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Chester, Clinton, Cromwell,
Deep River, Durham, East Haddam,
East Hampton, Essex, Haddam,
Killingworth, Lyme, Middlefield,
Middletown, Old Lyme,
Old Saybrook, Portland, Westbrook

**Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments
and Lower Connecticut River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization**

APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

RiverCOG Members:

Chester: Lauren Gister *
Clinton: Christine Goupil *
Cromwell: Anthony Salvatore *
Deep River: Angus McDonald, Jr. *
Durham: Laura Francis *
East Haddam: Emmett Lyman *
East Hampton: Michael Maniscalco *
Essex: Norm Needleman *
Haddam: Lizz Milardo *
Killingworth: Cathy Iino *
Lyme: Steve Mattson
Middlefield: Ed Bailey *
Middletown: Daniel Drew
Old Lyme: Bonnie Reemsnyder *
Old Saybrook: Carl Fortuna *
Portland: Susan Bransfield *
Westbrook: Noel Bishop *

MPO Members:

Middlesex Chamber of Commerce: Darlene Briggs *
Estuary Transit District: Joe Comerford *
Middletown Area Transit: Lisa Seymour *

Others Present:

Edgar Wynkoop, CTDOT
Pat Bandzes, Eversource
Bill Villano, Workforce Alliance
Tom Kirk, MIRA
Jessica LeClair, Sustainable CT
Stacy Abbott

* Members Present

Staff Present:

Samuel Gold, AICP
Judy Snyder
Robert Haramut
Torrance Downes
Janice Ehle-Meyer
Dan Bourret
Paula Fernald

1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chairman Bonnie Reemsnyder called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. at the RiverCOG offices, 145 Dennison Road, Essex, CT. Roll call was taken by Sam Gold, Executive Director and guests were introduced.

Bonnie Reemsnyder announced that Judy Snyder will be retiring April 5th and thanked her for her 35 years of service.

2. LCRVMPO BUSINESS

- a. Approval of the Minutes of the February 28, 2018 LCRVCOG and LCRVMPO Meeting

Upon motion of Lizz Milardo, seconded by Tony Salvatore, it was voted to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2018 meeting.

- b. Transit Cuts Update
i. Transit Districts
ii. Shore Line East

Sam Gold presented a letter addressed to Richard Andreski, Bureau Chief, CTDOT, (attachment #1), as testimony in opposition of the proposal to cut service on the Shore Line East commuter rail line and cut state funding to the state's transit districts by 15% in FY2019 and 50% in FY 2021. Mr. Gold thanked the members for submitting letters of support to the DOT and the legislators. He said that DOT asked all the transit operators in the state to prepare data on their budgets, contracts, ridership, and different cost structures. They will attend a workshop in two weeks at DOT to look at other cost saving measures that could be distributed across the state that would impact the ridership the least. Edgar Wynkoop stated that he doesn't always get every piece of information before the COG staff and COG members do, however he did hear about Mr. Gold's letter and it did make an impact.

Joe Comerford stated that the Commissioner feels that a 15% cut isn't that bad. He said that the state bus system expands but the town transits have been cut. There are no cuts proposed for the state owned CT Transit buses however he feels that the transit districts are no different than the state owned systems. Lisa Seymour said that the state does not recognize that all the buses are the same. Laura Francis stated that the towns served by CT Transit do not participate like Estuary Transit and Middletown Area Transit towns do. Christine Goupil asked if COST was lobbying for us. Sam Gold will contact COST. Mr.

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Comerford and Ms. Seymour thanked the members for their letters of support. Cathy Iino asked if paratransit services were safe. Mr. Comerford said yes this service is a different line item in the budget.

He said he wants every transit district to be treated like CT Transit is. Although if the underlying bus route is cut, so would be the complimentary paratransit. He said that the Transportation Committee did move the new car tax to the Special Transportation Fund. Carl Fortuna said he has spoken to Representative Devin Carney about the car tax and said this only makes a hole in the general fund.

c. Transportation Improvement Program

- i. 2018 TIP amendment #9 - Pedestrian improvements on Main from Liberty Street to Union Street breakout of 0082-0318, project number 0082-0319, Middletown

Robert Haramut said that the first phase is the proposal is to construct “bump outs” at certain intersections along Main Street that would shorten the walking distance for pedestrians crossing Main Street. The shorter distance would allow for shorter walk light signals and longer green lights for better traffic flow. The second phase of the project would be in the St. John’s Square area intersection which includes Grand Street, Hartford Avenue, Main Street, and Rapallo Avenue. The third phase of the project would be the removal of the traffic signals on Route 9. Mr. Haramut said that the original Route 9 plan to construct a round-a-bout between Route 9, Washington Street (Route 66), and DeKoven Drive did not go over well at a public meeting. A new plan was presented at a public meeting last week that shows north bound traffic exiting Route 9 onto Rapallo Avenue and there was opposition to this plan also.

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Ed Bailey, it was voted to approve the 2018 TIP amendment #9 - Pedestrian improvements on Main from Liberty Street to Union Street breakout of 0082-0318, project number 0082-0319, Middletown.

d. Corridor Studies Route 66 and Route 81

Robert Haramut discussed the studies. Susan Bransfield stated that she doesn’t understand why these projects take so long. Sam Gold said he has found that Tighe and Bond are very slow with many delays. Michael Maniscalco suggested that a meeting be set up.

e. Other Transportation program updates (5310, LOTCIP)

Robert Haramut said that the 5310 applications are in and the members will review and rank them at the April meeting. He said he received three in the Hartford urbanized area and two in the New Haven urbanized area.

