

# Western Connecticut

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

## 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



*For Reporting Period July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019*



# WCEDD 2018 Annual Report

Reporting Period July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019

This Progress Report tracks activities according to the following six WestCOG 2017 CEDS goals:

1. Foster Regional Planning and Cooperation
2. Develop an Improved Business Climate
3. Cultivate Support for a Diverse Workforce
4. Improve and Maintain Transportation and Public Infrastructure
5. Foster A More Sustainable and Resilient Region
6. Cultivate a Positive Regional Identity

Additional details on these studies may be found in [WestCOG's Annual Reports](#)

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## 2018 WCEDD Activity

### EDD Designation

Goal 1.1

staff formally submitted the application materials to EDA on April 3 and interacted with EDA by email and telephone to follow up on status as well as to answer questions. These interactions extended throughout the remainder of 2019.

### Plan of Conservation and Development

Goals 1, 2, 4, 5

Connecticut's COGs are responsible for the creation and maintenance of a regional comprehensive plan to ensure orderly development that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. Plan elements include housing, infrastructure, the economy, water supplies and natural resources, community character, air quality, and agricultural resources. WestCOG staff began work on the first WestCOG POCD in January 2019; a draft Plan was prepared in November. Work on this Plan extended into 2020. WestCOG's POCD was designed to integrate many of the goals outlined in WestCOG's CEDS.

### Municipal Services Modernization Study

Goals 1.1, 2.3, 6.1

WestCOG hired consultants to evaluate opportunities for regional sharing, consolidation, outsourcing, and modernization of municipal processes. The study considered resident-facing processes such as issuance of licenses and permits and back-end services such as appraisals and payment processing. Improved municipal services makes doing business easier within the community.

### Regional Fee Schedule

Goals 1.1, 2.3, 6.1

Staff developed a comprehensive index of fees charged by municipalities regionwide to facilitate comparison and benchmarking. This inventory would be a one stop shop for users to understand the scope of required fees for a given community. The inventory is an initial step into web-based payment systems, which if implemented could make doing business a little easier in each community.

### Snow Removal Operations/Management/Routing Study

Goals 1, 4, 5

Through a CT Regional Performance Incentive Program (RPIP) \$254,782 grant, WestCOG completed a comprehensive winter highway operations study for the region in August. The study included computer optimization of snowplow routes, a best management practice guide for deicing, operations and equipment improvements, and a Snow and Ice Removal Planning guide. The study provides cost savings to WestCOG's municipalities by improving efficiencies and by producing a region-wide document that would have been duplicated by each municipality.

## Sustainable CT Fellowship

Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Sustainable CT is a voluntary certification program that recognizes communities for their sustainable and resilient efforts. The Program provides a list of best practices (actions) for municipalities to choose from, along with potential funding. A menu of nine categories constituting 55 actions and 1,645 certification points are offered. To be certified, a community must complete at least one action in each of the nine categories and receive a minimum number of points. This program is independently funded and originates in the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University. WestCOG was assigned two fellows to assist WestCOG member communities to participate in the Sustainable CT program.

## Westport Main to Train

Goal 4 .1

Study purpose was to identify improvements to vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian safety and circulation on Post Road East and Riverside Avenue. This will create better connections between the commercial center of town and the Saugatuck train station and promote non-motorized transportation choices.

## Norwalk Main Avenue

Goal 4 .1

A multi-phased corridor study, which included a traffic analysis and a Complete Streets assessment, was completed in March.

## Danbury and New Fairfield Route 37 Corridor Study:

Goal 4 .1

WestCOG, in collaboration with the City of Danbury and Town of New Fairfield, is developing the *Danbury and New Fairfield Corridor Study* for Route 37 between I-84 Exit 6 in Danbury to 0.2 mile north of Route 39 in New Fairfield. The major objectives of this study are to discover solutions to alleviate traffic congestion levels, improve pedestrian mobility, and to promote healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transportation. Specifically, the following improvements are being considered:

- Reduced congestion in key sections during peak hours,
- Improved safety at problem intersections,
- Adequate paved shoulder widths,
- Safe pedestrian connections (sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.), and
- The feasibility for a potential multi-use trail / side path between Saw Mill Road and Bear Mountain Reservation in New Fairfield.
- expected to be complete by March 2021.

## Stamford East Bus Evaluation

Goal 4 .1

WestCOG contracted Fitzgerald and Halliday, Inc. to perform a technical evaluation of the Stamford East Bus service (Routes 341, 344, and 345). The goal of the Stamford East Bus Service Technical Evaluation was to provide additional, more localized, and quickly actionable recommendations which could be readily implemented. The study was completed in July 2019.

## Western CT Metro-North Station Parking Evaluation:

Goal 4 .1

AECOM was engaged by WestCOG to analyze the market for parking at each of the commuter parking lots along the New Haven Line of Metro-North Railroad. • The study includes 19 stations across seven WestCOG communities, and analyzes relationships between local demographics and employment, parking capacity, train station ridership, and parking permit pricing to determine what factors are most likely driving demand for parking associated with transit. • Need for the study was driven by perceptions that available transit parking lots are full, with long wait lists for permitted spaces which suggest that parking demand vastly exceeds the available supply at most transit parking lots along Metro-North's New Haven Line. This study was completed in July 2019.

## Opportunity Zone Activity

### Stamford

*“The City of Stamford has partnered with Liberty Capital Advisors to set up its own Opportunity Zone (OZ) fund, which will seek to raise from 10 to 20 percent of the total capital requirements for the city’s 2019-2020 OZ project pipeline—a figure that is projected to range from \$553 million to \$1.1 billion. Thomas Madden, Stamford’s director of economic development, announced the new fund after highlighting some of the city’s top offerings across its five OZs. These include ten potential development sites downtown, such as the Stamford Town Center mall, an 853,00-square-foot property that Taubman Centers recently put on sale....(Stamford) currently has more than 1,500 apartment units under construction and another 3,200 that have been approved or proposed, the majority of them located in OZs, according to Madden.”* [Connecticut Bets on Opportunity Zones \(cpexecutive.com\)](https://www.cpexecutive.com)

[Treasury and IRS Issue Final Regulations on Opportunity Zones | U.S. Department of the Treasury](https://www.treasury.gov)