



**Conservation Technical Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting: Monday, March 15, 2021 - 11 am
Virtual GoToMeeting**

Meeting Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Zach Giron – MetroCOG
- Devin Clarke – MetroCOG
- Mark Hoover – MetroCOG
- Hannah Reichle – MetroCOG
- Tom Worthley- University of Connecticut
- Sarah Cwikla – Town of Easton
- Karen Burnaska – Monroe Conservation Commission
- Mary Hogue – Sustainable Fairfield Task Force
- Richard Rosen – Trout Unlimited
- Yaw Darko – Connecticut Land Conservation Council
- Joseph Gresko- State Representative, Town of Stratford
- Katie Lund- CIRCA
- Daphne Dixon- Live Green
- Kelly Kerrigan – Town of Stratford
- Ingrid Jacobs - Aquarion
- Tatiana Solovey – Town of Trumbull

2. Zach Giron, MetroCOG, Regional Trails Application & Current State Legislation

Representative Joseph Gresko gave an overview of current legislation, specifically HB6441 and SB950 which were of interest to CTAC members.

- HB6441 - two major features- potential for enabling permissive conveyance fee for municipalities to use for environmental initiatives and allowing for municipalities to establish a stormwater authority.
 - The environmental committee is making adjustments that would allow municipalities to have more say in the amount collected in the conveyance fee.
 - Allow the municipalities to pursue a stormwater authority with the idea of having a fee attached for storm water diversion and improvements in the community.

- SB950 – A feature of this would allow utility companies to maintain clear-cut around three phase or “backbone” utility circuits.
 - Received alternative language from utility companies for tree warden to have final say.
- Fossil fuel producers (shell and BP) in favor of trying to move away from fossil fuels using the transportation climate initiative as a tool.
 - Addresses electric vehicle charging station or grid modernization.
- The CT League of Conservation Voters website was highlighted as a useful tool to find information and stay on top of environmentally related bills moving through legislation.
 - You can sign up for alerts to go directly to your inbox.
<https://www.ctlc.org/2021-watchlist.html>

Zach Giron gave an update on the MetroCOG Regional Trail Mapping Application

- Showcased the working application complete with trail, trailhead and point of interest data collected in the field using gps data collection techniques.
- Data collection is estimated 80% complete. MetroCOG has recently acquired new GPS units along with iPads to collect field data more accurately.
- An elevation profile viewer was also showcased which will be linked to the trail viewer for users to better estimate trail difficulty.
- MetroCOG has also updated their website <https://ctmetro.org/> where you can find the minutes, agenda and recording of this meeting. The trail viewer will be hosted under the GIS section of the website.

3. Tom Worthley, UCONN, Stormwise Initiative

- Stormwise is a forest vegetation management initiative and has been working on reducing tree related storm damage to power lines.
- “Managing Forests to Keep the Power On” StoryMap:
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/19ab57142a5b4beb808fd0facfbae0d0>
- Governor set up panel in 2012 for understanding why power was out for so long after bad storms and one outcome of the panel was that research must be done.
 - Looked at trees and forest management because lots of power outage are often reason for powerline failure. Tom mentioned that not just roadside trees are the issue, and that the problems can be deep in the forest as well.
 - CT roads traverse through what would be called forested area. StormWise focuses more on wooded areas, but same principles apply to suburban or urban areas.
 - Historically trees were managed naturally by fire and wind, and human use started to impact forests as well (agriculture and human use)
- What can be done?
 - Stormwise suggests evaluating roadside forest and current conditions to ID where best and riskiest trees are and implement a management program that allows for best trees to have more space.

- Demo sites have been evaluated across the state. Site in Fairfield, Orange, Trumbull- thinned out area to make canopy less dense.
 - Projects are selected with Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and landowners to get permission to set up studies.
 - Began studying tree biomechanics to better understand species resistance to wind and storm damage.
 - During this last storm, seven Stormwise sites were evaluated and found little to no power interruptions. Even though it was a small sample, it made Stormwise feel like they were onto the right idea.

- In the future, storm related tree issues will still be a huge issue.
 - Requires huge cooperation between all agencies and local governments to change roadside density.
 - Would like to see some sort of direction to forest management site by site rather than a sweeping, one size fits all plan.
 - Talk with woodland owners and managers to create a plan that makes sense for the community.
 - Tom has applied for FEMA funds (building resilience for communities and infrastructure) Will hear back around summer.

4. Katherine Lund, CIRCA, Resilient Connecticut Update

- CIRCA has been working with the 4 COGS in Fairfield and New Haven counties since last summer to give updates on the resilient CT project.
- Held a MetroCOG virtual workshop in February to present initial findings of the climate change vulnerability index viewer.
- Consultants, Milone & MacBroom, identified zones of shared risk – areas that face common climate issues.
- Have moved forward with bringing in heat vulnerability and wind vulnerability. Working with consultants to look at social vulnerability zones as well.
- Will have a webinar in three weeks focused on heat and wind vulnerability (March 23rd) <https://s.uconn.edu/ccviwebinarmarch>
- New StoryMap that describes the concepts of vulnerability mapping effort complete with surveys for feedback. <https://mminc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=c700755a764e421596f9fa3719ea5262&folderid=f47a498583604f3f9601ce1de67f7407>
- Will continue to meet with COGS each month. Will be collecting ideas from stakeholders. Will meet quarterly to give state agencies updates.
- Will be creating a public factsheet for distribution. CIRCA wants to hear from COGS about other groups to communicate with regarding transportation, health, and community.

- MetroCOG workshop feedback
 - Heard the need to incorporate more social vulnerability.

5. Daphne Dixon, Live Green, EV Readiness Toolkit Program

Interactive discussion: Invite municipal participation to the 9-month EV readiness tool kit program.

- 2013 Zero Emission Vehicle Memorandum of Understanding between 9 states to commit to 3.3 million EV's by 2025.
 - Goal is to have 125,000 EVs in CT. Currently CT is at 13,000
 - Fairfield county needs 33k EV's to be part of goal.
- In 2020, Live Green ran a 12-week program with 60 CT municipalities for EV readiness.
 - The program was a result of an EV readiness study conducted in Fairfield and Hamden to find out the baseline of where municipalities were at with EV readiness and to identify projects to implement.
 - Feedback was great, but too short to really implement projects identified.
- Put together a 9-month program.
 - In March 2021, there is an overview of each part of EV readiness.
 - In April, will have targeted meeting with all municipalities.
 - In August will meet again to check progress
 - In November will celebrate projects that are ongoing and completed.
- To participate in the program all that is needed is a team consisting of 1 municipal decision maker and 1 community member.
 - Fairfield and Stratford are part, other MetroCOG municipalities have not signed up
- If you would like to join you can contact Daphne@livegreenct.org and join modules this month.
 - The program will give out certificates of completion for municipalities to gain points with their Sustainable CT certification. If a municipality complete the whole program, they get 15 points.

6. Other Business

- No other business

7. Adjourn at 12:26PM

- 2021 Meeting Dates – Virtual Until Further Notice

Monday, June 21, 2021

Monday, September 20, 2021

Monday, December 13, 2021