

MEMORANDUM

To: Policy Board
From: Matt Hart, Executive Director
CC: CRCOG Staff
Meeting Date: March 22, 2023
Subject: Staff Reports

Below please find a summary report from staff for the Board's information. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

- Appointment of Caitlin Palmer as CRCOG's Director of Regional Planning & Development - I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Ms. Caitlin Palmer, AICP, as CRCOG's Director of Regional Planning & Development, effective April 1, 2023.

Caitlin started at CRCOG in December 2018, and served most recently as a Principal Planner in our former Community Development section of Planning. She also worked as the Chief of Zoning Administration in Hartford and earned her BFA at James Madison University and her MS in Urban Planning at Columbia.

We were fortunate to have a highly qualified pool of candidates for this position. Caitlin impressed those of us involved in the selection process as someone with the experience, skills, and talent to take on this challenge. In meeting with Caitlin, I was inspired by her passion for her field, as well as her dedication to CRCOG. I look forward to working closely with Caitlin in her new role and am excited about the future of our new Department of Regional Planning & Development.

Congratulations to Caitlin as she embarks upon this exciting new chapter in her career!

- Approval of CRCOG Office Lease – As directed by the Policy Board, at its March 8 meeting the Executive Committee reviewed and authorized me to execute a ten-year lease of approximately 12,000 sq. ft. of office space at 350 Church St. ("The Metro Center") in Hartford. The new space will provide a centralized location downtown in Hartford. The space is more accessible from the highway, has better parking facilities, and greater security features compared to our existing space. The approved lease also includes 35 visitor vouchers a month as well as the ability for CRCOG to pay for additional visitors at a flat rate of \$5 per visitor.

We plan to move into the space in January 2023. This would leave a gap of time between September 1, 2023, and the move. We expect that our current landlord will

allow us to remain in our current space for that duration. If not, we will create a back-up plan for temporary space for employees who must be in the office combined with most of the CRCOG staff working from home.

Needless to say, our team is excited about the move as the lease presents us with an excellent long-term option for our organization, with room for future growth and other benefits. We greatly appreciate the support of the Policy Board and the Executive Committee!

- CTDOT Community Connectivity Grant Program – As reported at the last meeting, CTDOT has announced a third solicitation for Community Connectivity Grants to towns and cities across Connecticut to fund municipal construction projects. The Community Connectivity Grant Program (CCGP) is an infrastructure improvement program that provides funding for local initiatives to improve safety and accessibility for all road users and to encourage use of healthy and environmentally sustainable modes of travel.

Grant awards are contingent upon the State Bond Commission's approval of \$10 million. The funding limits for grants awarded in this solicitation are between \$100,000 and \$800,000 and can only be used to fund activities related to project construction. Municipalities previously awarded a grant under this program must have submitted and received approval of their final project design submission package by the application deadline, to be considered for this solicitation.

Although not required for this round, CTDOT will give additional consideration to municipalities that have developed a Complete Street Plan or Policy, ADA transition plan, or comprehensive safety action plan, as recommended by the state's Vision Zero Council. For future solicitations, municipalities will be required to have an adopted Complete Streets Plan or comprehensive safety action plan to be eligible to apply for funding under the CCGP; this recommendation came from the state's Vision Zero Council.

Grant applications are available on the Community Connectivity portal and will be accepted until 4:00 p.m. on Friday, July 21, 2023. For more information on the Community Connectivity Program, please visit portal.ct.gov/DOT/PP_Intermodal/CTConnectivity/CT-Connectivity-CCGP.

- CTDOT Fare Payment and Cost Information - The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) reminds residents that it will resume fare collection on all buses and ADA paratransit as of April 1, 2023. Also, on April 1, the state is introducing a new fare payment option for all CTtransit and CTfastrak customers to purchase bus passes and board the bus with their smartphones. A pilot program with Token Transit will allow customers to buy two-hour Adult, Senior/Disabled, and

Youth bus passes for all local CTtransit and CTfastrak buses. To use Token Transit, customers can download the Token Transit mobile app or use Transit App, Moovit, Agile Mile, or Google Maps, which are all integrated with Token Transit.

For more information, help planning a trip, and a list of routes, visit CTtransit.com.

