

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

December 2010

In This Issue

U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study
Update

MPO Approves Funding for
Resurfacing Program

Employee Profile

Intern Spotlight

RPCGB Annual Meeting Around the
Corner

RPCGB Receives Job Creation
Funds

CommuteSmart Highlight

Alabama Partners for Clean Air
Update

Community Updates

Redistricting Opportunities Coming

Good Design Works Wonders

SmartCode Corner

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPCGB Program Budget
Committee Meeting](#)
Canceled

[Metropolitan Planning
Organization Meeting](#)
December 8, 2010
RPCGB Office
1:30 pm, 1st Floor Conf.
Room

[APCA Steering Committee](#)
December 9, 2010
RPCGB Office
1:30 pm, 1st Floor Conf.
Room

[Transportation Citizens
Committee Meeting](#)
December 14, 2010
RPCGB Office
Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION OF
GREATER BIRMINGHAM!!!**

U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study Open House



A Public Open House was held for the U.S. 280 Corridor Transit Study on November 12th at the Cahaba Grand Conference Center. The purpose of the open house was to educate the public on the project and receive input on a variety of topics related to the study.

One of the exercises conducted at the open house to encourage attendees to give their opinions involved spending money. Each attendee was given four \$1,000,000 bills and four \$100,000 bills (a total of \$4.4 million) and asked to "spend" the bills by placing them in a variety of boxes that represented different transportation and land use related categories. The results of

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

December 15, 2010

RPCGB Office

10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Subcommittee Meeting](#)

Meeting

Canceled

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

this exercise are shown in the following graph:

| Type of Transportation Investment or Land Use Strategy | Total Results (in millions) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Light Rail Transit | \$ 14.9 |
| Express Bus Services | \$ 13.7 |
| Vanpools and Carpools | \$ 1.4 |
| Roadway Access Management | \$ 20.6 |
| Community Transit Circulators | \$ 3.4 |
| Pedestrian-Friendly Areas | \$ 2.7 |
| Traffic Management Systems | \$ 8.7 |
| Bus Rapid Transit | \$ 30.4 |
| More Roadway Capacity | \$ 20.4 |
| Transit-Oriented Development | \$ 11.7 |
| Other | \$ 10.3 |

In addition to this exercise, surveys were distributed to attendees and many other comments were received and recorded. All of the input received will be used to help guide the project team in their future efforts with the study.



For more information on the study, please visit the [U.S. 280 website](#).

MPO Approves Funding for Resurfacing Program

On October 13th, the Metropolitan Planning Organization approved \$10 million of Surface Transportation Program Birmingham Attributable (STPBH) funds for a Resurfacing Program. This program was established for the following reasons:

1. The 2035 Regional Transportation Plan (adopted by the MPO in June) proposes a "fix it first" approach to transportation infrastructure and recommends that a program be established utilizing STPBH funds.
2. Jefferson County has recently relinquished maintenance on several major roadways and this program could provide much needed assistance to the maintenance needs in the region.

- The program would reduce the significant carryover balance in the STPBH program in a more timely basis compared to traditional construction projects.

These funds can only be used on federal aid routes (functionally classified roadways) and the funds are intended to be used on non-State roadways. Since nearly all of the federal aid routes in the MPO area are maintained by Jefferson County, Shelby County, Birmingham, and Hoover, funds were distributed to these jurisdictions based on the number of lane miles of functionally classified non-State roadways in their jurisdictions. These jurisdictions will select the projects to be funded throughout Jefferson and Shelby Counties. The resulting distribution is shown in the following table:

Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization
Resurfacing Program
Lane Miles and Distribution of Resurfacing Funds

| | Lane Miles of Functionally Classified - Minor Arterials and Collectors* | % | Distribution of \$10,000,000 - Total Funds |
|--|---|-------------|--|
| Jefferson County (excluding Birmingham and Hoover) | 1,684 | 47.1% | \$ 4,709,709 |
| Shelby County (excluding Birmingham and Hoover) | 866 | 24.2% | \$ 2,422,944 |
| Birmingham | 847 | 23.7% | \$ 2,369,946 |
| Hoover | 178 | 5.0% | \$ 497,401 |
| Total: | 3,576 | 100% | |

Sources: Based on the Highway Functional Classification and Federal Aid Map, June 2010, produced by the ALDOT Bureau of Transportation Planning in conjunction with the MPO. City and County boundaries are from the Census Bureau. And number of lanes from the RPCGB's Year 2009 Regional Travel Demand Model.

* Note the number of lane miles and the resulting percentages have been reviewed and refined by the Cities and Counties.



Employee Profile -- Ray Morris, Deputy Executive Director, RPCGB



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Ray Morris, Deputy Executive Director.

