Social Impact Report

for projects funded in 2009 with the
Central Connecticut Region's
share of the
American Recovery & Reinvestment Act
Highway Infrastructure Investment funds

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Introduction

In March of 2009, the State of Connecticut received more than $930 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. $302,053,956 was dedicated to Highway Infrastructure Investment projects, "including resurfacing and pavement preservation projects, traffic signal system upgrades, bridge projects, transit projects, and intelligent transportation systems." Of this roughly $300 million, $90 million was distributed to the 15 regional planning organizations in the state. (Table 1 shows this distribution.) The Central Connecticut Region received approximately $5.7 million, which was allocated to projects in the region.

Transportation investments frequently have mixed impacts. While the completed project generally has a positive impact for users, the construction and implementation phases commonly impose negative impacts on both users and proximate residents. Moreover, as a major focus of transportation facilities is to move users from a starting destination to an ending destination, there can be a mismatch between those who experience the negative impacts of construction (in the form of temporary disruptions, noise, and air pollution) and those who reap the benefits of the completed facility. Historically, mismatches have frequently occurred where highways connecting suburbs to business

Region Name	Region Number	Urban/ Rural	ARRA Urban Distribution	ARRA Rural Distribution
Southwestern Regional Planning Agency	1	Urban	$ 9,215,534	$ -
Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials	2	Urban	$ 6,349,968	$ -
Northwestern Council of Governments	3	Rural	$ 4,604	$ 1,100,000
Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials	4	Rural	$ 1,568,840	$ 1,100,000
Central Naugatuck Council of Governments	5	Urban	$ 8,453,065	$ -
Valley Council of Governments	6	Urban	$ 2,238,500	$ -
Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency	7	Urban	$ 8,025,320	$ -
South Central Council of Governments	8	Urban	$ 14,048,105	$ -
Central CT Regional Planning Agency	9	Urban	$ 5,744,512	$ -
Capitol Region Council of Governments	10	Urban	$ 17,573,915	$ -
Midstate Regional Planning Agency	11	Urban	$ 2,135,706	$ -
CT River Estuary Regional Planning Agency	12	Urban	$ 1,099,730	$ -
Southeastern CT Council of Governments	13	Urban	$ 6,756,772	$ -
Windham Council of Governments	14	Rural	$ 1,533,616	$ 1,100,000
Northeastern CT Council of Governments	15	Rural	$ 1,210,236	$ 1,100,000

Table 1: Distribution of ARRA Highway Infrastructure Investment funds to RPOs.

districts were constructed through minority or low-income neighborhoods, imposing a burden on neighborhood residents who reaped little to none of the benefit. This raises concerns about equity, particularly when specific groups (e.g. minority or low-income) are systematically impacted.

The federal government recognizes the fact that minority and low-income groups have historically borne the brunt of many transportation projects from which they did not benefit. As a result, transportation agencies at every level are compelled to closely examine the intent, effect, and social distribution of transportation investments and projects in their areas. The Social Impact Report (SIR) exists to facilitate examination of equity concerns regarding transportation projects in the Central Connecticut region.

Transportation project impacts can be separated into different categories. The SIR explores three types of impacts: Implementation, Operation, and Investment.

Implementation Impacts

Implementation impacts are the physical consequences arising from a project's construction. (Projects that solely involve expansions or changes in service do not generally incur negative implementation impacts.) Construction often has immediate, negative consequences for the neighborhood where a project is located: travel paths are disrupted, traffic flow slows, surrounding streets may become more congested, there is a great deal of noise, there may be dust or other pollutants in the air. These effects are typically temporary, and may be counterbalanced by improvements to mobility and accessibility in the neighborhood once the project is complete.

Measurement: Impacts are classified as "negative" or "not negative," based on project construction's likely effects on its neighborhood.

Operation Impacts

Operation impacts are the effects the completed facility has on its

immediate neighborhood once it is in use. It is entirely possible for a facility to generate positive and negative operation impacts simultaneously. For example, an additional dedicated turning lane on a freeway off-ramp may cut down on rear-end collisions on the ramp while simultaneously increasing the risk to pedestrians at the intersection by increasing the number of lanes they must cross. In such a case, the reduction in collisions must be weighed against the added risks to pedestrians.