BIL/IIJA UPDATE

- Summary of [Memorandum](#) presented to the Transportation Committee at their March 20, 2023, meeting:
 - SS4A Round 2 Notice of Funding Opportunity is anticipated to be announced in April 2023. An additional \$1.1 billion is expected to be available for Round 2. CRCOG Staff will review the Notice of Funding Opportunity once it is issued and provide additional information. Please submit project ideas to [Elizabeth Sanderson](#).
 - Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) FY2023 Discretionary Grant Program
 - CRCOG issued Letters of Support for the following applications:
 - City of Hartford, Main Street North Streetscape Improvements.
 - Planning Grant Joint Application by Towns of Wethersfield and Rocky Hill for a corridor study of the Silas Deane Highway (CT Route 99)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced that \$1 million in non-competitive funding is available to the Hartford-East Hartford-Middletown Metropolitan Statistical Area (Hartford MSA) to fund development of a Climate Action Plan for the region as part of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program. As the predominant regional planning organization in the Hartford MSA, CRCOG is well-suited to serve as lead organization for this grant, which will be administered as a cooperative agreement.
- Visit CRCOG's [BIL/IIJA webpage](#) for information about federal programs, including:
 - U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) announced the Key Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) and anticipated timelines for FY2023. A [Memorandum](#) summarizing the discretionary grant programs that may be most applicable to CRCOG is available for your review. The provided list is not exhaustive, and content is subject to change as more information is provided about each program.
 - U.S. DOT Application Checklist for FY2023 funding opportunities – a [pdf of the Application Checklist](#), and link to [U.S. DOT's webpage](#), is provided in the General Information section of the BIL Webpage.

- CRCOG staff are collaborating with representatives from multiple state agencies and departments, including BILT, DOT, DEEP, and DEMHS to review funding opportunities and/or coordinate efforts.
- CRCOG is seeking information from member towns about what federal discretionary grant programs you or other agencies/entities in your town have applied for. Please provide this information so that CRCOG and the State may gain a greater understanding of which federal programs are of most interest to you and the region.
- Future BIL/IIJA Programs to keep in mind as budget season approaches:
 - Safe Streets and Roads for All – Round 2 anticipated April 2023
- Bridge Investment Program – Round 2 anticipated Summer 2023

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

- The Capitol Region Purchasing Council (CRPC) has issued the bid for Swimming Pool Treatment and Chemicals and Bituminous Curb Mix. This bid will close on March 21st.
- CRCOG has fully executed the contract with EPR Systems for Fire/EMS Records Management Software. If you are interested in participating via a side letter agreement, please contact Kim Bona at kbona@crcog.org
- EDA CARES Grants:
 - CRCOG Staff is working on the draft narrative for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). We met with our consultant on March 9 to go over branding for the region.
 - Long Term Recovery: We held the Long Term Recover Steering Committee meeting on February 23, and Goman + York presented a preview of some of the research and deliverables they are working on.
 - Digital Transition Technical Assistance: HostingCT is working on case studies for businesses which utilized these funds.
 - Webinars: Collaboration of Minority Women Professionals has scheduled business coaching webinars for April 19, and July 18, 2023. They are holding a webinar on Capability Statements and Business Certifications on February 15.
- Brownfields Assessments: East Hartford – EPA has some comments on the QAPP for the Enfield Bigelow Carpet site. Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF): Norwich application should receive feedback from Capital for Change by early March. Staff is working on dissolving the agreement for funds with East Hartford Venture due to the seizure of the property by eminent domain. CRCOG has received an application for

assessment funds for 169 Bartholomew, and in light of the previous use of the site is seeking both eligibility approval from both the EPA and DEEP.

- Our consulting team of RRS and TetraTech presented Task II (Waste Diversion Opportunities and Strategies) to the project steering committee on March 9, 2023. Task II focuses on utility based pricing, organics/food waste (residential and commercial), and regional waste authorities. CRCOG is currently developing an application for a RWA Grant through CTDEEP, with intentions to reconvene the Central CT Solid Waste Authority (CCSWA). A Presentation of the Study and next steps will be presented by Jim Frey of RRS to CRCOG's Policy Board for input and further discussion on March 22, 2023.
- CRCOG is working with the City of Norwalk to determine electronic document management system (EDMS) self-sufficiency options. Currently, Norwalk is the only remaining municipality tying onto CRCOG's EDMS platform (Hyland/OnBase) to manage online permitting. CRCOG will be reaching out to municipalities to garner continued interest in CRCOG's Regional Job Portal.
- CRCOG met with CCM and Novus Insight, LLC to discuss technical capabilities, cost, and viability of CRCOG's Regional Job Portal Pilot. Next steps include plug-ins and API through job sites, including LinkedIn and Indeed.
https://crocog.altrulink.com/auth.cfm?1=1&sign_in=1
- CRCOG's RFP for a HUD Consultant was published on February 14, and responses were due March 14 at 2:00 p.m.
- RPIP Grants for Shared Building Official, Shared Assessment and Shared Animal Control have been fully executed. CRCOG hosted meetings on February 16 and 17 for the Shared Building Official and Shared Assessment programs.

REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Staff is moving forward with Groton, New Britain, Torrington, and Willimantic to scope Year 5 quick-build demonstration projects. Staff is also working with DPH on the new NOFO issued by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for another 5-year program to continue these efforts.
 - Groton – intersection improvement demonstration project planned to reduce crossing distances, tighten turning radiuses, adding a median with paint, tape, plastic delineators, and planters and adding bike lane connections to nearby park (additional city funds included)
 - New Britain – planning for two potential demonstration projects and implementation of one on Arch Street that may include a “slow street”

component or bump out for traffic calming and reducing pedestrian crossing distances.

