

# ANNUAL REPORT THE CENTRAL CONNECTICUT REGIONAL PLANNING AGENCY (CCRPA) FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005

Serving Berlin, Bristol, Burlington, New Britain, Plainville, Plymouth and Southington



## AGENCY MISSION

The Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency has been organized to provide a regional framework within which **“To Plan and Promote Regional Policies and Programs to Enhance the Vitality, Accessibility, and Quality of life in our Communities.”** To accomplish this mission, the CCRPA provides paratransit services to the Region’s senior citizens and disabled, coordinates municipal land use planning and zoning, prepares transportation, economic development, environmental, and emergency services preparedness and response plans. Some of the specific projects we have undertaken during the 2004-2005 fiscal year, are described below.

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## COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

To qualify for Federal economic development assistance the region must have a Federally approved Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in effect. During the 2003-2004 fiscal year the CCRPA completed a contract with a consultant group which prepared a CEDS for the four most economically impacted towns of the Region: namely, Bristol, New Britain, Plainville, and Plymouth. Approval of the CEDS was granted by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) in April of 2004. EDA requires that a CEDS be updated annually and the CEDS Steering Committee completed that work in June of 2005 when the Updated CEDS was submitted to the United States Economic Development Administration.

The CEDS includes goals, objectives, strategies, and specific projects that the region wishes to pursue to foster continued economic **development**.



## HOMELAND SECURITY & CITIZENS CORPS

The CCRPA coordinates with the Capitol Region Emergency Planning Committee (CREPC) to organize, train, and equip Citizens Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in the Region. These teams are established to assist emergency response and law enforcement officials in time of an emergency. A CERT was organized this year in New Britain under the auspices of the New Britain Fire Department; the Public Health Department of Burlington/Bristol, and the Plymouth Volunteer Ambulance Corps have initiated the steps necessary to establish CERTs in those towns.



This year the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency was designated for a \$15,000 grant from the Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to help organize, train, and equip the Region's Citizens Corps.

## PUBLIC SAFETY ANSWERING POINT (PSAP) CONSOLIDATION STUDY

CCRPA last year obtained two grants from the CT Department of Public Safety (DPS) for a PSAP (911 Answering Centers) consolidation study in 13 towns in the Central Connecticut region and neighboring area. The first grant studies the PSAP consolidation of the City of Bristol and Towns of Plymouth, Thomaston, Watertown, and Wolcott. The CCRPA has already submitted a draft plan to DPS and working to finalize the plan. The second grant will be for the study of Central Connecticut State University (CCSU), Cities of Meriden and New Britain and Towns of Berlin, Newington, Plainville, Rocky Hill, Southington, and Wethersfield. CCRPA is currently working on this plan as well.

## PEQUABUCK RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

CCRPA, in cooperation with the Farmington River and Pequabuck River Watershed Associations, and a stakeholders committee representing participants from the six towns in the watershed, has successfully completed a comprehensive management plan for the Pequabuck River Watershed. The Plan has been approved by the CT DEP and adopted by the CCRPA agency board. Last year CCRPA completed the Pequabuck River State of Watershed Report, which compiles a variety of facts and information about the watershed for the public. The studies were funded by

\$36,879 in Section 604(b) and Section 319 grants from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. The Pequabuck River Management Plan presents goals for the watershed, in four major areas: habitat, land use, protected open space, and water quality. It also describes actions and strategies to improve water quality, preserve fish and wildlife habitat, protect open space in the watershed, and lessen the impact of land use on the water quality. The Plan will now be taken to the town councils, planning and zoning, wetland, and other appropriate commissions for their endorsement and implementation.

## **HAZARD MITIGATION**

During the year, the Agency started work on a regional plan that seeks to prepare for and to minimize the damage from natural hazard events in our region. All seven towns in the region are participating in this project. The funding was received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to undertake planning work for Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection is administering the program. The Plan will be completed for July 2006.

