



Working smarter together.

Congress of Neighboring Communities
Report to the Community, 2016-2017



Looking forward starts with looking back.

In a few short months, a data platform will be launched to allow municipalities and utility companies in Allegheny County (and soon statewide) to share and compare paving and construction plans. Hundreds of Allegheny County residents sleep better at night knowing that their CONNECT Community Paramedic is monitoring their health and wellbeing. ALCOSAN and its customer municipalities are meeting to finalize agreements that will result in the transfer of ownership of multi-municipal sewer pipes from the municipalities to ALCOSAN, a change which will achieve economies of scale, advance system integration, and increase consistency in meeting water quality standards. A working group comprised of municipal representatives, law enforcement, the Allegheny County Health Department and Department of Human Services, the Drug Enforcement Administration and others meets regularly to share the latest data available on the opioid crisis and to develop strategies to combat it. Representatives of municipalities and the City of Pittsburgh are meeting monthly, face-to-face, to talk about common issues and concerns. Municipalities are calling our offices to inquire about our work and membership, and organizations around the country are asking us for guidance on encouraging cross boundary collaboration.

These big wins, and also the smaller, day-to-day occurrences – hearing a long-time member give tips to a new member about launching a farmer’s market, getting

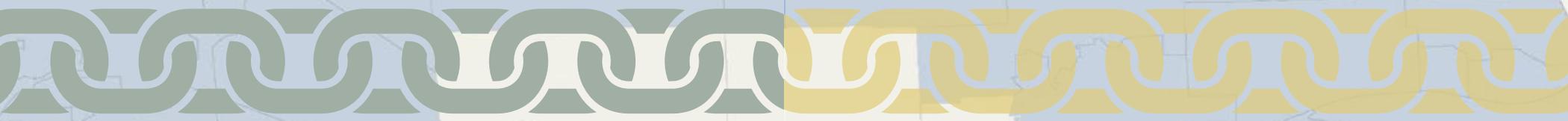


a member connected with a resource or contact that has been out of reach — solidifies our belief that CONNECT is making a tangible, positive mark on our region.

These accomplishments, among others, are exciting to watch as CONNECT grows each year, and enjoys continued and increasing support from our members, as well as the greater community. As we close out our eighth year, CONNECT has never felt stronger.

Our Executive Committee and Officers are the true drivers of CONNECT’s agenda and its successes and we are so appreciative of their conviction in our mission and their unrelenting support. We are honored to have the opportunity to advance their vision. We’ve accomplished a lot, but as we look towards the future, we know we are just getting started.

Kristen Michaels
Executive Director



2016-2017 Officers

Thank you to our 2016-2017 Officers who dedicated their time and leadership to CONNECT.

Mark Sampogna, Chair
President of Council, Borough of Green Tree

Marita Garrett, First Vice Chair
Vice President of Council, Borough of Wilkinsburg

J.R. Henry, Second Vice Chair
Mayor, Borough of West View

Mary Ellen Ramage, Secretary/Treasurer
Manager, Borough of Etna

Tim Rogers, Manager Representative
Manager, Township of Shaler

William Peduto, Immediate Past Chair
Mayor, City of Pittsburgh

Rich Fitzgerald, Allegheny County Representative
Executive, Allegheny County

2016-2017 CONNECT Members

Allegheny County	Forest Hills Borough	Reserve Township
Aspinwall Borough	Green Tree Borough	Robinson Township
Baldwin Borough	Heidelberg Borough	Ross Township
Baldwin Township	Homestead Borough	Rosslyn Farms
Bellevue Borough	Ingram Borough	Scott Township
Brentwood Borough	Kennedy Township	Shaler Township
Carnegie Borough	McKees Rocks	Sharpsburg Borough
Castle Shannon	Borough	Stowe Township
Borough	Millvale Borough	Swissvale Borough
Churchill Borough	Mt. Lebanon	West Homestead
Clairton City	Mt. Oliver Borough	Borough
Crafton Borough	Munhall Borough	West Mifflin Borough
Dormont Borough	O'Hara Township	West View Borough
Edgewood Borough	Penn Hills	Whitehall Borough
Etna Borough	City of Pittsburgh	Wilkinsburg Borough

Charting a strong strategy for the future.

