

2014 - 2015 Unified Planning Work Program

prepared by the

Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

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Overview

The region covered by the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) is made up of 16 of the state's 169 municipalities¹. The member towns of NECCOG are: **Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Union, Voluntown** and **Woodstock**. The 2014-15 marks a new era for NECCOG in terms of towns served and geography covered. Four towns, Chaplin, Hampton, Scotland and Voluntown became members of NECCOG during the 2013-14 fiscal year. The four new towns joined the original ten towns of NECCOG and the towns of Union (2001) and Ashford (2007) to form a solidly rural regional council of governments. The new additions to NECCOG are the result of regional consolidations initiated by the Connecticut General Assembly.

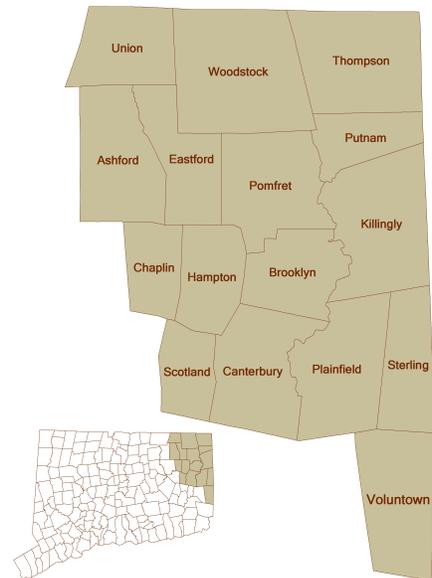
Northeastern Connecticut is rural. The landscape is characterized by rolling hills, forests and farms. The concentrations of population are those that developed in the 19th and 20th centuries in association with water-powered manufacturing. It is because of these "mill villages" that the Region has designations categorized as "urban." Geographically, the Region is large (just over ten percent of Connecticut's total area) - covering 562.8 square miles.

Demographically, the Region had a 2012 population of 95,971 (170.5 persons per square mile - compared to 647.6 persons per square mile for the State) making the region one of the least populated regions in Connecticut. The NECCOG region contains just 2.7 percent of the State's population.

The average size of the Region's towns was 5,998 persons in 2012. The largest population is found in Killingly (17,269) and the smallest in the Town of Union (the State's smallest population - 852). From 1970 to 2012 the region gained more than 29,000 persons - a 43.7 percent gain. Most of this growth occurred in previously undeveloped locations with single family homes. Population projections indicate that the region will grow to more than 104,000 persons by 2025². The implications of this growth on the Region's "rural character" and natural resources is the most pressing issue for the towns of NECCOG.

Regional growth (population, housing, and business) is tied to the strategic location of the Region; relative low costs for land and housing; and affordable labor. The Region is located close to New England's largest metropolitan areas: Providence, Worcester, and Boston. Many newer residents to the Region have located here because of its access to these metro areas while having a rural lifestyle and a choice of more affordable housing options. Within Connecticut, the Region (from its center) is approximately one hour from greater Hartford and New London and the two tribal casinos can be reached in about a half hour drive.

Transportation in northeastern Connecticut takes on many forms. The Region has local, state and national roadways (including a National Scenic Byway - Connecticut Route 169), a freight rail line, public transit system, commercial bus lines, one public and two private airports as well as reasonable access to four major airports, and numerous recreational waterways and trails (including the EastCoast



¹ Connecticut does not have county government. Each town is independent in terms of budget and administration. Each town derives authority from the State.

² University of Connecticut, State Data Center

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Greenway and Airline Trail). The right decisions and investments in our transportation systems is critical to the well-being of our region from both an economic perspective and from that of the quality of life enjoyed by the residents and visitors of this part of Connecticut. The Connecticut Plan of Conservation and Development Locational Guide Map categorizes the region as predominantly green and white - representing rural lands and lands that have either been preserved or should have protections from development. The landscape in these areas is rural with single family homes and farms. There are significant concentrations of prime and important agricultural soils, and significant un-fragmented forest lands. More intensively developed lands (commercial, industrial and residential) are generally confined to the I-395/Route 12 corridor. This corridor contains a series of former mill villages concentrations of housing, retail and commercial/industrial development. Applying the principles of "Smart Growth" has become a priority for the Region and each of its member towns.

