



# neccog

Northeastern Connecticut Transit District



## September Regular Meeting Minutes

**September 25, 2015 - 9:00 am**

**Meeting was opened** at 9:02 by NECCOG Chair Russell Gray

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

**Roll call** was called - Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Eastford, Hampton, Killingly, Pomfret, Putnam, Scotland, Sterling, Thompson, Voluntown were in attendance.

Previous **meeting minutes** of July and August **were approved as presented** on a motion from Ms. Nicholson and a second by Mr. Sirpenski.

### **Public Participation:**

Sue Starkey of NDDH - discussed upcoming happenings of the District  
John Sarantopolous - discussed the need for NECCOG to more aggressively promote regionalism.

**Guest Speaker - Scott Jackson, Under Secretary - Intergovernmental Policy Division, Connecticut Office of Policy and Management**

Mr. Jackson discussed the Intergovernmental Policy Division and in particular the grants to municipalities managed by his division of OPM.

Mr. Jackson provided an overview of the ICE Grants and that OPM would like to see more regional projects - asking the towns to "think big." He also discussed the Governor's recent adjustments to the current budget and the reductions to municipalities. He noted that the MORE Commission was supposed to develop \$20 million in savings and that to date no such savings have been proposed. He spoke of grants to municipalities regarding body cameras for law enforcement. He also spoke of COG funding and the commitment to funding COGs.

Mr. Brodeur asked how towns are to communicate with OPM regarding various municipal contracts. Mr. Sirpenski stated that he would rather have STEAP Grants move to a formula where towns could plan ahead - similar to other capital projects. He went on to discuss the issue of PILOT for state-owned forest lands being based on 490 values. He noted that such an application was never the intent of the so-called 490 law or PILOT - rather, state forest land should be priced/valued on its market value. Mr. Lenky noted that the process (application to receiving funds) for all grants is too time consuming. Mr. Jackson replied that systems need to be addressed and that OPM does need to improve the time-line. Ms. Nicholson raised the issue of prevailing wage on all work - Mr. Jackson replied that the legislature will have to address that issue. Mr. Ives discussed that there are many small jobs that the towns could better do themselves - without the state being as involved as they currently are in such projects - giving the example of a simple roofing job that escalated by \$20,000 plus - making no sense to taxpayers. Mr. Jackson agreed that more collaboration needs to take place. Mr. Falzarano cited a bridge project that is causing significant disruption is now further delayed due to the state not coordinating with its subcontractors. Mr. Jackson suggested that the Region consider a regional public works program. This was followed by discussion of possible shared equipment - street sweeper, snow plows, wood chipper and shared salt shed - including with the state when they are in close proximity of a town.

