

# CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the  
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

November 2010

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPCGB Program Budget  
Committee Meeting](#)

Canceled

[Metropolitan Planning  
Organization Meeting](#)

Canceled

[RPCGB Board of Directors  
Meeting](#)

Canceled

[Transportation Citizens  
Committee Meeting](#)

November 16, 2010

RPCGB Office

Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical  
Committee Meeting](#)

November 17, 2010

RPCGB Office

10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning  
Organization Subcommittee  
Meeting](#)

November 18, 2010

RPCGB Office

1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

## Letter from the Executive Director

On November 12<sup>th</sup>, the Regional Planning Commission and RS&H Consulting will host a **Public Open House** for the **U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study** at the Cahaba Grand Center from 11:00 am to 2:00pm and from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. We will be soliciting comments on the numerous transit/road improvement options that have been developed since the kick-off of the planning process six months ago. To date, we have focused on soliciting input from those with the most at stake in this corridor - the mayors, city councilpersons, developers, business owners and residents of the corridor. Our November 12<sup>th</sup> open house will seek input from everyone else. A second open house will take place later in the study calendar.



Throughout this process, we should be mindful of how traffic within the U.S. 280 corridor became such a problem in the first place. What we have now is the cumulative effect of hundreds or thousands of common, but short-sighted decisions made over the past 40 years, by individuals, companies and communities. These well-meaning decisions were made without the benefit of any type of comprehensive plan for the corridor and without regard for the needs of people without cars. As I stated in my April letter, past widening projects have provided only temporary relief to the gridlock they have kicked the can down the road. It is the intention of the RPCGB to help U.S. 280 corridor stakeholders formulate lasting solutions that will help us all avoid 40 more years of chaos. If you'd like to learn more about the study or the Open House, please visit the [U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study website](#).

*Charles Ball*

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

## U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study Open House



The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham is hosting an Open House to discuss new opportunities for transit service along U.S. 280 from I-20/I-59 in downtown Birmingham to the Shelby/Talladega County line. The Open House will allow citizens to learn about the

transit study, provide comments and participate in opinion surveys about transit and the future of U.S. 280 corridor communities.

Two open sessions providing identical information will allow attendees to choose the time best suited for their day. Any additional information can be found at the [U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Project website](#).

**DATE:** November 12, 2010

**TIMES:** 11 AM to 2 PM and 4 PM to 7 PM  
(two identical sessions)

**SITE:** Cahaba Grand Convention Center  
3660 Grandview Parkway  
Birmingham, Alabama 35243

**FORMAT:** Open House -- Attend anytime during one of the two sessions. There will be brief informational presentations at 11:30, 1:00, 4:30 and 6:00. Staff will be available at all times to discuss the project and receive comments.

## Transit Authority Receives Funding From MPO

The Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has provided \$100,000 of Federal Highway Administration funding to the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (BJCTA) for FY 2011. Funding is to assist BJCTA in preparing a five-year Transit Development Plan, which will include a funding component. The MPO will also offer technical assistance to the BJCTA on transit-related issues, including guidance for the development of the plan and geographic information system data.



## National Report Identifies Chokepoints in Region

TRIP, a national nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues, recently released a report along with the RPCGB identifying the top 40 surface transportation chokepoints in Alabama. These chokepoints relate to urban interchanges and highway segments, public transit routes, and sections of rural highways that are unable to meet a region's need for adequate mobility. Seven of the top 10 transportation chokepoints are in the Birmingham Urban Area of Jefferson and Shelby Counties. They include segments of I-65 from Shelby County to downtown Birmingham, segments of U.S. 280 east and west of I-459, I-20 in the Birmingham Airport area, and a regional transit system inadequate to meet the mobility needs of the region.

The RPCGB is actively addressing highway and transit options in the I-65 and U.S. 280 corridors to include high-occupancy vehicle lanes, interchange reconfiguration, and a broad range of transit types. The following websites provide further information:

[U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study](#)

[I-65 Mobility Matters](#)

To read the full chokepoint report, visit the [TRIP website](#).

## Employee Profile -- Debbie Fletcher, Senior Fiscal II, RPCGB



*Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Debbie Fletcher, RPCGB Senior Fiscal II.*

**Hometown:** Birmingham, AL

**Education:** Jefferson State College - Computer Science and Radiology

**How long have you been with the RPCGB?:** I have been with the RPCGB for 28 years

**Give a short overview of your job:** Senior Fiscal Officer II. I handle the Receivables for the Commission.

**What is your favorite aspect of your job?:** My favorite part of my job is making sure the RPCGB always has money in the bank.

