



CONNECTIONS

A newsletter from the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

February 2011

In This Issue

2011 RPCGB Annual Conference
U.S. 11 Southwest Corridor Transit
Study Update
Birmingham Passes Air Emissions Test
for Particulate Matter
CommuteSmart Highlight
Transportation Planning Updates
Call for Projects Announcement
Community Updates
SmartCode Corner

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[RPCGB Program Budget Committee Meeting](#)

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

[Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting](#)

February 9, 2011
RPCGB Office
1:30 pm, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[RPCGB Board of Directors Meeting](#) February 16, 2011

RPCGB Office
10:30 am, 1st Floor Conf. Rm.

[Transportation Citizens Committee Meeting](#)

February 16, 2011
RPCGB Office
Noon, 1st Floor Conf. Room

[Transportation Technical Committee Meeting](#)

February 23, 2011
RPCGB Office
10:00am, 1st Floor Conf. Room

Letter from the Executive Director

On January 26th, the RPCGB successfully hosted its **Annual Conference**. Our morning training sessions and luncheon were well-attended. We were particularly pleased with the number of new elected officials in attendance from across the region. This year's conference focused on non-traditional economic development strategies for communities.



Our keynote speaker was Mr. **Pete Conroy** of Jacksonville State University. Mr. Conroy gave a spirited presentation on economic development through tourism, Alabama's second-largest industry. He shared stories about his experiences developing high-profile projects such as the Little River Canyon Center, the Chief Ladiga Trail, the Pinhoti Trail, and the Fort McClellan Redevelopment project. Conroy also discussed the enormous economic impact of outdoor activities such as birding, hunting and fishing. He encouraged attendees to look in their own backyards to identify natural, cultural and historical amenities that can give their communities a competitive edge.

Conference attendees were also treated to breakout sessions on the **Alabama Broadband Initiative**, the **Birmingham-to-Atlanta High-Speed Rail** study, **redevelopment strategies for abandoned properties** around our region, and progress on the visionary **Five Mile Creek Greenway** project.

Lastly, our Director of Planning, Bill Foisy announced his retirement after 37 years of extraordinary service to our organization, the region and the state. Bill and his wife Sue, are leaving our region and setting up residence in Red Lodge, Montana. Bill began his career as a Planner with the old BRPC in 1973. During those early years, some of his high-profile projects included a Comprehensive Plan for Bessemer and the Elton B. Stevens Expressway. More recently, Bill has been instrumental in developing the In-Town Transit Partnership plan, the I-65 HOV Study, and the U.S.280 and U.S. 11 Transit Corridor Studies.

Bill has worked with hundreds of elected officials and five RPCGB Executive Directors. Twice, Bill served as Acting

[MPO Subcommittee Meeting](#)

February 24, 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](#).

Executive Director. He has worked under the legislation of eight U.S. presidents, from President Nixon's Clean Air Act to President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Bill earned the reputation as one of, if not the preeminent authority in Alabama on all things transportation-related. Typically, if he could not find a way to get a project done, the project was not doable.

Bill is well-respected by anyone that has had the pleasure of meeting him or working with him. We will miss Bill's intellect and sense of humor. We'll miss his hard work and attention to detail. We will miss our countless brainstorming sessions with him, and his rational, yet unconventional approach to solving just about any problem. We wish Bill and Sue much enjoyment on the ranch!



2011 RPCGB Annual Conference

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham hosted the **2011 Annual Conference** on January 26th at The Club on top of Red Mountain. The half day event included several sessions highlighting everything from redevelopment of brownfields to high-speed passenger rail. Over 100 attendees took part in the sessions and heard keynote speaker, Pete Conroy of Jacksonville State University's Environmental Policy and Information Center (EPIC), discuss the great natural highlights of the state of Alabama.

The Annual Conference also marked the end of an era at the RPCGB. Director of Planning, Bill Foisy, was recognized for his 37 years of service as he retires at the end of February. During his tenure, Foisy worked on numerous community and transportation projects. Steve Ostaseski and Charles Ball of the RPCGB, as well as Mayor Doug Brewer of Graysville recognized Foisy during the Annual Conference luncheon. Foisy will be retiring to Red Lodge, Montana with his wife, Sue.

The Annual Conference also hosted the unveiling of the new RPCGB website. The new site provides users with a clean, dynamic experience. Member governments and the general public can easily navigate the new site to find any information needed on current projects, loan funds and public initiatives. Check out www.rpcgb.org to see the new design and to find the presentations from all four sessions at the Annual Conference.



RPCGB Annual Meeting

Did you miss the 2011 Annual Meeting? Want to download a presentation you attended? Check out our 2011 Annual Meeting archive for downloadable files and video presentations.

[Read more >](#)

What is the RPCGB?