As 2016 came to a close, our Officers agreed that it was due time to pause and define the goals of the organization for the coming years. This began a multi-month strategic visioning process that kicked off with a full member survey and Strategy Session in January of 2017. At this session, attendees worked through a process that helped us identify: what CONNECT is doing well; what CONNECT is doing poorly; opportunities for improvement; and priorities for the coming year.



Strategic Priorities

Sustainability

- ✓ Determine a sustainable organizational and financial model for CONNECT

Member Engagement

- ✓ Consistent and active member participation and engagement
- ✓ Engage members to take leadership roles in working groups and policy development

Public Relations & Outreach

- ✓ Garner media coverage to share the positive work being done by CONNECT more broadly
- ✓ Encourage members to act as organizational champions

Infrastructure Coordination

- ✓ Advance CONNECT's efforts to improve coordination and collaboration with the utility companies operating in their municipalities through continued in-person interactions as well as the launch of an online data platform

Since developing and formally accepting these priorities at our Annual Congress in April of 2017, CONNECT staff and membership have been diligently working towards these goals while also addressing the areas of opportunity that were identified. A smaller "CONNECT 2.0" working group was established to assess CONNECT's operations, and identify sustainable funding sources. We look forward to reporting back on progress and accomplishments next year.



Strength in numbers: CONNECT Annual Events

2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION & RECEPTION

Our Eighth Annual Congress was a successful evening with more than 100 attendees (an increase of 20% over prior years!) and 24 member municipalities joining together to pass resolutions on CONNECT's organizational strategy, water/sewer, infrastructure coordination, transportation, health, and emergency medical services. The City of Clairton also became the newest member of CONNECT! Following the working session, cocktails and hors d'oeuvres were enjoyed by all.

2016 FRIENDRAISER

CONNECT's fall Friendraiser has become a fun tradition that is looked forward to by members throughout the year. At the Friendraiser, we kick back with our members and friends in a casual setting, and enjoy networking and snacks while learning more about fellow members and reflecting on our accomplishments. At the 2016 Friendraiser, we surprised attendees by awarding prizes to our members with the best meeting attendance throughout the year. This year's top prize for perfect attendance went to Tim Rogers, Manager of Shaler Township, for not missing an Executive Committee meeting all year!



“CONNECT plays a critical role in our work to improve public health in Allegheny County. Thanks to the strength of member relationships and the organization's successful record developing multi-municipal policy, CONNECT makes our work across jurisdictional lines more effective and more collaborative.

Most significantly in this past year, CONNECT staff and member municipalities have advanced our chronic disease prevention efforts via the Live Well Allegheny campaign and helped us to better understand the on-the-ground reality of the opioid epidemic in Allegheny County communities. An ongoing dialogue with CONNECT has made our community outreach and technical assistance more practical, more user-friendly, and better informed by the daily experiences of residents. We look forward to many more years of working side by side with our CONNECT partners.”

—Dr. Karen Hacker, Director, Allegheny County Health Department



Stronger bonds, stronger policy

CONNECT FOR POLICY: INFRASTRUCTURE COORDINATION

In 2015, CONNECT's membership posed an important question, what can we do to better coordinate construction and paving with the utility companies? We got to work to find an answer. Two years later, Pennsylvania One Call is set to launch a common data platform, Coordinate PA, which will allow municipalities and utilities to upload their paving and construction plans, and view conflicts and potential areas of opportunity for collaboration. CONNECT's membership has had the opportunity to provide feedback on the beta version of the platform, and the initial launch is expected to take place before the end of the year. CONNECT continues to host semiannual meetups between municipal and utility representatives, as we know that no matter how useful technology is, nothing can replace face-to-face communication between parties.

