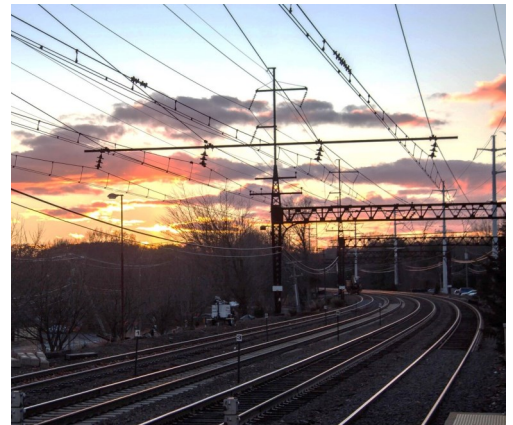


# Western Connecticut COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



## 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

## PREFACE

The mission of the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) is to meet the needs of its communities for quality government, regional cooperation, economies of scale, and innovation. Encompassing 17% of Connecticut's population, the boundary of the Western Connecticut Region is defined by the CT Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

The WestCOG board is composed of the mayors and first selectmen of the eighteen member municipalities: Bethel, Bridgewater, Brookfield, Danbury, Darien, Greenwich, New Canaan, New Fairfield, New Milford, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Sherman, Stamford, Weston, Westport, and Wilton.

The organization of this report is designed to meet state statutory requirements for councils of governments to describe their current regional services and progress in developing additional services. A summary of those statutory requirements appears at the end of this report.

The traditional activity area for councils of governments is in regional planning. While planning remains active, the intent of the General Assembly is for regional services to be an area of expanded activity. With that guidance in mind, report organization reflects the following categories:

1. Public Administration & Communications
2. Regional Planning Activities
3. Current Services
4. Development of Additional Services
5. Inventory of Publications
6. CT Section 8-31b(c) Requirements

As documented herein during 2017 the Council worked to assist its municipalities. Questions on this report are welcome and can be directed to WestCOG Executive Director, Francis Pickering, at [fpickering@westcog.org](mailto:fpickering@westcog.org) or 475-323-2070.

**WESTCOG MEMBERS:**

Boughton, Mark, Mayor of Danbury  
 Del Monaco, Pat, New Fairfield First Selectman (elected 2017)  
 Dunn, Stephen, Brookfield First Selectman  
 Bass, Peter, Mayor of New Milford (elected 2017)  
 Knickerbocker, Matthew, First Selectman of Bethel  
 Lowe, Don, Sherman First Selectman (elected 2017)  
 Marconi, Rudy, **VICE CHAIRMAN** and Ridgefield First Selectman  
 Marpe, James, Westport First Selectman  
 Martin, David, Mayor of Stamford  
 Moynihan, Kevin, First Selectman of New Canaan (elected 2017)  
 Pemberton, Julia, **SECRETARY** and Redding First Selectman  
 Read, Curtis, Bridgewater First Selectman  
 Rilling, Harry, Mayor of Norwalk  
 Rosenthal, Daniel, Newtown First Selectman (elected 2017)  
 Stevenson Jayme, **CHAIRMAN** and Darien First Selectman  
 Spaulding, Christopher, Weston First Selectman (elected 2017)  
 Tesei, Peter, Greenwich First Selectman  
 Vanderslice Lynne, **TREASURER** and Wilton First Selectman

**WESTCOG STAFF:**

Bastian, Jamie, Associate Planner	Kenny, William, Associate Planner
Brinton, Robert, Project Manager	Payne, Patricia, Finance Director
Chew, Jonathan, Senior Project Manager	Pickering, Francis, <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>
Dawson, James, GIS Analyst	Sachnin, Robert, Principal Planner
Esposito, Elizabeth, Associate Planner	Sullivan, Michael, GIS Analyst
Floberg, Kristin, Associate Planner	Sullivan, Nicole, Communications Assistant
Hadjstylianos, Kristin, Associate Planner	Towle, Michael, Planner
Harvey, Josephine, Financial Manager	Zimmerman, Carl, Senior GIS Manager

**REVENUE FOR FY2016-17:**

CT OPM	41.3%
US DOT	38.6%
CT DOT	8.8%
Membership dues	7.9%
Local Other	1.4%
US DHS	0.6%
UConn CIRCA	0.6%
US EDA	0.4%
CT Other	0.3%
Other	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0% (\$3,303,448)</b>

## 1. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

### 1-1: FORUM FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

Francis Pickering, Executive Director  
Nicole Sullivan, Communications Assistant

As authorized by municipal ordinances and State Statute Section 4-124j, eighteen mayors and first selectmen represent their municipalities and compose the board of WestCOG (the Council). Meetings of this leadership group are the backbone of the organization.

