

Five-Year Outline for the Future of the Connecticut River Valley Corridor Transportation and Climate Change Project

September 24, 2008

Background

Over the past three years, local and regional governments along the Connecticut River Valley Corridor have come together to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the transportation sector under ICLEI's Transportation and Climate Change Project. Phase 1 of the project commenced in spring of 2005 and ended in spring of 2006. Phase 2 of the project commenced in spring of 2006 and ended in fall of 2008.

Phase 1 of the project yielded transportation-specific GHG emission inventories and climate action plans and a general recommendations report for the Corridor. The plans were drafted for and by Northampton, MA; Chicopee, MA; Holyoke, MA; Hartford, CT; and Brattleboro, VT.

In line with the precepts in many of these plans, Phase 2 of the project focused on advocating for improved passenger and freight rail service and smart growth along the Corridor to reduce regional GHG emissions from the transportation sector. Phase 2 yielded:

- Two major events: one geared for local government decision-makers (June 10, 2008) and the other geared for state and federal decision-makers (September 23, 2008)
- Expanded Working Group participation (all Phase 1 members continued into Phase 2)

Cities and Towns	Regions
<i>Phase 1</i>	<i>Phase 1</i>
Brattleboro, VT	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, MA
Chicopee, MA	Windham Regional Commission, VT
Hartford, CT	
Holyoke, MA	
Northampton, MA	
<i>Phase 2</i>	<i>Phase 2</i>
Greenfield, MA	Capitol Region Council of Governments, CT
Hanover, NH	Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
Lebanon, NH	Franklin Regional Council of Governments, MA
Montague, MA	Southwest Region Planning Commission, NH
Springfield, MA	Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, NH
Whately, MA	Connecticut River Transit, VT (Transit Agency)
Windsor, CT	Greater Hartford Transit District, CT (Transit Agency)

- Expanded Corridor northward from Brattleboro, VT, to Lebanon, NH
- A vision document articulating the desires of the Working Group for the future of the Corridor
- Land use and transportation maps for the Corridor from Vermont to Connecticut
- Four case studies highlighting the accomplishments of group members:
 - Environment and Economy Working Together: Holyoke's Partnership with Freight Rail
 - Land Use Patterns the Decrease Auto Dependency: Transit-Oriented Development
 - Bicycle and Pedestrian Links to Downtowns and Transit Systems
 - Increasing Transit Ridership and Revitalizing Downtowns through Intermodal Transportation Centers
- Two fact sheets:
 - ICLEI's Transportation and Climate Change Project
 - Alternatives to a "Dirty" Train: Cleaner Train Technologies Fact Sheet

- An implementation matrix that includes land use policies to reduce transportation sector GHG emissions in communities large and small
- A website that provides tools and resources for communities on land use policies and other issues related to climate change and transportation: <http://www.icleiusa.org/transportationproject>
- A five-year outline for the future of the Corridor

Next Steps

Facilitation/Organization

- At the August 8th Working Group meeting, members expressed the desire to continue meeting as a group to collaborate on issues related to rail along the Corridor
- At the September 23rd Event, several Working Group members created a Steering Committee to guide future Group activities
- Two options exist for continuing to hold meetings
 1. The City of Greenfield will act as an organizer and facilitator for the Working Group for as long as possible and viable
 2. The regional planning agencies and/or Steering Group members involved with the project will organize and facilitate meetings on a rotating basis
- Meetings should be held on a quarterly, or at least a bi-annual, basis
- Interested stakeholders – as evident from their attendance at the events or regular communication – should be invited to future meetings
 - ICLEI has a list of interested stakeholders that will be provided to the Working Group
- If/when possible and necessary, the Working Group should hold events that target specific stakeholders or are open to the public
 - ICLEI suggests holding events in coordination with Pioneer Valley Advocates for Commuter Rail (see below)

Short-Term Focus/Upcoming Event

- For the project to move forward, there must be support from all four state governments as well as their federal representatives
- At the September 23rd Event, Senator Rosenberg (MA) said that the Council of State Governments (CSG) Eastern Regional Conference (ERC, <http://www.csgeast.org/>) will hold its annual conference in Burlington, VT, in August 2009
 - Established in 1933, CSG is a non-partisan, public, non-profit organization that provides information, research, and training to state officials in all 50 states and U.S. territories.
 - ERC educates public officials regarding the unique problems and challenges facing the CSG Eastern Region. By facilitating cooperation among its member jurisdictions, ERC promotes multi-state or region-wide solutions to those problems.
- The Senator asked the Group to coordinate with the *Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail Study* (see below) and present what it would like to accomplish in the Corridor to the CSG Eastern Region's Transportation Committee
 - The Senator said that he will work to bring the right legislators together from all four states in that meeting
- While this event promises to be a good opportunity to drive the project forward at the state level, the Group must be sure to keep the federal legislators in the loop as well

