

CRCOG 2019 Legislative Agenda

Adopted by the CRCOG Policy Board January 30, 2019

The Capitol Region Council of Governments is made up of 38 cities and towns and serves one million residents covering most of the historic Hartford and Tolland counties.

The legislative items below express CRCOG's desire to partner with the state to offer effective, efficient and responsive public services to our residents.

- 1. Strengthen the Role of Councils of Governments.** To accelerate shared services at the regional level, Councils of Governments in CT, of which CRCOG is the largest organization, need stable funding, clear roles and need to be able to secure federal funding designated for counties.
 - **Provide Stable Funding for Councils of Governments.** To be vibrant and effective, Councils of Governments need long-term stability in funding. Ultimately, a direct, reliable source of funding, not dependent on either the state or municipalities, is needed.
 - **COGs as Counties for Purposes of Federal Funding.** Secure state approvals necessary for federal declaration that Councils of Governments shall be considered counties for receiving federal grants that may currently not be accessed. Use Council of Government (COG) boundaries as a framework over time for other service districts such as workforce development and human services delivery.
 - **Codify Council of Government Roles.** Codify COG roles in water and solid waste planning in state law.
- 2. Assist Home Owners with Crumbling Concrete Foundations.** In 2018, significant progress was made toward helping homeowners suffering from the effects of crumbling foundations. The enormity of the problem requires continued efforts to assist these homeowners as shown in the attached map of affected communities. The following legislative changes are recommended to continue the progress over the past year:
 - **Extend Public Act 16-45 an additional five years.** Public Act 16-45 allows for a property affected by crumbling foundations to have the property taxes reduced for five years. Initial homes that received the property tax reduction are two years away from their final reductions. This provision should be extended for an additional five years.
 - **Clarify that Condominiums are Authorized for Funding.** Remove any reference to the number of living units occupying a single foundation in the legislation regarding the captive insurance fund. This would clearly authorize condominiums for funding.

- **Streamline Application Process.** Modify legislation such that “CFSIC will obtain preliminary loan information of a sufficient nature to then, with the affected homeowner’s permission, transfer that information to an appropriate source.” Current legislation requires a single unified application.
- **Allow for MOUs.** Provide that any allocation of funds from any source that flows through DOH to CFSIC can be done by Memorandum of Understanding entered by the DOH and CFSIC signing authorities.
- **Streamline the Process of Changing Claims Management Guidelines.** Provide that any future “substantive” changes to the underwriting and claims management guidelines need a ten (10) day notice period rather than the thirty (30) day period currently required. Procedural changes can be instituted immediately upon passage by the CFSIC Board of Directors.
- **Stabilize Funding.** Address the flow of future allocations which currently are to be made in amounts of \$20 million over the current fiscal year and three subsequent fiscal years. The uncertainty of funding and the timing of when funding materializes impacts a licensed insurance company differently than a municipal government. The insurance company has no other source of funds to cover the liabilities until the bond funds are received. Currently, once the insurance companies’ liabilities in terms of claims exceed available cash, the acceptance of applications must be suspended. The procedures regarding allocation of funding needs to be reviewed if the concept of using a captive insurance company is to make sense for this type of problem. Timely bonding agenda items at the beginning of each new fiscal year would address this issue partially.
- **Increase Funding Limits for Testing Program.** Amend the current \$5,000,000 bond authorization for the testing program administered by CRCOG to allow for an additional cost of up to \$200 per amended report for homeowners who: had a visual examination performed prior to December 10, 2018; requires a priority rating according to the CFSIC guidelines and incurs a cost to receive that priority rating.

3. **Expand Municipal Shared Services Offerings.**

- **Leverage Technology to Expand Shared Services.** Support expanding shared services such as technology and software services based on CRCOG’s Nutmeg Cloud platform, hosted on the Nutmeg Network. This builds on the large portfolio of services already in place for towns and cities.
- **Coordinate Police, Fire, and EMS communications.** Conduct a study of Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) operations and funding (including governance, equipment needs) at a scale large enough to demonstrate savings and performance improvements that could be achieved through regional shared services.
- **Incentivize Municipal Service Sharing.** Reinstate the Regional Performance Incentive program to accelerate municipal service sharing.

4. **Support Economic and Environmental Vitality with Full Funding of PILOT and PRPT.** Create a statewide PILOT and PRPT Impact Equity (PIE) program to address the heavy impacts felt by some communities because of tax revenue losses due to: State of Connecticut or Connecticut Airport Authority properties and farm/forests; MM&E reimbursement; hospitals and colleges; and Public Act 490 lands. Fund the program with a modest increase in sales taxes. All towns would be expected to absorb a 15% loss of nontaxable property without reimbursement for the public good. Also, restore state funding for Enterprise Zones.