CONNECT FOR POLICY: HEALTH

The opioid crisis has left no municipality untouched. It continues to worsen, affecting more families and communities every month. So what can local governments do? This is the question we've been working to answer since we convened an opioid policy working group in August of 2016 after one of our municipal managers called us to ask what he could be doing to help. Comprised of municipal representatives, the Allegheny County Health Department and Department of Human Services, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) community, and representatives of the CONNECT Community Paramedic Program, this group has been working to establish a toolbox

"I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak at the CONNECT meeting. Our sit down afterwards [with representatives of the utility companies that serve Wilkesburg] has definitely made a difference. The gas company is coordinating and responding to our issues immediately. Duquesne Light and Peoples have agreed to a regular planning meeting so we can coordinate projects in the immediate and long term future. We've definitely gotten the response I was hoping for."

-Eric Parrish, Director of Code Enforcement, Wilkesburg



of resources and action steps for municipalities that want to face this epidemic head on. From installing drop boxes for safe drug disposal, and encouraging all EMS and police to carry Narcan, to collaborating with school districts to encourage drug education and hosting community meetings, a wealth of resources and action items have been identified. CONNECT also facilitated a training for emergency and police responders with the DEA, where more than 50 attendees learned how to properly respond to overdose scenes.

CONNECT FOR POLICY: TRANSPORTATION

At our 2017 Congress, CONNECT members passed Resolution 17-06, committing to advance effective Transit Oriented Development (TOD) in their communities. We are excited to announce that we've received a grant that will allow us to implement a two-year effort in partnership with the Port Authority of Allegheny County which will bring TOD expertise to municipalities to assist in the development of effective TOD policy and practices.

CONNECT also convened a Complete Streets team comprised of partner organizations that are working to assist municipalities to pass Complete Streets legislation. This summer, CONNECT member Sharpsburg Borough became the first local municipality (aside from the City of Pittsburgh) to pass a Complete Streets resolution, paving the way for surrounding municipalities to follow suit. Resources provided to the Borough by CONNECT's partners including the American Heart Association and the Allegheny County Health Department were instrumental in gaining the necessary support and momentum to pass the policy. We are looking forward to hosting a Complete Streets Workshop this fall.

Fueled by the CONNECT community.

FUNDING

This year, CONNECT members contributed a larger portion to CONNECT's annual budget than ever before. In 2015-2016, these voluntary contributions comprised 30% of CONNECT's operating budget. We are so appreciative of our members who demonstrate their commitment to the organization both financially and through their active participation.

The remainder of CONNECT's budget is funded by the generosity of Pittsburgh's foundation community. We'd like to thank the foundations and our members for their continued support. We'd also like to thank Dean John Keeler, and the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) at the University of Pittsburgh for their institutional support. GSPIA has provided CONNECT with office space, resources, and accounting and IT services at no cost since our inception in 2009.

STAFF

CONNECT is managed by Executive Director, Kristen Michaels and Project & Outreach Manager, Lindsay Angelo. Founder Dr. David Miller serves as an advisor.

CONNECT also enjoys the contributions of GSPIA student interns, who play an integral role on our team, serving as policy researchers, data analysts, and providing general operating support.



“When I first was elected to serve on Aspinwall’s council I found the CONNECT meetings to be a great resource to learn from neighboring municipalities on everything from how they addressed issues to available grants. As I’ve become more involved, the CONNECT events have been invaluable in giving me information that would otherwise be difficult to find. The CONNECT team are some of the first people I reach out to when I need a connection or introduction.”

—Tim McLaughlin,
Councilman, Aspinwall

PARTNERS

As an organization founded on collaboration, we know that no effective policy or progress will be made alone. Our monthly Executive Committee Meetings bring together our municipal leaders to tackle common problems, but the solutions almost always require the input and participation of partner organizations. A huge thank you to our partners including the Port Authority of Allegheny County, the Allegheny County Health Department and Department of Human Services, Allegheny County Economic Development, 3 Rivers Wet Weather, ALCOSAN, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Local Government Academy, Allegheny League of Municipalities, Allegheny County’s seven Councils of Government, Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group, Bike Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Economy League, the American Heart Association, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, and Economic Development South who have been integral to our successes.



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