

# Capitol Region Council of Governments

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**DATE:** FEBRUARY 23, 2009  
**TO:** CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, REVENUE  
AND BONDING  
**FROM:** MELODY CURREY, CHAIRMAN, CRCOG POLICY BOARD  
LYLE D. WRAY, PHD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
**SUBJECT:** CONCERN REGARDING GOVERNOR'S BILL NO. 833, AN ACT  
AUTHORIZING BONDS, SECS. 9(a)(2) & 9(a)(3)

These comments relate to Governor's Bill No. 833, Section 9(a)(2)—grants-in-aid to municipalities for the acquisition of equipment necessary to regionalize services, not exceeding \$10,000,000; and Section 9(a)(3)—grants-in-aid to municipalities under the regionalization incentive grant program for capital improvements to promote regionalization of an existing municipal service, not exceeding \$40,000,000.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is a regional planning organization representing the City of Hartford and the 28 surrounding communities. Our members have collaborated for more than 30 years on a wide range of projects to benefit our towns individually and the region as a whole. One of the many areas we dedicate ourselves to is helping members improve governmental efficiency and save tax dollars through regional shared services and other direct service initiatives.

The local government fiscal crisis we find ourselves in will not go away. Without significant changes to the way local governments provide services, programs will be cut, professionalism and morale within local governments will suffer, and citizens will pay higher property taxes. CRCOG is committed to facilitating regional service sharing, but recognizes the need for funding the existing Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program to get the most promising projects implemented. We also strongly assert that intermunicipal coordination by a Regional Planning Organization like CRCOG can facilitate decision-making and provide technical assistance that is not just necessary, but vital to the success of these projects. The regionalization incentive grant program, funded by these bond authorizations, removes RPOs from this important coordination role. Rather than establish a new program, the state should be focusing its energy on and providing this \$50 million in funding to the Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program that already exists.

CRCOG is already encouraging, coordinating, and facilitating many regional shared services in our area of operation with the support of member dues contributions and State Grant in Aid (SGIA). The SGIA, which allows CRCOG to continue our work in cooperative purchasing, municipal services, and fulfilling legislative mandates concerning regional land use planning, was eliminated in the Governor's budget

proposal. The State Grant in Aid for Regional Planning was funded last year at \$1,000,000 statewide, then cut to \$950,000 in July 2008. The CRCOG share of this grant is \$128,000.

Here are a few of the regional shared service initiatives which we are currently undertaking with the financial support of the State Grant in Aid, local dues, and Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program.

- Having core, SGIA-funded staff available allowed us to apply for, receive and successfully administer nearly \$5.2 million in OPM Regional Performance Incentive Grants. CRCOG and its towns are now carrying out 10 projects including the shared development of information technology applications, cooperative equipment purchase and maintenance of the Farmington Valley Trail System, shared development and implementation of an information technology system to support regional and local health district operations, and four public safety initiatives, including establishment of a Regional Emergency Operations Center.
- CRCOG local assessments and the SGIA continue to support the 40 year old Capitol Region Purchasing Council (CRPC) program, which saved its 73 member towns in FY 2008 almost \$2 million, and \$1.5 million in the prior year. The Council conducts 18 to 20 bids annually for a variety of goods and services, and saves its members money through conducting competitive bids on their behalf and providing access to volume-based savings. The Council also runs a Natural Gas Procurement Program that serves 33 municipalities. Two new initiatives that are being developed now, and which will be up and running by the end of the calendar year, are a Job Order Contracting Program and a cooperative purchasing Electricity Consortium.

We are pleased that this proposed bond authorization recognizes the importance of regional cooperation in the provision of essential municipal services, and would provide funding to support such efforts. However, based on our experience with the Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program and our long-standing Capitol Region Purchasing Council, you still need one entity to coordinate and shepherd these efforts. As budgets and staffing tighten at the municipal level, Capitol Region towns are increasingly looking to CRCOG to be that coordinator and facilitator. The proposed regionalization incentive grant program does not enable the State's existing regional coordination structure—the regional planning organizations—to play a role in implementing new regional service sharing initiatives. In addition, the Governor's proposed elimination of the State Grant in Aid for Regional Planning further impedes our ability to develop new ideas and initiatives that can help local governments function more efficiently and cost-effectively.

