SCCOG

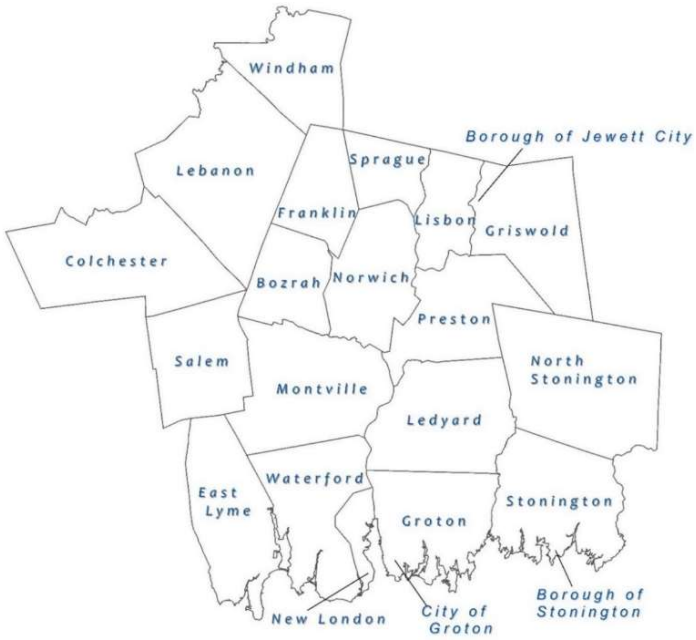
Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

FY 2022 Annual Report

February 2023

The Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) is one of nine regional councils of governments in Connecticut. The Council's mission is to provide a structure for intergovernmental cooperation on a wide range of issues facing southeastern Connecticut. Its predecessor agency, the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Planning Agency, was formed in in 1961.

SCCOG's policy board is comprised of chief elected officials representing the region's 22 member municipalities, with participation from the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes, the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, the Naval Submarine Base New London, Southeast Area Transit, and the CT Department of Transportation. This annual report covers activities between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.



Transportation

The transportation planning program is funded with municipal dues, a CTDOT grant, and funds from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Metropolitan Transportation Plan and air quality conformity analysis: SCCOG conducted outreach in advance of these documents' 2023 updates.

Transportation Improvement Program: SCCOG reviews and approves changes to the State and Regional TIP on a monthly basis to allocate funding to projects as they progress.

Regional Transportation Safety Plan: SCCOG amended the Plan to conform to federal requirements necessary for SCCOG to apply for federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant funding in the first quarter of FY2023.

Transit Planning: SCCOG provides technical planning assistance to Southeast Area Transit (SEAT) and the Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium (ECTC) and coordinates with Windham Regional

Transportation District (WRTD), Estuary Transit District (9Town Transit) and Arrowline (CT Transit express bus service). SCCOG also reviews and endorses transit performance measures and asset management plans. SCCOG continues to support SEAT's implementation of the 2014 Comprehensive Operational Analysis (COA), and provided support for the microtransit (demand response) service pilot in New London.

Commuter Park & Ride Facilities: SCCOG staff conducted quarterly counts at park & ride facilities in the region and submitted this information to CT DOT.

Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTCIP): Since 2014, SCCOG has received funding from CTDOT to administer and manage LOTCIP funds in the region. As of July 1, 2022, five LOTCIP projects had been completed, three were close to completing construction, three were in design, and three applications were in development. SCCOG staff provided assistance to municipalities in refining applications for seven projects submitted as concepts in 2021 and 2022.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): The City of Norwich's Norwich-New London Turnpike project proceeded with design work. Additional TAP funding was allocated through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), authorized in November of 2021. In May 2022, SCCOG reconfirmed its 2019 project priorities for TAP funding, which included projects in New London, Groton, and Bozrah.

Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan: SCCOG continued to implement its 2019 plan with projects including the Bicycle Facility Planning Study for Route 2 in North Stonington. SCCOG continues to aid municipal and advocacy groups, including the Connecticut Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Board, Bike Groton and the City of Groton/Groton Utilities. SCCOG continues to catalog local bicycle plans, facilities, and data.