5. **Transportation Funding, and Grant and Approval Processes**

- **Revenues.** Identify revenues for the Special Transportation Fund to ensure a state of good repair, continue building a best-in-class transportation system, and encourage economic development. Tolling is a sustainable revenue option that all our neighboring states use.
- **Capital Funding for Transportation Projects.** Support continued funding for the Town Aid Road Program, Local Bridge Program, and Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP). Support the Interstate 84 Viaduct Reconstruction and Charter Oak Bridge projects as they will provide significant congestion relief, improve safety, and encourage economic development.
- **Expedited Grant and Approval Processes in Transportation.** Develop expedited grant and approval processes for state grants in aid for transportation-related development projects, including LOTICIP and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) projects. Support the continuation of the LOTICIP program as a successful alternative to STP-Urban federal grants to Municipalities.

6. **Transportation: Re-Establish Boston Rail Connection from Hartford.**

The newly opened Hartford Rail service has shown strong ridership on the Hartford-New Haven corridor. To complement this, work with the State of Massachusetts to close the rail gap between Springfield and Worcester to allow frequent passenger train service from Hartford to Boston, like the connection from Hartford to New Haven and New York City.

7. Transportation: Support and Expand CTfastrak. CT**fastrak** provided more than 10 million rides on the guideway in its first three years and 15 million rides in the broader corridor. The Hartford Division of CT**transit** showed an annual increase of 5% in ridership. Hartford was the only division that saw a gain in ridership, allowing the CT**transit** system to post a statewide increase of 1.2%. Continue supporting the expansion of CT**fastrak** to the east of Hartford and invest in CT**fastrak** service to Bradley Airport using existing HOV lanes.

8. Economic Development.

- **Continue to Fund Innovation Places.** The Innovation Places program has resulted in early successes. The InsurTech accelerator in Hartford is attracting interest from firms from around the world and has leveraged more than \$1 million in private funds. Combined with the new Stanley + Techstars facility in downtown Hartford, the entrepreneurial ecosystem is expanding. Recommend continued funding for Innovation Places for at least its initial five-years.
- **Increase Funding for Work-Based Learning.** In 2018 the General Assembly passed a bill establishing a \$50 million Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative. In December 2018, \$5 million was appropriated for the program. Appropriate the rest of the \$45 million to increase the impact of the program. Approve additional funding as necessary. The CRCOG region has more than 4,000 vacancies in core cluster occupations and more needs to be done to fill those positions promptly.
- **Brownfields.** Continue to support brownfields testing and remediation funding to reuse the many impacted sites along transit and rail corridors and in other areas across the region.

9. Technology.

- **Accelerate the State's Use of Strategic IT.** Require each state agency to develop a Strategic IT Plan and develop a common grant portal and one-door access for Human Services. Support implementation of the related MORE Commission's State and local IT plan.

- **Maintain Funding for and Expand the Nutmeg Network.** Following the recommendations produced by the MORE Commission's Municipal Efficiencies Committee in their 2015 report titled "Transforming Local Government Service Delivery through Technology", we recommend supporting the following technology initiatives. (See: http://crcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Final_Report_MORETechGroup.docx).Support expansion of Nutmeg Network to additional towns, libraries and schools in the region. Currently 36 of 38 CRCOG towns are connected to the Nutmeg Network.
- **Advance Digital Equity.** Improve digital equity by requiring Internet providers to provide low-cost service to households with members on the free or reduced lunch program.

10. K-12 Education

- **Shared Services and School Town Service Integration.** Require closer collaboration or integration of school and town administrative functions to reduce costs. CRCOG developed RFP language for integrated finance systems in one of its towns that could be replicated in other municipalities. CRCOG has 5 of 38 towns and cities with integrated school town back office functions and staff.
- **Special Education Funding.** Have the State assume all costs of special education with appropriate adjustments in ECS funding to reflect reduced special education expenditures at the local level. Other options would be to remove the cap on excess cost items and change the burden of proof in the special education assessment.
- **Minimum Budget Requirement.** Town grand lists are not increasing at a sufficient rate to support the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) as it currently stands. According to OPM, between the 2011 and 2015 assessment years, the average growth in equalized net grand lists was 6.49% statewide. That figure is significantly skewed by a few high growth towns, however, and the median rate is just 3.75%. Changes to the MBR could help ease the difficulties towns have with funding the rising costs of education, such as allowing a reduction in the MBR based on discernable savings.
- **Individual Education Plan (IEP) Appeals Process.** If legally possible, empower Regional Education Service Centers to serve as the sole appeal process for decisions on individual education plans to avoid unnecessary legal expenses and delays.

