Bus of the Future Stops in Capitol Region

On April 6th members of the CRCOG staff and Policy Board were able to take a look at a prototype hybrid electric bus on display at CTTRANSIT. The 60-foot, articulated bus manufactured by North American Bus Industries, Inc. was like nothing we have seen on the streets of the Capitol region. This is the type of bus that might be used on the New Britain Busway, to handle high passenger loads. The bus has a low floor, can be built with doors on both the right and the left, and can be manufactured with diesel, natural gas or hybrid electric propulsion. Similar buses (natural gas propulsion) are currently in service in Los Angeles and in other western cities.

US Senator Christopher Dodd Drops in on CRCOG Policy Board Meeting

US Senator Christopher Dodd dropped in at the March 22, 2006 CRCOG Policy Board meeting to discuss homeland security, regional transportation and upcoming federal budget issues. Shown at left, CRCOG Policy Board chair David Kilbon greets Senator Dodd.

Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue (TLAER) May Drill

On May 26th, 27th, and 28th a drill involving large animal rescue techniques will be held at the Simsbury Airport. CRCOG and the Animal Response Teams are holding the drill for the State and Region 3. Participants will learn animal behavior and handling skills as well as technical aspects of large animal rescue, highlighted by a helicopter lift. For further information, please contact Dr. Arnold Goldman at ctsart@ctvet.org.
Climate Change Leadership Awards

On April 18th, the Governors Steering Committee on Climate Change recognized five individuals/organizations with the first ever Climate Change Leadership Awards. Two of the five state awards were given to CRCOG affiliates. The Town of Suffield was recognized for their efforts to preserve farmland and open space and Sandy Fry, CRCOG staff member, was recognized for her role in promoting bicycling to work. Shown in the top photo at left are Suffield representatives Ray Wilcox, Phil Chester, and Scott Lingenfelter with Commissioner Gina McCarthy. Sandy Fry, CRCOG is in the photo at the left. The goals of the award program are to increase awareness of climate change solutions and to recognize those who make a significant impact by engaging a larger group to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The DEP Commissioner, Gina McCarthy, noted that the awardees “exemplary actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Connecticut and promote the goals of the 2005 Climate Change Action Plan have made the state a better place to live.”

Congratulations!

Safe Routes to Schools in the Capitol Region

The Surface Transportation legislation (SAFETEA-LU) passed by Congress last summer provides funding for Safe Routes to Schools programs. The state of CT has hired a Safe Routes coordinator (Sharon Okoye) and has just requested applications for Safe Routes infrastructure improvements. The applications were issued through CRCOG and are due back at CRCOG on May 10. For any communities interested in learning more about how to set up a Safe Routes program, Sandy Fry has a power point presentation that explains the program. Sandy has presented the program in Manchester and Vernon. (Shown in photo: Manchester town staff and school staff examine possible infrastructure projects in the vicinity of Bowers School.)

Web-Based Geographic Information System Option for CRCOG Communities

Over the past few months, CRCOG has been investigating how the agency might establish a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) that would benefit communities that do not currently have GIS capability, and also provide value to communities that have already established GIS systems. CRCOG plans to take the first steps in developing a Web Based GIS initiative in FY 2006-2007. The initial system
would provide basic mapping and analysis functions, and it is anticipated that new features could be added over time. In addition, for communities who are using the CRCOG system as their sole municipal GIS tool, there may be opportunities for cost sharing with municipalities to develop data sets or functionality that is focused on the needs of one or more specific municipalities.

**Land Use Leadership Alliance Training Program**

The Land Use Leadership Alliance Training Program, which CRCOG co-sponsors with the Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) and Connecticut Environmental Review Team, launched its third series of classes on March 31st. Representatives from nine Capitol Region communities are participating in the four, full day sessions. The program, modeled after a successful initiative by the Land Use Law Center of Pace University in New York, is designed to put needed technical, planning and process tools into the hands of local leaders to help create land use patterns that will improve the quality of life, local economies, and the environment in Connecticut’s municipalities. The course teaches participants land use law, conflict resolution, and community decision-making techniques. An assortment of speakers from the legal, environmental sciences, planning, engineering and mediation professions facilitate the interactive course, which is complemented by group exercises. After the course, participants remain in contact through a newsletter that highlights projects or ideas implemented in their communities after the training session. The RC&D intends to continue to foster the program’s development in Connecticut by conducting at least two rounds of training sessions per year in various regions throughout the State.

