



# **Congress of Neighboring Communities Annual Report**

**January 2012**

*A special thanks to our funders, partners and the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh*

## OVERVIEW OF CONNECT

CONNECT (The Congress of Neighboring Communities) was established in 2008 as an innovative model of intergovernmental cooperation that helps to address common public policy issues facing the City of Pittsburgh and its adjacent “also-urban” communities, a region often cited as one of the most jurisdictionally complex and fragmented in the United States.

CONNECT’s mission is to coordinate the activities of the City of Pittsburgh and the 36 neighboring municipalities that comprise the region’s urban core through: advocating for and voicing the collective interests of the urban core and its nearly 690,000 residents; developing and enhancing ways the 37 municipalities work together to deliver important public services; and maintaining a forum for the discussion, deliberation and implementation of new ways to maximize economic prosperity for Western Pennsylvania.

CONNECT emerged as a response to the absence of a formal structure for dialogue among the communities that comprise the economic and political powerhouse of Southwestern Pennsylvania. CONNECT’s thirty-six neighboring municipalities, with a combined population of 378,781, together with the City of Pittsburgh, with a population of 305,704 creates a core community of 684,485.

## PROGRESS ON RESOLUTIONS

Every year at the annual CONNECT Congress; the municipalities adopt a number of resolutions that guide the work of the Congress. Since the first Congress in June 2009, the legislative body passed 67 resolutions on issues ranging from typical organizational issues to policy related issues like emergency medical services, blight and vacant property and water and sewer infrastructure. As CONNECT has evolved so has the sophistication and depth of the issues addressed. Through a number of resolutions CONNECT has accepted a number of reports authored by experts in the field of issue including *Critical Condition: The EMS Crisis in Pittsburgh and its Neighboring Communities* (Michael E. Lamb, Controller, City of Pittsburgh, June 2010) and *CONNECT Multijurisdictional Sewer Management Study* (James H. Roberts, Esq. and Kathryn L. Clark, Esq., Eckert Seamans Cherin & Mellott, LLC, June 17, 2011). A sampling of a variety of resolutions passed at the first three CONNECT Congress are below.

### **Resolution 09-14**                      **ADOPTED 6.19.09**

CONNECT commits to maintaining active engagement in policy-level transit planning as it occurs in Allegheny County. To that end, CONNECT will initiate conversation with business leaders, economic development organizations and grassroots community groups to identify and develop “next generation” transit plans for the urban core. Likewise, CONNECT requests that the Port Authority of Allegheny County engage the congress in the early stages of discussions about possible system-wide changes to service delivery.

### **Resolution 10-10**                      **ADOPTED 6.18.10**

WHEREAS Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is an essential service provided in all 36 CONNECT communities; and

WHEREAS there are 17 EMS providers operating in CONNECT; and

WHEREAS 67% of CONNECT municipalities representing 86.7% of the population of CONNECT have in the past or are currently providing in-kind support to their EMS providers; and

WHEREAS the City Controller has issued the report “Critical Condition: The EMS Crisis in Pittsburgh and its Neighboring Communities” identifying:

- The short-term and long-term financial crisis for EMS providers in Pittsburgh and its neighboring communities
- The widely divergent levels of staffing, training and service provided by EMS providers in the 36 CONNECT communities

- The need for new partnerships between EMS providers, the municipalities, Allegheny County and our non-profit community to solve this crisis; and

WHEREAS all of the CONNECT EMS providers are in agreement that additional dedicated revenues are needed in order to sustain their organizations and that rigorous minimum standards supported by proper training, education and staffing levels would help to improve service.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT:

- Accepts the report of the City Controller identifying the urgency of finding additional revenues and the need to establish minimum standards for EMS providers;
- Will charge the Executive Committee with initiating discussions with the EMS Council of Allegheny County;
- Will charge the Executive Committee with initiating discussions with the nonprofit community and Allegheny County;
- Will work with the EMS providers, the municipalities, Allegheny County and the non-profit community, will identify adequate revenues and minimum standards for EMS providers.