The grant originates from the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA) that created the National Pre-Disaster Mitigation Fund. Hazard mitigation plans are a preventative measure and are becoming increasingly important. Many Federal programs will require the existence of a local hazard mitigation plan for eligibility and participation. The goal is to reduce future damage from natural disasters by reducing future liabilities and thereby saving money. By increasing the preparedness of towns for natural disasters, the expectation is to reduce the potential for damage and the future need for federal and state disaster assistance.

## **CONGESTION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

The Region is developing a Congestion Management System (CMS) to monitor congested links in the transportation network. This task is being coordinated with similar efforts at the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) and Mid State Regional Planning Agency (MRPA), our partners in the Hartford Urbanized Area. The CMS consists of various tools and technologies to measure and assess traffic operations on the Region's roadways. A grant through the Federal Highway Administration has allowed CCRPA, CRCOG, and MRPA to purchase

geographic positioning system (GPS) receivers to collect drive-time data such as speed and delay. This data is plotted on the geographic information system (GIS) to graphically display locations of congestion on maps. To effectively analyze the problems, a good deal of traffic data must be collected at various times during the day, such as volume, delay times, travel speeds, signalization detail and turning movements. With this detailed knowledge, the proper solution to improve operations can be developed and implemented. A CMS report will be an annual product of the Region's function as a Metropolitan Planning Organization.

## **FREIGHT PLANNING**

CCRPA has been involved in people movement since 1973, but has just embarked on a project that concerns the movement of goods. Freight is shipped by truck and train in the region, but has not been a part of the transportation planning picture until now. CCRPA has joined up with CRCOG and Midstate RPA in a collaborative effort to get an understanding of the freight movement issues in the Hartford Urbanized Area. With this understanding of the issues and the impact of freight on the entire transportation network, solid recommendations can be made that improve the system. In coordination with the two other MPOs in the Hartford urbanized area, CCRPA is working with a consultant to gather the substantial commodity flow data necessary for a true understanding of the regional freight picture. The thrust of this effort is to mainstream freight planning into the regular MPO program of transportation activities and to establish public-private partnerships with the providers of freight movement in the region.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

The established policy of the CCRPA is to review its public involvement plan annually. Last year, in addition to changes from the annual review, staff overhauled the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) based on modifications recommended by the triennial federal certification process (April 2005) and a Title VI review (October 2004). The new PIP features a series of maps to identify locations of population clusters that reflect traditionally underserved groups such as low-income, minorities and limited English proficiency (LEP). These maps aid in the judgment of the positive and negative impacts of transportation projects in certain locations in the Region. Improvements to the PIP also included enhancement of the public hearing notification process, promotion of varied outreach

techniques, and formalization of procedures for evaluating public input efforts and activities.

### PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLISTS – CCPATH

The Central Connecticut Plan for Alternative Transportation and Health (CCPATH) represents the Agency's first combined pedestrian and bicycle plan. The Agency endorsed the CCPATH in June 2005. The CCPATH establishes an evaluation of the nonmotorized transportation system, in recognition of this vital component of the regional modal network. Previously, the transportation network in the Region was seriously out of balance. An over reliance on the automobile for travel has contributed to poorer air quality, road congestion and unhealthy sedentary life styles. Through a combination of project and policy proposals, the CCPATH hopes to increase opportunity for pedestrian and bicycle activity that works to restore a more balanced transportation system. Recommendations of the Plan include, among other things:

- ✓ Bicycle racks on buses and at commuter lots to strengthen the linkage of modes
- ✓ Sidewalk ramp and crosswalk improvements at roadway intersections
- ✓ Promoting dedicated bike lanes on roadways, as feasible
- ✓ Establishing more funding opportunities for pedestrian-oriented projects

This Plan and other products are available on the Agency website: [www.ccrpa.org](http://www.ccrpa.org)

### TRANSIT SERVICES

CT Transit, New Britain Division, operates two bus routes in Bristol and nine in New Britain. Service is also provided in Kensington and Plainville.