Hometown: Sylacauga, AL

Education: BA, UAB; MPA, JSU, PhD (ABD) AU

How long have you been with the RPCGB?: Almost 8 years

Give a short overview of your job: I oversee all administration of the organization.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?:

I really enjoy the variety of things I get to do, every day is different. Although if I have to pick one thing...I love working on our Revolving Loan Funds.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I used to really hate going to school, but I've already

started on another graduate degree after completion of my PhD.
Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be..." Right here at the RPCGB.

Intern Spotlight



Ariana Blackwell is a junior at Holy Family Cristo Rey High School. This is her second year working on the Cristo Rey intern program, which provides high school interns to the RPCGB. Ariana plans on attending Auburn University and earning a degree in Nursing. Her hobbies include reading, praise dancing and shopping.



Brianna Gaston is a sophomore at Holy Family Cristo Rey High School. This is her second year on the Cristo Rey intern program. She would like to attend Florida State University and earn a degree in Pediatric Nursing. Brianna's hobbies include shopping, texting and volleyball.

RPCGB Annual Meeting Around the Corner

SAVE THE DATE!!!

Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

2011 Annual Conference, January 26, 2010

The Club, Ballroom

1 Robert Smith Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209

Training Sessions 9am - 11:15am

Luncheon 11:30am - 1:00pm

Keynote Speaker: Mr. Pete Conroy, Director

Jacksonville State University's Environmental Policy and Information Center (EPIC)

Brochure with all details coming your way soon!

RPCGB Receives Job Creation Funds

The State of Alabama Department of Finance announced in mid-November that economic development agencies across the state, including the RPCGB, will each receive a share of \$12 million for job creation in their respective regions. The Alabama Revolving Loan Fund Authority met and issued bonds for the money that will be used to provide funds to twelve area agencies. The taxable bonds were sold by competitive bid to Protective Securities, a division of ProEquities, with a true interest cost of 5.416804%.

The twelve agencies that will be receiving funds from the \$12 million bond issue include:

- Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments, Muscle Shoals
- West Alabama Regional Commission, Northport
- The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, Birmingham
- East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, Anniston
- Central Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, Montgomery
- Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, Dothan
- South Alabama Regional Planning Commission, Mobile
- Lee-Russell Council of Governments, Opelika
- North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments, Decatur
- Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments, Huntsville
- Alabama-Tombigbee Regional Commission, Camden
- South Central Alabama Development Commission, Montgomery

The RPCGB will receive approximately \$1 million to be allocated to the expansion of businesses in its region. Businesses that are eligible for funding include manufacturing, industry, health care and technology. Contact Yvonne Murray at ymurray@rpcgb.org for more information.

CommuteSmart Highlight

CommuteSmart Hosts ETC Training

CommuteSmart hosted an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) Workshop on Tuesday, November 30th at the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. CommuteSmart partners from Jefferson and Shelby Counties attended the presentation. This training was designed to teach the ETCs about the features and benefits offered by the new ridematching database. On December 7th an ETC Workshop on the same topic will be held. If you are interested in attending please call 205.264.8429 for more details.

Looking For A Ride?

Are you interested in joining a vanpool? Below is a list of current vanpools that are looking for more riders. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Williamson at 205.264.8436 or lwilliamson@rpcgb.org.

| ROUTE | Work Start | Work End |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| Springville to Bham Downtown | 7:30 AM | 4:00 PM |
| Hoover/Alabaster to Montgomery | 8:00 AM | 5:00 PM |
| Hayden to Bham Downtown | 7:00 AM | 4:30 PM |
| Bessemer to Bham Downtown | 7:30 AM | 4:00 PM |
| Prattville to Hoover | 7:00 AM | 4:00 PM |
| Trussville to Inverness | 7:00 AM | 4:00 PM |
| Jasper/Cordova/Carbon Hill to Bham Downtown | 7:00 AM | 4:00 PM |
| Clanton/Calera/Montevallo/Helena/Alabaster to Bham DT | 7:00 AM | 4:00 PM |

Alabama Partners for Clean Air Update



On Wednesday, December 1, 2010, the Alabama Clean Fuels Coalition (ACFC), an Alabama Partners for Clean Air partner, hosted lawmakers and energy sector representatives at the Plug-In Alabama kickoff event at the Marriot Legends conference center in Prattville. The event, geared towards introducing stakeholders to the electric vehicle market, featured the Nissan Leaf, Chevrolet Volt, and the Tesla vehicles. Attendees discussed the infrastructure needs to be addressed in order to prepare the State of Alabama for the electric vehicle market. Proposals included the creation of tax incentives for manufacturers, suppliers, and consumers. It is estimated that more than one million electric vehicles will be on roads in the US by 2015, and Nissan has announced that Alabama will be one of the first 11 states where its Leaf, a zero emission vehicle, will be released. *Those interested in getting involved in the Plug-In Alabama campaign or looking for more information should contact Yvonne Murray at YMurray@rpcgb.org.*