NECCOG is responsible, in coordination and consultation with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CONNDOT), for making transportation decisions in the 16-town northeast region. NECCOG is the designated recipient of the United States Department of Transportation planning funds for use in performing transportation planning work through the CONNDOT. As a condition of the receipt of Federal Highway and transit capital or operating assistance, NECCOG is required to have a transportation planning process and a plan detailing that process referred to as the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The work tasks described in UPWP are conducted on a continuous basis in order to maintain certification and eligibility for Federal Highway and transit funds, and to plan for the orderly and efficient development of the transportation system infrastructure.

Required by this process is the development of a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), review and action on the Connecticut short-range transportation improvement program, and a planning work program which includes other planning and project development activities which address transportation issues in the region and in support of extra-regional and/or state-wide transportation planning activities. Fund sources include: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Planning Funds (PL) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5303 Funds.

The following UPWP has been prepared to define the work tasks and anticipated funding requirements for the NECCOG region for the Fiscal Year which covers the period July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. The UPWP, as outlined in this document, contains the work tasks necessary to conduct transportation planning activities for the NECCOG region. The UPWP contains a brief description of each specific task, anticipated products, personnel, and anticipated costs. In developing the UPWP, NECCOG, as required under federal law, must consider projects and strategies that will:

- ▶ **Economic Vitality** – Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency
- ▶ **Safety** – Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
- ▶ **Security** – Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
- ▶ **Mobility** – Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight
- ▶ **Environment** – Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, enhance air quality, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns
- ▶ **System Integration** – Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight
- ▶ **System Management** – Promote efficient system management and operation

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- ▶ **System Preservation** – Emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system
- ▶ **Equity** - Continue to develop and implement a strategy to address the goals of Title VI and Environmental Justice

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Anticipated Revenues

Grant	Federal	State	Local	Total
Planning Grant, SPR	60,000	7,500	7,500	75,000
Planning Grant, FTA	21,000	2,625	2,625	26,250
Totals	81,000	10,125	10,125	101,250

Maximum Hourly Rates

Position	Executive Director	Fiscal Director	Associate Director	Intern	Program Analyst	Engineer
Rate	\$60.00	\$33.00	\$40.00	\$20.00	\$30.00	\$45.00
Burden Fringe and Overhead Rate (FY 2012 - 13 Audit, most recent) - 107.14%						

Planning Cost by Activity, SPR

Program Element	% of Work Program	FY 2015 Budget
Task 1: Management of the Planning Process	5%	\$3,750
Task 2: Data Collection/Analysis, Planning and Technical Assistance	90%	\$67,500
Task 3: Public Participation	5%	\$3,750
TOTAL	100%	\$75,000

Planning Cost by Activity, FTA

Program Element	% of Work Program	FY 2015 Budget
Task 1: Management of the Planning Process	3%	\$788
Task 2: Data Collection/Analysis, Planning and Technical Assistance	92%	\$24,150
Task 3: Public Participation	5%	\$1,313
TOTAL	100%	\$26,250

General Duties of Each Employee

Executive Director	Overall administration of the UPWP for the organization, including: direct contact with the Department of Transportation, quarterly and other reporting requirements, planning, technical assistance and ensuring adherence to public participation, environmental justice
Fiscal Director	Ensures the proper financial reporting in accordance with Department standards and Generally Accepted Accounting Principals. This person may assist in the production of public meetings or similar outreach events.
Associate Director	Planning and technical assistance to towns - including project development
Program Analyst	Planning and technical assistance to towns - including project development
Intern	Planning and technical assistance to towns - including project development
Engineer	Planning and technical assistance to towns - including project development

UPWP Task 1 Administration

Background:

One of the fundamental elements related to the funding provided to NECCOG from CONNDOT is the proper administration of those funds. This requires NECCOG to employ qualified persons internally to manage those funds and report to CONNDOT in accordance with required schedules and to ensure that each year a qualified audit firm reviews the fiscal functions of NECCOG to ensure adherence to established standards, regulation and/or law.

NECCOG has managed the transportation planning program process since its formation in 1987 and prior to that as the Northeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. The organization has provided the required reports and annual audits in accordance with established procedures. Finally, NECCOG has adhered to Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requirements, its Public Participation Policy and Title VI/Environmental Justice obligations.

Objective:

To guide and effectively Administer the Region's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), to maintain an effective and efficient continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process, and to meet the needs of the member local governments and all federal and state requirements.

