

Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments

2023 Annual Report

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.

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.



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 adopted a new Metropolitan Transportation Plan in March. The Plan establishes general policy goals and identifies long-range transportation needs across a 20-year planning horizon, and is updated every four years.

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 applied for federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant funding for implementation projects across the region and to support the

revision of the region's Safety Action Plan, and was awarded funds for planning.

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.

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 (LOTICIP): Since 2014, SCCOG has received funding from CTDOT to administer and manage LOTICIP funds in the region. As of

December 31, 2023, nine projects have been completed through this program. Jefferson Avenue, New London, is nearing completion. The Ledyard multi-use trail project went out to bid in late 2023. Projects in Bozrah and Colchester are in final design. The Broad/Williams project in New London received its Commitment to fund and is in final design. The Poquetanuck project in Preston received Commitment to Fund. Projects in East Lyme and Norwich advanced in design. Proposed projects in Lisbon and Montville are being reevaluated.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): The City of Norwich's Norwich-New London Turnpike project proceeded with design work. In May 2022, SCCOG reconfirmed its 2019 project priorities for TAP funding, which included projects in New London, Groton, and Bozrah. The New London and Groton projects are being further developed for funding under this program, along with Norwich New London Turnpike, selected under a previous solicitation.

Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP): SCCOG reviewed project applications and submitted a prioritized project list to CTDOT. One project (Preston) was selected for initial funding.

Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan: SCCOG continues to coordinate regarding bicycle/pedestrian programs and projects with municipalities and advocacy groups, including the Connecticut Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Board, Bike Groton and the City of Groton/Groton Utilities. SCCOG continues to pursue funding for implementation projects.

Senior/Disabled Transportation Funds: (Section 5310, MGP): SCCOG solicited applications for *Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities* (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: SCCOG completed two major Corridor Studies in 2023, developing improvement plans for segments of Route 161 in East Lyme and Route 32 in New London, and began work on a third focused on downtown Norwich.

Performance Metrics: In compliance with new federal requirements to adopt performance targets and track the impacts of projects, SCCOG worked with CTDOT to adopt performance measures and targets related to traffic congestion and safety.

Other Grant Opportunities: SCCOG submitted an application for funding to update the SEAT Comprehensive Operations Analysis through the federal Areas of Persistent Poverty program but was not selected for funding. SCCOG staff ensured that member municipalities were aware of funding opportunities, reviewed applications, and provided letters of support where appropriate (Recreational Trails Program, RAISE, Community Connectivity, Community Investment Fund).

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 staff participated in the Eastern CT Rail Transit Study technical committee and coordinated a briefing for SEAT/SCCOG members. SCCOG staff also coordinated with CT DOT on the development of the CTDOT Capital Plan and the development of performance metrics.

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.

Economic Development: SCCOG actively collaborates with seCTer, the region's economic development organization, and seCTer provides a briefing to the SCCOG Board at its monthly meeting. In 2023, SCCOG contributed data to seCTer's draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. SCCOG's Executive

Director is a member of seCTer's board as well as several committees.

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 and SECHA provided training on fair housing issues to municipal commissioners to satisfy new statutory requirements for training.

Drinking Water: SCCOG provides administrative support to the Eastern Connecticut Water Utility Coordinating Committee (Eastern WUCC), which was dormant in 2023.

Wastewater Management: SCCOG developed a Regional Wastewater Management Plan in 2019. 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 completed a Municipal Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study in 2023 that evaluated the potential for stormwater authorities to support the growing costs of managing stormwater systems. This project was funded through a \$65,000 grant from UConn CIRCA.

Hazard Mitigation Planning: SCCOC coordinates with its member municipalities every five years to develop a Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, a prerequisite for certain federal grants for disaster planning and hazard mitigation projects. In 2023, SCCOG completed its fifth such plan, and also partnered with the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation to incorporate Climate Adaptation into its Hazard Mitigation Plan for the first time.

Brownfields: SCCOG received its first brownfields remediation grants in 2023 to conduct assessments of four properties in Waterford and Windham. SCCOG also partnered with UConn's Technical Assistance for Brownfields program to develop brownfields inventories in Griswold, Preston, and Sprague.

Military/Community Planning: SCCOG staff continues to work with SUBASE New London and its neighboring municipalities to identify and resolve potential use conflicts. SCCOG received funding in 2023 through the DOD Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation to support the design of utility upgrades that will improve the resiliency of systems serving the New London SUBASE. SCCOG also continued to convene an intermunicipal working group on community/defense issues and coordinated with the City of Groton on addressing the existing and future demand for parking associated with Electric Boat. In December, SCCOG awarded the Association of Defense Communities *Defense Community Champion Award* to Marian Galbraith in recognition of her many activities highlighting the military history of southeastern Connecticut.

