

CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

January 2011

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPCGB Finance Committee Meeting](#)

January 5, 2011
RPCGB Office
9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPCGB Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

January 12, 2011
RPCGB Office
9:00 am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)

Canceled

[RPCGB Board of Directors Meeting](#)

Canceled

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

January 19, 2011
RPCGB Office
Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

January 25, 2011

Letter from the Executive Director

I am extremely excited about two things right now. First, I am happy to have celebrated my 4th Anniversary with the RPCGB on December 11th. Second, I am elated to continue to have the honor of working with our dedicated and talented staff, our elected officials, our partnering organizations and local residents. Time truly does fly when you are having fun. So far, the experience here has greatly exceeded all of my expectations.



In my very first letter to you back in 2006, I shared that the Chinese definition for "crisis" is danger/opportunity. At the time, I was referring to the financial and leadership challenges the RPCGB had recently overcome. Today the definition can be applied to our region, state and nation. It is my hope that the challenges of 2010 will usher in a renewed appreciation in our region for the value of preparing for the future, or "rebooting" as one economic commentator recently suggested. The RPCGB can help.

In 2011, the RPCGB will continue to work with local governments to expand the reach of programs like Building Communities, CommuteSmart, Alabama Partners for Clean Air and Freight Planning initiatives. We will continue to push for the development of a comprehensive transportation system that includes truly regional transit, fewer congested roads, more sidewalks and bicycles paths, in short, more transportation choices for everyone. We will also continue to help bolster existing businesses and jobs and create new ones.

This year represents more opportunities to push our region to reach its full economic, cultural and recreational potential, and the RPCGB will continue to do its part to help make this happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles Ball". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

2011 RPCGB Annual Conference

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

[RPCGB Annual Meeting](#)

January 26, 2011

The Club

[Register online](#)

[Metropolitan Planning
Organization Subcommittee
Meeting](#)

January 27, 2011

RPCGB Office

1:30pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

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

Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

2011 Annual Conference

January 26, 2010

The Club, Ballroom

1 Robert Smith Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209

8:30am - 9:00am Registration / Continental Breakfast

9:00am - 10:00am Concurrent Sessions A

Planning for the Redevelopment of Greyfields, Brownfields and Tax Delinquent Properties (Stateroom)

This session examines turning problem properties into opportunities. Often municipalities do not understand the full extent of their under-utilized properties. Presenters will identify the scale of these properties, give a brief overview and provide strategies for redevelopment of the region's greyfields, brownfields and tax-delinquent properties. An example of a local, neighborhood-scale redevelopment plan will be discussed.

Moderator: Mr. Philip Amthor, Planner, RPCGB

Connecting Alabama through the Broadband Initiative (Ballroom)

There is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to meet community needs for broadband access and use. This session will provide an overview of this multi-year initiative promoting the availability and adoption of broadband internet access throughout the state of Alabama.

Moderator: Ms. Jessica Dent, Executive Director, Connecting Alabama

10:00am - 10:15am Break

10:15am- 11:15am Concurrent Sessions B

Outdoor Adventure Tourism as Unconventional Economic Development (Stateroom)

Identifying assets, mechanisms and partnerships to protect and utilize natural & cultural resources.

Moderator: Ms. Francesca Gross, Five Mile Creek Greenway

High-Speed Passenger Rail Service: Atlanta to Birmingham (Ballroom)

A representative from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) will present information on the conceptual engineering analysis being conducted under agreement between the

RPCGB and the GDOT for the feasibility of high-speed passenger rail service between Atlanta and Birmingham.
Moderator: Mr. William R. Foisy, Director of Planning, RPCGB

11:30am - 1:00pm RPCGB Annual Luncheon (Ballroom)

Election of 2011-2012 RPCGB Officers and Board of Directors
Keynote Address: Mr. Pete Conroy, Director, Jacksonville State University's Environmental Policy and Information Center (EPIC)