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310): SCCOG solicited applications for Section 5310 grants, and seven grants were awarded including two non-traditional grants. Staff assisted the CTDOT in collecting Municipal Grant Program applications for operational grants to municipalities for senior and disabled transportation.

Corridor Studies: During the year, the SCCOG initiated two major Corridor Studies, one of Route 161 in East Lyme and one of Route 32 in New London. Both of these studies are scheduled to be completed in FY 2023. In addition, in FY 2022 the SCCOG was awarded an STP-funded corridor study of Norwich's downtown area, which is currently being scoped.

Other Grant Opportunities: SCCOG staff ensured that member municipalities were aware of funding opportunities, reviewed applications, and provided letters of support where appropriate (Community Connectivity, BUILD, Corridor Studies).

Special Projects: SCCOG continued coordination with CTDOT to advance potential improvements to the Gold Star Bridge, including enhancements to bicycle/pedestrian accommodations. SCCOG staff and Norwich consulted on Routes 82 and the downtown area. SCCOG coordinated with CTDOT on improvements to Route 85 necessitated by abandonment of the Route 11 expressway extension. SCCOG consulted CTDOT on several congested corridors identified within our Congestion Management Process. SCCOG staff participated in the Interstate 95 Planning & Environmental Linkage (PEL) Study and Eastern CT Corridor Rail and Transit Feasibility Study, providing information and local insight and assisting with public outreach.

Comprehensive Planning:

This program is supported by municipal dues and a Regional Services Grant from Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management. Major tasks within the program include development of regional development and conservation plans, support and coordination of regional economic development efforts, administrative and technical support of the Council of Governments, and the provision of information to the public and other agencies and organizations. Of note are the following initiatives:

Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (RPOCD): SCCOG continues to work on projects implementing the recommendations of its 2017 Regional Plan. The RPOCD recommends a number of strategies and specific activities that are being implemented via hazard mitigation planning, shared services coordination, housing planning, planner and commissioner training, transportation planning and regional economic development activities discussed in this report. In addition, SCCOG's statutorily-required review of municipal Plans of Conservation and Development includes documentation of how the contents of each municipal plan specifically relate to regional goals and strategies. SCCOG encourages municipal requests for state or federal funding to include statements of how proposed municipal activities relate to regional goals established in the RPOCD and has assisted municipal staff in preparing this information.

Regional Economic Development Activities: In FY 2022, SCCOG was a coalition member in the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region's (seCTer) Offshore Wind Industry Cluster (OWIC) application to the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) for a $39 Million Build Back Better Regional Challenge grant. SCCOG's portion of the application would provide predevelopment assistance and create a digital dashboard for use by OWIC supply chain businesses looking to locate in the region. seCTer's coalition grant application advanced to Phase 2 of the competition and competed for American Rescue Plan funding. Although seCTer was named a Phase 2 finalist, one of only 60 nationwide, it was informed on September 1, 2022 that the region's application had not been one of the 21 selected for funding. The SCCOG and its Executive Director also supported and participated in the work of the Southeastern Connecticut Enterprise Region (seCTer), Thames River Heritage Park, and the Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB).

Housing: SCCOG and its staff continue to support the work of the Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance (SECHA) and to provide technical assistance in housing planning and implementation to its member municipalities. During this past year, SCCOG staff, SECHA, and the Community Foundation of Eastern CT discussed the potential for the establishment of a stand-alone housing resource/advocacy organization affiliated with the Centers for Housing Opportunity which exists elsewhere in the state; it is expected that a decision on this will be made in FY 2023. SCCOG encouraged its member municipalities to apply for CT Department of Housing Affordable Housing Plan Technical Assistance Grants; seven SCCOG municipalities received grants and SCCOG staff assisted six towns with developing draft plans that are being considered for adoption. As part of this work, SCCOG staff also developed region-wide resources including an analysis of Census data and a stand-alone strategy resource guide for affordable housing implementation strategies.