**Placemaking Web-Based Seminar**

On April 11th, 21 individuals representing 14 towns and agencies gathered in Windsor to attend an American Society of Civil Engineers webinar entitled “Placemaking on a Budget.” The webinar provided examples of how translating the value of community attributes into public works projects—such as streetscape enhancements and wastewater treatment plant improvements—can be very powerful in improving economic vitality, image and community pride. This change in perspective can help make seemingly ordinary public works projects extraordinary public assets, without adding substantially to project budgets. CRCOG paid the single registration fee for the program, and Windsor staff set up the broadcast in their Council chambers, enabling a large number of individuals to participate.
Hartford Neighborhood Supports Albany Avenue Reconstruction

On March 21, nearly 100 people attended a public information meeting on the Albany Avenue reconstruction project. Residents and businesses alike expressed support for this major road reconstruction project that evolved from a CRCOG corridor study. CRCOG also helped organize the meeting that is an important milestone as the project formally transitions from the planning stage to the design stage.

The broad support for the project is the result of a collaborative planning process that involved neighborhood groups, the City of Hartford, CT DOT, MDC, and CRCOG. It is also a good example of the context sensitive approach to design that CT DOT is employing on many of its projects. DOT adjusted project plans to address many of the concerns raised by the community in early meetings.

The project has a strong emphasis on safety improvements, but also achieves a number of other important community goals such as improving drainage, separating the combined sanitary and storm sewers, and making the Avenue more attractive and pedestrian friendly. The safety improvements include reconstructing the street with one travel lane in each direction, adding left-turn lanes at each intersection, modifying the direction of some one-way streets, and realigning offset and unsafe intersections. Pedestrian safety will be improved by adding a traffic signal, eliminating illegal parking on sidewalks, and reducing the length of pedestrian crossings. The project will also include streetscape improvements that will make the Avenue more appealing and walkable. The streetscape improvements include new curbs, new sidewalks, brick pavers between the sidewalks and curbs, ornamental lighting, and street trees.

Steps Towards NIMS Compliance

In March, CRCOG sponsored two National Incident Management System (NIMS) IS-700 classes. This course introduces NIMS and explains its key components and benefits. The classes were funded through CRCOG’s homeland security training project.
Over fifty people from around the region attended and will receive certificates from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for passing the course. More information and training opportunities will be available shortly as jurisdictions are required to meet NIMS implementation requirements as a condition of receiving future federal preparedness funding assistance.

**Media Focus on Strategic National Stockpile Drill**

Part-time CRCOG employee Carmine Centrella, and Steve Huleatt, West Hartford Director of Health, were featured on WVIT 30’s CT Newsmakers on Easter Sunday. Tom Monahan hosted the interview, which focused on the upcoming Strategic National Stockpile drill. Both men addressed Connecticut’s need to put itself through the test of seeing if we can reach thousands of responders if/when a disaster occurs, particularly one of epidemic sorts. The discussion’s topic remained on the need to assist our medical and emergency preparedness professionals.

**Upcoming CRCOG Meetings**

CRCOG Policy Board, Wednesday, April 26, 12:00 Noon
**Capitol Region Partnership Legislative Reception, Room 310 Capitol April 27, 2006 3:00- 5:00 p.m.**
CRCOG Executive Committee, Wednesday, May 10, 12 Noon
CRCOG Community Development Committee, May 11, 12 Noon
Municipal Services Committee, Tuesday, May 16, 12 Noon
Regional Planning Commission, Thursday, May 18, 7:00 p.m.
CRCOG Transportation Committee, Monday, May 22, 12 Noon
Public Safety Council, June 8, 12 Noon.

Capitol Region Council of Governments
241 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06106
860 522 2217
www.crcog.org