**Resolution 10- 12                    ADOPTED 6.18.10**

WHEREAS CONNECT represents 86% of all Port Authority Transit (PAT) system usage, 74% of PAT route miles, and nearly three quarters of the county's transit dependent population; and

WHEREAS 40-50% of employees in downtown Pittsburgh, the most significant employment and economic force in CONNECT, use transit as their primary mode of getting to work; and

WHEREAS the vitality of our communities' economies, infrastructure and quality of life depends on reliable public transit to move citizens in convenient, affordable and efficient ways; and

WHEREAS the loss of potential revenues through the tolling of I-80 compounds the annual structural deficit facing the Port Authority; and

WHEREAS closing the annual deficit of the Port Authority without new revenues is likely to result in severe service cutbacks that will be detrimental to our residents and employers; and

WHEREAS the Port Authority has achieved \$50 million in savings over the past two years through internal reform actions; and

WHEREAS no other community in Pennsylvania has been as negatively impacted by transit funding as Allegheny County under Act 44.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 36 municipalities of CONNECT call upon the state legislature to provide a long-term plan for sufficient funding to ensure that public transit remains a viable public service to our citizens and a critical component of our area's transportation infrastructure.

**Resolution 10-14                    ADOPTED 6.18.10**

WHEREAS CONNECT continues to commit to the principal of eliminating sewage overflows by rehabilitating the sewage collection and conveyance system connected through its member municipalities; and

WHEREAS CONNECT calls on ALCOSAN to demonstrate to CONNECT that ALCOSAN is working to implement green initiatives to create alternatives to source reduction before designing and constructing grey infrastructure. "Grey infrastructure" refers to new brick and mortar facilities built to store or treat flows in wet weather; and

WHEREAS CONNECT believes that where new "grey" facilities are required, in the interest of environmental justice, they should be owned by a regional entity so that the costs and benefits of construction and operation are fairly shared.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT will continue to work inter-municipally and with ALCOSAN to implement green initiatives which will result in money saved and less infrastructure to manage, and will help rehabilitate the sewage collection system.

**Resolution 11-03                    ADOPTED 6.17.11**

WHEREAS CONNECT received funding from 3 Rivers Wet Weather (3RWW) for a Multijurisdictional Sewer Connection Management Study in December 2010 that reviewed and evaluated alternative models for managing and financing improvements to the multijurisdictional (or trunk) sewers located in 18 CONNECT municipalities that have a direct flow connection with the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA); and

WHEREAS upon receipt of the funding, CONNECT's water/sewer policy working group developed a request for proposals, solicited responses and selected Eckert Seamans to implement the study; and

WHEREAS Eckert Seamans has issued the report "Multijurisdictional Sewer Management Study" that identifies the following options for CONNECT's consideration:

- Use of existing municipal authorities or the creation of new, joint municipal authority to manage, operate and finance one or more trunk sewers.
- Formation of Environmental Improvement Compacts pursuant to state law.
- Continued use of intergovernmental cooperation agreements among municipalities sharing a particular trunk sewer.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT:

- Accepts the report issued by Eckert Seamans.
- Authorizes the water/sewer policy working group to review the options and make recommendations to the Executive Committee regarding implementation of one or a combination of options.

**Resolution 11-06                      ADOPTED 6.17.11**

A Resolution to amend Resolution 09-02

WHEREAS communities that do not share a common border with the City of Pittsburgh have contacted CONNECT to inquire about membership in CONNECT; and

WHEREAS in Resolution 09-02, membership in CONNECT was established to consist of the city of Pittsburgh and those municipalities that share a common border with the city.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the borough of Westview and the borough of Carnegie has expressed interest in becoming members of CONNECT and shall be extended membership by CONNECT's executive committee once their respective councils have unanimously passed a resolution requesting membership.

*Resolution 09-02 originally read:*

*Resolved that membership in the Congress shall consist of the city of Pittsburgh and those municipalities that share a common border with the city.*

**Resolution 11-11                      ADOPTED 6.17.11**

WHEREAS CONNECT passed Resolution 10-08, which stated that "CONNECT municipalities need to be able to develop, execute and implement agreements between its members in an expeditious manner;" and

WHEREAS a CONNECT Solicitor Working Group has advised that greater efficiency and effectiveness in the execution and implementation of intergovernmental agreements could be achieved by utilizing a standard framework for written intergovernmental agreements between CONNECT municipalities where possible; and

WHEREAS the sharing of public works equipment has been identified as a substantive area where CONNECT municipalities would benefit from a common framework for intergovernmental agreements.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Solicitor Working Group will develop a framework written agreement for sharing of public works equipment between CONNECT municipalities, and said framework agreement will then be available for CONNECT municipalities to draft written intergovernmental agreements.