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) provides planning services,

Featured Video



Featured Event

March 1, 2011
Trees and Development Workshop

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE



Attendees identify where they live in the region



Bill Foisy, right, chats with a conference attendee



Conference attendees listen to a presentation

Keynote speaker Pete Conroy of JSU's EPIC center



Bill Foisy, center, makes his farewell speech

RPCGB Exec. Dir. Charles Ball being interviewed

U.S. 11 Southwest Corridor Transit Study



The RPCGB, along with its consultant team led by PBS&J, is formally kicking off the Southwest Corridor Transit Study during the month of February. The study will examine premium transit alternatives along a 22-mile long corridor that extends from downtown Birmingham to the Jefferson/Bibb County line. The corridor study boundaries are

generally defined as I-20/I-59 and Red Mountain with U.S. 11/Bessemer Super Highway corridor at its center. While the study is focused on identifying the most practical transit service and alignment, it is also charged with exploring ways to leverage the corridor's land use and economic development potential - through transit investment and through other coordinated strategies. The study will devote significant effort in order to assess opportunities for reshaping communities and identifying retail, industrial, and residential reinvestment strategies.

The study will consider a range of transit technologies from express bus and bus rapid transit (BRT) services through rail-based transit options. A number of potential alignments for improved transit services also will be evaluated. This will include a critical look at all of the existing and abandoned transportation facilities running through the length of the corridor. The varied character of the study area - from the downtown urban area, older industrial districts, mature residential communities, established suburbs, historic districts such as the Bessemer downtown, and the developing suburban fringe to include the emerging transportation and warehousing district near McCalla - present a diverse palette of urban development to be potentially served by quality transit options.

The study process will rely on a well-rounded program of community engagement with corridor interests. A number of extensive interviews with community leaders and stakeholders have already occurred, and proactive outreach methods and channels are being employed. A steering committee and technical working groups have also been convened to interact with the study team. Finally, a robust program of community forums are planned to be held at five locations. The first community forums will be held between Tuesday-Thursday, February 22-24. The forums will provide the public an opportunity to begin giving input to the process..

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

HARPO Meetings

Mark Your Calendars

Heart of Alabama Rural Planning Organization (HARPO)
Public Involvement Meeting for Transportation Planning
Blount, Chilton, and St. Clair Counties

PURPOSE

To examine opportunities and review priorities for the HARPO counties in 2011 based on discussion from 2010 meetings.

DATE/TIME/PLACE

St. Clair County: February 10, 2011, 10:00 a.m., St. Clair Economic Development Council, 500 College Circle, Pell City, AL (Jeff State Campus)

Blount County: Tuesday, February 15, 2011, 10:00 a.m., Frank Green Building, 415 5th Ave. E., Oneonta, AL

Chilton County: February 24, 2011, 10:00 a.m., Clanton City Hall, 502 2nd Avenue N., Clanton, AL. Enter on 6th Street

SPONSORED BY:

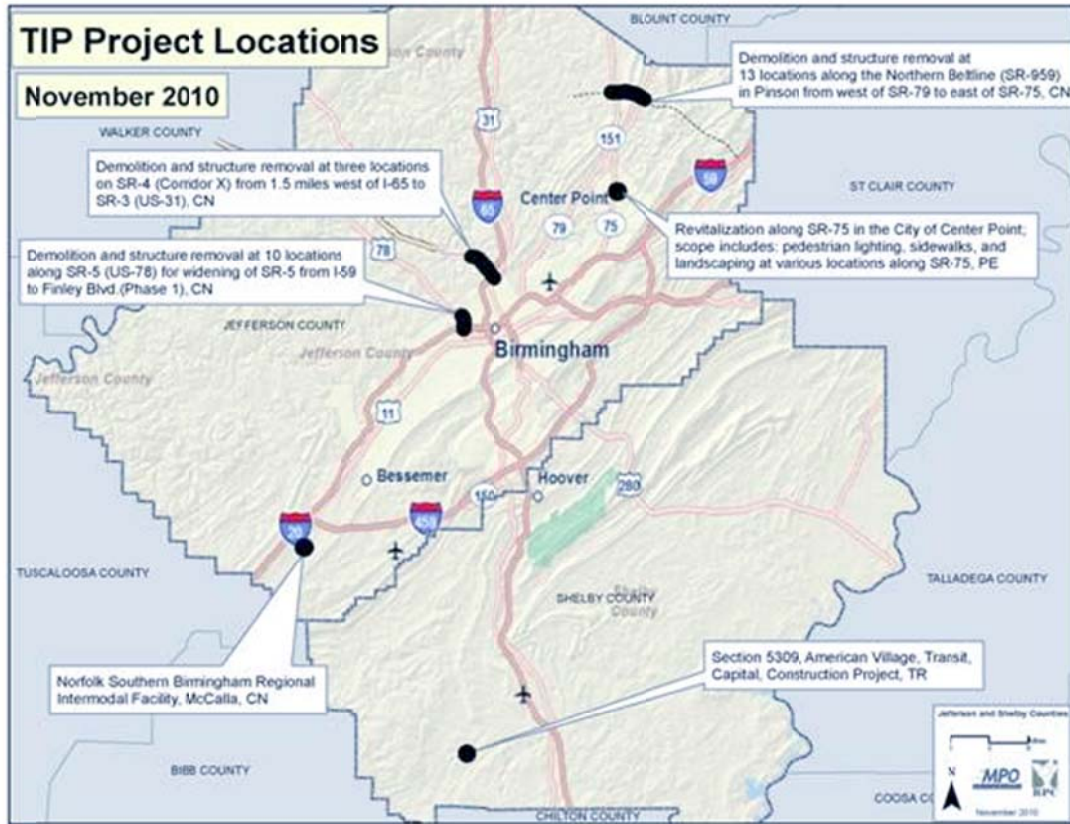
The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) on behalf of the Heart of Alabama Rural Planning Organization (HARPO)