Drinking Water: The SCCOG has a Regional Water Committee, which serves as the region's

water planning body, with representation on that committee by the major municipal water purveyors in the region. The Eastern Connecticut Water Utility Coordinating Committee (Eastern WUCC) met twice, in February 2021 and May 2022. SCCOG staff play an important role in the Eastern WUCC, continuing to serve in the Secretary role. The State's three WUCCs met convened on four occasions for Statewide WUCC Implementation meetings. SCCOG staff led an Interconnections/ Regionalization Workgroup of the Statewide WUCC Implementation effort, which resulted in draft changes to CT DEEP and CT DPH permitting processes, making it easier for water utilities to permit emergency interconnections.

Wastewater Management: SCCOG continued to engage with local wastewater staff to advance projects identified in SCCOG's 2019 Regional Wastewater Management Plan. SCCOG submitted a number of the plan's recommendations as candidate projects under the State of Connecticut and FEMA's Long-term Recovery Task Force effort.

Stormwater Planning: SCCOG continues to assist the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) in administering a regional stormwater collaborative. SCCOG applied for and received a $65,000 grant from CIRCA to define the steps needed to create municipal stormwater authorities in four SCCOG member municipalities. This project got underway in June 2022.

Hazard Mitigation Planning: Municipalities must have a current FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan in order to receive certain federal funding for disaster planning and hazard mitigation projects. SCCOG satisfies this requirement for its member municipalities through its development of regional hazard mitigation plans, which have been adopted in 2005, 2012, 2015 (to add former WINCOG towns), and 2017. In FY 2021 SCCOG applied for a FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant to update its hazard mitigation plan; SCCOG received notice in FY 2022 that it has received this $149,963 grant and has engaged a consultant to update its hazard mitigation plan. SCCOG and its project consultant began work on the update to its hazard mitigation plan in spring 2022. The effort will leverage "Resilient CT 2.0," a concurrent initiative of the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), to bring additional data into the plan, and make it a "Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan."

Brownfields: In fall 2021, SCCOG staff submitted candidate projects under the State of Connecticut and FEMA's Long-term Recovery Task Force effort; one such project was for supplemental phase I, II, and III environmental site assessments at the former Fusion Paperboard property in the Towns of Lisbon and Sprague. SCCOG staff participated in an information-gathering meeting with FEMA staff in February, 2022. SCCOG staff continues to assess ways in which it may assist its member municipalities with brownfield remediation.

Military/Community Planning: SCCOG staff continues to work with SUBASE New London and its neighboring municipalities to identify and resolve potential use conflicts. In 2020, SCCOG received a grant from DOD Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation to address parking issues in the vicinity of Electric Boat in the City of Groton. That project commenced in late 2020 and was completed in the summer of 2022. In summer 2022, SCCOG staff began working with staff from SUBASE New London and the Groton Utilities to develop a grant application for resilience improvements to utility systems serving SUBASE New London and the surrounding area in Groton.

Human Services Coordination: SCCOG continues to staff a Regional Human Services

Coordinating Council (RHSCC) to support the capacity of the region's human service providers and encourage coordination and efficiencies. SCCOG formed the first COG-sponsored RHSCC in the State in 2011, prior to RHSCCs being required by state statute. SCCOG has continued to work with RHSCC members to develop shared resources addressing agency and community needs, most recently working with the United Way of Southeastern CT, Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT, and Community Foundation of Southeastern CT to develop a volunteer/board recruitment and training program. During FY 2022, SCCOG staff supported and helped coordinate the region's human service agencies' efforts to respond to the pandemic.

Regional Geographic Information Systems: SCCOG continues to maintain and update a regional web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) viewer, which includes an online property survey index. SCCOG's SCCOG also complies with PA 18-175, which requires municipalities with digital parcel data to transmit that data to their Council of Governments, and for COGs to then deliver that data to OPM annually. SCCOG gathers the data annually and provides the required material to OPM.

Legislative Coordination: SCCOG meets annually with the southeastern Connecticut legislative delegation to discuss issues important to SCCOG member municipalities that might be the subject of proposed legislation before the start of the legislative session. SCCOG's 2022 legislative agenda included requests to address education funding, solid waste management, and zoning enforcement requirements. Federal and state legislators and their staff regularly attend SCCOG meetings.

