

SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR PROJECT–WORKPLAN ABSTRACT

The Knowledge Corridor Consortium was awarded a \$4,200,000 grant from HUD's FY 2010 Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program. We will use these funds to carry out activities which will build on the work of the three metropolitan planning areas of the Hartford-Springfield Knowledge Corridor to advance opportunity, sustainability and livability in our combined regions. The Knowledge Corridor, a concept that has evolved over the last 10 years through the work of the MPO's and the partner agencies of the Hartford Springfield Economic Partnership (HSEP), has identified the interrelatedness of these three regions as a single economic unit tied together by a wide range of regional assets including: excellent highway and air access, and soon to be excellent bus rapid transit and rail access; a concentration of population and employment; a well-educated workforce and a shared labor market; intellectual and research resources of the region's 32 universities and colleges; businesses in historically stable sectors (finance and insurance) and growth sectors (alternative energy and health care); and exceptional natural resources that enhance the region's quality of life, including the ecological, recreational, cultural, and agricultural resources of the Connecticut River Valley.

The Knowledge Corridor is home to 1.6 million residents. It will be the beneficiary of \$1.53 billion dollars in new transit investment over the next 10 years for the construction of the New Britain to Hartford Bus Rapid Transit System (operational in 2014), and the Springfield, MA to New Haven, CT Commuter and High Speed Rail (operational in 2016). The challenge facing Knowledge Corridor communities is how to use these new investments and other regional assets to expand opportunity to all residents of the region. The work to be carried out under this Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant will help us meet this challenge.

The lead applicant is the Capitol Region Council of Governments, the MPO serving the City of Hartford, CT and 29 surrounding suburban and rural communities. The other MPO partners in this application are the Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission which serves Springfield, MA and 42 other communities, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency of Bristol, CT which serves the City of New Britain, CT and six additional municipalities. In all, 80 communities will benefit from the activities we will undertake. We have formed a Consortium Partnership of more than twenty diverse organizations—municipal governments, housing and community development organizations, economic development interests, educational institutions, and smart growth and sustainable communities advocates, so that we may better focus our work on the goal of building a sustainable, economically competitive, and equitable Knowledge Corridor. Consortium partners will supplement the grant with cash match and leveraged contributions.

The Knowledge Corridor Consortium will use this grant to create a foundation of opportunity—in housing, education, transportation, employment, nutrition, and community resources—for those who have been trapped in neighborhoods that fail to provide it. We will: 1) update and integrate our existing regional plans to form a *Knowledge Corridor Detailed Execution Plan for a Sustainable Region*; 2) build off of major federal investments in the region—the rail line, the busway, and the EPA/CRCOG Sustainability Development Guidelines—to create energy-efficient, affordable housing opportunities near transit and job centers in well-designed, mixed-use settings; and 3) use the grant to establish imaginative new efforts—affordable housing training for zoning commissioners; incentives for density creation in transit-rich locations; studies to help establish pilot feeder bus service to link jobs, housing and transit; a web-based platform to share information on successful land use strategies and our progress toward a more sustainable Knowledge Corridor; opportunity mapping; studies on how to harvest increased land values near stations and plow it back into affordable housing and transit infrastructure—that will not only inform our efforts but also provide knowledge-sharing models for other regions.

To accomplish this vision, our work will focus on the following activities:

I) Regional Planning for a Sustainable Knowledge Corridor:

- A) Update and integrate existing regional plans to create a Knowledge Corridor Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. We will review, address gaps, supplement, update, and integrate existing plans already done by the three MPOs. Work will include preparing new plan elements where needed.
- B) Develop a Knowledge Corridor Detailed Execution Plan for a Sustainable Region to create a guide for future implementation actions and investment decisions.
- C) Establish a broad Civic Engagement/Public Outreach Process to ensure diverse participation throughout the project.

II) Capacity Building and Special Planning Studies to provide analyses, tools and an expanded knowledge base for the Knowledge Corridor's decision makers:

- A) Develop and Implement a Leadership Pioneer Valley Program
- B) Conduct a Market Analysis of the Knowledge Corridor's Bus Rapid Transit and Rail Corridors
- C) Undertake a Transit Enhancement Bus Study
- D) Develop Sustainable Land Use Codes, Regulations, Ordinances and Policies for Ten Municipalities
- E) Prepare a Model Affordable Housing Code
- F) Develop and Implement an Affordable Housing Training Module

III) Place-Based Activities to Build a Sustainable Knowledge Corridor to provide models of how integrated housing, land use, and transportation system planning will support and value existing communities and neighborhoods, and enhance economic competitiveness:

- A) Court Square Project, Springfield, MA
- B) Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway Project, Chicopee, MA
- C) Depot Square Redevelopment and Revitalization Project, Holyoke, MA
- D) Hartford North Park Design District, Hartford, CT
- E) Creating a Walkable New Britain, New Britain, CT
- F) Linking Transit Investment and Neighborhood Revitalization, Enfield, CT

IV) Metrics and Information Sharing

- A) Develop Metrics to measure our progress and better inform decision-making processes.
- B) Create a state of the art Knowledge Corridor Sustainability Dashboard which will be the web-based public face of our work.

V) Governance, Management, and HUD Assistance Agreement Oversight

- A) Engage local leaders in broad-based, well informed Consortium Governance and Management.
- B) Provide ongoing administrative oversight for the HUD Assistance Agreement including management of sub-grants and contracts, record keeping and reporting.

We have assembled a very capable team to undertake and complete these activities within the program's 36 month time frame. Regional agency staff who will be involved in this project are highly skilled management and planning professionals. Key housing and community development Consortium partners that are providing planning and technical assistance services under this grant are the Partnership for Strong Communities, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, and the Connecticut Housing Coalition. Key educational Consortium partners that will be leading grant activities include the University of Massachusetts and the University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR). We will also contract with expert consultants through an open procurement process for a number of tasks.