**Resolution 11-20                      ADOPTED 6.17.11**

WHEREAS CONNECT municipalities face significant incidences of residential single family houses and multi-unit apartment buildings that are blighted, abandoned or vacant; and

WHEREAS blighted, abandoned and vacant buildings affect the health, safety, and welfare of a community; and

WHEREAS blighted, abandoned and vacant buildings are an impediment to sustainable development, perpetuate crime, create liability to municipalities and danger to adjacent homeowners, and have adverse impact on quality of life; and

WHEREAS CONNECT municipal officials are challenged because of limited resources and uncooperative property owners to address blighted, abandoned, and vacant properties in their communities.

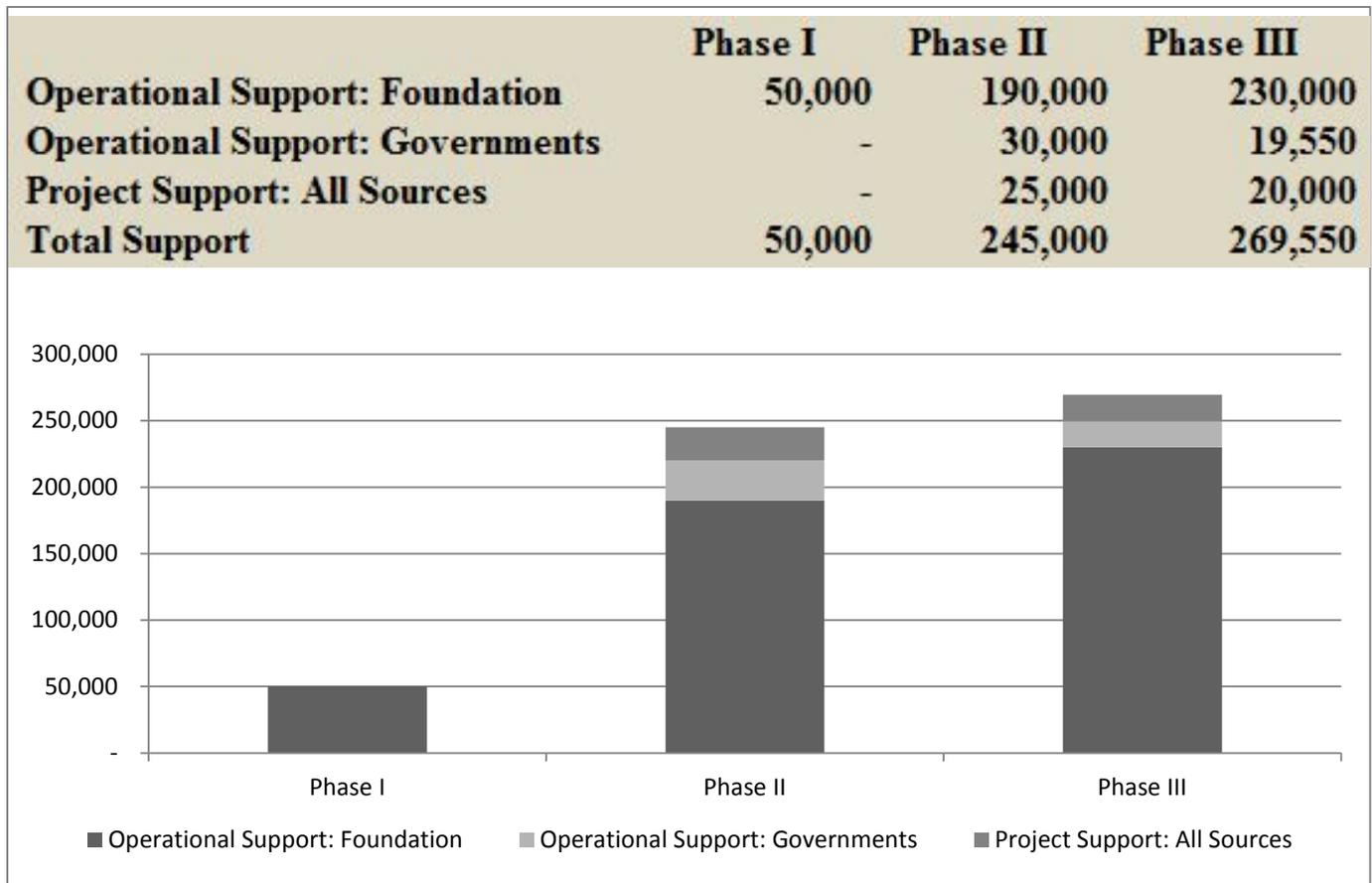
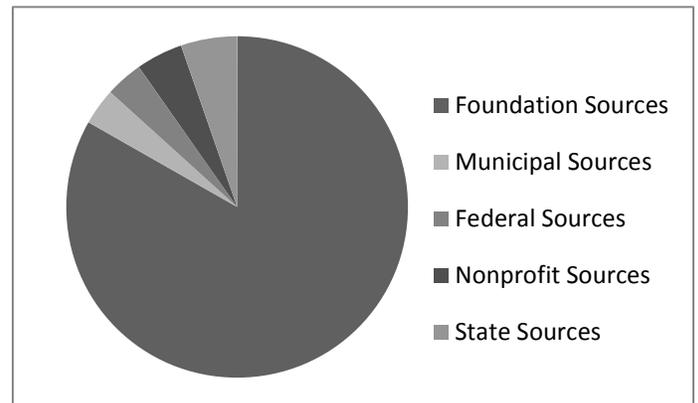
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CONNECT will work to address this important community economic development issue on a multi-municipal level by working with local community development organizations, relevant municipal entities, and Allegheny