**Tell us one thing we don't know about you:** I enjoy creating artwork.

**Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be..."** I hope to be retired, living on the lake and enjoying my grandkids.

## CommuteSmart Highlight

CommuteSmart and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham took active roles in supporting the Railroad Park Ramble on October 10, 2010. CommuteSmart was present with program information, cups and a banner for the nearly 125 participants. Of those who self-propelled to Railroad Park, over 90 filled out trip checklists which will support the greenway planning process. Over 120 wishes were collected for a connected, green, accessible Greater Birmingham community and better health for all. CommuteSmart provides commuter rewards to those walking and biking from home to work and back. Visit the [CommuteSmart website](#) for more details.

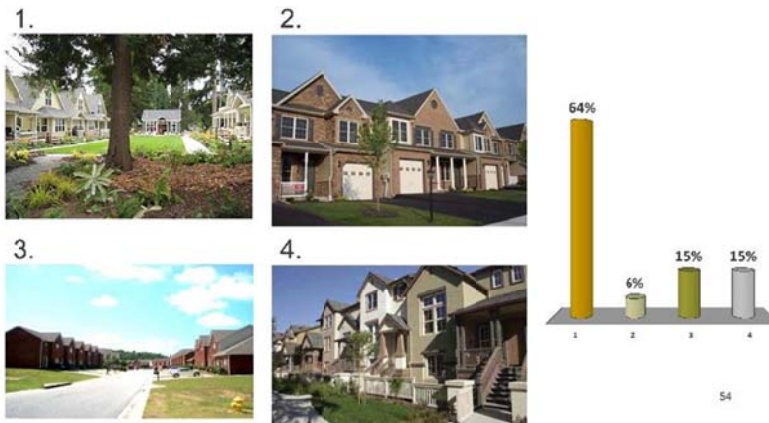


## Community Updates

### City of Leeds Master Plan

The RPCGB and the City of Leeds conducted a successful public involvement meeting on the Leeds Master Plan on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The RPCGB staff conducted an interactive visual preference survey to identify the community character preferences for future growth and development in the City of Leeds. A copy of the presentation and the visual preference survey results can be found at [http://www.rpcgb.org/planning/Leeds\\_Master\\_Plan\\_Oct2010\\_meeting.pdf](http://www.rpcgb.org/planning/Leeds_Master_Plan_Oct2010_meeting.pdf). The RPCGB is continuing to evolve the Leeds Master Plan through community engagement, stakeholder involvement, and staff resources to develop a long term vision for the City of Leeds. The RPCGB is working with the advisory committee on the downtown element of the master plan over the course of the next couple of months. 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](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org)*

What is your preferred high density residential development?



### City of Graysville Master Plan Update

The City of Graysville has requested assistance from the RPCGB to complete the update to their city's master plan. The City of Graysville is participating in the Alabama Communities of Excellence program and seeks to update their master plan in accordance with the program. The RPCGB is currently developing the Community Assessment section of the City of Graysville's Master Plan which includes an overview of the community, the environmental analysis, existing development, public infrastructure, and demographic and socioeconomic conditions. *For additional information please contact Richard Amore, Senior Planner with the RPCGB at [ramore@rpcgb.org](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org)*