11. Local Government Revenue Diversification: Tourism Growth Incentive

Grant. The State of Connecticut currently imposes a room occupancy tax of 15% for hotels and motel stays and 11% for bed and breakfast stays (CGS Section 12-408 and 12-411). To help diversify local government revenues, it is proposed that each Connecticut municipality receive an annual tourism incentive grant from the state equal to 50% of the revenue generated by hotels and bed and breakfasts in the municipality above and beyond the revenue generated from hotels and bed and breakfasts in each community in 2018. These payments would be payable only if there is revenue growth over the 2018 baseline. The state would not lose revenue. This bill would assist municipalities with revenue diversification without any burden and would not place an additional burden on consumers.

12. Increase Sustainability Initiatives. Support sustainability approach through continuation of energy conservation projects, micro-grids and Zero Emission Renewable Energy Credit projects for Towns and Boards of Education. Support Sustainable CT initiative in which many towns and cities in the region participate.

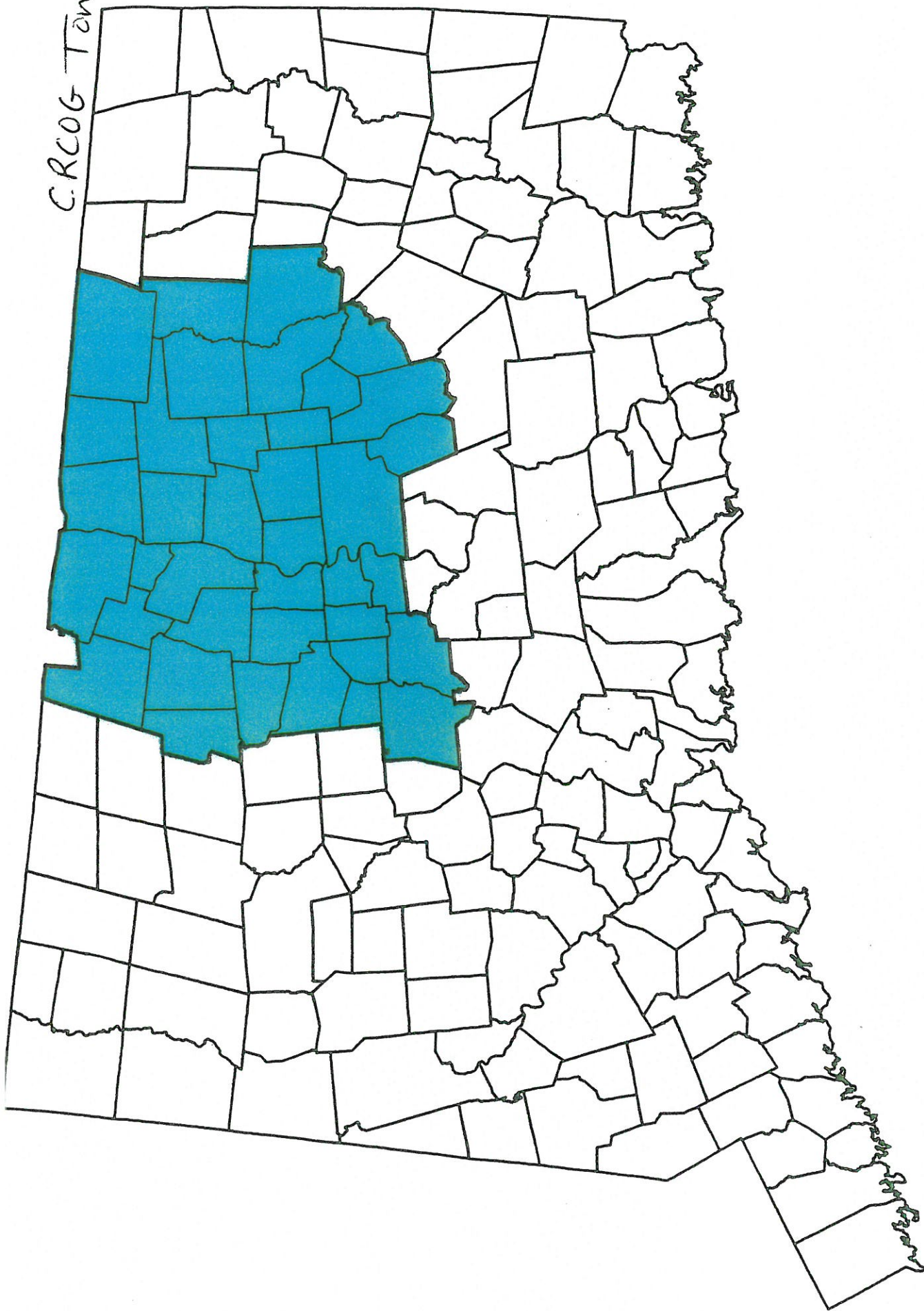
13. Allow Regional Asset Districts for Metropolitan Regions. Allow for creation of Regional Asset Districts to promote regional recreational and cultural facilities. Permit regions or towns to enact food and beverage taxes to fund such a district (to be supplemented by local property taxes). Funds to be distributed by COGs for infrastructure improvements for these facilities.