Pete Conroy is the Director of Jacksonville State University's Environmental Policy and Information Center (EPIC). Trained as a biologist, Mr. Conroy moved to Alabama in 1985 to work as the curator of the Anniston Museum of Natural History. Since then, he has received appointments from Alabama Governors Bob Riley (R), Don Siegelman (D), Fob James (R), Jim Folsom (D) and Guy Hunt (R). These appointments range from his 2002 selection by Governor Siegelman to Chair the Alabama Commission on Environmental Initiatives and Alabama Geographic Information Council to his 2009 selection by Governor Bob Riley to serve as Chair of the Region 4 Arts, Culture and Tourism Committee of the Alabama Rural Action Commission. Retained by President George Bush, Pete received White House appointments by President Bill Clinton in early 1999 to serve as Alternate U.S. Federal Commissioner of the Tri-State (ACT/ACF) Water Compacts. He was also selected by the Office of the Secretary of the Army to serve on an Operational Assessment Team to review safety measures relating to the destruction of chemical warfare materials in Alabama. Additionally and through his appointments, Pete leads a number of projects related to conservation and economic development. Examples include the establishment and operation of the Little River Canyon Center, reuse of the former Fort McClellan, the Chief Ladiga Rail-Trail, and several Alabama-based initiatives promoting smart growth, environmental education, the arts, conservation, ecotourism, water policy and, as of May 2010, the Gulf oil spill disaster.

Registration and training session information available on the [RPCGB website](#).

U.S. 11 Southwest Corridor Transit Study Update



During the month of December 2010, the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham began conducting stakeholder interviews with elected officials, businesses, property owners, community and civic leaders, and key community leaders in the US 11/Bessemer Super Highway

transportation corridor as part of the next step in the region's long range planning for public transportation. These stakeholder interviews are continuing through January 2011, and will conclude at the end of the month. The study, entitled the Southwest Corridor Transit Study, is a transit alternatives analysis being conducted by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham in cooperation with the Birmingham Jefferson County Transit Authority. The study will develop a plan to improve public transit services in the Bessemer Super Highway corridor between downtown Birmingham into the McCalla area of unincorporated Jefferson County. An alternatives analysis process will be used to evaluate and recommend different types of transit services and alignment. The alternatives analysis process will compare the different transit service types and route alignments against a set of desired outcomes in order to identify those service types and alignments that best address identified travel and community development needs, as well as accomplish desired outcomes. In addition to identifying potential improvements to the corridor's public transit services, the study will look at ways to encourage "smarter" planning. A strong focus is being placed on both green technologies and economic strategies that can help energize and spur development in the corridor. Ultimately, the recommended service will provide a benefit to the residents, businesses, and students located in the corridor. The study corridor is approximately 2-3 miles wide, and has I-20/59 as the northern boundary, and the ridgeline of Red Mountain as the southern boundary. The study corridor is approximately 20 miles long.

The project's steering committee, along with the project's technical advisory work committees, will have an initial meeting on January 27, 2011 at 11 am in the 1st Floor Conference Room of the RPC. The purpose of the meeting will be to provide members with an orientation to the project, and to provide each committee with their charge. Additionally, technical advisory work committees will meet the project team's subject matter experts to provide input/guidance for specific work products and tasks. The project's first series of public meetings is tentatively set to occur during the second week of February 2011. Locations and times will be announced as logistical efforts are confirmed.

Please contact Darrell L. Howard, the Southwest Corridor Transit Study's project manager, at dhoward@rpcgb.org for additional information.

Birmingham Passes Air Emissions Test for Particulate Matter

The Environmental Protection Agency Region 4, the Alabama Division of the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration Region 4, have notified the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) that the area's transportation plans meet the transportation emissions requirements under the Clean Air Act and Federal Transportation planning provisions.

Jefferson and Shelby Counties, as well as a small portion of Walker County, are classified as a nonattainment area with respect to the 24-hour particulate PM_{2.5} standard. Transportation emissions reflecting the current 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program must be less or equal to the current level of emissions from motor vehicles. *For further details can be obtained on the [MPO website](#).*

Employee Profile -- Ozge Cavusoglu, Transportation Intern, RPCGB



Each month, we look at the profile of an RPCGB employee. This month's profile is Ozge Cavusoglu, RPCGB Transportation Intern.

Hometown: Konya, Turkey

Education: I have a bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning, master's degrees in Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering and currently pursuing a PhD in Traffic Engineering at UAB.