### VISIONS NEW BRITAIN

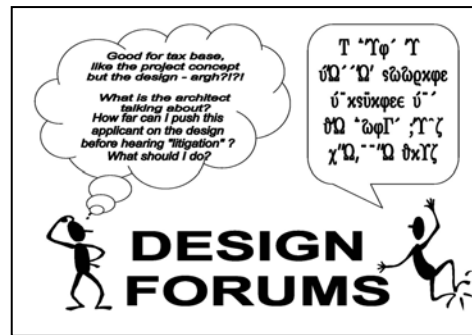
CCRPA was represented on the Visions New Britain Transportation Committee where we furnished guidance and information for the improvement of public transportation.

### GIS – GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM

CCRPA is continuously assisting its member towns and other agencies with various GIS data, analysis, and mapping that relates to the Region's environment, land use, and transportation. The CCRPA has updated the complete land use and open space maps

for the Town of Plymouth. During FY 2005-06, under a \$10,000 DEP Grant CCRPA will develop a Buildout Analysis for the region. The project will first update land use and zoning of seven towns in the region and then will analyze buildout scenarios in the region. The buildout generally determines how much land is available for future development and what kind of impact it will have to the community in terms of population, schooling, traffic, environment, etc. The CCRPA will make recommendations on what will be the best development scenarios based on the buildout results.

### DESIGN FORUM SEMINARS



In January 2005, the Agency organized two seminars on design in development for people involved in making land use decisions.

The first seminar was local. The Design Workshop was held on January 4, 2005 to a capacity crowd in the Agency's conference room. The Design Workshop audience consisted of members of the land use commissions of our seven member towns plus their town planners and staffs and the aim was to increase their knowledge of aesthetics and design in making land use decisions. The Workshop was comprised of two sessions: an overview on the law and court decisions by Timothy Bates, land use attorney with Robinson & Cole LLC, and then a primer on building design by Laura Kaehler, architect / partner of Kaehler / Moore Architects.

The second seminar was titled "Shaping the Design of Your Community" and was held on January 21, 2005 to a capacity crowd on the campus of Central Connecticut State University in New Britain. The seminar was organized in cooperation with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association. Like our Design Workshop, "Shaping the Design of Your Community" sought to increase their knowledge of people involved with making land use decisions on issues of design, the law and the development review process. However, this time the

audience was state wide, with town planners, members of land use boards, land use lawyers and design professionals gathering from throughout the state; and the program was more expansive. In addition to Timothy Bates' legal overview and Laura Kaehler's architectural primer, there were two case studies of the design review experience in the real world. Charles Boster spoke of the experience of the Borough of Stonington with codified design review; and two people, Matthew Steinberg and John Dixon, spoke of the experience of the Town of Greenwich with advisory board design review.

## LAND USE REFERRAL

The CCRPA's referral function is mandated by the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut. While these decisions are non-binding, the review mandate is important procedurally as this process keeps the Region and neighboring municipalities aware of developments in the larger area and provides the opportunity for input. Referrals are required in three areas: for zoning matters by Section 8-3b; for subdivision matters by Section 8-26b; and for plans of conservation & development by Section 8-23f.

For fiscal year July 2004 to June 2005, the Agency received a total of sixty-two referral submissions: thirty-two from our seven member municipalities and thirty from municipalities sharing our borders. However, a referral can be comprised of more than one component, which explains why there are more parts than there is a whole.

Fifty-six of the sixty-two referrals were zoning related. Of these fifty-six, two referrals involved moratoriums; nine involved changes to zoning maps and forty-six involved changes to the rules themselves, both modifications of text and entirely new regulations.

In contrast, the number of subdivision referrals was six. Four of these were proposals to divide land: three from our member towns and one from a town bordering our region. The other two referrals were advisory, as each involved changes to subdivision regulations and not actual subdivisions. Section 8-26b limits Agency review to subdivisions along and across municipal boundaries and, unlike zoning referrals, not to changes in the rules governing the subdivision of land.