14. Update Prevailing Wage Provisions. CRCOG supports an update of prevailing wage provisions. Along with CCM and COST, CRCOG supports updating the threshold for renovation projects to \$500,000 or higher, as well as having the project minimum threshold indexed automatically to inflation in the construction industry. CRCOG further supports combining the prevailing wage threshold for renovation projects and CHRO projects into a single threshold.

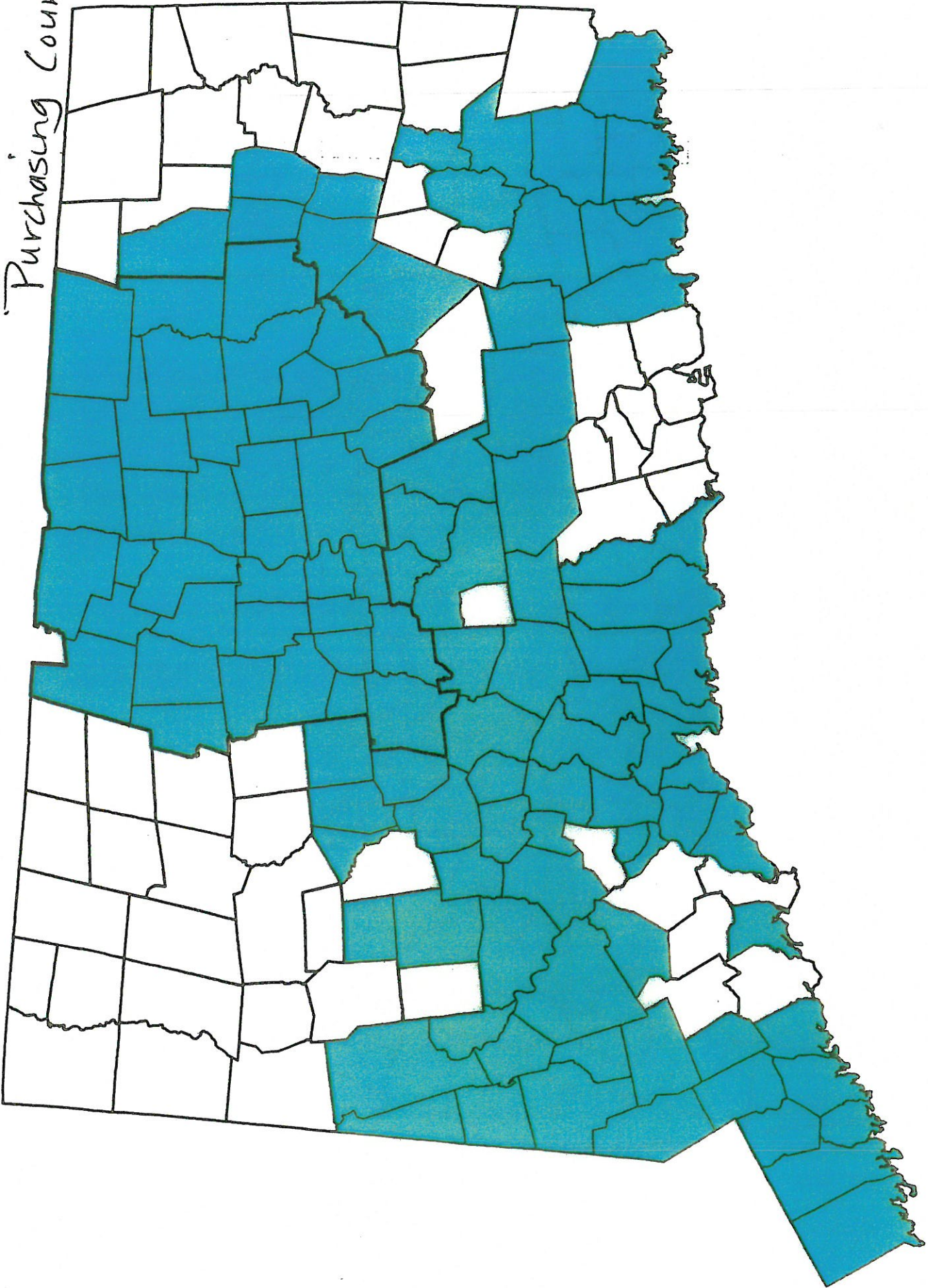
Attachments

- Map of 38 towns and cities in CRCOG
- Map of 116 towns in CRCOG Purchasing Council
- Map of 45 towns in the CRCOG online permitting system for towns and cities
- CTfastrak graph of 10 million rides in first three years of operation
- Map of LOTCIP projects in the state and region
- Map of crumbling foundations in the state and region