Measurement: Positive impacts are weighed against negative impacts to determine the overall effect. Impacts are classified as "positive" or "negative."

Investment Impacts

Investment impacts are investments in transportation infrastructure in a given neighborhood. In general, it is assumed that investments made in a neighborhood will benefit that neighborhood; however, that is not always the case. In the historical example of freeway construction in low-income and minority neighborhoods, investments in the area were actually detrimental to the neighborhoods. Commuters to the business district from the suburbs experienced considerable positive impacts from the investment, while residents experienced strongly negative long-term (operation) impacts, in addition to bearing the brunt of the short-term (implementation) impacts. Examinations of investment impacts must therefore be accompanied by study of the operation and investment impacts, in order to determine whether or not the investment will actually benefit residents of the project's neighborhood.

Measurement: So long as operation impacts are uniform, investment impacts can provide an objective means for determining whether projects are distributed equitably across population clusters. Impacts are listed by percent of project funding spent in target areas.

Target Areas

The primary purpose of the SIR is to ensure that benefits from transportation projects are equitably distributed across population clusters in the region, and that no segment of the population is unduly burdened with negative impacts. Target areas are areas with relatively high proportions of low-income or minority residents, and are defined in two ways:

Primary Target Areas are Census Block Groups having at least 50% population that identifies as non-white (minority) or Hispanic (of any race).

Secondary Target Areas are Census Block Groups wherein at least 20% of the population has household income less than 150% of the Census poverty threshold.

Based on population counts from the 2000 decennial Census, 26% of the region's population lives within the block groups classified as target areas. If ARRA funds are being invested equitably across all population clusters in the region, 26% of the funding should be allocated to projects having beneficial impacts in the target areas.

Funding Allocation Process

Figure 1 shows the locations of the target areas and the ARRA projects funded through CCRPA. (Some projects in the region received ARRA funding directly from the state; these are not taken into account here because CCRPA had no jurisdiction over the allocation and distribution of those funds.) The region's ARRA funds were allocated on a per capita basis; towns received