Last and by no means least, one referral was reviewed under the provisions of Section 8-23f. The referral was the Plan of Conservation & Development

for the Town of Plymouth, titled "Connecting To The Future".

As in prior years, this year's referrals were a diverse group. The most mundane was a schedule of fees as some towns have the fee structure listed in their zoning regulations. In contrast, one of the most sophisticated referrals created a multi-part strategy to protect and shape development along ridgeline and hilltop areas. The proposal involved the creation of an overlay zone, amendments to the zoning and subdivision regulations, and the addition of zoning districts to the zoning map in order to protect ridgeline and hilltop areas and manage development in these sensitive and very visible areas.

There were recurrent topics and prior topics were revisited. Three separate referrals pertained to permitting self-storage facilities. Five towns submitted referrals involving sign regulations: two involved political signs; one created a coordinated design theme for larger commercial developments; one sought a solution to people posting their personal signs, such as tag sale or lost pet; and the fifth was an overhaul of an entire sign section. One referral sought to permit combination of artist work studios/dwellings in order to revitalize older urban areas. Two referrals pertained to earth excavation activities.



## ADA PARATRANSIT SERVICE

The CCRPA operates the Region's Paratransit Service under a \$796,120 grant from the Connecticut Department of Transportation. This service is offered to disabled people who cannot utilize fixed-route transit.

The Region's ADA Paratransit Advisory Committee meets on a Quarterly Basis to oversee the operation of Regional Paratransit services. Committee voting members are Torre Skjerli, CW Resources; Shawn Cohen, Plainville Senior Center; Mike Karwan, New Britain Senior Center; Robley Newton, Connecticut Department of Social Services; F. Jay Sullivan, New Britain Commission on Persons with Disabilities.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR FISCAL '04-'05  
(July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005)**

More than ninety percent of the services the CCRPA provides are funded by Federal and State grants. Out of a total annual budget of more than \$1.2 million, the total local match budgeted for all seven of our member municipalities is \$88,000. That figure has not changed for a decade. During the 2004-2005 fiscal year, the \$88,000 local "match" enabled more than \$3.5 million of outside funds to flow to the Region's member municipalities for transportation and other projects. It is anticipated that similar amounts will be generated through the CCRPA for our member municipalities annually in the years to come.

While there has been no change in the total amount of the CCRPA budget supported by municipal dues, the proportion of the total \$88,000 paid by each of our seven member Towns varies annually in relation to changes in the proportion of population and total grand list value in each town.

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR FISCAL '04-'05**

Revenues:	
Federal	\$134,946
State	380,618
ADA Paratransit Service	701,603
Member Municipalities	88,001
Municipalities/CEDS	2,700
Plymouth Plan	13,927
Other	4,225
Total Revenues	<u>\$1,326,020</u>
Expenditures	
Direct Costs:	
Salaries	\$266,611
ADA Paratransit Service	701,602
Other	34,586
Indirect Costs	303,098
Total Expenditures	<u>\$1,305,898</u>

**AGENCY BOARD MEMBERS – AS OF 6/30/04**

Berlin	Morgan Seelye, Vice Chair Dennis Kern
Bristol	Timothy Furey, Chairperson Donald Padlo Michael Parks
Burlington	Richard Alden Theodore C. Scheidel
New Britain	Helen Z. Pearl Lisa Carver Steven Schiller
Plainville	David Dudek, Secretary Jennifer Bartiss-Earley
Plymouth	Patrick Herzing
Southington	Leanne Kennedy John Moise Matthew O'Keefe, Treasurer

**CCRPA STAFF**

Carl J. Stephani, ICMA-CM	Executive Director
Ken Shooshan-Stoller	Deputy Director
Margus Laan, AICP	Senior Planner
Tony Savino	Transit Manager
Pramod Pandey	Regional Planner
Joseph Barbeau	Transportation Planner
Rita Mastrobattista	Financial Administrator
Sharon Neupaver	Secretary