During the 2017 reporting period ten meetings of the Council were held, the agendas and minutes for which are posted on [westcog.org](http://westcog.org). The public has an opportunity to speak at each meeting. Agendas feature guest speakers, staff reports, financial oversight, peer exchange, advocacy, planning, and service coordination.

### 1-2: LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Francis Pickering, Executive Director  
Nicole Sullivan, Communications Assistant

WestCOG coordinates legislative efforts at the local, state, and federal level through education and outreach. State legislation needs and reaction to legislation proposed are expressed annually to legislators at a January meeting. Staff also monitors legislation during the session and provides periodic status reports to Council members and state legislators. There is also reaction to selected federal legislation as directed by the Council. The Executive Director testifies on COG legislative priorities.

### 1-3: WESTCOG ONLINE PRESENCE

Elizabeth Esposito, Associate Planner

The website [westcog.org](http://westcog.org) provides access to information on WestCOG programs. The related monthly newsletter highlights COG updates, grant opportunities, and regional events of interest. Information is also shared on social media via Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

### 1-4: ASSISTANCE TO MUNICIPAL REGISTRARS

Galen Wells, Regional Election Monitor

In compliance with state statute, WestCOG provides assistance to municipalities in preparing for elections. Assistance includes staff training and the introduction to technology enhancements.

### 1-5: EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

William Kenny, Associate Planner

The CT Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, through its Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), partners with WestCOG and the other regional councils on emergency preparedness activities. As they were pre-merger, the eight southern WestCOG communities are within DEMHS Region 1 and the ten northern communities remain within DEMHS Region 5. New Canaan First Selectman represents the southern communities at Region 1, and Ridgefield First Selectman represents the

northern communities at Region 5. Each DEMHS region develops funding priorities, training and exercises, sharing of resources, and support for functional committees.

WestCOG has also taken the role of Chair of Emergency Support Function 1 – Transportation (ESF-1) in Region 5, with Naugatuck Valley COG acting as Co-Chair, and Northwest Hills COG staff as members. In Region 1, MetroCOG is the Chair of ESF-1 and WestCOG is Co-Chair.

#### 1-6: DRUG TASK FORCE

Elizabeth Esposito, Associate Planner

William Kenny, Associate Planner

Due to crisis conditions, in 2015 WestCOG organized this Task Force to coordinate nonprofit and municipal staff, and other stakeholders addressing the opioid epidemic. The Task Force met three times in 2017. At these meetings, participants hear from guest speakers and network with one another. Skills are sharpened by technical exchange and presentations. Coordination continues and a web page is maintained.

#### 1-7: THE WESTCOG FOUNDATION, INC

William Kenny, Associate Planner.

In 2017, staff formed the not-for-profit, The WestCOG Foundation, Inc., as a shared resource for the communities of Western Connecticut. The Secretary of the State of Connecticut has incorporated the Foundation. Tax exemption status from the IRS is pending.

#### 1-8: RESPONSE TO REQUESTS AND OTHER ASSISTANCE

Good constituent service is the foundation of the organization. The staff responds to requests from members, businesses, municipal commissions and community groups.

#### PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PLANNING

William Kenny, Associate Planner

Since 2006 a public health directors group has been meeting for the Council's DEMHS 5 area, staff attends and administers the Committee's budget.

#### MUNICIPAL PLANNERS' LUNCH

Elizabeth Esposito, Associate Planner

Staff convenes quarterly educational and networking sessions for municipal planners. Skills are sharpened by technical exchange and presentations. Coordination continues and a web page is maintained.

#### TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

Robert Sachnin, Principal Planner

Staff convenes monthly meetings of public works and engineering department staff. Input is provided to the COG and MPOs on transportation and environmental planning programs. As with the planners group above skills are sharpened by technical exchange and presentations.



## TRAFFIC COUNTS

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Floberg, Kristin, Associate Planner

WestCOG possesses traffic counting cameras where staff can collect up to 50 hours of traffic video for an intersection. After processing, data includes 15-minute turning movement counts for pedestrians, bicycles, cars and heavy vehicles. The outputs are applicable for a wide range of analyses, including level of service, bike and pedestrian, intersection signal timing and capacity, traffic control type and signal coordination. In addition to our intersection analysis capabilities, our radar can collect bidirectional volume, speed and vehicle classification for up to four, mid-block lanes.