Activities and Outputs

- ▶ Provide staff support and administration to NECCOG by developing meeting schedules, providing technical assistance, compiling and producing agendas, providing minutes of meetings, conducting research, and completing directives of the NECCOG Board. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Monitor, evaluate and amend the FY 15 Unified Planning Work Program as needed. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Review and Act on regional and state TIP/STIP Actions and Amendments presented to the region by CONNDOT. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Purchase, as required, additional office equipment following guidelines set forth by CONNDOT and NECCOG Procurement Policies. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Conduct or participate in other planning or coordination activities (i.e., Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium, Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board and Northeast Economic Partnership) , as directed by the NECCOG Board or as requested by CONNDOT. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Complete progress reports and invoices in timely and accurate fashion through effective management of NECCOG staff and resources and continue NECCOG audit in accordance with all Generally Accepted Accounting Standards and all State and Federal Requirements (Monthly, Quarterly, Annually)
- ▶ Perform outreach with private-sector or quasi-public advocacy groups in order to build consensus on transportation initiatives, groups including but not limited to chambers of commerce and

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economic development entities, environmental groups, tourism development groups, human service organizations, running, cycling and trail groups, etc. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)

- ▶ NECCOG will attend quarterly and as requested meetings with CONNDOT, FHWA and FTA. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Provide training and continuing education opportunities to staff members in various technical areas through conferences, workshops, and professional development opportunities that may include travel throughout Connecticut and southern New England and, in some cases, national travel. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ NECCOG will continue promoting livability/Smart Growth principles that are to be considered in the planning process activities. These principles are:
 - Provide more transportation choices
 - Promote equitable, affordable housing
 - Enhance economic competitiveness
 - Support existing communities
 - Coordinate policies and leverage investments
 - Value communities and neighborhoods

Outcomes

- ▶ An efficient, accountable, measurable and cost effective transportation planning process, including active participation by public agencies, private sector, non-profit communities and citizens
 - Quarterly Reports and Annual Audit prepared and submitted as required
 - Agendas and Minutes of all meetings maintained in accordance with FOIA
 - Unified Plan of Work posted on NECCOG website
 - Posting of all requested documents from CONNDOT

Positions contributing to the task of Managing the Planning Process: Executive Director, Associate Director, Program Analyst and Fiscal Director.

UPWP Task 2 Planning and Technical Assistance

Background:

NECCOG, as has been previously described in the introduction to this UPWP, is a rural region serving predominantly small rural (at least by Connecticut standards) towns. Most of the sixteen towns have limited staff in terms of persons that can assist in making determinations for land use or transportation specific questions. NECCOG is the only COG that has an in-house engineer to assist its member towns. NECCOG works closely with chief-elected officials, town engineers, road foremen to analyze transportation needs and options to address those needs. NECCOG then works with CONNDOT staff as a bridge to the towns to move projects forward and to facilitate local-state dialogue. NECCOG has been successful in bundling road projects as a means to reduce costs and increase efficiencies. Additionally, our towns utilize NECCOG's expertise to handle the reporting requirements and other paperwork associated with transportation projects. NECCOG and its' planning agency predecessor has a long history of both long range planning and project specific assistance to the towns that make up the Region. From 1958 to 1999 the Region covered 10 towns. In 1999 the Town of Union joined - followed by Ashford in 2007. Most recently, the Region has grown to 16 towns under the State's new consolidation of regions. This most recent change places an emphasis on putting in place a 16 town approach for all things regional - including transportation.

In the past, NECCOG has assisted member towns both regionally and individually. This is anticipated to continue in FY 15 and beyond. NECCOG has been the data center for the Region. While in the past that role was focused on Census data - today the use of GIS has grown to complement Census and other data. NECCOG has developed a regional data viewer and is continuously looking to add data layers to assist our towns and residents. This service has provided assistance in routing for the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District (NECTD), developing trail maps and site plan design for individual transportation projects. NECCOG further has the capacity to conduct build-out analysis using GIS to enhance decision making and smarter land use decision making. We also collect point specific data in the form of vehicle and pedestrian traffic counts using state-of-the-art counters that can be integrated with our GIS system.

NECCOG has a long history of engagement in planning activities and technical assistance to our member towns. The Long-Range Transportation Plan, the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Region are fundamental blueprints for decision making. The most recent change regarding consolidation of regions in Connecticut requires that each of these (and others) be altered to conform to the new regional configuration. NECCOG has participated in the General Assembly's Smart Growth Working Group - with the Executive Director co-chairing the Land Use Sub-Committee. This evolved to the formation of the MORE (Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies) Commission - on which NECCOG's Director serves. NECCOG is the administrator for the Route 169 National Scenic Byway and is currently updating the 1997 Byway Management Plan with a grant from FHWA and assisted the Town of Pomfret with the development of a visitor kiosk on the Route 169 - intersecting with the EastCoast Greenway/Airline Trail.