Community Updates

City of Leeds Master Plan

The RPCGB continues to move forward on the development of the City of Leeds Master Plan. The RPCGB will meet with the Leeds Master Plan advisory committee in December. This meeting will focus on the redevelopment of Downtown Leeds and future development throughout the City. The RPCGB and the City of Leeds looks forward to hosting another public involvement meeting on the Master Plan in January or February 2011. 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.*

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*

RPCGB Hosts Work Session on Abandoned Properties

The RPCGB held the first of several work sessions discussing vacant, abandoned and tax delinquent properties in the region. The meeting included local elected officials, city attorneys and legal experts to determine best practices in the process to clearing title and redeveloping neighborhoods. The next work sessions will aim to determine best practices for physical redevelopment with a focus on housing and green space. *For additional information please contact Philip Amthor, Planner with the RPCGB at pamthor@rpcgb.org*

Trees and Development Workshop

The RPCGB will host the Trees and Development workshop scheduled in Birmingham, Alabama on January 11, 2011, in a cooperative effort with Auburn University's Cooperative Extension System and CAWACO RC+D. This multi-agency supported workshop responds to a growing need to preserve trees during development and construction. Trees and development are often at odds resulting in contention between city officials, design and construction professionals, planners, arborists, and property owners. Experience from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System suggests lack of knowledge in the design and construction industry, as well as the general public on the techniques important to successful tree preservation. **Five AICP CMs are pending approval for the workshop.**

This workshop will feature Alabama experts as well as **James Urban, a leading landscape architect** and tree preservation specialist from Annapolis, Maryland. The goals of this one day workshop are to:

- Educate the audience on the importance of green infrastructure in Alabama cities
- Provide techniques for preserving trees during development
- Present case studies on successful local and regional projects.
- Facilitate networking opportunities for a multidisciplinary audience

Workshop Details

The Trees and Development Workshop will be at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens on January 11, 2011. For more information about the workshop and speakers, please refer to the agenda at: http://www.rpcgb.org/documents/Trees_Workshop_Agenda+Registration.pdf

Workshop Location: Birmingham, Botanical Gardens, 2612 Lane Park Road Birmingham, Alabama 35223

Workshop Date and Time Tuesday, January 11, 2011 8:30am - 4:30pm

Register Online at: <https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/conference/ucftrees2011/registrationForm.php>

Community Development Block Grant Awards

FY2010 CDBG Awards:

Blountsville, Blount County - Small Cities Fund - sewer project

Vincent, Shelby County - Small Cities Fund - roads project - \$400,000

Pell City, St. Clair County - Large Cities Fund - sewer project - \$500,000
Oneonta, Blount County - Large Cities Fund - sewer project - \$500,000
Blountsville, Blount County - Community Enhancement Fund - fire station project - \$250,000
Thorsby, Chilton County - Community Enhancement Fund - streets project - \$250,000
Snead, Blount County - Community Enhancement Fund - sewer project - \$250,000
Hayden, Blount County - Planning Fund - comprehensive plan - \$32,000

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

Redistricting Opportunities Coming

In April 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau will release the Public Law 94-171 data for state reapportionment and local government redistricting. States and local governments use this data, provided at the block level, to evaluate and update voting district boundaries in order to comply with the one-person, one-vote mandate as well as other requirements of the Voting Rights Act. In Alabama, the next elections for most jurisdictions will be in October of 2012, leaving only a small window of time (approximately one year) for jurisdictions to update, adopt, and receive approval for new voting plans to be in place before the next elections. *In order to have your plans ready in time for the 2012 elections, please contact Brett Isom at bisom@rpcgb.org or call 205.264.8433.*

Good Design Works Wonders

If your community has some less-than-stellar examples of multifamily housing, consider the following images. The before picture was built many years ago with very little consideration to designing for the ages. The after picture certainly represents a considerable improvement in layout and design and is an asset to the Woodlawn neighborhood. This transformation is the result of the passion of the Birmingham YWCA and the design expertise of Cohen Carnaggio Reynolds. The YWCA assembled funding from the City of Birmingham and multiple private and institutional contributors to achieve this remarkable makeover. Roman Gary, AIA, of Cohen Carnaggio Reynolds, did an exemplary redesign that is transformational for the neighborhood. Good design is important. See for yourself. The units are located at 59th Street South and 1st Avenue South in Woodlawn.



Before



After



Before



After

SmartCode Corner

Does the SmartCode recognize the importance of retail development? Yes, there is a module for that! In fact, there are two modules, the Retail Markets module by Gibbs Planning Group and the Sustainable Commerce module by Seth Harry & Associates. Bob Gibbs reframes familiar, conventional types for neighborhood context, using the language of the big box retailer and mall developer. In the other module, Seth Harry focuses on the fine grain of a walkable neighborhood, its varying intensities, and its thoroughfare types. Both modules may be easily incorporated within the SmartCode. The modules are useful to frame the specific needs of retail development within the SmartCode. It is just another example of the adaptability of the SmartCode.

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. 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

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Find out more at www.rpcgb.org