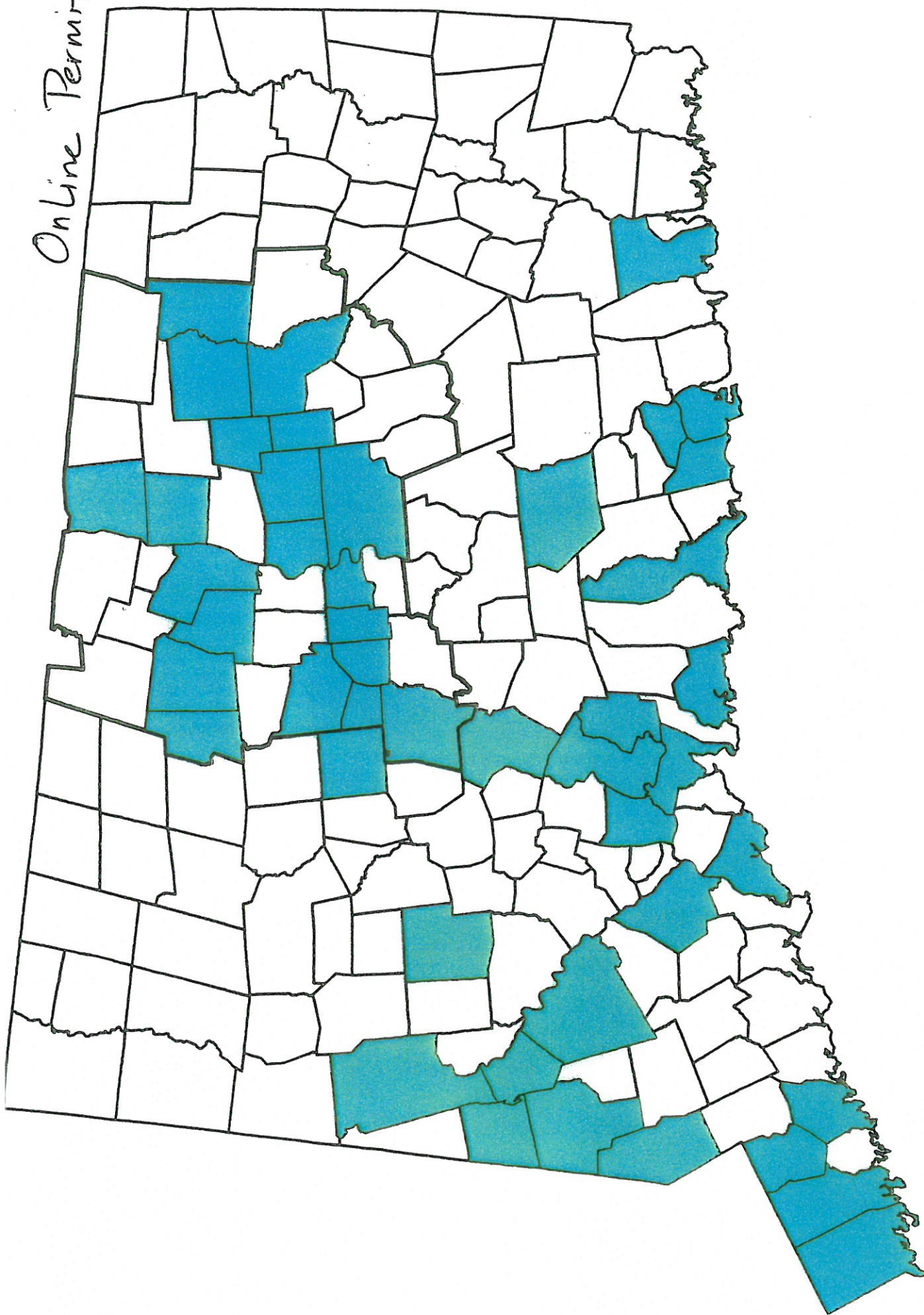
CRCOG Towns



Purchasing Council



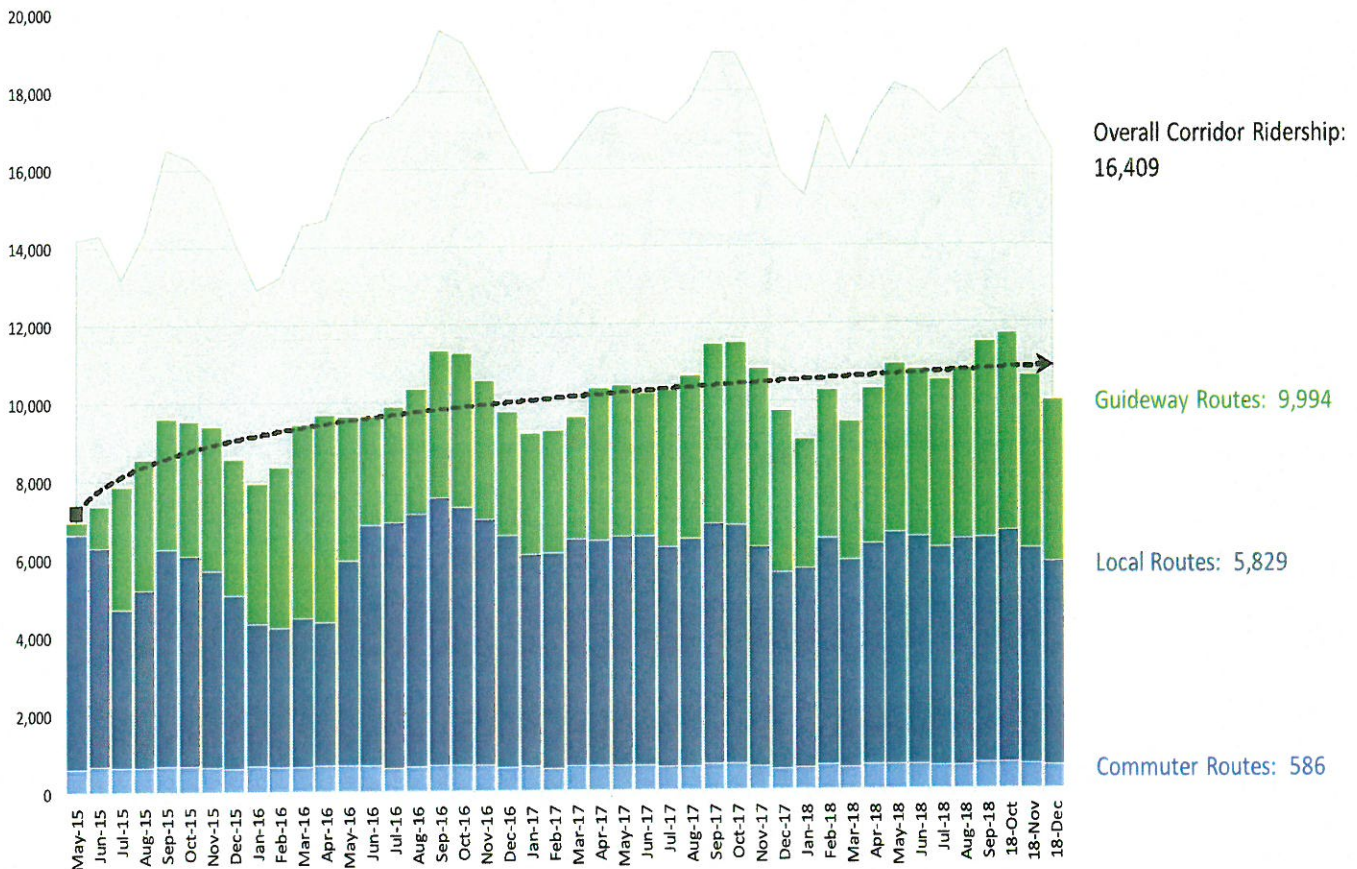
Online Permitting





Average Weekday Ridership

May 2015—December 2018



Legend

Guideway Routes

New or revised routes that use the CTfastrak guideway. These routes provide service along the guideway, as well as to local destinations.

