Capitol Region Update

April-May 2010
Capitol Region Council of Governments
Serving the 29 Communities of Connecticut’s Capital Region
www.crcog.org

CRCOG Partners with Everybody Wins CT!

Power Lunch, a program of Everybody Wins CT! is a lunchtime reading enrichment program that matches elementary school age students with volunteer mentors. This year, ten CRCOG staff members formed a team at Betances Elementary School on Charter Oak Avenue in Hartford. Every Tuesday, the third grade students read books with their volunteers over lunch. The purposes of the program are: promoting reading for pleasure, sharing favorite stories, talking about books, enhancing students’ self-esteem and encouraging success by providing consistent, weekly attention. Books are provided by Everybody Wins CT! Cheryl Assis and Sandy Fry also serve on the EBW! CT Volunteer Council. The Council provides input and direction to program staff, shares strategies and makes recommendations for future programs.

Farmington Valley Trail Shares Equipment

The towns of Avon, Burlington, Canton, East Granby, Granby, Farmington, Simsbury and Suffield celebrated the new regional effort with a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 29 at Avon Public Works. The eight towns are now sharing equipment to better manage the Farmington Valley Greenway Trail, with a $216,300 regional performance incentive grant administered by OPM and coordinated by CRCOG. Photo: (L-R: Jennifer March-Wackers, CRCOG; Jim Hayden, East Granby; Tom Roy, Simsbury; Scott Zenke, Farmington; Bruce Williams, Avon; James Klase, Granby; Scott Tharau, Burlington) The grant’s aim is to demonstrate how towns can save money and improve services through a shared approach to service delivery. The towns share a
utility maintenance vehicle, mini hydraulic excavator, aerial lift, and utility tractor. All equipment will be housed in Avon which has also set up maintenance and replacement funds that all eight towns contribute to.

**CRCOG Will Hold Workshop on New Sustainable Development Guidelines on May 20, 2010**

CRCOG, in partnership with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association, will hold a workshop on its new Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development on May 20 from 1:00-4:00, at the Lyceum Resource and Conference Center located at 227 Lawrence Street, Hartford. This workshop will feature renowned consultants, Daniel Hernandez and Matthew Lister, who are planning director and planning manager at Jonathan Rose Companies in New York. Jonathan Rose Companies is one of the original authors of the Guidelines in collaboration with CRCOG, the U.S. EPA, and Wallace Roberts and Todd LLC. The workshop will focus on current market conditions for sustainable development in the Capitol Region and will examine how to make decisions about location, design and building within the sustainable development framework. This workshop is being offered as part of the Sustainable Capitol Region Initiative. Onsite registration will begin at 12:30. Light refreshments will be served. For speaker information, and more details about the event, please visit [http://www.crcog.org/community_dev/SustainableCommunitiesEvents.htm](http://www.crcog.org/community_dev/SustainableCommunitiesEvents.htm).

**New Leadership for CRCOG Regional Planning Commission**

On April 15, the CRCOG Regional Planning Commission elected a new Chairman, Sandra Bobowski (right in photo) of Hartford and Vice Chairman, Karl Robert Profe (at left in photo) of Windsor. Both Ms. Bobowski and Mr. Profe have been active members of the Commission over the past few years, having most recently seen the Commission through an update and adoption of the 2009 Plan of Conservation and Development for the Capitol Region. Ms. Bobowski is chairman and long time member of the Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Profe has been a member of the Windsor Planning and Zoning Commission since 1994 and he currently holds the position of Secretary of the Commission. The CRCOG Regional Planning Commission meets bimonthly and is charged with preparing and updating the Regional Plan of Development. Based on the Regional Plan's goals and policies, the Commission reviews and comments upon proposed municipal zoning regulations and subdivisions that affect land use along town
boundaries. CRCOG wishes Ms. Bobowski and Mr. Profe well as they transition into their new leadership positions.