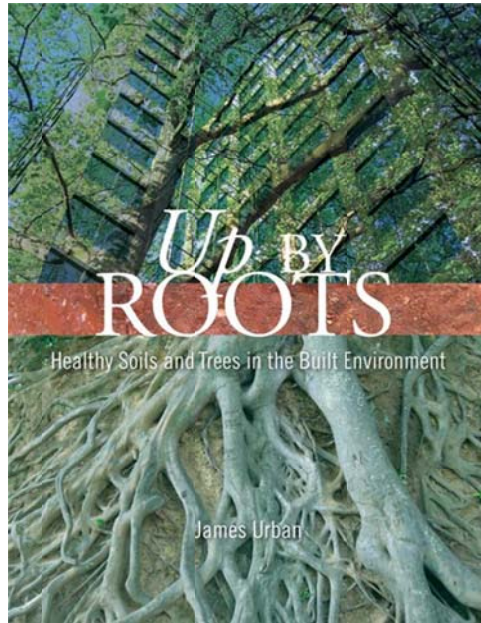
### Trees and Development Workshop

**SAVE THE DATE**

#### **Trees and Development Workshop**

Tuesday, January 11, 2011  
Birmingham Botanical Gardens

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham and CAWACO RC+D will be offering a Trees and Development Workshop on Tuesday, January 11 2011. James Urban, FASLA will be the keynote speaker and several other state experts will be sharing their knowledge of trees and development. Please register at <https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/conference/ucftrees2011/registrationForm.php> Please contact Richard Amore, [ramore@rpcgb.org](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org) or Heidi Richards, [Heidi.richards@al.usda.gov](mailto:Heidi.richards@al.usda.gov) for more information.



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

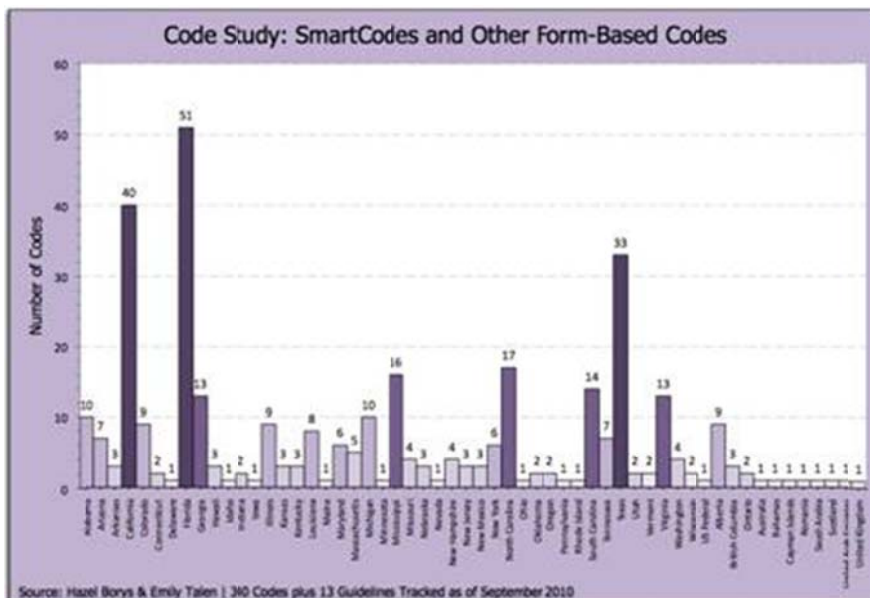
#### Building Communities Program Update

The RPCGB Building Communities Program is designed to provide grants for projects that support the integration of land use and transportation. The Building Communities Program provides grants to local communities within the Birmingham metropolitan planning area to support land use integration, economic vitality, safety and security, accessibility and mobility, environmental/air quality improvement, and system preservation. *For more information on projects completed under this program, see the projects overview presentation on the [RPCGB website](#).*

#### SmartCode Corner

Jefferson County embraces the SmartCode. On Tuesday October 19, 2010, the Jefferson County Commission adopted the SmartCode as an overlay available throughout the entire County. The Jefferson County Department of Land Planning and Development Services developed the SmartCode over the course of the last year by involving development interests, planners, designers, non-profit organizations, health officials, and citizens. The SmartCode is part of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Jefferson County is the largest jurisdiction in the United States to adopt the SmartCode. As of September 2010 there were 340 SmartCode and other Form Based Codes in place throughout the world. Jefferson County brings the total to 341. Congratulations to everyone involved!



To view this graph and learn more about the study, please go [here](#).

So how do you get started with SmartCode? It is a three step process. (1) You need a plan/vision; (2) you need tools; and (3) you need to follow through with the implementation. It starts with a plan. The SmartCode code is a tool and community developers and leaders using those tools need plans. RPCGB can help you develop a plan and customize the tool to fit your community's needs.

*If you have SmartCode questions, 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](mailto:smo@rpcgb.org). Richard may be reached by phone at 205.264.8447 or by email at [ramore@rpcgb.org](mailto:ramore@rpcgb.org). Philip may be reached by phone at 205.264.8421 or by email at [pamthor@rpcgb.org](mailto:pamthor@rpcgb.org)*

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Find out more at [www.rpcgb.org](http://www.rpcgb.org)