CommuteSmart Highlight

CommuteSmart is now offering its commuters a choice in the gift cards that they receive. Commuters can go in at the beginning of each quarter and choose between seven different \$25.00 gift cards. The choices include Texaco, The Summit, CVS, Publix, Cahaba Cycles, MAX and Express Oil Change.

If you are interested in participating and taking advantages of the benefits of a cleaner commute, please visit the [CommuteSmart website](#) for more details.

TIP Amendments for the end of 2010 and start of 2011



For questions or comments concerning the grant application, contact the Alabama Department of Senior Services, Transportation Dept., 770 Washington Avenue, RSA Plaza Suite 570, Montgomery, AL 36130, (334) 353-8548 or Sharon.Coats@adss.alabama.gov.

The grant application can be accessed at: www.unitedweridealabama.com/info.cfm

Community Updates

City of Leeds Master Plan

The RPCGB is moving forward with the City of Leeds Master Plan. The RPCGB is meeting with the Leeds Area Chamber of Commerce at their monthly luncheon on February 17th to discuss the master plan and collect input into the Greenways and Parks component of the Master Plan. 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 RPCGB is near completion of the City of Graysville Master Plan update. The RPCGB will be meeting with the Graysville Planning Commission and City Council on February 15th to present the update to the 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 Alabama Communities of Excellence program. The RPCGB has evolved 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*

Titusville North Neighborhood Plan

The RPCGB is excited to announce that it is working with the Titusville North Neighborhood on a Neighborhood Plan. The RPCGB is working with the Titusville North Neighborhood Association, the City of Birmingham and Auburn University Urban Studio in developing the Neighborhood Plan for Titusville North. The first kick-off meeting will be on Saturday, February 19th at the Titusville North Neighborhood Association monthly meeting. The meeting will occur at the Titusville Library at 11am. The Titusville North Neighborhood Association has requested assistance from the RPCGB through the Building Communities 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 March 1, 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 cities 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. This educational workshop has been approved for AIA, AICP, ISA, and ASLA continuing education credit.

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:

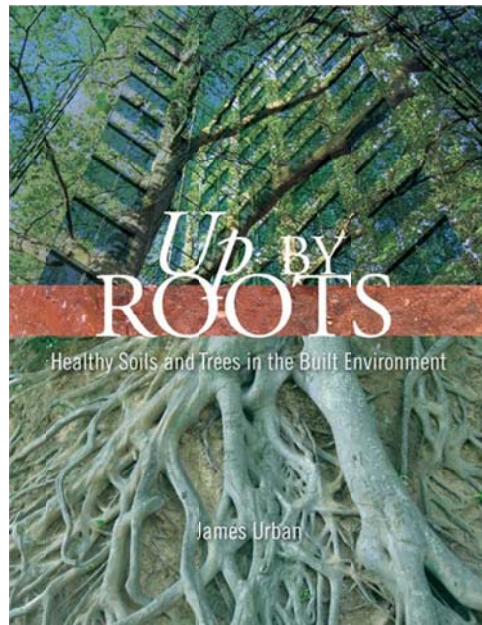
- Educate the audience on the importance of green infrastructure in Alabama cities
- Provide techniques for preserving trees during development
- Present case studies on successful local and regional projects.
- Facilitate networking opportunities for a multidisciplinary audience

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, March 1, 2011 8:30am - 4:30pm

Register Online: <http://www.rpcgb.org/about-the-rpcgb/calendar/#c58>



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

SmartCode Corner

SmartCode is one of many tools in developing a sustainable community. SmartCode permits the development of sustainable places. There is a strong demand for walkable places as seen by their stronger economic performance. There is empirical evidence to support the economic benefit of walkable places. Improving neighborhood "walkability" enhances property values. WalkScore.com rates locations according to a walkability index from 1 to 100. One study found that, in general, every one-point increase in a home's Walk Score raised its value by \$700 to \$3,000.

Walkable communities also make sense for the consumer. Creating a range of housing opportunities in proximity to jobs saves households money. In the Washington DC region, households living in the jobs-rich core spent about 30% of their income on housing and transportation, while those in the car-dependent outer suburbs spent over 40% of their income on housing and transportation. In this region, the combined housing and transportation costs are 45% of household income. Considering that percentage, there might be a reason to look at alternates to conventional wisdom.

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

