

CONNECT Infrastructure and Utilities Launch meeting

Thursday | September 12, 2019 | 1PM
Green Tree Borough Building
10 W Manilla Ave



Municipal Attendees: Michael Lamb, Pittsburgh; Lou Casadei, Green Tree; Steve Beuter, Carnegie; Mark Sampogna, Green Tree; Bill Stout, Millvale; Megan Tuñón, Etna; Sarah Yeager, Pittsburgh; Darrell Rapp, Swissvale; Wayne McVicar, Dormont

Other Attendees: Jessi Gorby, Peoples Gas; Robert Weimar, PWSA; Adam Kidane, ALCOSAN; John Garofalo, ALCOSAN; Jim Sloss, Duquesne Light; Bill Kiger, PA One Call; Allison Evanitz, PA One Call; Manda Metzger, PWSA; Thomas Morse, Colombia Gas; Aaron Sims, GSPIA

GSPIA Capstone students: Emma Yourd, Jennifer Schaber, Yanbin Zhao, Yichang Xu, Tianru Zhao, AJ Stephens, Liz Fries, Gabrielle Marotta, Mitch Powell

CONNECT/GSPIA Staff: Lydia Morin, CONNECT; Dave Miller, CONNECT; Edward Bakos, University of Pittsburgh; Tess De Jong, CONNECT

Mapping exercise warm-up: Visualizing our interconnected region

On a notecard: How else can CONNECT use mapping and data to advance our goals? What would you like to see mapped out?

**See suggestions at the end of the minutes.*

Introductions and Context: Name, title, organization and how increased infrastructure & utilities coordination would improve your/your organization's quality of life

**See themes at the end of the minutes.*

Infrastructure and Utilities Working Group Goals

- Use GSPIA Capstone Projects to provide the research and data we need to set goals for the working group

GSPIA Capstone projects: Coordinate PA and Stormwater Management

Discussion highlights concerning Coordinate PA:

- These GSPIA capstone projects were chosen because they came out as two top priorities in our visioning session. We explained this process for those who weren't there (which was all of our partners.)
- Only 1/3 of municipalities are really using the software. How do we fully implement Coordinate PA? Are there standards for data entry? How do we ensure it stays accurate and updated? How do we solve disagreements surrounding projects? For example, what if there is a conflict: one party wants to rip up road the same year, but the 2nd party doesn't care and says let's just do it twice?

- CONNECT is not only interested in the quantity of the projects, but ensuring the quality of entry in the system as well, and how they can be integrated together
- Question: What are drawbacks/disincentives to using the system?
 - At some point you must make the project public (to those who use Coordinate PA, not the general public.) Many people would prefer not to give away their future plans, and for others, it can be embarrassing if they are not in fact able to go through with the planned project.
 - Students can interview municipalities and find out their reasons for why they would not want to participate.

Discussion highlights concerning stormwater management/governance:

- Transfer of municipal pipes to ALCOSAN is one of the biggest success, 250 miles will have been transferred
- We've made good progress concerning sewers, and now CONNECT feels more prepared to go back to the issue of stormwater and how to help our partners like 3 Rivers Wet Weather
- A challenge is that different municipalities have different design standards (as opposed to most municipalities having the same sewer standards)
- Another challenge is that now we get so many more flash floods that we used to, even as recent as 15 years ago. The weather we designed our communities for is not the weather we're getting.
- Perhaps we need meteorological studies and specific characteristics for our climate; we can't necessarily copy other places. We need the best science for the predicted future too, as this infrastructure will be around for decades.
- Before we get too far, we need to make sure we're in close contact with all the right partners (people kept mentioning 3 Rivers Wet Weather and the Conservation District, of which we are aware)
- Plugged the 3RWW Sewer Conference Nov 13-14
- We've only recently also started caring about the *quality* of the water too; what's in the water?
- Does this have to be done on a watershed basis/scale? What unit of size should we work with?
- It will cost more in the long run to not act now, but figuring out financing for this now may be challenging.
- PWSA to have the beginnings of a stormwater compliance discussion with partners soon?
- Public safety concerns associated with this are huge, and it's going to get worse

- All sewage goes to ALCOSAN, they must treat it and deal with it, but all our stormwater just goes to the Ohio River. No one has that much skin in the game.
- Look at buildings – will building regulations affect property flood prevention due to fees? Recently, municipalities have the ability from state legislature to impose stormwater fees on places. They can charge a fee to a Home Depot which will be higher than a hotel parking lot with a lot of green space. This has only applied 1st class cities, not towns and 2nd class cities, but there's been a push for this to change.
- CONNECT's role will probably be a supporting one and helping to build a governance model

More about the projects:

- Students will meet to plan deliverables over next 2 weeks, by 9/23. Remember they are in the process of learning about the technical issues
- The 2 other student groups are recycling and LEAD, their final presentations are on 12/9 at 9am!
- Last year's firefighter group is got a lot of publicity. Students are able to produce very important information that is useful to CONNECT and its members.

Determining Milestones and Pacing

Roundtable: what do we want to see in January?

- Many people said we were on the right track, and that they were happy to help in whatever way they could.
- Other thoughts were: a coordinated stormwater discussion in January, a way to see what other municipalities are doing in terms of stormwater, having collaborated better with key partners, continued communication, sharing cost-sharing opportunities, and PA One Call is happy to train people on Coordinate PA.

Adjourn 2:45pm

***Suggestions from the notecard activity: What can or should be mapped?**

- Stormwater design criteria for CONNECT municipalities – variations, comparisons
- Document watershed organizations and other key players, Conservation District, USACE, etc
- Rainfall data
- Better coordination between utility companies and boro/twps
- Utility: capital planned work 3-5 years, timeline
 - Municipality: current year's work
 - Response time frame for coordination discussion
- The location of all utilities
- What the governing districts could be for watersheds RE stormwater
- Sewers (sanitary and storm)
- Historic streams
- Planned capital projects regionally
- Connections: sidewalks, bike trails, bike routes
- Destinations: parks, schools, cultural sites, business districts
- Affordable housing, availability and need
- Savings potential, where we can share projects

***Themes from the roundtable: How would increased coordination help you?**

- It would save money and save time
- There would be less facility run-ins
- It would become easier to implement green infrastructure
- It'd help infrastructure be at its best when parking is at a premium
- Students are very interested in how municipalities interact with companies
- There could be coordination to least disrupt business during their open hours
- There'd be less disruption for residents (which leads to angry emails)
- It'd be a more efficient use of infrastructure dollars
- Good infrastructure saves actual lives
- Having this discussion is critically important!