

**CONNECT Economic and Environmental Development**  
**Working Group meeting**  
Thursday | June 4, 2020 | 1:00pm  
Via Zoom



**Municipal Attendees:** Patty DeMarco, Forest Hills; Nickole Nesby, Duquesne; Mindy Ranney, Mt Lebanon; Deneen Underwood, Carnegie; Tara Yaney, Edgewood; Alicia Carberry, Pittsburgh; Maureen Hartwell, Pittsburgh; Brittany Reno, Sharpsburg; Shawn Alfonso-Wells; Swissvale; Blake Martin, Forest Hills; Phyllis Anderson, Oakmont; Anita Prizio, Allegheny County

**Other Attendees:** Breen Masciotra, PAAC; Peter Quintanilla, Michael Baker International; Kelsey Ripper, Friends of the Riverfront; Annie Quinn, 3 Rivers Wet Weather; Jim Price, Sustainable Pittsburgh; Kinsey Miller, Tree Pittsburgh; Ashley DiGregorio, PRC; Chris Sandvig, PCRG; Alyson Fearon, Allegheny Land Trust

**CONNECT/GSPIA Staff:** Lydia Morin, CONNECT; Tess De Jong, CONNECT; Sarah Downing, CONNECT; Tosan Adoki, CONNECT; Eric Raabe, CONNECT; Ally Walker, CONNECT

#### **Introductions and agenda overview**

- Acknowledging the context and current events surrounding this meeting. Racial justice cannot be separated from environmental justice. We are not all impacted the same, but together we can all pave a way forward.
- From this meeting, CONNECT will bring action items to the Executive Committee in 2 weeks
- In the chat: what are you thinking about right now?
  - Some highlights: Working toward moving our environmental work to environmental justice work; how to raise kind and thoughtful kids that do good for all, and their environment; how do we keep sustainability at the forefront of the recovery; a possible proposition for establishing an Eco District; we need to support Black farmers

#### **Transit Updates & Discussion**

Breen Masciotra, Port Authority

- Updates with COVID-19: they maintained 75% service level for 20% normal ridership, most service came back mid-May, there are capacity limits for different sized buses, front boarding has started again, fare collection is to resume June 8.
- The customer service phone number is 412-442-2000.
- Environmental justice includes transit access and funding support
- Good news about the Oakland BRT project and NEXTransit
- Stay up to date: <https://www.portauthority.org/covid-19/coronavirus/>
- 25 year plan: <https://nextransit.network/>

Chris Sandvig, PCRG

- The community is reliant on transit-reliant populations. Port Authority did not drop as much as larger cities during COVID 19.
- PCRG has historically focused on land, mobility, and capital
- Transportation revenue is at a free fall, the drink tax is low because no one has gone to bars
- PCRG has a letter in support of preserving transit funding. (CONNECT is interested in revisiting signing onto a letter for transit funding. Sent separately in follow-up email.)
- Funding shortfalls are chronic to transit, even though PA has a legal obligation due to Act 89 to support transit at a certain dollar level through 2022, regardless of where the money comes from. We are making sure our advocacy voices are heard proactively
- It is important for municipalities to weigh in on the projects that are very important right now
- There is racial injustice in where roads are built and who gets cut off/loses access
- Now is the time to plan for the future, more than any other time, especially because we realize how important transit it now.

#### **Update on Regional Recycling Research**

- Ally Walker, Regional Recycling Research Coordinator, [aew65@pitt.edu](mailto:aew65@pitt.edu)
- Creating a data base collective and broad education programs to increase recycling accessibility
- Waste management contracts are due at different times. CONNECT is creating a tool/report that we can use to improve our recycling programs step by step.
- The goal is to have this report/proposal by the end of summer with a core set of recommendations and priorities in recycling strategy, which should be very helpful in building consensus about this at our local level.
- To best use our members time, Ally will be conducting brief email interviews with each CONNECT member manager.
- Quick breakout rooms to discuss:
  - "How can municipalities utilize services of environmental/ sustainability focused organizations during this time? Does your organization have anything unique to offer?"
  - "How can the Regional Recycling Project work for your municipality? Are there other things that would be beneficial to consider?"

### **Update from County Councilwoman Anita Prizio**

- She circulated a letter which would allow municipalities to have their own bans or fees on plastic bags. Seven other councilpersons have signed on. (Sent separately in follow-up email.)
- While this will not solve everything, we as local officials want to make sure we have all the tools available to affect things that affect our residents. This is important for the health of our residents
- Comment: be sure the plastics collaborative knows about this
- Would CONNECT Executive Committee support this?
- County is voting on a Clean Construction Ordinance (modeled after Pittsburgh's) on Tuesday.

### **ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and CONNECT**

- Eric Raabe has been working with West Homestead since August. Explanation of DEP + ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) and the process of trying to measure, understand, and then reduce emissions. There is a lot of overlap with this working group and this Infrastructure & Utilities WG.
- Tosan Adoki, another GSPIA intern, has just begun doing the same at the Borough of Munhall.
- There are 20 communities doing this program with municipal level climate action plans. As a collective of local governments, it is interesting to see what we could do together
- It is not a cookie cutter process. Municipalities do strategize from their specific data
- What can we do as CONNECT to benefit from communities that had these close ICLEI relationships?
  - It would be helpful for those interested to watch the process happening in others' meetings, see what their project looked like, and how they engaged their community (the biggest challenge in COVID-19).
- It would be helpful to have access to the tools and software these municipalities used
- Comment: Reinvestment in community-based recovery and health is essential.