In 2017, WestCOG conducted 64, 48-hour intersection traffic counts; Danbury-4, Darien-10, Greenwich-4, New Milford-4, Norwalk-13, Sherman-8 and Stamford-21. WestCOG also analyzed 7 mid-block locations for speed and volume.

## TRANSPORTATION TECHNICAL & ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE

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WestCOG provides technical assistance to the region. Assistance includes programmatic and funding guidance, engineering review, planning studies, and data analysis. Recent examples include the New Milford Congestion Relief and Signal Optimization analysis, Road Safety Audits and corresponding WestCOG reports, and cost estimate analyses and related planning documents for Sherman and Stamford.

## REGIONAL CRASH DATA ANALYSIS

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Jamie Bastian, Associate Planner

WestCOG collects and analyzes crash data to assist municipalities in identifying intersections and corridors with high crash rates. As part of the 2017 Local Road Accident Reduction Program (LRARP) solicitation, a comprehensive analysis of fatality- and serious injury-causing crashes on local roads was completed.

## IVES TRAIL ASSOCIATION WEB SITE

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WestCOG provides web site hosting within westcog.org for this regional non-profit trail group.

## ACCESS WESTERN CT WEB SITE

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WestCOG provides web support for the northern sub-regional economic development group.

## PLANNING & ZONING REFERRALS

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Jonathan Chew, Senior Project Manager

The Connecticut General Statutes specify procedural requirements for municipal planning and zoning commissions to submitting referrals to WestCOG. The staff responded to 91 referrals this calendar year.

## IT WORKING GROUP

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Elizabeth Esposito, Associate Planner

Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager

Staff convenes quarterly educational and networking sessions for municipal Information Technology (IT) staff. Skills are sharpened by technical exchange and presentations.

## GIS WORKING GROUP & OUTREACH

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Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager  
Mike Towle, Planner

Staff periodically convenes educational and networking sessions for municipal, non-profit, and private sector staff. Technical exchange and education presentations are utilized to guide GIS and analytic policy in the region. In addition, informal and formal technical assistance and referrals are provided upon request.

## GEOSPATIAL LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION & OUTREACH

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Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager

Staff monitors geospatial and data legislation at the state and federal levels and provides necessary testimony. In addition, staff participates in state-wide data acquisition policy and planning efforts.

## VARIOUS

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In addition to other previously mentioned tasks, WestCOG provides state and federal wetlands data, topography, planimetrics, and imagery to various municipalities, consultancies, and agencies; conducts small mapping projects for towns like New Milford, Brookfield, Westport, Sherman, Danbury, and Bridgewater; performs region-wide municipal mapping of various types; and supports the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership efforts on ecological planning.

## 2. REGIONAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES

### 2-1: REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Robert Sachnin, Principal Planner  
 Robert Brinton, Project Manager  
 Kristin Hadjstylianios, Associate Planner  
 James Bastian, Associate Planner  
 Kristin Floberg, Associate Planner  
 Jonathan Chew, Senior Project Manager

Transportation systems in urban areas are regional by nature. Operating since 1975, regional transportation planning continued its key role throughout 2017. The Congressional intent for regional transportation planning is to maximize the cost-benefit of federal expenditures on transportation. Detailed technical studies and a constrained capital improvement program are produced. Through their approval power over federally funded capital projects, the “Transportation Improvement Program,” area chief elected officials maintain a significant partnership with CT DOT. In addition, the Council is responsible for solicitation, review, and submission of funding applications under a variety of transportation programs.

#### MPO ADMINISTRATION

A requirement for receipt of federal transportation project funds in urban areas is the operation of a specialized policy entity known as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). WestCOG serves as host agency, providing staff support for two federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organizations, which make transportation policy and project decisions in the Region. Core activities include meeting facilitation, development of transportation studies such as the Long-Range Transportation Plan, technical assistance, as well as development and maintenance of two Transportation Improvement Programs.

During 2017, ten meetings of the northern Housatonic Valley MPO (HVMPO) were held, chaired by Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi. Also during 2017, ten meetings of the southern South Western Region MPO (SWRMPO) were held, chaired by Darien First Selectman Jayme Stevenson.