Municipal Services:

This program is supported by municipal dues, a Regional Services Grant from Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management, and individual contracts with municipalities receiving direct assistance. The program includes direct technical assistance to member municipalities, training programs for members of local commissions, information-sharing and other support for municipal Chief Elected Officials, and the provision of statutorily required land use permitting reviews.

Municipal Shared Services: SCCOG staff and contractors provide planning and inland wetland assistance under contract to five municipalities and also assist with special projects and interim coverage as needed. SCCOG staff also provided assistance to six municipalities developing Affordable Housing Plans. In Fiscal Year 2021, SCCOG worked with its member municipalities to explore developing additional resources to address continued and emerging needs for qualified Building Official Services, Zoning Enforcement, and Inland Wetlands personnel. As a result, SCCOG has hired a part-time Building Inspector to serve two towns and a part-time Zoning Enforcement Official to serve two towns.

Municipal Planner and Commissioner Training: In FY 2022, SCCOG continued to work towards the goal of educating regional commissioners and planners. The training videos created by SCCOG staff continue to be available on the SCCOG website and YouTube. As State Statutes require that land use commissioners attend educational sessions beginning in 2023, the SCCOG will continue to assist towns in meeting this requirement.

Municipal Chief Elected Official Support: In FY 2022, the SCCOG initiated a new program to support Chief Elected Officials. The program consists of an Orientation Manual provided to all SCCOG CEOs, a "SCCOG 101" series of programs,

a mentor program, a Speakers Bureau, and CEO Roundtables.

Regional Planning Commission (RPC): SCCOG holds quarterly meetings of the RPC to engage municipal commissions in regional initiatives, share best practices, provide training on specific topics, and identify issues of concern that the SCCOG might assist in addressing. In FY 2022, SCCOG staff facilitated three virtual meetings with the RPC to discuss legislative updates, commissioner training requirements, and updates on municipal activities.

Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Activities: SCCOG staff continued to assist member municipalities in responding to the COVID-19 public health crisis throughout FY 2022. Activities included convening special Zoom meetings with the region's municipal CEOs and health district directors to transmit current information and public health guidance, and regularly compiling information from member municipalities to enable consistency in COVID protocols. SCCOG continued to support Connecticut's Executive Branch agencies, particularly DEMHS, in coordinating a Regional Recovery steering committee and associated working groups, at the request of the Office of the Governor. This work required a substantial investment of time in conducting outreach to regional stakeholders and preparing materials in preparation and response to COVID recovery meetings. SCCOG staff also attended COVID response calls convened by the Departments of Agriculture and Department of Aging and Disability Services. Toward the end of the fiscal year, the SCCOG retained a Regional Recovery Coordinator, who assisted SCCOG member municipalities in their efforts to recover from the pandemic and to advise municipal staff on ARPA expenditure and reporting requirements.

Statutory Planning and Zoning Referrals: Connecticut General Statutes require that municipalities advise Councils of Governments of certain changes to zoning or subdivision regulations to allow COGs to assess potential intermunicipal impacts. During FY22, SCCOG staff reviewed and responded to 47 statutorily required referrals from municipalities in or adjacent to the SCCOG region.

Sustainable CT: Eight of SCCOG's 19 eligible municipalities are currently certified through this program, with one certified Silver and seven certified Bronze. SCCOG hosted a Sustainable CT fellow in the summer of 2021 who worked with 11 towns seeking certification, re-certification, or advancement from bronze to silver certification. Four towns submitted applications for recertification.