Human Services Coordination: SCCOG has convened a Regional Human Services Coordinating Council (RHSCC) since 2011 to facilitate communication between and among social service providers and municipalities. In 2023, topics addressed at quarterly meetings included legislation, reaching undocumented immigrants, partnership with law enforcement, and opioid recovery programs. The SCCOG Board also approved adding an agenda item to monthly meetings for a report from the health districts serving southeastern Connecticut.

Regional Geographic Information Systems: SCCOG continues to maintain and update a regional web-based Geographic Information

System (GIS) portal. 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.

Solid Waste: At the request of the Board, SCCOG established an ad hoc Solid Waste Committee to review issues regarding solid waste disposal and mark recommendations for next steps. The committee was chaired by Mayor Allyn of Ledyard and met every two weeks for several months. A report of findings is forthcoming. The Committee will continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

Carbon Reduction Planning: SCCOG staff coordinated with the State and partner Councils of Governments regarding the preparation of a Carbon Reduction Plan and potential related funding opportunities.

Legislative Coordination: The SCCOG Board meets annually with the southeastern Connecticut legislative delegation to discuss issues important to SCCOG member municipalities. SCCOG's 2023 legislative agenda included the following requests:

- Greater predictability and stability for education costs (particularly special education)
- Insufficient funding for Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program
- Revisions to laws regarding Zoning Enforcement certification and Land Use Commissioner Training
- Actions to enable shared services
- Workforce development funding.

SCCOG's legislative chair submitted testimony on several related bills. In addition, representatives from the federal legislative delegation representing southeastern Connecticut regularly attend and report on their activities at the SCCOG's monthly meetings.

Municipal Services:

This program is supported by municipal dues, a Regional Services grant and Regional Planning Incentive Program 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: In response to ongoing challenges in staffing local services, SCCOG applied for and received an Office of Policy and Management (OPM) Regional Planning Incentive Program grant to support an expanded municipal services program that would enable the addition of a building official and zoning enforcement officer supporting multiple SCCOG towns under contract to SCCOG. The OPM grant provides partial funding for the services over a period of three years. The new staff joined the SCCOG in early 2023. SCCOG now provides staff or contractors providing planning services in five towns, zoning/blight enforcement to four towns, and building official services to four towns, and also provided interim planning and zoning enforcement services in one municipality in 2023 as they searched for new staff. SCCOG also provides GIS services to municipalities on an as-needed or contract basis. In addition, 13 of SCCOG's 22 member municipalities participated in CRCOG's Capitol Region Purchasing Council during the year.

Municipal Planner and Commissioner Training: SCCOG coordinated with OPM, CCAPA, and the UConn Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) to address new training requirements for commissioners and hosted

training sessions in late 2023 provided by CLEAR. As noted above, SCCOG also worked with SECHA to provide required housing-specific training.

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 2023, SCCOG staff facilitated three virtual meetings with the RPC to discuss legislative updates, commissioner training requirements, and updates on municipal activities. SCCOG also updated its white paper on short-term rental regulation approaches in response to requests and recognition of evolving case law on this issue.

Regional COVID-19 Response and Recovery Activities: SCCOG transitioned its COVID-19 work to a permanent work plan that more supports public health more broadly. This included adding representatives from the region's Health Districts to monthly board meeting agendas and incorporating public health topics into the agendas of the Regional Human Services Coordinating Council. Each month, a representative of either Uncas or Ledge Light Health District provides a briefing to the municipal CEOs as part of the monthly board meeting. SCCOG continued to support municipal staff in administration of ARPA funds but discontinued its employment of a dedicated staff person for this purpose.

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 2023, SCCOG

staff reviewed and responded to 71 statutorily required referrals from municipalities in or adjacent to the SCCOG region.

Sustainable CT: SCCOG has hosted Sustainable CT Fellows each summer since 2018 to assist member municipalities participating in the Sustainable CT program. Eight of SCCOG’s 19 eligible municipalities are currently certified through this program. In 2023, Fellow Morgan Casey provided assistance to five municipalities

and helped two submit applications for recertification.

Ongoing Census Coordination: Following the completion of the 2020 Decennial Census, staff worked with CTDOT and FHWA to review and address urban boundary changes that affect funding eligibility.

