

Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report

The Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SECOG) works on behalf of 22 member municipalities. The Council's mission is to provide a structure for intergovernmental cooperation on a wide range of issues facing southeastern Connecticut.

SECOG'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.

Major Accomplishments

Staffing: SECOG added five new staff in 2024 to replace outgoing staff and add new program capacities. Kate Rattan was promoted to Director of Transportation and Helen Zincavage joined SECOG as Director of Regional Planning. SECOG also partnered with the Town of Montville to hire Paul Currie as a building inspector trainee.

Capital Improvements: With the installation of new site drainage and repairs to exterior walls, SECOG addressed long-standing moisture infiltration. Interior renovations refreshed the office and added new workspaces for additional staff.

Open Space Plan: SECOG completed a Regional Open Space Plan, the first since 1968, and began working with stakeholders on implementation. The Plan's open space inventory brings together state and local data on open space preservation with information from local land trusts. SECOG's data shows that 13% of the region's land area is preserved as open space, with an additional 10% temporarily protected as open space. The plan outlines actions to expand access to open space and improve its environmental quality.

Climate Resilience: After a severe storm in January 2024 flooded Norwich businesses and forced evacuations along the Yantic River, SECOG engaged with DEMHS and member municipalities to begin identifying infrastructure investments that would reduce future flooding. While a request to FEMA for funding was unsuccessful, the project was initiated thanks to a partnership with the Connecticut Institute of Resiliency and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) which committed funding towards consultant work on early action items. In December, SECOG submitted an application to EPA, in partnership with the United Way of

Southeastern Connecticut for \$20 million to support actions reducing the effects of extreme heat. Funding would support projects such as shade tree plantings and cooling center upgrades in five SECOG municipalities and the Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation facilities.



After heavy rainfall in January 2024 flooded properties along the Yantic River, staff have worked with the State, cities and towns, and UConn's CIRCA to create a framework for preventing future flood damage. Pictured: Site tour of flood levels in the village of Yantic.

Defense Community Coordination: SECOG continued its partnership with the SUBASE, the Connecticut Office of Military Affairs, Association of Defense Communities, and Department of Defense to address the needs of local military installations and the supporting civilian communities. In 2024, SECOG worked with Groton Utilities to design infrastructure improving the resilience of the SUBASE to utility interruptions. SECOG was also approved

for an additional \$683,000 grant that will fund housing development plans in the Town of Groton and an updated Compatible Use Plan, which will direct future activities in this program area.



SECOG celebrated Steven Ricard as the region's 2024 Defense Community Champion. Mr. Ricard is the chairman of New London Veterans Advisory Committee. This award is given annually as part of the Association of Defense Communities program recognizing individuals who positively impact their defense communities. Pictured with Mayor Passero and Angela Clay of the Navy Federal Credit Union at the Coast Guard Academy's CommUNITY Day. Photo: Coast Guard Academy.

Local Transportation Funding: SECOG coordinated applications for local road projects in 3 towns. Over eight million dollars in funding was allocated for projects in 2024 through the LOTCIP and TRIP programs.

Corridor Planning: SECOG completed the Chelsea Harbor/Downtown Norwich Study, in partnership with the City of Norwich. The study proposes improvements to parking and circulation that would improve pedestrian connectivity and motor vehicle safety. SECOG continues to work with CTDOT on implementing improvements planned in SECOG's New London Route 32 study and East Lyme Route 161 study, which were completed in 2023.

Bus Shelters and Stops: SECOG assisted SEAT and its member municipalities with the conversion of the flag-down system to a signed-route system and also coordinated with CTDOT on shelter installations.

Housing: SECOG continued its partnership with the Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance (SECHA) to host a tour of new housing in the region and prepare a lookbook for broad circulation. The tour visited new single-family homes, a historic mill being converted to mixed-income housing, co-housing for recently homeless individuals, and a single-family home being rehabbed by a land trust, illustrating the diversity of approaches to adding attainable housing.

Electric Vehicles: SECOG prepared a memo summarizing opportunities for electric vehicle adoption in southeastern Connecticut and formed an interest group with which to continue coordination. SECOG continues to provide support to SEAT as it looks forward to its facility renovation to accommodate electric buses.

Mystic Tourism Working Group: SECOG Transportation Director Kate Rattan serves on the Working Group and its Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittees.

Bike/Ped Planning & Implementation: SECOG coordinated with local community groups to program \$57,673 in CTDOT Active Transportation Microgrants. Funding was available for up to \$5,000 per grant to support bicycle and pedestrian safety programming by municipalities, schools and non-profits. SECOG coordinated with the Town of Stonington and CTDOT on improvements following a fatal crash.

