



Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments

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Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments And Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

September 22, 2021

RiverCOG Members;

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Karl Kilduff *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore (until 10:00) *
Deep River: Angus McDonald *
Durham: Laura Francis *
East Haddam: Robert Smith *
East Hampton: David Cox *
Essex: Norm Needleman
Haddam: Bob McGarry *
Killingworth: Cathy Iino *
Lyme: Steve Mattson *
Middlefield: Ed Bailey
Middletown: Ben Florsheim
Old Lyme: Tim Griswold *
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna
Portland: Susan Bransfield *
Westbrook: Noel Bishop (until 9:45) *

MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs *
Estuary & Middletown Area Transit Districts: Joe Comerford *

*present

Others Present:

Brianna DeVivo, Senator Murphy's Office
Julia McGrath, Congressman Courtney's Office
Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator
Laurie McElwee, Mobility Manager, Kennedy Center
Cynthia Clegg, Middlesex Community Foundation
Grayson Wright, CT DOT
Jeff Pugliese, Middlesex Chamber of Commerce
Francisco Gomes, FHI Studio
Frank DeFelice, Regional Planning Committee

Staff Present:

Sam Gold
Torrance Downes
Eliza LoPresti

RiverCOG

Robert Haramut
Kevin Armstrong
Megan Jouflas

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Introductions

Chairman Salvatore called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

Ms. Gister moved to add agenda item 4a – Resolution Expanding Transit Service in the Lower Connecticut River Valley Region, pushing all agenda items under #4 down. Second by Mr. Smith. Vote was unanimous in favor.

2. Public Speaking

Jake Manke, DEMHS Region 2 Coordinator, reported that we are in day 569 of activation on the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a slight uptick in Delta-variant COVID cases. State supported testing sites may be addressed shortly. DEMHS has committed to helping the regions with long-term recovery. The COGs will be the lead agencies for economic development in their boundaries, the steering committees have become a communication and advisory pool to help the COGs.

Some parts of Middlesex County may be eligible for disaster declaration due to hurricane Ida. If the declaration is accepted by the President, reimbursement to local municipalities that need it may occur through FEMA.

Ms. Bransfield asked Mr. Manke about the process of submitting project proposals to DEMHS Region 3, which Portland is a part of. Mr. Gold noted that RiverCOG will be holding an upcoming meeting to discuss. Ms. Bransfield is not able to attend that meeting; she proposed a regional initiative homeless shelter diversion. Portland is starting that project now, but it is only funded for 18 months.

Julia McGrath of Rep. Courtney’s office gave a legislative update from his office. She is available to towns that would like to talk about or need help with ARPA funding implementation.

Brianna DeVivo of Sen. Murphy’s office discussed the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) designation. There is a public hearing led by DEEP to get input from towns.

Laurie McElwee, South-Central Regional Mobility Manager is putting together a steering committee to meet quarterly and talk about transportation issues and keeping seniors, veterans and those with disabilities connected.

3. LCRVMPO Business

a. Approval of Minutes of July 28, 2021 LCRVCOG & LCRVMPO Meetings

Mr. Bishop moved to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2021 meeting; second by Mr. McGarry. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Review and Prioritize FTA Section 5310 Applications

The Section 5310 through FTA provide funding to improve mobility for seniors or people with disabilities. Applicants are non-profits, state and local governments and transportation agencies. For

this cycle CT DOT is waiving the match and providing 100% funding for traditional applicants based on recovery funds (on hopefully also on non-traditional). The priority rankings were sent out in advance with the agenda and are as follows: Hartford urbanized area traditional applications ranked MARC, Cromwell, East Hampton and New Haven urbanized area non-traditional applications ranked ETD Feeder Service, ETD Taxi Voucher.

Mr. Cox moved to approved the FTA Section 5310 prioritization as described above by Mr. Haramut; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. Other Transportation Updates

- i. Regional Transportation Safety Plan:** V&N Engineers created plans for all the COGs based on their strategic highway safety plan. Mr. Haramut removed the performance measure numbers from RiverCOG’s draft report because that is beyond the scope of a COG and so we are not tied to something that we have no control over. The plan should be updated every five years, language was added that it will continue to be updated as long as we have CT DOT’s financial support. Mr. Haramut will distribute the draft plan to the CEOs and town representatives that were at the meetings for review.
- ii. Bike/Ped Plan:** The second steering committee was held. Existing condition reports were reviewed, data was looked at, and next a few locations will be looked at more in-depth. Once the existing conditions report is finished it will be distributed.