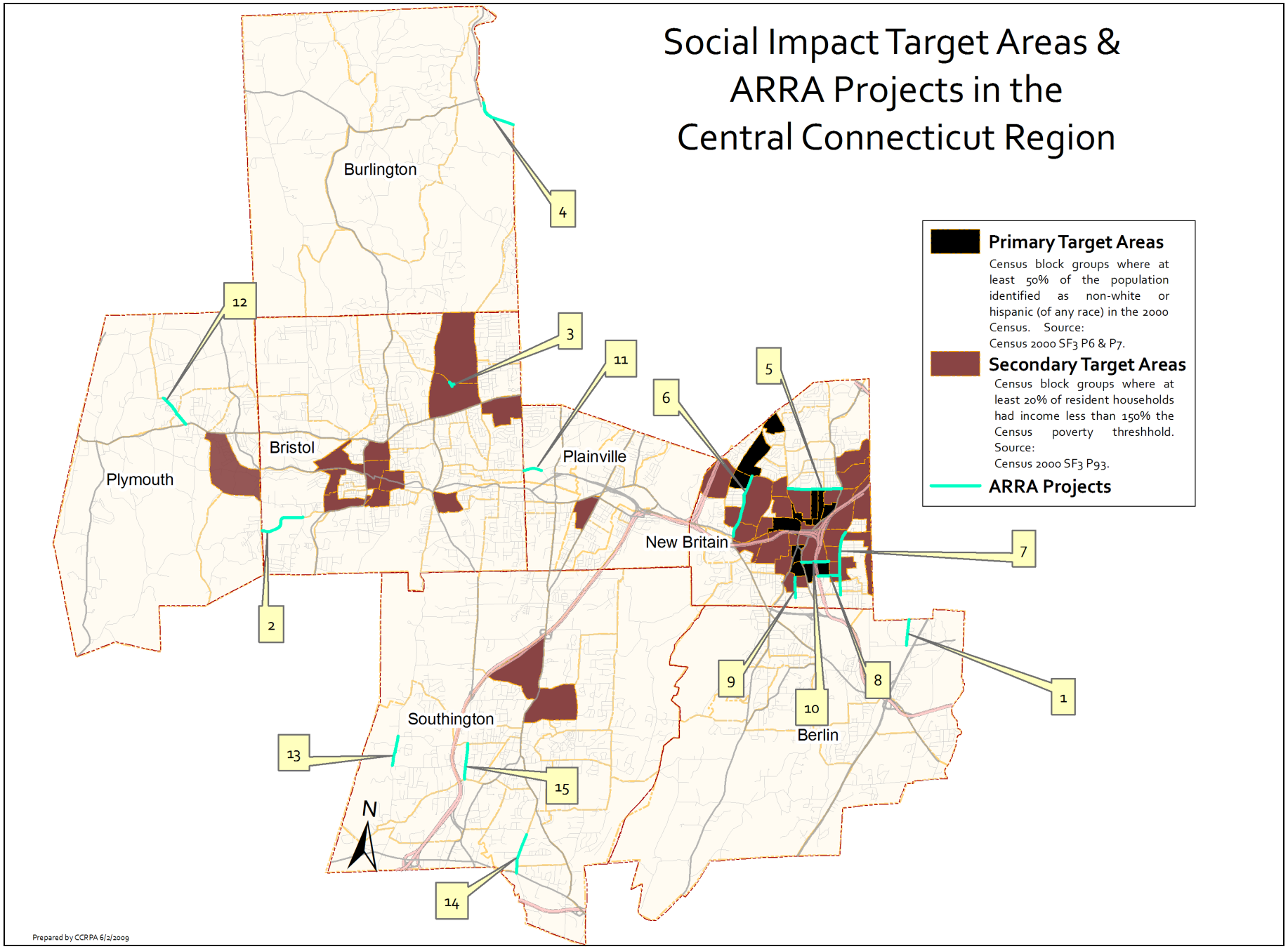

Figure 1: Map of Social Impact Target Areas and ARRA Projects in the Central CT Region.

Town	Population in Target Areas	Total Population	Percent in Target Areas
Berlin	0	18,215	0%
Bristol	13,508	60,062	22%
Burlington	0	8,190	0%
New Britain	40,894	71,538	57%
Plainville	1,094	17,328	6%
Plymouth	1,356	11,634	12%
Southington	2,175	39,728	5%
Central CT Region	59,027	226,695	26%

Table 2: Population of Target Areas in the Central CT Region.

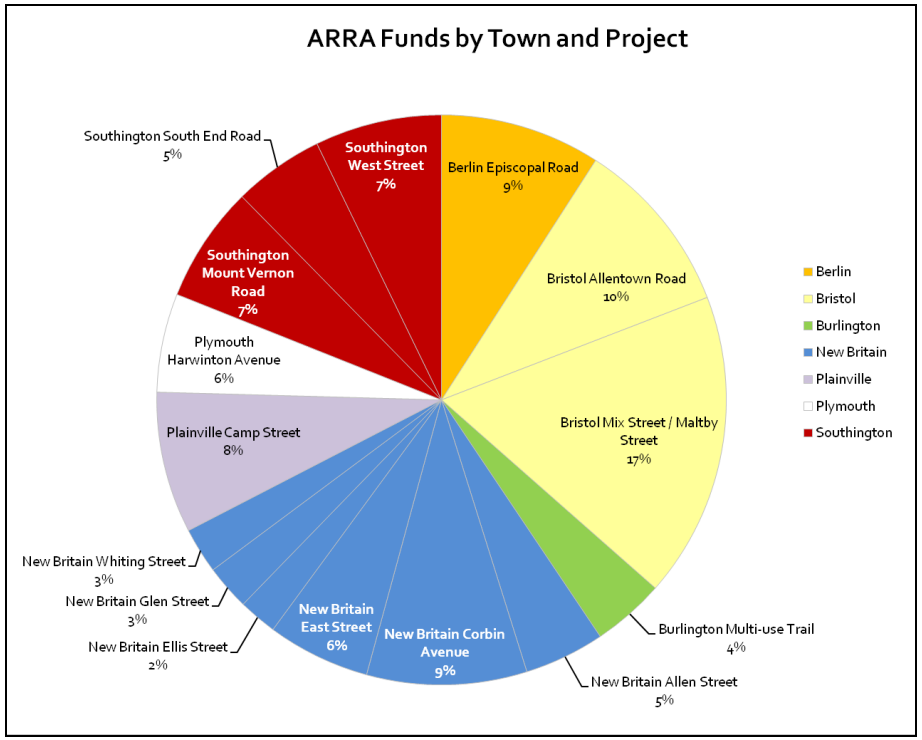

Figure 2: Distribution of ARRA funds by town and by project

project funding proportional to their populations. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of funding per project and per town. The per capita allocation ensured an equitable division of funding among the region's seven towns, but did not guarantee a socially equitable distribution.