Municipal Solid Waste: SECOG continued to support a Solid Waste subcommittee and completed a research report documenting the need for state investment and policy changes. In December, SECOG submitted a request for funding to pilot organic waste collection in Windham.



SECOG staff visited transfer stations across the region as part of its research on solid waste solutions.

2024 Legislative Session: SECOG produced a guide to legislation for municipal elected officials and staff which summarized legislation most relevant to municipal activities.

Brownfields: SECOG continued to expand its brownfield services, managing assessments for four properties in Waterford and Windham. SECOG also partnered with the Eastern CT Land Bank and UConn TAB program to submit an application for \$1,200,000 in EPA funds for assessments and remediation plans.

Municipal Services: SECOG staff served as interim planner for the Town of Colchester while it sought permanent staff. SECOG began a building inspector apprentice program in partnership with the Town of Montville, with the goal of the apprentice being certified as Assistant Building Official in early 2025. SECOG held OSHA training for municipal field staff that was attended by over 60 individuals from across the state.



The New London Jefferson Avenue Roundabout was completed in 2023 as part of a corridor-wide LOTCIP project. Photo: CTDOT

Looking Ahead

Regional Transportation Safety Plan: SECOG was awarded funds in the Safe Streets for All Program to develop a new Regional Transportation Safety Plan. The project will kick off in early 2025.

Enhanced Public Information on Proposed Transportation Projects: SECOG has been working to update its public information regarding projects proposed for State and Federal funding through the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) Amendment process, with 2025 expected to bring more convenient, real-time information for constituents.

Region 4 Regional Emergency Planning: SECOG has been in coordination with DEMHS to reactivate the Team focused on transportation issues (e.g. evacuation) which has been mostly dormant since 2019.

Stormwater Management: With the upcoming release of new CT DEEP MS4 regulations, SECOG expects to be called on to assist towns with administering their local MS4 activities.

2027 Regional Plan Development: SECOG will begin research and coordination in advance of preparing a new Regional Plan for adoption in 2027.

Coordination on Bus & Rail Transit: SECOG will engage with SEAT as part of SEAT's upcoming bus operations analysis, and with Amtrak as it develops its New Haven to Providence Capacity Planning Study, kicking off in early 2025.

Parcel Data and CAMA Data Improvements: The State has awarded SECOG \$209,900 in ARPA funding to assist its member municipalities in improving the quality and format of GIS parcel and CAMA data. With the planned improvements, data will have increased interoperability across multi-town and regional projects due to standardization across towns, leading planners to dedicate more time on analysis versus data preparation.

Future Grant-Funded Projects:

As mentioned above, SECOG has submitted extreme heat, brownfields remediation, and organic waste disposal.



SECOG staff presented alongside representatives of the Town of Groton and Resilient Land and Water as part of Connecticut Sustainability & Resiliency Week. SECOG's Hazard Mitigation Plan was the first in the state to incorporate climate adaptation strategies.

Year In Review

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).

FHWA/FTA Quadrennial Review: SECOG's metropolitan planning organization serves a Transportation Management Area, making SECOG subject to review every four years by the FHWA and FTA, who ensure that SECOG is meeting its statutory obligations. SECOG hosted a federal team in April and received certification in July.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan and air quality conformity analysis: SECOG 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: SECOG approved a new 2025-2028 TIP, which programs State and Federal funds to transportation projects, and subsequent amendments.

Transit Planning: SECOG 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). SECOG also reviews and endorses transit performance measures and asset management plans.

Commuter Park & Ride Facilities: SECOG 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, SECOG has received funding from CTDOT to administer and manage LOTICIP funds in the region. Six projects are currently in design (Bozrah-Fitchville Road, New London- Broad/Williams, Norwich- New London Turnpike, Preston- Poquetanuck Village, East Lyme-East Patagansett, and Lisbon- River Road. Project were recently completed in Norwich (Dunham St) and New London (Jefferson Ave). Construction will soon commence in Colchester (Lebanon Avenue). SECOG is accepting applications for new projects in January 2025.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): SECOG advanced requests to CTDOT for funding under this program for 1) Preston- Poquetanuck Cove and Village Heritage Trail and 2) Windham- Airline Trail Bridge and Resurfacing Project. Design and preconstruction work continued for projects in Norwich (Norwich-New London Tpke), New London (Williams Street), and Groton (Thomas Rd/G&S Trail).

Transportation Rural Improvement Program (TRIP): Applications for funding are pending for projects in Preston (Matthewson Road) and North Stonington (Lantern Hill Road).

Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan: SECOG 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, and as noted above, administered microgrants to 12 community and municipal organizations to support bike events and programs.