4. LCRVCOG Business

a. Resolution Expanding Transit Service in the Lower Connecticut River Valley Region

The resolution is for support of the ETD and MAT merger and for those two entities to share services.

Ms. Francis moved to authorize the resolution expanding transit service in the Lower Connecticut River Valley Region; second by Mr. McDonald. Vote was unanimous in favor.

b. Adoption of the Draft Regional Plan of Conservation and Development

Ms. Jouflas presented on the plan, which has been recommended by the Regional Planning Committee for COG adoption.

Ms. Francis moved to adopt the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development; second by Ms. Gister. Vote was unanimous in favor.

c. ARPA County Set Aside Request Update

The MCRC can facilitate an ARPA funded municipal program to provide small business grants and loans, as the Community Foundation of Middlesex County can provide a framework for grants to social service-type agencies. The existing structures are already in place within these two entities. Lyme and Old Lyme would be able to be included, even though they are in another “county”, because the money used to give businesses in their town would be their money, not funds that initially belonged to MCRC. There would be an administration cost for both agencies to process applications and make recommendations. Mr. Gold also mentioned coming up with a legal recommendation to delegate authority to BOS or

Councils to make decisions on grants as there shouldn't be a town meeting to decide the recipients.

Chairman Salvatore exited the meeting at this time and Vice Chairman Gister took over running of the meeting.

Mr. Pugliese discussed the MCRC infrastructure in place for the above and is creating a draft plan for review. Ms. Iino asked about the cost for MCRC managing the functions, Mr. Gold reported that this will be figured out shortly.

Mr. Gold discussed the set-aside request draft letter that was sent out. This letter asks for up to 15% of their share of county funds. He also discussed a possible subcommittee to flesh out what a reporting service for the towns to share will look like.

d. **DECD/FEMA Recovery Project List:** <https://bit.ly/ctLTRprojects>

There will be a meeting in two days about this. We will come out of it with a list of potential regional recovery projects to raise to FEMA via the ESF14 Steering Committee of DEMHS.

e. **Appointment of Judy Preston as the Regional Representative (South) to the Gateway Commission**

Mr. Smith moved to appoint Judy Preston as the Regional Representative (South) to the Gateway Commission; second by Mr. Cox. Vote was unanimous in favor.

f. **Update on Regional Housing Plan**

The plan will be created in two parts: First a regional analysis of existing housing then the town-specific 8-30j annexes. There have been a couple of meetings with town liaisons, RiverCOG staff and the consultants. Preliminary data has been received which is being packaged and getting it ready for the public launch of the plan to take place Oct. 12 at 7pm.

Ms. Gister asked about the response to the survey. It varies by town, Killingworth had over 600 responses. The survey is still open, and is meant to be a test of perceptions of housing in the region.

g. **MIRA Update & Trash Discussion**

Both Mr. Bailey and Mr. Fortuna were not present (because there was a MIRA call happening) to discuss. Mr. Gold reported that he reached out to CCM to ask them to help convene a statewide meeting on solid waste and he has not heard back from them.

h. **Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update**

The plan has its final approval from FEMA. Hard copies are being delivered to each town hall.

i. **Lower CT River Land Trust Update**

On September 29 at 7:00 there will be a virtual meeting of the LCRLT and the LTE

j. Hydrilla & Water Chestnut Update

Ms. Burns was not present as she was out on the river dealing with Hydrilla. Written updates were sent out to all prior to the meeting.

k. DEMHS Update

The FY18 Homeland Security grant has expired, it will be replaced with the FY21 Homeland Security grant in October.

l. Compost Bin/Rain Barrel Sale and Repair Café

The compost bin/rain barrel sale is open until Sept. 30 for pickup on Sat., Oct. 2. There will be a repair café in partnership with the Rockfall Foundation and the City of Middletown on Sat. Oct. 16 from 12-3.

5. Chairman & Executive Director's Reports

Deputy Director Downes gave the financial report: FY 22 spending is so far within the parameters of the adopted budget, the council will go over budget for miscellaneous expenses due to donations in honor of losses in the life of a staff member and former staff member (Rick Grant). The STIF account has \$1.2 million, the Liberty account balance is \$180,385.

Vice Chair Gister reminded everyone that the October meeting will be our last meeting with some people that will not be running for re-election in November and urged everyone to attend.

6. Other Business

Mr. Downes will put the legislative update in a memo and have it circulated.

7. Adjournment

Mr. Smith moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:39 AM, second by Ms. Iino. Vote was unanimous in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eliza LoPresti