Local Routes

These are the "blue" buses that operated in the corridor prior to the opening of CTfastrak. They include the following routes: 31/33, 37/39, 41, 69. They operate in the corridor but not on the guideway.

Commuter Routes

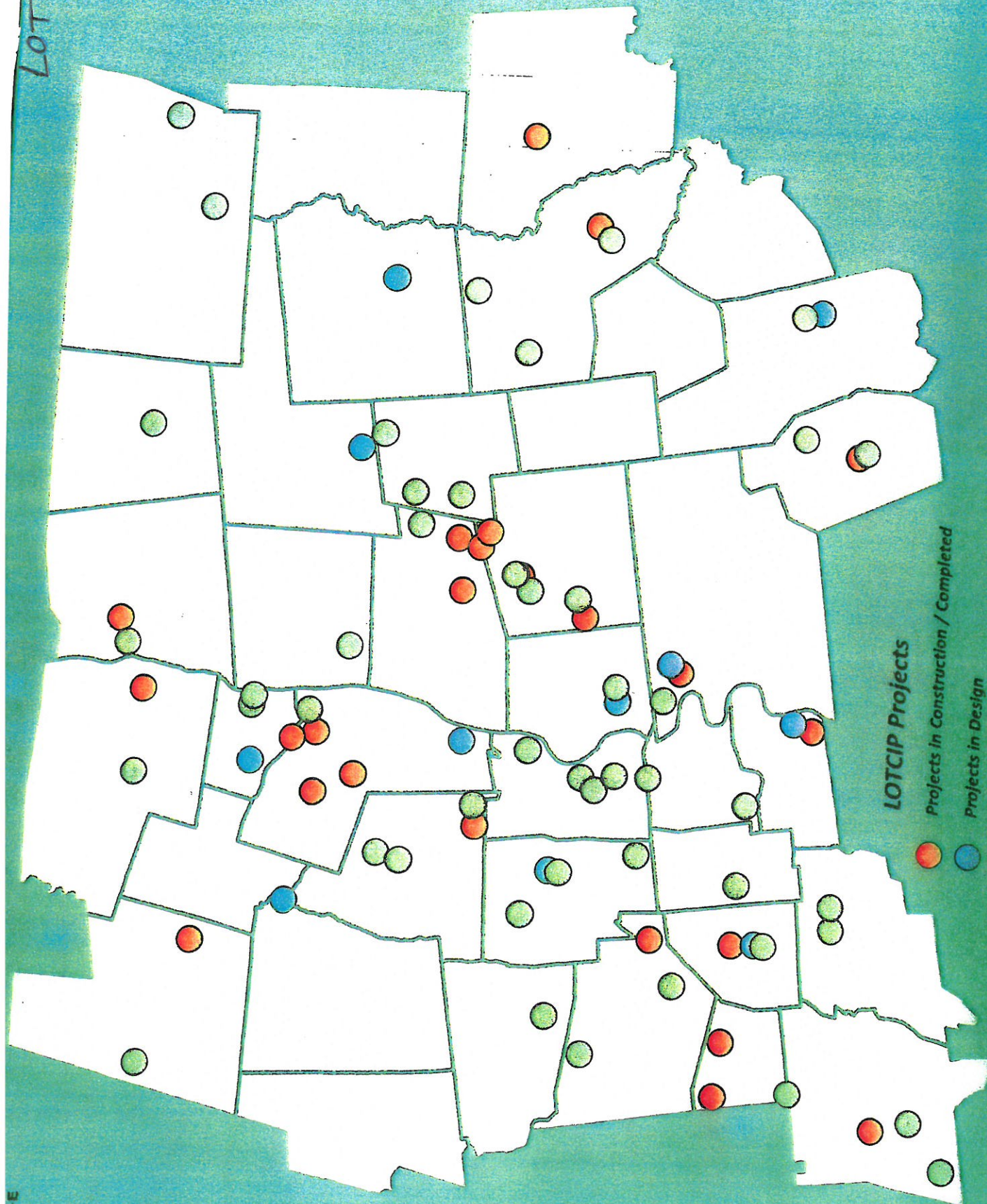
Buses operated under the CTtransit Express brand. These routes existed prior to the opening of CTfastrak, but provide complementary service.