NECCOG also administers the Northeastern Connecticut Transit District. The District provides services to most of the new NECCOG - but the new regional configuration results in not less than three transit systems providing services to NECCOG towns. Additionally, due to the Region's proximity to Massachusetts and Rhode Island we have ongoing discussions as to how to make additional connections to neighboring regions. NECCOG annually promotes and assists in the furtherance of the 5310 Program to provide buses to towns and organizations attempting to provide transportation

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opportunities to elderly and disabled persons. NECCOG participates in the Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium - This is a gathering of public transportation providers, the workforce board, human service organizations, and State (including CONNDOT) agencies meeting to enhance employment/sustainability options for persons in eastern Connecticut. NECCOG recently participated as a primary partner (along with two other COGs and the local Workforce Investment Board) in a HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative that includes a review a transportation connections in eastern Connecticut. NECCOG has worked with the Town of Putnam to develop a Safe Routes to School Program. Until the TSBs elimination in 2011, NECCOG actively participated in its activities - the Director was a two term member of the TSB.

In coordination with CONNDOT, NECCOG has assisted towns in the development of road projects utilizing collector monies and urban funds. NECCOG further provides project inspection and grant oversight services for town projects. NECCOG has worked with CONNDOT to update the functional classifications of roadways based on land development and change of use. NECCOG routinely reviews STIP amendments/actions forwarded by CONNDOT and ensures proper public participation procedures are followed.

Objectives:

- ▶ With the new geographical bounds of the NECCOG, the organization will develop a Long Range Transportation Plan covering the sixteen towns of the Region.
- ▶ Continue as the regional information resource supporting regional transportation, economic development, land use, and municipal planning by gathering, developing, and maintaining data regarding the NECCOG Region. Continue to refine GIS information, information delivery and expertise.
- ▶ Assist member communities with planning and technical assistance related to specific transportation related projects.
- ▶ Continue collaboration with local, regional, state, and federal organizations (member towns, CONNDOT, FHWA, FTA, General Assembly, University of Connecticut, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Department of Economic and Community Development) and other public and private entities/ stakeholders to foster the development of economically/environmentally sustainable transportation system.

Activities and Outputs

Primary:

- ▶ Develop a new Long-Range Transportation Plan incorporating the new sixteen town region consistent with the eight (8) planning factors required to be considered in long range transportation plans:
 - Support the economic vitality of the United States, states, and metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency
 - Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
 - Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
 - Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight

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- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation and improve quality of life
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the state, for people and freight
- Promote efficient system management and operation
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system

Taking a regional view the LRTP will attempt to address:

- How land use affects transportation
- Preservation of the existing transportation system
- How transportation influences economic and employment opportunities
- How investments in transportation influence growth (economic and physical)
- How transportation projects are selected
- How transportation projects serve regional needs
- How transportation impacts rural character
- A safe and secure transportation system
- Enhancing the connectivity of the existing transportation network within and between regions across all modes for both people and freight

Secondary:

- ▶ Maintain and improve the economic, demographic, geographic and land use data, including digital base map data, and develop geographically referenced data layers for utilization in regional short-range and long-range planning efforts that is necessary to conduct regional transportation planning. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
 - Communicate development changes and their implications to elected officials, business leaders, civic groups, community organizations, and the public at large. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
 - Continue the use of Scenario 360 – a build out analysis software for transportation applications (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
 - Participate in GIS imagery, and technical expertise meetings in coordination with the work efforts of state and federal agencies. Ensure that the perspective of local governments and agencies are given consideration in the development of statewide initiatives and standards. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)

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- ▶ NECCOG will review and act, as requested, on TIP/STIP Actions and Amendments and seek public involvement and act on them in coordination with CONNDOT (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Technical Capacity Enhancement of the Planning Process – NECCOG will have staff responsible for transportation planning attend CONNDOT, FHWA and/or FTA sanctioned training; webinars; and subscribe to appropriate publications. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Rural Major and Minor Collector Program and Urban Program for road project development and construction – working with member towns to develop projects. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan - the NECCOG Region will continue to coordinate and cooperate with the Bureau of Public Transportation on the continuing development of and updates to this plan and on the selection of projects for the various programs that fall under it. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Transit Planning - NECCOG will continue to assist NECTD in coordinating services in tune with the basic mobility needs of the elderly and disabled (FTA-5310) of the region. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
 - Inter-Regional Connections - NECCOG will explore inter-regional connection options (Worcester, Providence and Norwich areas) to determine the opportunities and challenges of such connections.
- ▶ Municipal Grant Program - NECCOG will assist NECTD in providing services under the Municipal Grant Program to the elderly and disabled of region. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Continued local traffic counts – as requested. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Complete Route 169 National Scenic Byway Management Plan - Current grant may or may not cover the completion of the plan - NECCOG anticipates the project being completed (submitted for approval) by October 2014.
- ▶ Working with the Northeast Economic Partnership to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the new 16-town Region in accordance with U.S.EDA rules and assisting towns with individual economic development projects. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)
- ▶ Develop a Regional Plan of Conservation and Development for the new 16-town Region. (Ongoing throughout fiscal year)