Senior/Disabled Transportation Funds: (Section 5310, MGP): SECOG solicited applications for *Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities* (Section 5310), and four grants have been awarded (so far) to East Lyme, Lebanon, Colchester, and United Children and Family Services. SECOG submitted funding requests for Matching Grant funding for vehicles in Lebanon, Colchester, and Sprague.



SECOG administered microgrants to groups such as Windham's Project IMO, which held cycling workshops for youth as part of its 21st Century Workforce Skills Program. Photo: Project IMO

Corridor Studies: As noted above, SECOG completed the Norwich Downtown Corridor Study in 2024 and coordinated with CTDOT regarding work in New London and East Lyme.

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

Other Grant Opportunities: SECOG reviewed ongoing funding opportunities to ensure 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: SECOG continued coordination with CTDOT to advance potential improvements to the Gold Star Bridge, including enhancements to bicycle/pedestrian accommodations. SECOG coordinated with Amtrak and CTDOT to host a briefing on Amtrak's upcoming New Haven to Providence Capacity Planning Study.

Regional 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, environmental planning, 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): SECOG 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. SECOG'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. SECOG 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. SECOG staff will begin preparation of the next plan, due in 2027, in early 2025.

Open Space Plan: SECOG completed a Regional Open Space Plan, the first since 1968, and began working with stakeholders on implementation. The Plan's open space inventory brings together state and local data on open space preservation with information from local land trusts. SECOG's data shows that 13% of the region's land area is preserved as open space, with an additional 10% temporarily protected as open space. The plan outlines actions to expand access to open space and improve its environmental quality.



SECOG's Regional Open Space Plan includes a comprehensive inventory of land preserved/protected as open space, enabling partners to strategically plan future preservation to improve public access and ecosystem quality.

Economic Development: SECOG actively collaborates with seCTer, the region's economic development organization, and seCTer provides a briefing to the SECOG Board at its monthly meeting. In 2023, SECOG contributed data to seCTer's draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. SECOG's Executive Director is a member of seCTer's board as well as several committees.

Housing: SECOG 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. In 2024, SECOG and SECHA hosted a tour of 'attainable housing' in southeastern Connecticut and released a lookbook providing additional information about the projects.

Drinking Water: SECOG provides administrative support to the Eastern Connecticut Water Utility Coordinating Committee (Eastern WUCC), which was dormant in 2024.

Hazard Mitigation Planning: SECOG 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 2024, all member municipalities and affiliated tribal nations approved the 2023 plan. As part of its ongoing implementation, SECOG commissioned Resilient Land and Water to geocode plan recommendations so that recommendations can be implemented as part of other projects. SECOG staff also presented the Plan, which was the first in Connecticut to incorporate climate adaptation, as part of Connecticut's Sustainability & Resiliency Week.

Human Services Coordination: SECOG has convened a Regional Human Services Coordinating Council (RHSCC) since 2011 to facilitate communication between and among social service providers and municipalities. Co-chairs Kathleen Stauffer (The Arc of Eastern CT) and Dina Sears-Graves (United Way of Southeastern CT) led the Council in 2024.

Regional Geographic Information Systems: SECOG continues to maintain and update a regional web-based Geographic Information System (GIS) portal. SECOG 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. SECOG gathers the data annually and provides the required material to OPM. In 2024, SECOG released a new parcel viewer portal which will enable the publication of additional information and interface with SECOG and the State of Connecticut's other data systems.

Brownfields: SECOG administered brownfields remediation grants to conduct assessments of four properties in Waterford, Lisbon, and Windham, and worked with the Eastern CT Land Bank on an application for additional EPA brownfield funding.



Brownfield contaminants at South Windham's Giant Vac property are being documented in advance of remediation as part of a project administered by SECOG and funded by CT DECD. Photo: Weston & Sampson

Solid Waste: In support of SECOG's ad hoc Solid Waste Committee, staff developed an existing conditions report which was distributed to the region's legislators in support of SECOG's legislative asks. The Committee is chaired by Mayor Allyn and Mayor DeVivo. SECOG also submitted an application for funding to pilot organic waste collection and processing in Windham.

Military/Community Planning: As mentioned above, SECOG staff continues to coordinate with SUBASE New London and its neighboring municipalities on issues affecting the quality of life for military and civilian populations. While completing a grant-funded project to improve the utility resiliency of the SUBASE, SECOG received an additional grant from the Department of Defense to fund housing planning in Groton and a Compatible Use Plan that will direct future workplan activities. Executive Director Amanda Kennedy and Director of Regional Planning Helen Zinavage attended defense-related conferences in Washington, DC and San Antonio, TX. In November, SECOG awarded an Association of Defense Communities *Defense Community Champion* Award to Steven Ricard, SUBASE New London Base Commander of the U.S. Submarine Veterans Inc. organization and Chairman of the New London Veterans Advisory Committee.