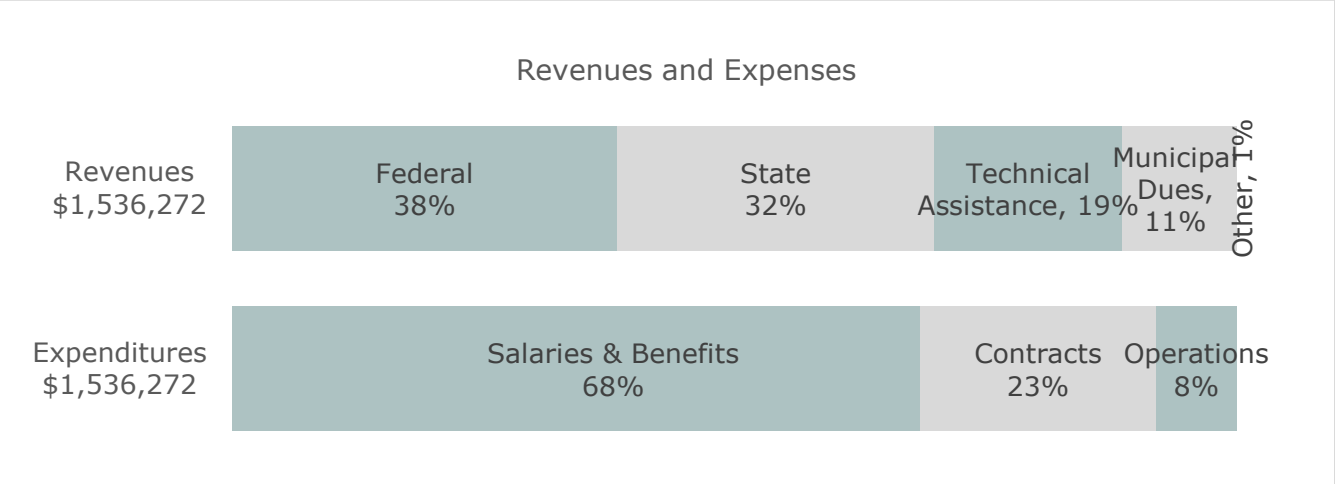
2020 Census Participation: Following the completion of the 2020 Decennial Census, staff has tracked the release of Census results from the Census and American Community Surveys. SCCOG continues to be an Anchor Partner of the Census Bureau by promoting data summits to municipalities. SCCOG staff also stayed informed of Census-related news to be able to provide answers to any municipalities with questions.

Emergency Management Planning:

SCCOG is the fiduciary agent for the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) Region 4 Regional Emergency Planning Team (REPT). In FY 2022, the REPT and its REPT Steering Committee approved a $385,306.80 budget for the purchase of equipment and services and for the provision of training to the region's emergency responders. In addition to these grant funds, SCCOG administered five other ongoing emergency management grants during the past fiscal year.

Financial Summary:

An audited financial statement is available for review at www.seccog.org.



Staff:

Amanda Kennedy	Executive Director
Wendy Leclair	Office Manager
Kate Rattan	Planner III/Transportation Program Manager
Sam Alexander	Planner III
Nicole Haggerty	Planner II
Kyle Casiglio	Planner I
Jessica Cobb	GIS Coordinator
Jennifer Lindo	Land Use Specialist
James Butler	Senior Advisor

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Ledyard
Lisbon
Montville
New London
North Stonington
Norwich
Preston
Salem
Sprague
Stonington Borough
Town of Stonington
Waterford
Windham

Military Liaisons:
U.S. Coast Guard Academy
Naval Submarine Base New London

Tribal Affiliates:
Mohegan Tribe
Mashantucket-Pequot Tribal Nation

MPO Membership:
Southeast Area Transit (SEAT)
CT Department of Transportation (non-voting)

Executive Leadership:

2021
Chair: Fred C. Allyn, III, Ledyard
Vice-Chair: Michael Urgo, North Stonington
Treasurer: Keith Hedrick, City of Groton
Secretary: Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington

2022
Chair: Fred C. Allyn, III, Ledyard
Vice-Chair: Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington
Treasurer: Rob Brule, Waterford
Secretary: Cheryl Blanchard, Sprague

If language assistance is needed, please contact SCCOG at 860-889-2324, office@seccog.org.
Si necesita asistencia lingüística, por favor comuníquese a 860-889-2324, office@seccog.org.
如果您需要语言帮助，请致电 860-889-2324 或发送电子邮件至 office@seccog.org.