



# 2010 Annual Report

Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency

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## Regional Consortium Is Awarded \$3.5 Million Sustainable Communities Grant

A \$3.5 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has been awarded to a regional consortium of planning organizations and cities in coastal Connecticut, New York City, Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley that includes NYMTC and the Regional Plan Association. The grant, one of 45 awarded nationally was announced on October 14, 2010. It is part of the Federal *Partnership for Sustainable Communities* with HUD, the US Department of Transportation and the US Environmental Protection Agency, formed to help communities across the country to create more housing choices, make transportation more



efficient and reliable, reinforce existing investments, and support vibrant and healthy neighborhoods that attract businesses. The other cities, counties and planning organizations in this Consortium represent more than 14 million people and nearly \$800 billion in economic output. The work conducted through this grant will build upon

individual sustainability planning efforts in the New York-Connecticut area by formalizing existing collaboration, and developing a broader context for regional cooperative efforts. The GBRPA will continue to play an active role in this project through the development of a Regional Plan for Sustainability, and contributions to related public outreach activities.

## Overview

The Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency (GBRPA) serves as the state-designated regional planning organization (RPO) for the six-town area encompassing Bridgeport, Easton, Fairfield, Monroe,

Stratford and Trumbull. The GBRPA was established in 1960 by ordinances adopted by each of its member communities. Today, the region is home to over 300,000 people and, with an area of ±145

square miles, it is the most densely populated region in Connecticut. Policy and planning guidance is provided by a Board of Directors consisting of 18 municipally appointed representatives.

## Transportation Planning

The GBRPA is the federally designated *transportation planning agency* for the Greater Bridgeport Planning Region and conducts the transportation planning process in accordance with federal regulations. It also serves as the co-planning staff and co-operating agency, along with the Valley Council of Governments, of the Greater Bridgeport and Valley

Metropolitan Planning Organization (GBVMPO). The GBVMPO is primarily responsible for providing policy direction on all aspects of the transportation planning process, as specified in federal transportation acts. The past year has been extremely important with regards to the transportation planning program through the

establishment of the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC). This group serves in advisory capacity to the MPO through the provision of input on projects, plans, and programs. By providing TTAC members with more detailed information on transportation planning efforts town staff can better analyze the local implications of proposed regional projects.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Initiatives

The completion of the Housatonic Railroad Trail, a multi-use trail over and along the old, abandon rail corridor, continues to be an emphasis planning area of the GBRPA. The GBRPA initiated work with Fuss & O'Neill, Inc to design the extension of the HRT from the Pequonnock Valley and is in the final stages of completing the design phase. In addition to the

regional trail project, the GBRPA has been invited to participate in the development of a local bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Town of Fairfield. Building from the work of the town Bike/Ped Advisory Group (who gathered over 700 signatures to initiate this planning effort) the GBRPA has been able to provide technical assistance to support the development

of recommendations aimed at improving the safety of local bicyclists and pedestrians. Planning work is scheduled to continue through the beginning of next year, with the intention of hosting a public charette process to assist in the identification of potential target areas in need of further analysis. A final plan is expected for completion in late-spring.

## Regional Council of Elected Officials

The Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency (GBRPA) will soon be the Greater Bridgeport Regional Council (GBRC). The change comes in response to the unanimous approval of our region's local legislative bodies which felt re-structuring the agency as a Regional Council of Elected Officials, would improve accountability and operational efficiency.

Under the new structure the region's six Chief Elected Officials will serve as the agency's policy board. They will now be responsible for setting the direction of the agency, and overseeing successful completion of planning program tasks. The agency's previous board has been converted to a representative Regional Planning Commission (RPC). The Planning and Zoning

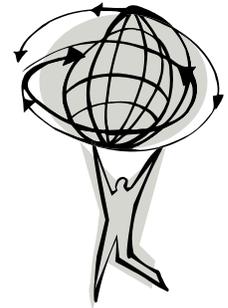
Commission of each member municipality is responsible for appointing one member. The new Commission is responsible for the review of zoning referrals, and will additionally guide the upcoming update to the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development.

## Economic Development District Approval

The GBRPA is one of the partners involved with a recently approved economic development strategy for the south western Connecticut coastal area, consisting of 14 cities and towns (ONE COAST). Through demonstrated compliance with requirements of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), ONE COAST now has an active

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The intent of the CEDS is to work collaboratively in order to grow the economy, manage growth effectively and share resources. This document was submitted to EDA in 2009 and was approved in 2010, additionally establishing ONE COAST as an approved Economic Development District (EDD).

This effort is particularly important to our region since it contains several Connecticut municipalities that meet minimum EDA distress criteria, namely Bridgeport and Stratford. Ultimately, this designation will enable the pursuit of grant funding for projects having a positive impact on the regional economy.



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