- Completed demonstration project examples: [Hartford](#) and [Waterbury](#)
 - Also always looking for elementary schools for our “train-the-trainer” program with offer with Bike Walk CT through this grant, with the goal of schools implementing curriculum afterwards, i.e. [Middletown](#).
- Staff continues to participate in the Complete Streets Leadership Academy program led by Smart Growth America (SGA) with CTDOT, DPH, and participating communities, and is preparing to attend in-person workshops March 21 and 22.
 - Staff continues outreach with interested communities to explore expanding the existing scooter share program and is in discussion for potential short-term pilots with limited geographic scope. Additionally, CRCOG as well as CTDOT and UConn are preparing to enter into a data sharing agreement with Superpedestrian to enable these organizations to access Mobility Data Specifications (MDS) data and to enable CTDOT to create a platform for sharing the data with specified employees, including those in member communities.
 - Staff have begun working internally to update the region’s 2024 Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) and are holding weekly internal meetings.
 - Reviewing implementation progress and status of previous plan
 - Developing public engagement strategy for POCD
 - Identifying composition of POCD steering committee, and put out a call for volunteers with town planning and economic development staff
 - Exploring key themes and organization
 - Staff conducted a regional survey on municipal responses to Public Act 21-29, focusing on the opt-out provisions relating to Accessory Dwelling Units and parking minimums. The survey also asks for town feedback on the new training requirements for land use commissioners. We had a 100% response rate and are currently analyzing “opt outs” for ADUs (i.e., 22 communities “opted out” but in practice, approximately only three communities currently do not permit ADUs).
 - In partnership with Sustainable CT, CRCOG conducted outreach to communities for their participation in “Building Together – Community Focused Affordable Housing Plan Implementation in the Greater Hartford Region,” an affordable housing implementation pathways pilot project available to Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) communities.
 - Eight communities submitted a Statement of Interest in the program.
 - Follow-up discussions with interested communities and CRCOG staff, Sustainable CT, and the Equity Coaching staff are scheduled on March 15 to better understand unique challenges facing each town.

- CRCOG has sent CIRCA a Memorandum of Understanding to provide planning services for the Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation plan update.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

- CRCOG's update of its Metropolitan Transportation Plan is underway, and the draft report was released for public comment on February 22. Hybrid public meetings were held on March 8 and 9. The public comment period will remain open through March 26, and action will be sought from the Policy Board at the April meeting. Additional information is available at <https://crocog.org/mtp>.
- The Transportation Committee met on March 20. Staff updated the Committee on the following: Upcoming Safety Workshops, Regional Roundabouts Screening Update, CTDOT Traffic Request Procedures, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Updates, Community Connectivity Grant Program Solicitation, Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP) Draft Rankings, CTDOT Bus Shelter Enhancement Program Update, MAP Forum Multi-State Freight Working Group Meeting, and 2023 LOTCIP Project Solicitation Summary of Applications. The committee acted on Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Confirmation of Priority Projects, Resolution: Canton Route 44 Corridor Study, and one (1) LOTCIP Funding Increase Request in Suffield.
- The solicitation for the Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP) was distributed to eligible towns in November 2022. CRCOG staff received seven (7) applications by the deadline in February 2023. CRCOG staff reviewed the applications and provided draft rankings to the Transportation Committee. Action will be sought from the Transportation Committee and Policy Board in April, and the top four (4) applications will be sent to CTDOT for consideration.
- CRCOG staff distributed the solicitation for Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTCIP) in December 2022. Applications were due February 22, and CRCOG staff received 27 project applications from 22 municipalities. The solicitation includes \$33.8 million in funding, and \$57.7 million in applications have been received. CRCOG staff has begun reviewing the applications, and draft rankings will be shared with the Transportation Committee in April. Staff anticipates that approval of the rankings will be sought from the Transportation Committee and Policy Board in May.
- Staff continues to advance the following studies: Capitol Region Roundabout Screening; Routes 190 and 220 Traffic Impact Study, Enfield; Farmington Area Connectivity Study; TOD Roles, Visioning, Viability, and Tools Analysis; Route 20 Corridor Study, Windsor Locks; East Coast Greenway Gap Closure Study.

- The Route 44 Corridor Study, Canton is in the initiation phase. Consultant interviews have been completed, and rankings are being finalized.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Work on the FY 19 State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) is nearing completion; DEMHS just gave all regions an extension through June. CRCOG has begun work on the FY 20 grant. All open grants include funds for training and exercise, contractual support and sustainment and maintenance of regional equipment. There are set asides for the Hartford Bomb Squad, Capitol Region HAZMAT team and Metropolitan Medical Response System.
- CRCOG provided a letter of concurrence to DPH for its submission to the CDC for Budget Period 5 of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) grant. Additionally, CRCOG is preparing correspondence that affirms our interest in remaining as the fiduciary agent/grant manager for the next five-year period beginning in 2024.