In an era where towns are going to need to cooperate, coordinate, and consider regional shared or consolidated services in order to deal with our fiscal crisis, CRCOG is a vital mechanism for advocating for and supporting our towns as a group. We have provided attachments with more detail regarding the programmatic work of the Capitol Region Council of Governments and hope it will help you understand the extensive impact we have on the livelihood of municipalities.

## **CRCOG Service Sharing Initiative Regional Performance Incentive Grant Projects**

The Capitol Region Council of Governments was awarded \$5.2 million in grant funds from the State of Connecticut in 2008 to pursue 10 service sharing projects. Those grants have been leveraged to start sharing in all 29 CRCOG towns and several towns outside of the CRCOG region. The grants range over a broad array of local government services. Below is a summary of each project and their latest activities.

### **Regional Animal Control**

**Grant amount: \$515,000**

**Estimated savings: ~\$2.5 million** (based on prices of buying land and building individual facilities in four separate towns)

This grant provides funding for the purchase of land on which the Connecticut Humane Society shall construct a new Regional Animal Control Facility shared by the towns of East Hartford, Hartford, Manchester and South Windsor.

Most recently a parcel has been selected and a price agreed to with the land owner. The towns will be meeting with the Connecticut Humane Society shortly.

### **Digital Health Departments**

**Grant amount: \$355,476**

**Estimated savings: ~\$400,000 for software development and hardware purchase** (versus independent development and purchases)

The grant provides funding to purchase a web-based system for local and regional health departments to add capacity for data entry in the field and to store and track all inspections, permits, run queries, reports and conduct data analysis. The grant provides access to 12 towns through 5 health departments. It is possible to expand this software to other towns after the implementation period.

An RFP has been conducted and a finalist selected. The final contract is currently under review. CRCOG is partnering with the Connecticut Association of Directors of Public Health on this project and will provide leadership on helping expand the software to other town and regional departments.

### **IT Application Sharing and Development**

**Grant amount: \$515,000**

**Estimated savings: ~\$1 million** (~\$33,000 per town with pilot projects - depending on types of software pursued, plus much more in long-term savings)

This grant provides funding for the Capitol Region Council of Governments to set up an infrastructure through which towns can cooperate in IT software purchasing and development. Several pilot projects will also be conducted with the grant. There are 31 towns participating in this project.

Phase 1 Needs Assessment is complete and the group is working to establish an online web portal to share home-grown software and information. There is also an RFP under development for shared permit tracking software.

# **CRCOG Service Sharing Initiative Regional Performance Incentive Grant Projects**

## **GIS OrthoFlight and Mapping Data**

**Grant amount: \$357,000**

**Estimated savings: ~\$1.3 million** (if towns contracted for individual flights)

This grant provides funding for a region-wide orthoflight at 1"=100' scale. The data will become the property of CRCOG and its member towns (plus the Town of Plainville).

A contract has been finalized and the flight is scheduled. A higher quality of data was obtained than was expected with available grant funding. Towns also have "buy-up" options to enhance the data available if they so choose.

## **Web-based GIS Enhancement**

**Grant amount: \$25,000**

**Estimated savings: ~\$125,000** (if participating towns paid for enhancements individually)

This grant provides funding to add functionality to the existing CRCOG web-based GIS system used by its members.

Enhancement options are being evaluated and changes are expected to be implemented by May 2009.

## **Farmington Valley Trail Maintenance**

**Grant amount: \$216,300**

**Estimated savings: ~\$720,000** (if participating towns bought equipment individually)

This grant provides funding for equipment purchase and development of an agreement to share that equipment with the 8 towns that the Farmington Valley Greenway Trail runs through.

All but two of the eight towns have gained approval for the sharing MOU. It is anticipated that all approvals will be complete by March 2009 and bids will go out for equipment at that time.

## **Regional EOC**

**Grant amount: \$515,000**

**Estimated savings: ~\$1.9 million** (if each town built its own EOC)

This grant provides funding for the renovation of an existing area in the Manchester Public Works building to be a Regional Emergency Operations Center.