#### TAG FACILITATION

WestCOG’s Technical Advisory Group (TAG) provides support to the HVMPO, SWRMPO and COG. Members consist of town planners, engineers, public works officials, transit district representatives, and COG staff. The TAG reviews and evaluates proposals, making recommendations to the appropriate policy board. Examples of recent TAG initiatives include: review and recommended prioritizations for federal and state funded project solicitations, MS4 collaboration and regional efficiencies, Snow Removal Operations, Management & Routing Study, and other important regional efforts. In 2017, nine meetings of the TAG were held.

Minutes for MPO and TAG meetings are posted to the web site. Numerous transportation related web pages are maintained. Each MPO has its own formally endorsed Regional Transportation Plan. Detailing of transportation planning activities conducted is provided in quarterly reports submitted to members and CT DOT.



## TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

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Staff maintains the HVMPO and SWRMPO Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs), which are financially-constrained listing of all federal-aid transportation projects within the Region over a four-year period.

Collectively, the HVMPO and SWRMPO TIPs contain over \$2.5 billion in transportation improvements over the next four years. This year, staff helped the MPOs develop and endorse a new 2018-2021 TIP in cooperation with CT DOT, including all associated public engagement and outreach.

## CT DOT CORRIDOR STUDY SOLICITATION

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The region issued a solicitation for transportation study candidates. These planning studies serve as a critical step in enhancing the transportation network throughout the region. Study recommendations become the foundation in addressing transportation concerns, often becoming future design and construction projects. Two projects in Stamford and Danbury/ New Fairfield were advanced by WestCOG and for consideration by CT DOT, including Washington Boulevard/ CT 137 in Stamford and along CT 37/ 841 in Danbury and New Fairfield. Both efforts seek to alleviate congestion and improve the safety of all users throughout the corridor.

## LOCAL ROAD ACCIDENT REDUCTION PROGRAM

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The Local Road Accident Reduction Program (LRARP) is an opportunity to fund “highly effective safety improvements” along local roads on an annual basis. For HVMPO and SWRMPO, staff issues solicitations for funding and coordinates proposed projects with the TAG and both MPOs. In 2017, funding was awarded to the Washington Street Bridge Strike Reduction Plan in Norwalk and the Summer Street Corridor Improvements in Stamford.

## CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

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The Congestion Management Process is an ongoing program that evaluates patterns of congestion and bottlenecks for highways in Western Connecticut. The recent focus is on evaluating the new methodologies and speed data associated with four Performance Measures instituted within the FHWA Final Rule. Of particular focus are road segments on the National Highway System within the Bridgeport-Stamford Urbanized Area.

## 2-2: REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Elizabeth Esposito, Associate Planner

Like transportation, economic development is very regional in its impacts. A federal “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy” (CEDS) is required to qualify municipalities for federal economic and environmental clean-up funds. A new CEDS, combining and updating the two pre-merger economic plans, began with a federal grant award in September of 2016 and was adopted by the COG in October 2017. It received State approval in December 2017 and Federal Approval was received in early 2018.

To create the CEDS, staff convened eight meetings of the Western CT Economic Advisory Group. The volunteer group guided the development of the CEDS. Per EDA requirements, the group was a balance of public and private sector stakeholders and influencers in the region. The purpose of the Advisory Group included setting goals and strategies for the economic development of the region, as well as the identification of candidate projects of potential funding. All meetings were open to the public. Policy aspects identified by the group become part of the legislative agenda. While collecting data for the CEDS, staff also conducted six focus groups about the needs of various industries.

## 2-4: REGIONAL TREE CANOPY ANALYSIS

Elizabeth Esposito, Associate Planner

The Regional Tree Canopy Analysis began late in 2017, and will calculate the benefits provided by the Region's current tree canopy. It will also identify where the canopy could be improved and what the resulting benefits would be. This analysis will assist the municipalities and the Region in targeting their investments in the environment for the largest return.

### 3. CURRENT SERVICES

#### 3-1: GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS) SERVICES

Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager  
 Michael Towle, Planner  
 Michael Sullivan, GIS Analyst  
 James Dawson, GIS Analyst

Digital geographic data is now routinely utilized in a variety of municipal functions from planning and public works to property assessment and emergency management. By working jointly through WestCOG, municipalities are receiving GIS services and data at least cost. The resulting WestCOG GIS services consist of six parts: data archiving, assembly, data infrastructure development, analyses, mapping and visualization, and distribution.