How long have you been with the RPCGB?: Two months

Give a short overview of your job: I'm working on creating a transportation geodatabase of the Birmingham area by using

ArcGIS software.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?: Gaining experience.

Tell us one thing we don't know about you: I'm a movie-maniac. Once in a month, I write Turkish-movie critics on a website.

Finish this sentence: "Ten years from now, I hope to be..." managing my own transportation consulting firm.

CommuteSmart Highlight

CommuteSmart welcomes the following businesses as new partners.



If your company is interested in partnering and taking advantages of the benefits of a cleaner commute, please visit the [CommuteSmart website](#) for more details.

Alabama Partners for Clean Air Update

2010 APCA Media Recap

Alabama Partners for Clean Air recently concluded a successful year of promotion through its many media partners in Jefferson and Shelby Counties. 2010 saw an air quality campaign on al.com that delivered over 1.3 million ads to viewers from June through September. Viewers were notified of air quality alert days with special ads placed on the al.com homepage.

A television and radio campaign focused on multiple stations throughout the year. The campaign ran Monday through Friday and had a broad message of the importance of better air quality.

Transportation Planning Updates

Fiscal Year 2012-2015 Transportation Improvement Program - Call for Projects

The development of the next Transportation Improvement Program is underway. Instructions for submitting projects will be emailed to all committee members and member governments on Monday, January 10th. The deadline for submitting project funding requests is February 28th. A workshop will be held during the Transportation Technical Committee meeting on Tuesday, January 25th at 10:00am in the first floor conference room at the Regional Planning Commission.

I-65/US 31 Mobility Matters - Alternatives Analysis

The I-65/US 31 Mobility Matters project is making progress. The results of the highway analysis indicate that a High Occupancy Vehicle lane is the best alternative for the corridor which spans from downtown to the Valleydale Road interchange. The analysis examined nearly 60 different performance criteria for mobility, cost effectiveness, and environmental impacts. The next phase of the project includes an environmental assessment of the HOV alternative as well as additional analysis for the bus rapid transit services recommended for the corridor.



Bike Sharing Webinar

Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals Professional Development Webinar Series

Bike Sharing Programs

Wednesday, January 19- 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Register here, it's FREE if viewed at the RPCGB: http://www.apbp.org/event/jan-11_webinar

Join the RPCGB and the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) on Wednesday, January 19 for a 90-minute webinar on bicycle sharing programs. The event is free to those who register and view at the RPCGB offices. Bike sharing is a cost-effective approach to solving what is commonly known as the "last mile" problem of public transportation. Relative to public infrastructure, transit or other transportation demand management (TDM) tools, bike sharing can provide higher mode shifts, emissions reductions and financial returns. For these reasons, more cities are considering bike sharing as a low-cost way to help achieve environmental, public health

and TDM-related goals while improving the city's marketability.

This webinar will include an overview of bike sharing in the U.S. and other countries, with case studies from Minneapolis and San Antonio and a detailed discussion of the implementation process (building support, funding models, RFPs, contracting, launch, and operations). Attendees will learn to identify the planning and implementation steps necessary to launch a bike share system; the different financial models and methodologies used to pay for bike sharing; and the implications of an exponential increase in bicycle traffic for public infrastructure. APBP has applied to the AICP for one Certification Maintenance credit for this webinar. A certificate of attendance for those who document professional development hours will be available.

Community Updates

City of Leeds Master Plan

The RPCGB and the Leeds Master Plan advisory committee conducted a successful visioning session for the Leeds Master Plan on December 16th. This brainstorming session discussed the elements of a great city and led to a mapping exercise by the advisory committee. The RPCGB and the City of Leeds looks forward to hosting another public involvement meeting on the Master Plan in 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*



RPCGB Planner Richard Amore meets with Leeds community leaders

City of Graysville Master Plan Update

The RPCGB is updating the City of Graysville's 2005 Comprehensive Policy Plan. The City is participating in the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program and seeks to update their master plan in accordance with the program. The RPCGB is currently evolving the Master Plan to include all the elements required for the ACE program. *For additional information please contact Richard Amore, Senior Planner with the RPCGB at ramore@rpcgb.org*

Trees and Development Workshop

The RPCGB is pleased to announce the Trees and Development workshop scheduled for January 11, 2011 at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. This educational workshop is a cooperative effort

between Auburn University's Cooperative Extension System, CAWACO RC+D and the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. 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 are important to successful tree preservation.