About the data

This infographic presents passenger trip data for the CTfastrak service. The data comes directly from the Connecticut Department of Transportation and is not the product of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CROG). CROG provides this visual resource to make the data more accessible.

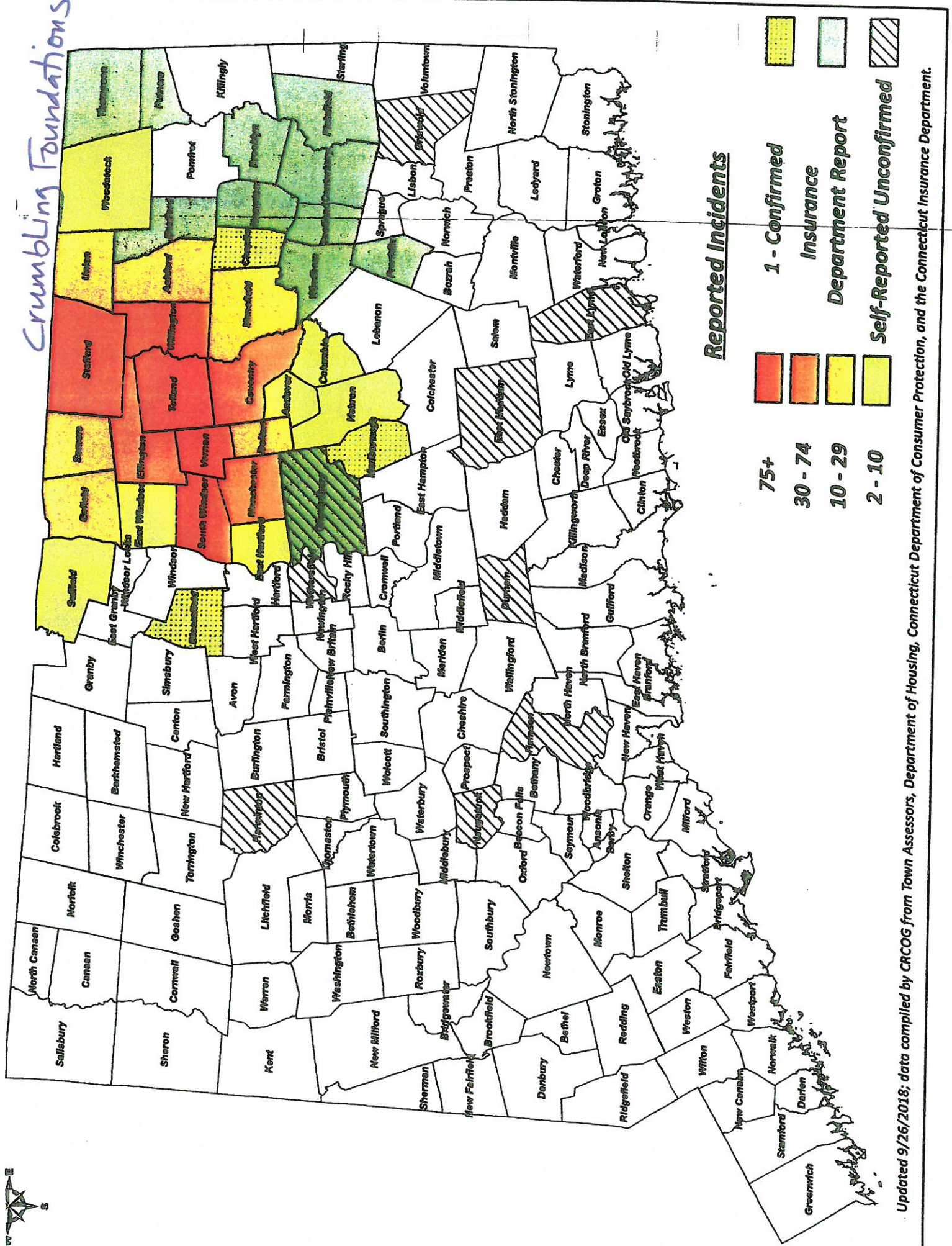
*Technical issues that occurred in February through April of 2016 may have resulted in artificially low ridership numbers for those months.

Data current as of: 1/7/2019 <http://www.ct.gov/dot/ctfastrak>





Crumbling Foundations



Updated 9/26/2018; data compiled by CRCOG from Town Assessors, Department of Housing, Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection, and the Connecticut Insurance Department.