Emergency Management Planning:

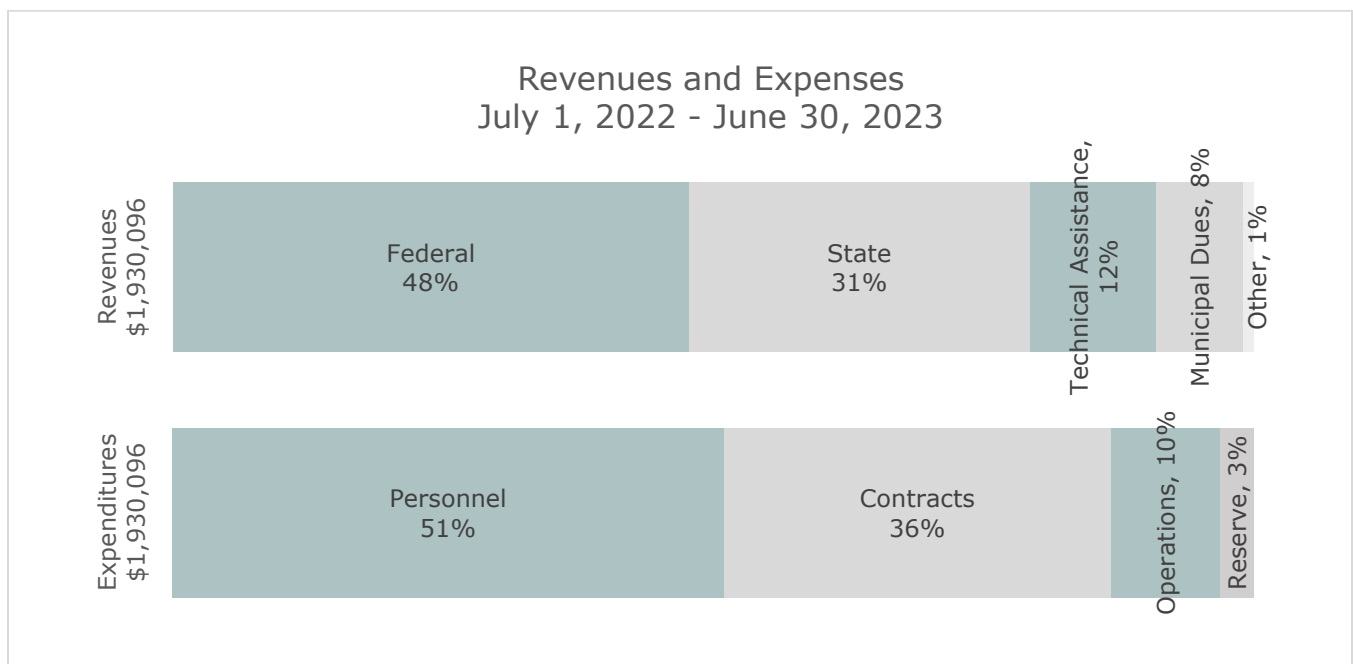
SCCOG is the fiduciary agent for the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) Region 4 Regional Emergency Planning Team (REPT). In 2023, the REPT and its REPT Steering Committee approved a \$400,288.97 budget for the purchase of

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.

Financial Summary:

SCCOG’s total revenue earned in FY 2023 was \$1,930,096. Revenues exceeded expenses by \$59,628, which was reserved for future use.

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



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Members:

Bozrah	New London	<i>Military Liaisons:</i>	<i>Tribal Affiliates:</i>
Colchester	North Stonington	U.S. Coast Guard	Mohegan Tribe
East Lyme	Norwich	Academy	Mashantucket-
Franklin	Preston	Naval Submarine	Pequot Tribal
Griswold	Salem	Base New London	Nation
Jewett City	Sprague		
City of Groton	Stonington Borough		<i>MPO Membership:</i>
Town of Groton	Town of Stonington		Southeast Area
Lebanon	Waterford		Transit (SEAT)
Ledyard	Windham		CT Department of
Lisbon			Transportation
Montville			(non-voting)

Executive Leadership:

2023 Executive Committee

Chair: Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington
Vice-Chair: Rob Brule, Waterford
Treasurer: Cheryl Blanchard, Sprague

Secretary: Charlie Grant, Franklin
Rep. at Large: John Salomone, Norwich
Rep. at Large: Fred Allyn, Ledyard

Staff:

Amanda Kennedy	Executive Director
Wendy Leclair	Office Manager
Emily Bigl	Environmental Planner I
Liz Burdick	Director of Municipal Services
James Butler	Senior Advisor
Jessica Cobb	GIS Coordinator
Doug Colter	Building Official
Nicole Haggerty	Planner II
Jennifer Lindo	Land Use Specialist
Kate Rattan	Planner III/Transportation Program Manager
Helen Zincavage	Director of Regional Planning

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