Outcomes

- ▶ Long-Range Transportation Plan for the new 16-town Region
- ▶ Robust GIS and traditional data services
- ▶ Active/Competitive 5310 Grant process
- ▶ Identified studies acted on either to completion or to a logical stage of development for further actions and the results posted/published on the NECCOG website
- ▶ Collaboration and participation with various public and private organizations regarding identified initiatives

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- ▶ Technical assistance (project development and/or administrative assistance)

Positions contributing to the task of Managing the Planning Process: Executive Director, Associate Director, Program Analyst, Fiscal Director, Regional Engineer and Intern(s).

UPWP Task 3

Public Participation

Background

Public participation is an ongoing activity of the NECCOG transportation planning program, including the regular posting and copying of CONNDOT or regional notices and reports. Public participation is also an integral part of one-time activities such as special corridor studies (i.e., Route 169 National Scenic Byway) and regularly repeated activities such as STIP amendments and the periodic LRTP updates. NECCOG has a strong commitment to informing and seeking the input of the Region's residents in transportation planning. Our organization has in place a Public Participation Policy to which NECCOG adheres and which spells out not only our commitment to the letter and spirit of Title VI and Environmental Justice - it articulates an organizational strategy to realize our public participation goals.

Objectives

- ▶ Raise the level of understanding of the transportation planning process throughout the Region by:
 - Seeking out under-involved populations within the Region, including minority, low income, senior citizen and immobile populations.
 - Targeting different audiences for each planning task, as necessary, including residents, business interests, transit providers, freight-haulers, and underserved and underrepresented populations.
 - Holding public meetings at sites convenient to potentially affected citizens and promoting meetings in a manner appropriate to the population groups from which feedback is desired.
- ▶ Maintain contact with "interested parties" and key stakeholders throughout the transportation planning process. Such a list will include:
 - Elected Officials and Local Government Staff
 - Transportation Agencies (public, non-profit, private)
 - Local Media
 - Civic and Special Interest Groups
 - Federal, State and local land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, historic preservation and other environmental agencies
 - Public and Private Environmental Organizations
 - Private Freight Shippers
 - Public transportation providers, including NCTD and social service transportation providers
 - Private Providers of Transportation
 - Representatives of Users of Public Transportation, Pedestrians, and Bicycles
 - Representatives of the Disabled

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- Other interests as may from time-to-time be active and interested in the planning, development and of the transportation network and/or the environment.

NECCOG will, when feasible, electronically mail meeting announcements to the contact list or to targeted groups for upcoming activities.

- ▶ NECCOG will keep the public informed of on-going transportation related activities on a continuous basis, using a variety of written and graphic means.
 - Employ visual techniques to depict transportation conditions and plans, including charts, graphs, photo interpretation, maps, GIS, and/or computer simulation.
 - Make all publications and work products available electronically to the public via the NECCOG web site (necog.org) and at the NECCOG offices.
 - Web site will be compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled users.
 - Web site shall be updated and maintained to provide the most current and accurate transportation planning information available. The web site will, at a minimum, contain the following information: contact information (mailing address, phone, fax, and e-mail), meeting calendars, agendas and minutes, work products and publications (STIP, Long Range Transportation Plans, Unified Planning Work Program, Public Participation Plan and Title VI Environmental Justice Plan).
 - Staff will be reasonably available to provide general and project-specific information at a central location during normal business hours and after hours at the request of community interest groups, with reasonable notice.
- ▶ NECCOG will strive to continuously improve public participation and mechanisms, as necessary, to make them most effective.

Outcomes

- ▶ Public and Stakeholders are well informed as to the planning process and organizational capacity
- ▶ Increased public input - especially from minority, disabled and low income persons

Positions contributing to the task of Managing the Planning Process: Executive Director, Planners, Fiscal Director, Regional Engineer and Intern(s).