SUBASE New London hosted a January 2024 tour of the facility, including the USS Columbia, for staff from SECOG, CT DECD, and the Department of Defense's Office of Local Community Cooperation.

Legislative Coordination: The SECOG Board meets annually with the southeastern Connecticut legislative delegation to discuss issues important to SECOG member municipalities. SECOG's 2024 legislative agenda included the following requests:

- Greater predictability and stability for education costs (particularly special education)
- Programs and policies that address municipal solid waste challenges
- Clarification of recent property tax exemption language for permanently disabled veterans.

In addition, representatives from the federal legislative delegation representing southeastern Connecticut regularly attend and report on their activities at the SECOG's monthly meetings

Odds and Ends: SECOG is often called on to support new program areas, which in 2024 included broadband expansion programs and renewable energy tax credits.



SECOG members spoke alongside legislators at a GNACC breakfast December 10, 2024 and met with legislators afterwards to present SECOG's 2025 legislative agenda.

Municipal Services

This program is supported by municipal dues, Regional Services and Regional Planning Incentive Program grants 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.

Shared Services: With support from an Office of Policy and Management (OPM) Regional Planning Incentive Program grant, SECOG staff and contractors provide planning services in four towns, zoning/blight enforcement to four towns, and building official services to four towns, and also provided interim planning services in one municipality in 2024. SECOG also provides GIS services to municipalities on an as-needed or contract basis. In addition, 15 of SECOG's 22 member municipalities participated in CRCOG's Capitol Region Purchasing Council during the year, saving an estimated \$163,000.

Municipal Planner and Commissioner Training: SECOG remains available to conduct commissioner training as required by state statute.

Regional Planning Commission (RPC): SECOG held only one RPC meeting in 2024 and anticipates shifting from the RPC model to a more active and open commissioner engagement program in 2025, particularly as staff begin preparing the region's next regional plan. In October, SECOG updated its white paper on short-term rental regulation approaches in response to requests and recognition of evolving case law on this issue.

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 2024, SECOG staff reviewed and responded to 59 statutorily required referrals from municipalities in or adjacent to the SECOG region.

Sustainable CT: SECOG has hosted Sustainable CT Fellows each summer since 2018 to assist member municipalities participating in the Sustainable CT program. In 2024, Fellow Paige Booth worked with The

Town of Preston, who was certified Bronze, and East Lyme, which was recognized as a Climate Leader.

Emergency Management: SECOG 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 \$346,203.97 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, SECOG administered five other ongoing emergency management grants.

Members

Bozrah
Colchester
East Lyme
Franklin
Griswold
Jewett City
City of Groton
Town of Groton
Lebanon
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



Additional MPO Membership:

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

Executive Leadership (CY 2024)

Chair: Rob Brule, Waterford
Vice-Chair: Cheryl Blanchard, Sprague
Treasurer: Tom DeVivo, Windham

Secretary: Bob Carlson, North Stonington
John Salomone, Norwich
Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington

Staff (CY 2024)

Emily Bigl	Environmental Planner I
Jessica Cobb	GIS Coordinator
Doug Colter	Building Official
David Cook	GIS/Technology Manager
Nicole Haggerty	Senior Regional Planner
Amanda Kennedy	Executive Director
Wendy Leclair	Office Manager
Jennifer Lindo	Land Use Specialist

Lana Harrison	Planner II
Debra Pierce	Transportation Planner III
Kate Rattan	Director of Transportation Planning
Dan Robinson	Planner I
Helen Zincavage	Director of Regional Planning

FY 2024 Revenue & Expenditures

Revenues		\$ 2,192,282
Federal- Transpo. Planning	21%	\$ 450,943
Federal- Other	10%	\$ 219,835
State- RSG	25%	\$ 538,266
State- Other	24%	\$ 530,980
Municipal Dues	7%	\$ 154,236
Tech. Assistance	12%	\$ 258,002
Other	2%	\$ 40,020
Expenses		\$ 2,192,282
Salaries & Benefits	52%	\$ 1,129,820
Contracts	26%	\$ 580,618
Operations	9%	\$ 203,421
Reserve	13%	\$ 278,423
		\$ 1,913,859

SECOG is committed to making its programs accessible to all residents and stakeholders. If language assistance is needed, please contact SECOG at 860-889-2324, office@secogct.gov.

Si necesita asistencia lingüística, por favor comuníquese a 860-889-2324, office@secogct.gov.

如果您需要语言帮助，请致电 860-889-2324 或发送电子邮件至 office@secogct.gov.