WestCOG has taken the lead in GIS data acquisition and archiving for the region. WestCOG plans, collects, curates, and distributes planimetric and imagery data sets for the towns to facilitate their analytic, Computer-Aided Mass Appraisal, transportation, and parcel efforts. This simplifies construction, planning, and municipal projects for both individual towns and the region.

Data infrastructure development consists of technologies that modify, enhance, aggregate, assemble, and filter data to optimize usability, adaptability, and functionality. In determining functionality, municipal needs are paramount. Data development also facilitates regional transportation, economic, environmental, and public health planning and analytics. Non-governmental organizations also may access to the data upon request.

The GIS staff provides innovative data analyses to member municipalities utilizing statistical, database, GIS, and other analytic methods. With significant analytic capacities, WestCOG can provide new types of information and analyses across the entire region using massive data sets.

The GIS staff also creates mapping and visualization products to facilitate planning and communication of complicated geographic data. This data is provided through the new our website, file sharing, and traditional maps. WestCOG provides regional web based mapping services, support, and analysis. This extends capabilities that are not available at the municipal level and facilitates projects such as wetlands and contour mapping, recreational planning, and congestion and infrastructure analysis. GIS training and consulting is also provided to municipal staff.

#### 3-2: PURCHASING COLLABORATIVE

Patricia Payne, Finance Director

Of Connecticut's nine councils of governments, the Capitol Region provides the most cost-effective purchasing collaborative. Other COGs are eligible to join their group bidding process, and WestCOG is participating. Cost savings through group purchasing are documented on the Capitol Region web site.

#### 3-3: REGIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE SAVINGS PROGRAM (REGIONAL CRS)

Michael Towle, Planner

FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) provides reduced flood insurance rates for policy holders in communities who take flood mitigation measures within their community. WestCOG developed a pilot Regional CRS Program with Darien, Greenwich, and Norwalk. With funding support from The Nature Conservancy, under

the Horizon Foundation Grant Award, WestCOG is in position to expand this effort to include additional municipalities through automated CRS reporting and an outreach to other communities. The Regional CRS Program aims to find savings through centralizing the effort associated with joining and maintaining the Regional CRS program under a single entity, WestCOG.

Total potential savings for policy holders for all eighteen communities in WestCOG is an estimated \$810,000 annually. This program aims to be a replicable model within the United States. This year, staff developed an initial CRS credit inventory, a library documents for distribution, a Protected Open Space Analysis, the Municipal CRS Webpage, and the CRS Geodatabase. Staff has also conducted a Hazard Mitigation Plan CRS Credit review, a Stormwater Plan Credit review, and Municipal Strategy meetings for Darien, Greenwich, and Norwalk.

### 3-4: CONSERVATION SUPPORT SERVICES

Michael Towle, Associate Planner

WestCOG incorporates energy, land, and water conservation practices into its planning services by providing data, analysis, and information monitoring services for regional conservation groups and member municipalities. Services for each sector (energy, land, water) will be funneled into the Sustainable CT initiative such that any interested community who joins the program can receive regional points towards their certification as a Sustainable CT Community. This year, staff completed a Regional Electric Vehicle Adoption Study and a Strategy for Municipal and Conservation group engagement, which is currently being used by the regional conservation group, Hudson to Housatonic, to inform their future development of outreach materials.

#### ENERGY

WestCOG has performed analysis on electric vehicle adoption within the Region and is currently considering solar viability for our Region's buildings. Additionally, WestCOG is monitoring the VW Settlement, which is providing \$55 million to Connecticut to incentivize reducing emissions.

#### LAND

An open space inventory, land preservation priority mapping, natural resource mapping, and land trust and municipality engagement are some of the many programs which make up WestCOG's land conservation service. WestCOG funnels much of its efforts to Hudson to Housatonic to enhance their mission and goals.

#### WATER

WestCOG monitors the development of the State Water Plan, activities with the Water Utility Coordinating Committee, MS4 permit, Watershed Alliances, Long Island Sound, and DEEP for pertinent information for member municipalities regarding wetlands, water quality, water based natural resources, and conservation.

### 3-5: STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERVICES

Michael Towle, Associate Planner

Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager

To achieve economies of scale, the COG has taken on some of the new federal "MS4" stormwater planning requirements placed upon municipalities. These are the stormwater management template, stormwater infrastructure mapping, networking and coordination meetings. In cooperation with DEEP and UConn CLEAR, some WestCOG products are serving as statewide models. This year, staff created the Stormwater Management

Plan Template, processed impervious data by parcel, watershed, and catchment area, and gave 7 update presentations during Technical Advisory Group meetings. Analysis and study development is ongoing.