**Bicycle Workshops Held for Town Staff**

In April, CRCOG sponsored two workshops for town staff. The first was a workshop for physical education teachers who are interested in teaching bicycling as part of their physical education programs. The workshop was jointly sponsored by Bike Walk CT, Bike New York, and CRCOG. All participants received a complete curriculum, enabling them to easily begin a program. Berlin High School hosted the workshop. They have an extensive bicycling program including a bicycle library where students can borrow bicycles. Attendees spent time in the classroom but also got out on their bikes to learn skill drills to share with their students. Participants also spent some time in the maintenance shop to learn the basics of bicycle maintenance. The course will be offered again next spring. The second workshop was a four-hour course designed to provide an understanding of roadway and bicycle specific infrastructure from the point of views of the bicyclist. The class was held at West Hartford Town Hall and planners, engineers, and public works directors from towns around the region and Connecticut DOT attended (shown in photo above). The class is taught by transportation professionals, including Sandy Fry, who are also certified cycling instructors. Contact Sandy at sfry@crcog.org if you would like this class to be offered in your town.

**CRCOG Receives Bicycle Education Grant**

CRCOG has been awarded a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) grant to advance bicycle education in the region. The grant is designed to get a broad program up and running with the understanding that Bike Walk CT, a statewide bike and pedestrian advocacy group (formerly the Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance), will take over the program when the grant ends September 30th. We have hired a contractor to coordinate the program: Beth Emery, a certified cycling instructor, is currently developing classes and materials and we expect to have the program fully operational this summer. If you would like a class to be held in your town, contact Beth at biked@bikewalkconnecticut.org or see [http://www.crcog.org/transportation/bicycle/bp_edu.html](http://www.crcog.org/transportation/bicycle/bp_edu.html).

**CRCOG Implements Check Fraud System**

The Capitol Region Council of Governments Finance Department recently implemented a check fraud prevention system known as “positive pay” for all of its vendor payments. It is estimated that check fraud costs U.S. businesses in excess of $20 billion dollars annually. A recent spike in check fraud activity in the Greater Hartford area also prompted the move to this system. Working with
Bank of America and its business partner, SecurePay, finance staff converts its vendor check issue data into a “positive pay” file that matches bank check specifications and is then transmitted to the bank via the internet. When checks are presented for payment to the bank, they are compared to the positive pay file and if an exception is found, the bank notifies CRCOG for verification. Implementing positive pay helps CRCOG meet Uniform Commercial Code (UCC) standards of ‘ordinary care’ for fraud prevention and gives it leverage for full loss-recovery in the event of a check fraud incident.

**I-84 Viaduct Study Public Workshop a Success**

On March 25, about 100 Greater Hartford residents attended the second Public Workshop of the I-84 Viaduct Study to hear about five preliminary options for the replacement of the Viaduct structure in downtown Hartford: Baseline – similar to today’s structure with some enhancements, Skyway – a higher elevation viaduct; Boulevard – lower speed street for a portion of I-84; Tunnel – deck over/bury highway segment; and Composite – hybrid of the tunnel model on the eastside and an enhanced viaduct structure on the Westside. Attendees viewed boards describing existing conditions, sketches and information on preliminary replacement options, and lessons learned/ideas from other communities across the country and abroad. Suggestions and comments will be used to help refine the alternatives. The final public meeting, a community summit, will be held later this year. For more information on the I-84 Viaduct Study, please contact Jennifer Carrier at jcarrier@crcog.org.

**Regional Online Permitting Software Training**

A new regional online permitting system funded by an OPM Regional Service Sharing grant is being tested and all nine pilot towns received in-depth training on the system in March. The training took place at Manchester’s new regional Emergency Operations Center, another project funded in part by the Service Sharing grants. The permitting system will allow businesses and residents in the nine towns to apply for, pay for, and receive permits online, some of them instantly. Towns will also be much better able to track and manage the permit approval process on the back end. The system is expected to “go live” later in May. Once system testing is completed and the system is operational, additional towns will be invited to participate. Those interested in a demonstration or in joining the program should contact Jocelyn Mathiasen (jmathiasen@crcog.org).