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

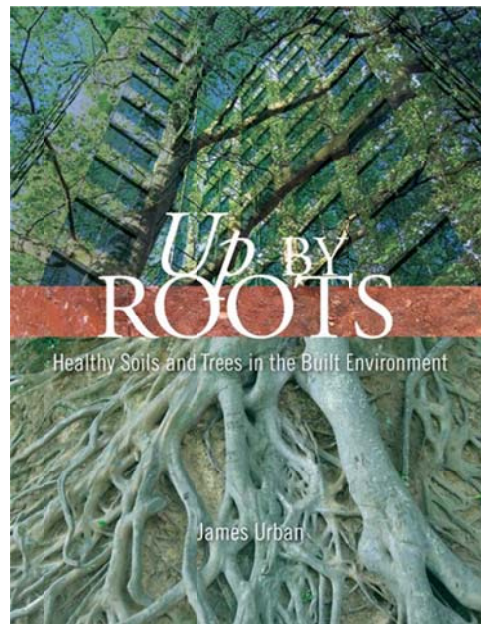
For more information about the workshop and speakers, please refer to the agenda at:

http://www.rpcgb.org/documents/Trees_Workshop_Agenda+Registration.pdf

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

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

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



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

United States Census 2010

The first round of 2010 Census data was released on December 21, 2010 with the resident population totals of the nation and states. As of April 1, 2010 the population total for the United States is 308,745,538 and the State of Alabama is 4,779,738, an increase of 7.5% from 2000. Click to view the Census Bureau's [interactive map widget](#) that enables users to view the history of population change and apportionment through the past century.

While this initial data release is limited to national and state population totals, additional data will be released between now and the next several years. Below is the release schedule for selected data products along with a brief description of the product.

Planned Release Date	Data Product	Lowest level of Geography
September	2009 ACS (1 year)	Geographies with pop. greater than 65,000
December	2005-2009 ACS (5 Year)	Geographies with pop. greater than 65,000
December	2010 Population estimates	States (1 st 2010 Census data release)
Feb - March 2011	2010 PL 94-171	Blocks
May 2011	2010 Demographic profiles	Places and Functioning Minor Civil Divisions
June - Aug 2011	Summary File 1	Blocks
Dec 2011 - Apr 2012	Summary File 2	Census Tracts
October 2012	Urban/Rural update	Blocks
July - Aug 2013	Refined CBSA updates	Principal cities
April 2013 - Sep 2013	2010 Pop & Housing Unit Reports	Places

Redistricting Opportunities Coming Quickly

In April of 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@rpcqb.org or call 205.264.8433. First come, first served.*

SmartCode Corner

Existing zoning codes sometimes precluded development opportunities. One of the biggest advantages to a SmartCode community is its flexibility. The next biggest advantage is that the SmartCode reflects the emerging trends accepted by the modern development community. The *Emerging Trends in Real Estate® 2011* report, released by PwC US (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP) and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) identifies several trends for astute investors. The advice encourages an emphasis on infill over fringe - the 'move back in' trend gains force as twenty-something Echo Boomers want to experience more vibrant urban areas and aging Baby Boomer parents look for greater convenience in down-scaled lifestyles.

John Hempelmann, Vice Chairman of ULI's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Council, has offered that one of the definite real estate plays in the next 15-20 years is high capacity transit oriented development, Hempelmann says. "Right now, the best sector for real estate nationally as well as in Seattle, is infill multifamily, especially around transit stations," He continues, "Any kind of high capacity transit will lead to development and redevelopment of walk-about neighborhoods, where people don't need their cars

So how are you suited for emerging plays in the next 15 to 20 years? The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham has been steadily working to plan for transit development. Projects are underway for the US-280 and US -11 corridors, and work is wrapping up on the I-65 corridor. RPCGB is doing its part to position the region for the real estate play of the next several decades. RPCGB can also help your community with a SmartCode necessary to support TOD.

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

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