### 3-6: HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS

Michael Towle, Associate Planner

Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) identifies potential natural hazards, quantifies damage estimates from those hazards, and recommends solutions to mitigate impacts. These plans were completed for all 18 communities with municipal input. An active HMP is an eligibility requirement for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Funds. Plans are updated every five years. Plans are performed under a single grant to provide regional savings.

### 3-7: SEPTAGE DISPOSAL ADMINISTRATION

Jonathan Chew, Senior Project Manager

WestCOG provides administration of septage hauler permits and pumper truck decals for a regional septage management disposal system based in Danbury and including six neighboring communities. Calculations of savings were included within the 1980s grant application. An update is scheduled for 2018.

### 3-8: ADMINISTER LOCAL TRANSPORTATION CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Robert Brinton, Project Manager

Robert Sachnin, Principal Planner

WestCOG performs administrative functions for the Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP), including grant solicitations, reporting, review of project applications, and prioritization and selection of projects for funding by the TAG and the COG board. WestCOG performs technical reviews of project design plans, specifications, cost estimates, and bid documents prior to submission of final designs to CT DOT for funding. Municipalities may select from WestCOG's pre-approved lists of consultants for assistance with design and construction phases.

A total of \$63.1 million has been authorized by the Legislature for projects in the WestCOG region from FY 2014 to 2019. To date, 25 projects totaling \$42.3 million have been programmed in the Region. Four projects proceeded to construction in 2017, and five projects advanced through the design phase and are expected to proceed to construction in 2018. Due to state funding issues, the LOTICIP program was put on hold by the state in late 2017, and WestCOG suspended its solicitation for new LOTICIP projects.

### 3-9: ROAD SAFETY ASSESSMENT

WestCOG and the City of Stamford participated in a Road Safety Assessment (RSA) workshop in August led by the UConn Technology Transfer Center. The purpose of an RSA is to evaluate the roadway challenges and identify countermeasures to improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists. RSA participants included representative from the City of Stamford, WestCOG, and Connecticut Department of Transportation. The team was briefed on the RSA process, conducted a field visit along Hope Street and developed a series of recommendations to address the existing safety challenges in the corridor. WestCOG developed a report for Stamford outlining the short, mid, and long-term recommendations to serve as a strategy for implementing future improvements.

### 3-10: MAP FORUM AND MULTI-STATE WORKING GROUPS

The Metropolitan Area Planning (MAP) Forum is a consortium of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and Pennsylvania region. As a member, WestCOG participates in the MAP Forum to better coordinate transportation planning efforts in the larger multi-state metropolitan region. WestCOG staff also participates in a Multi-State Freight Working Group with the New York Metropolitan Transportation Committee (NYMTC) to discuss regional freight topics.



## 4. SERVICES IN DEVELOPMENT

### 4-1: SNOW REMOVAL ROUTINGS & CHLORIDE MANAGEMENT

Kristin Floberg, Associate Planner

The Region was awarded a Regional Performance Incentive Program grant in late 2015 to conduct a routing optimization study for the Region's member municipalities. After discussions with the TAG, the study was expanded to also include a best management practice guide for Chloride, Salts and other Deicing Materials; an Operations Guide for recommended best management practices and equipment improvements; and a Snow and Ice Removal Planning Guide. WestCOG advertised a Request for Proposals in May 2017 and by August the selected consultant commenced the study. At the end of 2017, the baseline report was under final review and all municipalities have their initial optimized snow removal routes. The finalized study is expected in August 2018.

### WINTER MAINTENANCE & SALT REDUCTION TRAINING

In November 2017, the Region held a training session for public works professionals to expand and refresh their knowledge in deicing and anti-icing application techniques, equipment calibration, effects of different weather conditions and the environmental impacts of chloride materials. Thirty-three attendees from nine municipalities participated, with many acknowledging the benefit of holding similar trainings in the future.

### 4-2: OPTIONS FOR REGIONAL COMPUTER ASSISTED MASS APPRAISAL

Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager

This study provided recommendations on the viability of a Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) system for the region and other cost-effective methods to improve the system.

### 4-3: REGIONAL GIS WEB APPLICATION RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager

A WestCOG project assessing the potential Regional efficiencies of employing a Regional GIS mapping system for CAMA and Tax Assessment data.