An engineer has been selected and design is complete. An RFP for construction services will be released in March 2009.

# **CRCOG Service Sharing Initiative Regional Performance Incentive Grant Projects**

## **Regional Training Center**

**Grant amount: \$1,051,101**

**Estimated savings: ~\$50,000 per town per year** (versus rental fees of other facilities)

This grant provides funding for the establishment of a Regional Police Training Facility in Rocky Hill, CT. Twenty-seven towns are participating in this project, six of which are non-CRCOG towns.

A site has been identified in Rocky Hill and an RFP for design/build is under review. It is expected that the RFP will be released in March 2009.

## **Law Enforcement Data Sharing**

**Grant amount: \$1,292,860**

**Estimated savings: ~\$4.3 million** (for total individual town software development and maintenance costs)

This grant provides funding for law officers to share data regarding arrests, vehicle status and other information among departments. Thirty-one towns are participating in this project.

A vendor has been identified and has commenced software development. Tests of the system are underway.

## **Regional Traffic Team**

**Grant amount: \$353,290**

**Estimated savings: ~\$980,000** (if each town developed this function and bought equipment independently)

This grant provides funding for the creation of three mobile units for investigation of traffic incidents. This expands the ability of law enforcement to respond to these incidents without duplicating efforts across towns.

Purchases are being made for some equipment (crash zone reporting software, trailers). Training classes have been scheduled.



## **CRCOG HIGHLIGHTS 2007-2008**

### **Prepared applications and implemented grant funding for regional efforts and member towns**

Enhanced service sharing mission with receipt of **\$5,196,027** in grants from OPM  
Obligated **over \$8 million** in federal urban funds for road projects  
Awarded **\$440,000** for 11 paratransit vans through the Section 5310 program  
Awarded **\$900,000** for Elderly and Disabled Demand Responsive Transportation  
Obligated **over \$2.2 million** to provide jobs access transportation across the region  
Awarded **\$2.4 million** in FY 2006 and 2007 federal homeland security grants  
Completed work under the first EPA Brownfields Petroleum Assessment Grant (**\$200,000 grant**)  
Completed final draft of FEMA Pre-Disaster Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (**\$322,000 grant**)

### **Provided direct technical assistance, training, supplies, and equipment to towns**

Completed CRCOG assistance on Bolton Route 44 Land Use study  
Completed requirements of an Agriculture Viability Grant  
Responded to ongoing requests for information and assistance on livable community issues  
Provided technical assistance to towns to solve traffic and transportation planning issues  
Provided assistance to towns developing Safe Routes to School plans  
Assisted the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice  
Initiated a partnership to develop a public works inter-town service cooperation pilot program  
Completed several Regional Emergency Disaster (RED) Plan table top exercises  
Completed a 6-day All Hazards Incident Management Team Training for first responders  
Conducted 5 HAZMAT IQ courses for the region's fire departments  
Continue to train all first responders in the National Incident Management System (NIMS)  
Supplied towns with new and upgraded supplies and technology to support public safety