**Director's Report** - John Filchak, Executive Director

- Animal Services Program** - Two Ford Transits were bought for the Program and are now in use.
- Trap, Neuter and Release Program** - The Program is now at the 200 cat threshold. The cat hospital is work out well as the colonies are found, go through surgery, and recover. We have found that large colonies are not as prevalent as first thought. The majority of the colonies contain 10 - 20 cats.
- Transportation** - We have begun work on the Long Range Transportation Plan and anticipate it to be ready for public discussion/input by December. We are in need of project ideas/proposals. CONNDOT has informed us that as part of the Governors Lets Go CT program, the Connecticut Department of Transportation is expanding and improving the existing STP Rural Major/Minor Collector Program as a way to provide additional assistance to the rural areas of the state. The modified program includes two main points: (1) INCREASES the amount of STP-Rural funds available to the COG's from \$1.0 million to \$2.0 million per year and (2) DECREASES the local match from 20% to 10%. - up to two projects will be entertained each year in each region. The funding limit of each project is half the total available funding.
- NECTD Administration and Operations** - Ridership has been steady through the summer months at between 200 and 250 rides per day (Monday - Friday). Saturday and Sunday services are also steady at between 20 and 35 rides. The elderly and disabled service is keeping two buses busy - including our church rides each Sunday. The biggest challenge has been securing qualified drivers to substitute for drivers out due to illness or vacation.
- Route 169 Management Plan** - A proposed amended management plan is being developed and a kick-off meeting was held on September 23. Our goal is to have the plan in place by January 2016. This includes expanding the scope of the current plan to include Norwich and Southbridge north and south as well as adding related historical, environmental and commercial locations to the management plan.
- Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan** - The Plan was reviewed by FEMA and returned to us for final edits. Those edits are now complete and both DEMHS and FEMA are now reviewing for final approval.
- Emergency Management** - Not a lot of news to report. The new budget was adopted in early September and we have continued to facilitate meetings for the member town emergency management directors.
- Economic Development** - We are in the process of preparing the updated CEDS for distribution to all towns and regional partners. This should be completed by mid November with a general kick-off meeting to follow. The goal is to have a plan ready for adoption by March of 2016 with a submission for consideration as a Economic Development District at that time.
- Paramedic Intercept** - No major changes to the program. We did request and subsequently receive \$20,000 from Backus Hospital to cover the hospital share of transports taken to the Backus Plainfield site.
- Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Study** - The study is progressing with our consultant now surveying the pre-hospital emergency responders and related organizations. They are also analyzing data from QVWC, Inc. and other sources. A preliminary report will be provided in early October - the final report/recommendations will be delivered in November.
- GIS Services** - The Regional Viewer continues to be refined and we are working with Vision Government Solutions to enable CAMA data to be more easily integrated into the system. A meeting was recently held with assessors (meeting are also being held one-on-one) to go over update schedules and operational issues with the system.
- Land Use Professional Services** - Currently, we are providing temporary (until December) planning services for Brooklyn, facilitating the update of Eastford's, Ashford's and Scotland's respective plans of conservation and development. We have also provided comment to the Voluntown Planning and Zoning Commission regarding a few specific zoning issues.
- Regional Comprehensive Planning** - We are in the data gathering stage and will soon be developing a preliminary draft.
- Regional Human Services Coordinating Council** - This is a relatively new mandated initiative "to encourage collaborations that will foster the development and maintenance of a client-focused structure for the health and human services system in the region." The purpose is to: "(1) ensure that regional plans and activities are coordinated with the human service needs of each region, and (2) develop approaches to improve service delivery and achieve cost savings in the region." We are assembling data and a comprehensive listing of the regional organizations that should be involved. Our intent is to hold an initial meeting in early November.

- MS 4 Technical Compliance Assistance** - DEEP has recently revised these regulations and they now no longer apply to most of our towns. However, for Brooklyn, Killingly, Plainfield, Putnam and Thompson these may result in significant changes and related costs. Our Regional Engineer can assist - if needed.
- MORE Commission Update** - During the summer we have been focused on two areas: Technology and Education. The Technology Working Group is focused on: (1) Support the creation of a Statewide Technology Plan, (2) Expanding the Nutmeg Network and Support its Funding and Use, (3) Demonstrating the value of the Nutmeg network, (4) Maximizing Student Achievement through Monitoring Software, and (4) Saving money by increasing board of education and town shared services. The Education Working Group is still formulating its recommendations - but is focused on consolidation of administration.
- LED Streetlight Workshop** - NECCOG is facilitating a LED Streetlight workshop on the 29th of September.
- Regional Reval Program** - The Director reported that due to the withdrawal of Putnam and Killingly from the Program that a new RFP must be issued. He stated that they are moving quickly to ensure a quick turnaround. Several members expressed concern that the members should stay united with these programs once it is decided to proceed.

### Discussion and Action Items

1. **Authorization** to use Transit Reserve Funds to cover the costs to put in place video cameras on each NECTD bus and to upgrade the communications systems - **authorization approved** on a motion from Mr. Piper and a second from Ms. Nicholson
2. **490 Valuation as it relates to PILOT for State forest lands** - After explanation from Mr. Sirpenski regarding the State Tax Panel regarding the use of 490 values as opposed to market values and the testimony provided to the State Tax Panel the members unanimously agreed to send a letter in line with that already submitted by the Town of Voluntown to the Tax Panel - voted unanimously on a motion by Mr. Brodeur and a second by Ms. Nicholson.

### Selectmen's Roundtable

Mr. Brodeur and Mr. Cahill expressed concern, to Mr. Jackson, regarding the current system for the issuance of pistol permits. Specifically, they are concerned with the qualifications and the wisdom of having such a decision made by the local CEO.

Mr. Falzarano spoke of Governor John Dempsey's Irish home and his visit there in honor of the former Mayor of Putnam and Governor of Connecticut 100th birthday.

### Adjournment

10:30 am - Motion by Mr. Piper and Second by Mr. Syme