### 4-4: SOLAR POWER SUITABILITY ANALYSIS

Carl Zimmerman, Senior GIS Manager

WestCOG is currently conducting a project assessing the Solar Power Suitability of buildings in the region.

### 4-5: AUTOMATION OF ANALYTIC WORKFLOWS AND OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

GIS team members are building capabilities in data analytics and geospatial processing enabling new analytic capabilities. In addition, staff is enhancing capabilities in open source analytic software to understand potential software cost savings for the region and our municipalities.

### 4-6: PAVEMENT ROUGHNESS ASSESSMENT

GIS team members are conducting a pilot project utilizing pavement roughness data with the intention of tracking pavement changes over time.

#### 4-7: PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

WestCOG is responsible for the creation and maintenance of a regional comprehensive plan, to ensure that development is orderly, economic, and environmentally and financially sustainable. Plan development includes a range of stakeholders representing all sectors of the region. WestCOG's next plan will be initiated in 2019.

#### 4-8: PLANNED NEAR-TERM ACTIVITIES

Below is a list of activities that are planned for implementation in the next two years but are on hold due to limited funding availability.

##### CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL REGIONAL GIS

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WestCOG will expand its current regional GIS to integrate parcel maps from all municipalities and establish linkages with municipal assessor databases. Municipal parcel maps and databases will be brought into a common format and schema, enabling group purchase/contracting for the continued maintenance of and improvement to these vital data sources, as well as enhancing analytic and managerial capacity and reducing transaction costs in economic development.

##### REGIONAL ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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WestCOG will build an asset management system onto the regional GIS. Initially, this will serve a selected group of municipalities in the region, with the potential to expand to all eighteen. Use of an asset management system will improve cost management and service delivery at the municipal level; regionalization of this function will obtain efficiencies in software procurement and training.

##### COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF MUNICIPAL CLERK OPERATIONS

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Municipal clerks, who serve as the frontline to city and town halls, provide a wide array of services, many of which have not been critically evaluated or reengineered since they were provided for or required by state law. WestCOG will undertake a comprehensive study of all processes engaged in by municipal clerks' offices, with the purpose to identify and quantify opportunities for improved service and cost savings through streamlining, refactoring, automation, sharing, and consolidation. WestCOG will prepare a plan to implement these opportunities and will guide its execution. Significant increases in efficiency and customer satisfaction are expected.

##### LINE-OF-BUSINESS CLOUD MIGRATION

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In conjunction with the other activities listed here, WestCOG will identify software packages that are used by municipalities in the region and, through its IT Working Group, will develop and implement plans to collectively purchase and cloud host these products.

##### REGIONAL REVALUATION

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WestCOG will coordinate municipalities in the region to develop and execute a regional contract for revaluation. Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) has realized 50% cost savings through such an approach.

##### REGIONAL HEALTH SELF-INSURANCE

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WestCOG will evaluate the feasibility and quantify potential costs and savings associated with the creation of a health self-insurance pool and/or plans for municipal employees in the region. If such an approach is determined to be practically and financially viable, WestCOG will develop and implement a plan to deploy regional health self-insurance.

## PUBLIC SAFETY CONSOLIDATION

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WestCOG will identify opportunities for sharing and/or restructuring of public safety answering points and police and fire services with the greatest estimated cost savings and improvements in service levels and safety outcomes. Findings will be used to inform and assist municipal efforts in coordination, sharing, and consolidation.

## 5. INVENTORY OF PUBLICATIONS

Many WestCOG initiatives yield an accompanying report. The cumulative inventory of these provides a useful overview of Council activity. A comprehensive list can be found on [westcog.org/past-publications](http://westcog.org/past-publications). The items listed below are from 2015 onward.

### IN PROGRESS

- Freight Plan Update
  - Staff leads K. Hadjstylianos & J. Bastian
- HART Commuter Parking Study
  - Staff lead J. Bastian
- Long-Range Transportation Plan Update
  - Staff lead K. Hadjstylianos
- Main Avenue (Route 719) Corridor Study, Norwalk
  - Staff lead J. Bastian
- Noroton Heights Station Area Study
  - Staff lead K. Hadjstylianos
- Norwalk Tree Canopy Improvement Plan
  - Staff lead E. Esposito
- Regional Tree Canopy Analysis
  - Staff lead E. Esposito
- Road Safety Audit, Hope Street, Stamford
  - Staff lead K. Hadjstylianos
- Snow Removal Operations, Management & Routing Study
  - Staff lead K. Floberg
- Stamford Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
  - Staff lead K. Hadjstylianos
- Stamford Bus and Shuttle Study
  - Staff lead K. Hadjstylianos
- Westport Rail Stations Study
  - Staff lead K. Hadjstylianos