Social Impact Analysis

Due to the allocation method, the more populous towns in the region received more ARRA funding from the region. The more populous towns, however, are also home to most of the target areas (see Table 2, above). New Britain contains 34 block groups classified as target areas; 57% of the town's population resides in these areas. Bristol contains 11 target areas, which are home to 22% of its population.

Investment Impacts

Of the fifteen funded projects, eight projects (comprising roughly 39% of the funded projects' total linear footage) are located at least partially in target areas. Assuming that each project's costs are equally distributed per linear foot, 39% of the total ARRA funding distributed by CCRPA is being invested in target areas. (Table 3 illustrates these calculations.) This is considerably more than the 26% expected based on population counts. Examination of the implementation and operation impacts shows that all the projects occurring in target areas are local road improvements; consequently, it seems that funding invested in target areas will accrue benefits to those areas.

Implementation Impacts

Every project in a target area involves resurfacing or repaving a local road, except project 3, which involves reconstruction and normalization of an

Map Key	Town	Feature Affected	Project Description	ARRA funding awarded	% Project in Target Areas (by foot)	Implementation Impact	Operation Impact	Investment Impact
1	Berlin	Episcopal Road	Reconstruction & repaving	$ 499,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
2	Bristol	Allentown Road	Reconstruction	$ 550,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
3	Bristol	Mix & Maltby Streets	Reconstruction & normalization of intersection	$ 950,000.00	100.0%	Negative	Positive	$ 950,000.00
4	Burlington	Multi-use Trail	Connect to Farmington Canal Heritage Trail	$ 225,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
5	New Britain	Allen Street	Mill and Overlay	$ 250,000.00	100.0%	Negative	Positive	$ 250,000.00
6	New Britain	Corbin Avenue	Mill and Overlay	$ 498,000.00	100.0%	Negative	Positive	$ 498,000.00
7	New Britain	East Street	Mill and Overlay	$ 320,000.00	52.4%	Negative	Positive	$ 167,680.00
8	New Britain	Ellis Street	Mill and Overlay	$ 120,000.00	47.8%	Negative	Positive	$ 57,360.00
9	New Britain	Glen Street	Mill and Overlay	$ 140,000.00	48.2%	Negative	Positive	$ 67,480.00
10	New Britain	Whiting Street	Mill and Overlay	$ 142,000.00	100.0%	Negative	Positive	$ 142,000.00
11	Plainville	Camp Street	Reconstruction & repaving	$ 439,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
12	Plymouth	Harwinton Avenue	Reconstruction & repaving	$ 307,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
13	Southington	Mount Vernon Road	Mill and Overlay	$ 362,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
14	Southington	South End Road	Mill and Overlay	$ 282,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
15	Southington	West Street	Mill and Overlay	$ 395,000.00	0.0%	N/A	N/A	$ -
			Total ARRA funding going to projects in region:	$ 5,479,000.00	Total ARRA funding going to target areas:			$ 2,132,520.00

Table 3: Distribution of ARRA funds by project, and project impacts.

intersection of two local roads. Each of these projects will cause disruption to the neighboring community in the form of traffic diversions and slowdowns, considerable noise, and/or increased particulate matter in the air. All of these disruptions are expected to be temporary; nonetheless, all the projects in the target areas were assessed as having negative implementation impacts.

Operation Impacts

As all the projects in target areas involve improvements to existing, local infrastructure, it seems reasonable to conclude that benefits from these projects will accrue to their current users. Because all the roads are local roads, the current and future users are likely to be area residents. improvements made to these facilities will primarily benefit the residents of the target areas.

Conclusion

Distribution of the region's portion of the ARRA Highway Infrastructure Investment funding seems to have been equitable across population clusters. Target areas, which comprise 26% of the region's population, received 39% of the funding; the projects funded in these areas seem to benefit the local populations almost exclusively. There was no bias against minority or low-income communities in planning for these transportation improvements.