He said that the Middletown LOCIP project is currently out to bid, and should be going to construction this spring. At the February meeting the state bond commission approved the addition of funds for the Durham job. Laura Francis asked if the final designs are at the state. Susan Bransfield asked if there was funding for town roads. Ms. Bransfield said that with the 5310 program Cromwell and Portland brought a bus together and that has worked very well.

Edgar Wynkoop said that he met with Rob Haramut yesterday and doesn’t know where the money is going. The CTDOT likes LOCIP and does not want to lose the program.

f. Updates from MAT and 9 Town Transit

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Lisa Seymour stated that the towns of Portland, East Hampton, Durham, and Middlefield are going to be asked to join the MAT board shortly.

Joe Comerford said that an app will be released soon for the dial-a-ride service. It's being tested now but is close to being released to the public.

3. PRESENTATION BY BILL VILLANO OF THE WORKFORCE ALLIANCE ABOUT CT'S COMPETITIVE FUTURE

Bill Villano, Workforce Alliance, gave a PowerPoint presentation (attachment #2). Servicing South Central Connecticut, including Lyme and Old Lyme, he explained that the Workforce Alliance funds employment and training initiatives to prepare individuals for jobs. He said that Connecticut will have a large number of jobs available in the future. He is working with Amazon on their new distribution center that is coming to North Haven and states that a large number of jobs will be coming to Connecticut.

Lauren Gister asked if this program is being presented to students in the high schools. Mr. Villano said it is. Michael Maniscalco asked if the alliance will work with towns for skills not learned in high school. Mr. Villano would like to do workshops in the towns and the schools. Cathy Iino asked for the number counts for each town. Norm Needleman stated that he has hired many of the people. He said that the average age of a worker is over 55. If younger people would start in an apprenticeship program they could have a successful career in the future.

4. PRESENTATION BY TOM KIRK OF MIRA REGARDING THE FUTURE OF THEIR WASTE TO ENERGY

Tom Kirk gave a PowerPoint presentation on MIRA waste to energy facility (attachment #3). He said that the Hartford facility needs to be rebuilt, RFP were solicited and Sacyr-Rooney was selected. He is hoping for a signed agreement by August 2018. Less garbage coming into the facility means that it costs more to operate. Janice Ehle-Meyer asked about recycling. Mr. Kirk said that recycling is not a money maker.

5. PRESENTATION BY JESSICA LECLAIR ON SUSTAINABLE CT

Jessica LeClair, Sustainable CT explained the program and the steps that need to be completed to become a certified town (attachment #4). There are 30 towns in Connecticut already registered and six of those towns are in the RiverCOG; Clinton, Durham, Middletown, Old Lyme, Portland, and Westbrook.

6. LCRVCOG BUSINESS

a. Legislation Update

Sam Gold distributed copies of letters he had submitted as testimony on several bills being discussed at the Capitol (attachment #5). He said that the bill would shift revenue from the new car tax into the transportation fund and that's also the bill that is associated with tolls.

Tony Salvatore said he is upset with the Hartford bailout deal. He asked if the COG is going to take a position on this. All the legislators that he has spoken to expressing his displeasure have claimed it's not the way it was proposed and conveyed to them.

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b. Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans

Sam Gold said that the mitigation plans for our region expires in 2019 and needs to be updated. He said that the staff in this department at DEEP are new and he could not get an answer about funding. He said

that this could cause our plans to lapse. This would mean: 1) we could pay for this ourselves and maybe with some of the COGs grant money; or, 2) we could take a risk. The risk does not affect your town's post disaster recovery. It affects your eligibility for a portion of the recovery money that is meant to mitigate future disasters.

c. Long Island Sound Dredging Spoils Lawsuit - Amicus Brief

Sam Gold said that there are seven organizations with us which are: SoutheastCOG, RiverCOG, WestCOG, Electric Boat, Crosstown Ferry, CT Marine Trades, and CT Port Authority. The estimated cost would be \$15,000 divided by 7 equals \$2,000. He has a draft of the Amicus Brief.

d. Regional Plan

Sam Gold said that the Regional Plan is going slower than originally anticipated due to Jon Curtis being out of the office however, this has freed up money that could be used to hire someone to do some of the sections.

e. RiverCOG Summer Interns

Sam Gold said he is planning on having interns working at the RiverCOG for the summer.

7. CHAIRMAN'S AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

There was nothing to report.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Gateway Commission

Torrance Downes said there was nothing new to report.

b. DEMHS Update

Torrance Downes said that DEMHS has two grants with one expiring in May and they are spending that down now.

He said that Westbrook has hired a ZEO and that him and Dan will not be needed soon.

Noel Bishop said that Westbrook has received first rate service from the COG and this is a perfect example of regionalization.

Laura Francis said that regional equipment is available for use by Chiefs through DEMHS.

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Laura Francis said that she has been involved in the controversy over AirBNBs and similar businesses. Lauren Gister said that there is a public hearing in Chester on April 12 to discuss "short term rentals".

Laura Francis said she has spoken to the regional manager of public policy in our region (Andrew.Kallock@AirBNB.com) and there is a platform for complaints. Lauren Gister stressed that AirBNB is not the only company doing this and property owners can and do advertise on more than one website.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Tony Salvatore, seconded by Lauren Gister, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Snyder
Recording Secretary

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