenway on Five Mile Creek funded by Sloss Industries (now Walter Coke) as part of a Supplemental Environmental Plan agreement. Sloss also set aside property on the creek in conservation easements and planted trees. RPCGB and Cawaco RC&D Council in cooperation with Sloss produced the Five Mile Creek Greenway Master Plan in 2005. RPCGB took the project another step by securing funding through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for trail location studies in Brookside, Fultondale, and Center Point. The Five Mile Creek Trail Location

Study was completed in April 2008.

The main feature of the Five Mile Creek Greenway is a 16.5 mile path planned on the CSX Cane Creek Rail Line. This historic mineral rail line is planned to be developed as a multi-use trail.

Money has been programmed for the acquisition of the Cane Creek Rail Trail through the MPO. Matching funds will be provided through fund raising and local grants.

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