### 2017

- Branchville 2017 TOD Plan
- CAMA - Existing Conditions and Initial Recommendations Report
- Electric Vehicle and Charging Station Study

- Ladders of Opportunity Brief
- New Fairfield – Gillotti Road RSA
- Regional GIS Web Application Recommendations Report
- Regional Initiatives Report
- Western Connecticut Economic Development Plan: A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

### 2016

- 7 Link Efficiency Study
- Regional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2016-2020 (South)
- Special and Functional Needs Sheltering Planning Guide
- SweetHART Operational Analysis 2016
- Westport 2016 Bus Study
- Westport 2016 Rail Parking Analysis

### 2015

- Bethel 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Bridgewater 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Brookfield 2015 Route 202 Plan
- Greater Danbury Bike Plan
- New Milford 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Newtown 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Redding 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Ridgefield 2015 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Stamford 2015 Glenbrook- Springdale TOD
- 2015-2040 Regional Transportation Plan for the Housatonic Valley Region
- South Western Region Long Range Transportation Plan

## 6. CT SECTION 8-31B(C) STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-31b(c) requires the nine Councils of Governments in Connecticut to submit annual reports describing their services.

Below is an excerpt from the statutory language that structures this report. Each is followed by a statement of how WestCOG meets the requirement.

**1) A description of any regional program, project or initiative provided or planned by such regional council of governments.**

The body of the text above provides descriptions of current and anticipated programs. Note that in the case of the CT OPM defined WestCOG region, until 1/1/2015 its 18 municipalities had been operating separately as two smaller CT OPM regions, 8 municipalities in the south and 10 in the north. In most cases, services and programs tied to those older geographies are being continued by WestCOG.

**2) A description of any expenditure, including the source of funding, spent on each such regional program, project or initiative and a cost-benefit analysis for such expenditure.**

WestCOG understands that OPM and the Legislature are seeking more use of fiscally based cost/benefit evaluations and will increasingly provide them. Yet it is challenging to specify dollar costs for minor programs that are supported by general operating funds and not reflected within specific budget line items.

While the quantification of costs and benefits can be increased as the organization moves forward, non-numeric evaluations have a continuing role for some services that by their nature do not lend themselves to monetary summation.

For example, OPM's Regional Performance Incentive Program guidelines require cost benefit assessments, but the requirement is relaxed for proposed services that are not practical to express in monetary terms. Such is the case with some WestCOG initiatives that improve public safety or reduce health risk.

A non-monetary analysis is again the case for those WestCOG services that enhance communications between municipal departments and professionals. Net positive benefits are assumed, as evidenced by continuing utilization of the regional forums by municipal staffs.

**3) A list of existing services provided by a municipality or by the state that, in the opinion of the regional council of governments, could be transferred to such regional council of governments and any efficiency associated with such transfer.**

There are, as yet, no municipal or state services planned for transfer in their entirety to WestCOG. Promoting regional efficiencies by such regionalization has long been limited within Connecticut by the lack of regional public works or other operational infrastructure, such as is found in states with county government.

Currently WestCOG is focusing on improving the efficiency of existing municipal services while those services remain municipally based. This requires regionalizing selected municipal service aspects to improve the efficiency of delivery.

**4) A discussion and review of the performance of any regional program, project or initiative, including any recommendations for legislative action.**

The two WestCOG programs with the largest budget shares are the transportation planning program for its combination of staffing and contracted services, and then the geographic information services contracted program.

Both programs are derived from funding sources that require detailed progress reports. These existing reporting formats can double to serve the intent of CGS Section 8-32b(c) for annual reports by WestCOG.

As for recommendations for legislative action, WestCOG annually formulates a Regional Legislative Agenda, presented at a regional forum with area legislators. Progress with WestCOG legislative priorities is monitored by staff thereafter.

We will include within this policy vehicle any recommendations relating to legislative authorizations or clarifications needed to better structure efficient regional services. We will also include such recommendations herein as this report is updated annually.

**5) Specific annual goals and objectives and quantifiable outcome measures for each program, project or initiative administered or provided by such regional council of governments.**

Setting specific annual goals and objectives is achievable and will be incorporated into more of this Council's activities as the new emphasis gains momentum.