**Route 195 Traffic Calming Plan Completed**

After extensive public outreach efforts and guidance from the Route 195 Advisory Committee, a traffic calming plan in Tolland has been completed. The plan is reflective of goals and objectives raised by area stakeholders throughout the process: to keep speeds low through the historic town green, improve traffic safety and preserve the character of...
the green. Traffic calming elements such as lateral roadway shifts, textured crosswalks, passively activated pedestrian crossings, and pocket parking have been incorporated into the final plan. For more information on the Route 195 Corridor Study findings, please visit http://www.crcog.org/.

**CRCOG Staff Visit Highway Operations Center**

Through the years, CRCOG and ConnDOT staff has worked closely to monitor and evaluate traffic congestion throughout the region. In an effort to kick-off our Congestion Management Program data collection and analysis efforts, John Korte, Transportation Supervising Engineer offered a tour of ConnDOT’s Highway Operations Center in Newington to CRCOG staff on April 1st. One of two highway operation centers in CT (the other is located in Bridgeport), this is the center for overseeing the limited access highways using closed circuit cameras and traffic flow monitors to detect recurring congestion as well as traffic incidents, for managing variable message signs, highway advisory radios, e-alerts, and for dispatching the CHAMPS vehicles. Data collected by Highway Operations staff allows us to better understand regional arterial congestion and trends.

**CRCOG Employee Awarded Scholarship**

CRCOG Office Assistant Karen Stewartson has been awarded a Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Transfer Scholarship. Karen graduated with honors from Capital Community College with an Associates in Business Office Technology and is now pursuing her bachelor degree at the Greater Hartford campus of UCONN. Karen is shown here at a luncheon recently held by UCONN to honor fall 2009 and spring 2010 scholarship recipients.

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee – June 8, 2010, Noon, CRCOG
- Public Safety Council – June 10, Noon, South Church
- Connecticut River Assembly – June 10, 2010, 7:00 p.m., Wethersfield Town Hall
- Municipal Services Committee – June 15, 2010, Noon, CRCOG
- CREPC – June 17, 2010, 9:30 a.m., South Church
- Regional Planning Commission - June 17, 2010, 7:00 p.m. West Hartford Town Hall
- CRCOG Transportation Committee – June 21, 2010, Noon, CRRA
- Annual Meeting – June 29, 2010, Noon – LUNCH MEETING
- Capitol Region Jobs Access Task Force – July 15, 2010, 9:30 a.m., CRCOG
- CRCOG Executive Committee – August 11, 2010, Noon, CRCOG
- CRCOG Policy Board – September 22, 2010, Noon, CRRA
Capitol Region Update is published ten times per year by of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (www.crcog.org). The April/May 2010 issue is Volume 42 Number 3. CRCOG was formed January 28, 1968 and organized under the laws of the State of Connecticut. Member municipalities of CRCOG are: Andover, Avon, Bloomfield, Bolton, Canton, East Granby, East Hartford, East Windsor, Ellington, Enfield, Farmington, Glastonbury, Granby, Hartford, Hebron, Manchester, Marlborough, Newington, Rocky Hill, Simsbury, Somers, South Windsor, Suffield, Tolland, Vernon, West Hartford, Wethersfield, Windsor, and Windsor Locks. The officers of the CRCOG Policy Board are: Melody A. Currey, Chair, Mayor of East Hartford, Eddie Perez, Vice Chair, Mayor of Hartford, Vice Chair John Adams, First Selectman of Granby, Mary Glassman, Treasurer, First Selectman of Simsbury, and Richard J. Barlow, Secretary, First Selectman of Canton. Lyle D. Wray, PhD, Executive Director.