Coordination with Other Regional Stakeholders

- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's (PVPC) *Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail Study*
 - This project is examining the viability of extending commuter rail service from Springfield, MA, north to White River Junction, VT. The study will include a recommendation to remove

- the Palmer detour, which would restore passenger rail service from Springfield through Chicopee, Holyoke, and Northampton up to Greenfield.
- PVPC encourages Working Group members to join in this Study, which will last into fall of 2009. A Partnering Charter for Study participants is available to interested local and regional governments.
 - States (Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont)
 - The Group should invite state government staff to present information at each meeting. These presentations will serve two purposes: 1). the group will be updated about current state-level work and initiatives, and 2). state staff will be apprised of what the group is pursuing.
 - State staff should be invited to return to future meetings.
 - Pioneer Valley Advocates for Commuter Rail (PVACR – www.springfieldrail.org)
 - PVACR is an all-volunteer group of Western Massachusetts residents that wants to bring commuter rail to the region. Members include commuters, environmental supporters, people concerned with economic development, and train buffs.
 - PVACR was a significant help in getting state decision-makers to the September 23 event in Holyoke.
 - The Hartford-Springfield Economic Partnership (<http://www.hartfordspringfield.com/>)
 - This group’s Steering Committee is composed of mainly academic, business, tourism, and economic development representatives.
 - This group should be “kept in the loop” on upcoming important dates and events
 - The Partnership has an Annual State of the Region Conference
 - Note: Tim Brennan, PVPC Executive Director, is on the Steering Committee

Communication

- To keep in touch with one another over time, a listserv could be created to announce upcoming Working Group meetings and relevant local, regional, and state events
- The facilitator/organizer, or a designated Working Group member, should be in charge of this listserv, or at least the email list of interested stakeholders
- The Working Group should work with ICLEI in case something on the project website becomes out-of-date

Potential for Phase 3

- Interested group members formed a Sub-Group to potential topics for funding for a Phase 3 of the project. These topics are listed below.
 - ICLEI suggests that the full Working Group discuss these topics at their next meeting
 - If the Working Group decides on a direction they would like to pursue, they could discuss the option of developing a joint proposal with ICLEI that could then be circulated to relevant foundations
 - The Working Group would then need to help ICLEI create full proposals if necessary

**ICLEI Transportation and Climate Change
Sub-Group Call re: Potential Phase 3 of Work**

September 3, 2008

On Call: Cyd Groff (Windsor, CT), Paul Cameron (Brattleboro, VT), Ken Niemczyk (Lebanon, NH), Ben Rasmussen (ICLEI), and Catherine Miller (PVPC)

Context:

- Funding (from the Surdna Foundation) for this project expires September 30, 2008
- There was a Phase 1 and now a current Phase 2
- The Town of Greenfield has proposed that it could operate as a facilitator/organizer of periodic meetings going into the future
 - Need Mayor's OK for this, however

General Comments:

- Last meeting (in Greenfield) really showed that we have momentum
- Project work is general to transportation/climate change issues and could be more specific: advocacy for rail to Springfield and then beyond

Ideas for Phase 3:

Continued advocacy:

- Build more partnerships
- Build more on freight rail
- Get more people on board - railroad advocates, etc.

Ridership studies:

- Undertake ridership studies on "spurs":
 - White River Junction to Randolph, VT
 - WRJ to St. Johnsbury, VT
- Revisit study on high-speed rail from Boston to Montreal via Concord, NH
- Foundations are unlikely to fund ridership studies since that is usually done by the state or local governments

Legislation support:

- Craft Congressional Letters of Support
- Develop materials aimed at legislators to expand commuter and freight rail
 - Work with PIRGs on this
- Work on showing why rail projects should be expedited through the approval process
 - I.e., make a case for what rail projects, like the New Haven – Hartford – Springfield line, should not trigger undo environmental reviews

Next Steps:

- Ben will discuss these ideas internally with ICLEI staff and see which, if any, foundations might be receptive to a Letter of Inquiry/Intent proposing these ideas for funding.