

## SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR PROJECT –ABSTRACT

The Knowledge Corridor Consortium is requesting a \$5,000,000 grant from HUD's FY 2010 Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program. Activities contained in this **Category 2 Application** will build on the work of the three metropolitan planning areas of the Hartford-Springfield Knowledge Corridor. 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; population and employment concentration; 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.

The Knowledge Corridor includes three MPO planning regions: the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) of Springfield, MA; the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) of Hartford, CT, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) of Bristol, CT. It also includes the region's three economically-distressed central cities: Springfield, Hartford, and New Britain. The region 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 2013), 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 Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving the City of Hartford, CT and 28 surrounding suburban and rural communities. The other MPO partners in this application are the Pioneer Valley Regional Planning Commission that serves Springfield, MA and 42 other communities, and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency of Bristol, CT—an agency that serves the City of New Britain, CT and 6 additional municipalities. In all, 79 communities will benefit from the activities contained in this application. We have formed a Consortium Partnership of more than thirty diverse organizations—municipal governments, housing and community development organizations, economic development interests, private industry, 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. The Consortium partners have pledged over \$40 million in total match and leveraged contributions.

The Hartford Springfield Economic Partnership's work has been dedicated to increasing interstate cooperative efforts in support of marketing, transportation and public policy goals. Our new partnership will expand these original goals to include housing and community development, environmental protection, and social equity concerns. MPO and RPA 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 (CLEAR).

As a **Category 2 Grant** applicant, our work will focus on the following activities:

1. The update and integration of existing regional plans to create a *Knowledge Corridor Regional Plan for Sustainable Development*.
2. The preparation of a *Knowledge Corridor Detailed Execution Plan for a Sustainable Region* and development of *Sustainability Tools and Metrics for Measuring Success*.
3. *Enhancing mechanisms for cross-border (intermunicipal and interstate) communication and decision-making that involves a diverse group of consortium partners, community stakeholders and citizens* throughout the bi-state region, including those traditionally excluded from regional planning and decision-making processes.
4. *Building leaders* who can work with the Knowledge Corridor Consortium to move plans and strategies to implementation.
5. *Creating a state of the art Virtual Sustainability Concourse* (also called a *Sustainability Dashboard*) that will be the public face of the Knowledge Corridor Consortium's Sustainability work, assisting in outreach and civic engagement efforts, the sharing of best practices on sustainable development, and a source for information on how to measure progress on sustainability at the site level and regional scale. It will be the place in which we will share the metrics being used to measure our success under this program.
6. Key *planning activities* to move the Knowledge Corridor forward in implementing priority elements of the existing regional plans. These activities will serve as models of how integrated planning creates more transportation choices; promotes equitable, affordable housing; enhances economic competitiveness; and supports and values existing communities and neighborhoods.
7. *Placed-based planning in strategic locations* within the 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.

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 Springfield-New Haven rail line, the New Britain-Hartford Busway, the CROG 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. The Sustainable Communities Initiative program is a dream come true in its efforts to provide opportunity and choice for low-income, disabled, homeless and other under-served populations. We aim to turn this grant into new opportunity for our residents.