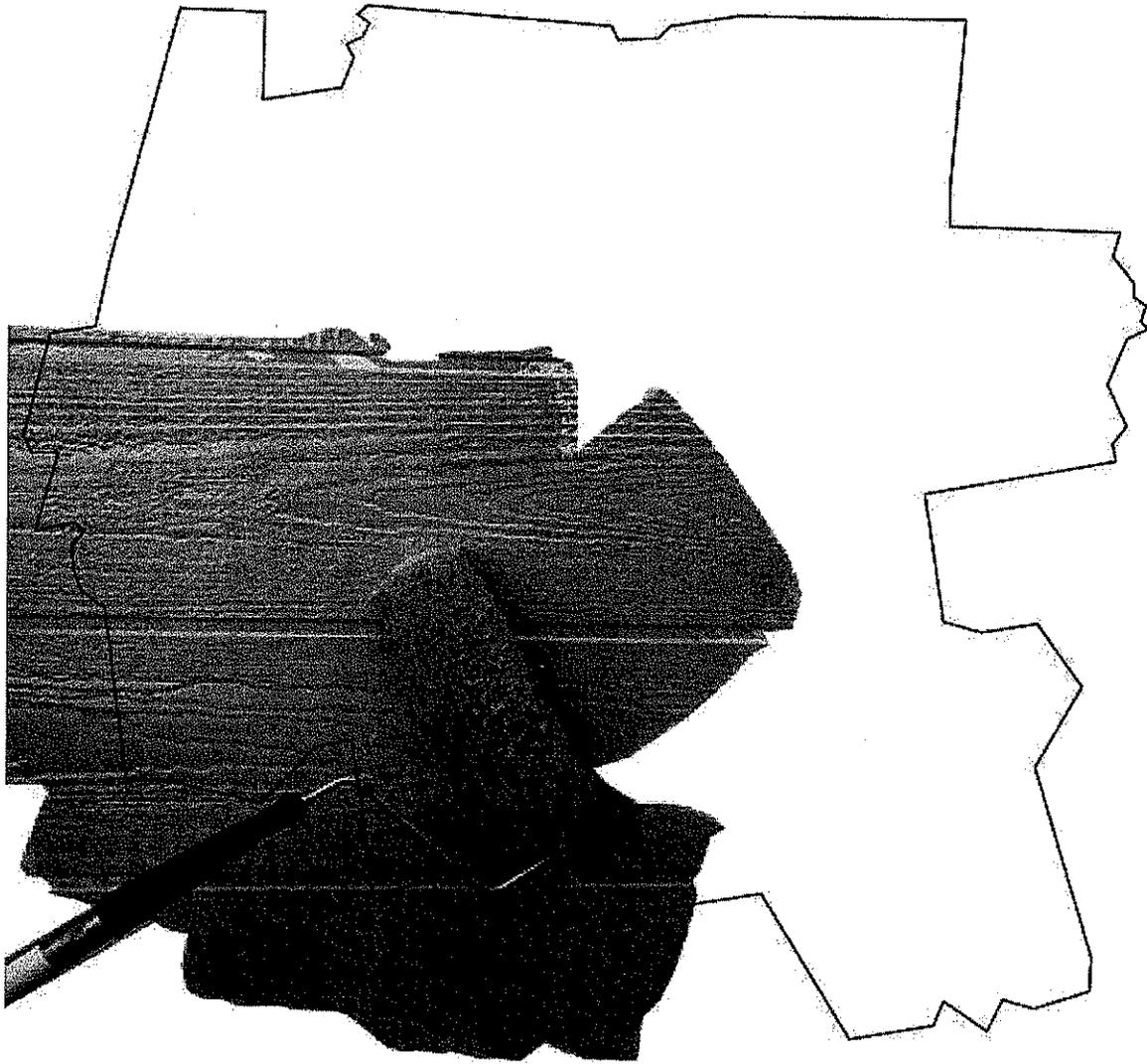
### **Assisted in planning and implementation efforts to support responsible long-term development**

Implementing the regional transit strategy, including transit-oriented development  
Drafting a new bicycle and pedestrian plan  
Conducting the Route 195 corridor study in Tolland  
Conducting the Route 305 corridor study  
Conducting a study of how to improve transit to employment centers in Windsor and Bloomfield  
Conducting a capital improvement planning project for historic Union Station in Hartford  
Establishing an agreement with Journey Home to address long-term homelessness  
Working on the redevelopment of brownfield sites so that the property can be reused  
Expanding affordable housing opportunities  
Working to preserve natural resources, including agricultural lands and watersheds  
Completing Phase I of the Integrated Design Community Design Resource Project

### **Provided leadership and direction in implementing a long-range vision for the region**

Acted as an advocate for the region and its towns in the legislature on key priorities  
Supported the Capitol Region COMPASS initiative  
Supported the Citizens Network on local education finance reform  
Participated in efforts related to strategic planning and performance measurement  
Analyzed and educated stakeholders on demographic changes and other regional trends

# 2007 - 2008 Annual Report



**Greening the Region**  
**Capitol Region Council of Governments**  
*Serving Connecticut's Capitol Region*  
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