County to develop a uniform method of data collection and storage to facilitate the identification of blighted and abandoned property. This data will help further efforts to mitigate blight through land banking, code enforcement, and vacant property registration with the goal of redevelopment, rehabilitation, and long-term neighborhood stability in CONNECT.

## FUNDING 2008 – 2011

CONNECT has been successful in raising more than a half million dollars in funds from a variety of sources and continues to diversify our funding to ensure sustainability. Funding for phase three is on-going therefore the graph on the next page is accurate as of December 2011.

<b>Total raised from specific sources:</b>	
Foundations	\$470,000.00
Municipal Contributions	\$19,550.00
Federal	\$20,000.00
Nonprofit/Project	\$25,000.00
PA State	\$30,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$564,550.00</b>



## POLICY INITIATIVES

CONNECT's policy initiatives are the outgrowths of discussions within its Executive Committee and Policy Working Groups which develop, approve and implement the proposals as authorized by the Executive Committee or by the Congress as a whole body.

- An **Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Policy Working Group** which, in partnership with the Allegheny County EMS Council, is working to address the funding crisis for the 16 EMS providers operating in CONNECT municipalities. The crisis facing local EMS providers was outlined in a report written by Pittsburgh City Controller Michael Lamb entitled *Critical Condition: the EMS Crisis in Pittsburgh and its Neighboring Communities*, which was issued to CONNECT at the 2010 Congress and updated at the 2011 Congress. Controller Lamb is currently engaging in conversations with UPMC and Highmark to fund a study for CONNECT that will evaluate the financial and health impact of improving quality of care off-site to reduce emergency room transfers. Given the contentious nature of their relationship, a willingness to collaborate among them is a milestone on its own.
- A **Water/Sewer Infrastructure Policy Working Group**, which has partnered with 3 Rivers Wet Weather (3RWW) and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council to examine the operation, management, and maintenance of the multijurisdictional sewer lines between 18 CONNECT municipalities and the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority. This proposal is now part of a menu of options under examination by the Allegheny Conference for Community Development's Sewer Regionalization Study Group.
- A **Transportation Policy Working Group**, which is working with a variety of partners (Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG); 10,000 Friends; keepPGHmoving, among others) to address our Port Authority Transit funding cuts. This committee is also investigating how CONNECT can enhance or improve multijurisdictional transit corridor planning within member communities. CONNECT is in the planning stages of hosting meetings around the communities to help business owners and residents begin contingency planning for after September's anticipated cuts.
- A **Green Infrastructure Policy Working Group**, which has established a formal and mutually beneficial relationship between Duquesne Light and the municipalities. Together we are exploring more energy efficient options for street lights. This group has also authorized participation from CONNECT communities in energy bill audits and group purchasing of energy through the Western Pennsylvania Energy Consortium, saving municipalities thousands of dollars annually. This committee has begun identifying funding for green projects, including our recent award by the federal Department of Energy's Rooftop Solar Challenge that will create a model ordinance for solar zoning, coding and permitting.
- A **Blighted and Abandoned Building Policy Working Group**, which is working with member municipalities to develop a plan of action with community development entities operating in CONNECT to address a variety of policy issues related to community stabilization and economic development. CONNECT has also partnered with Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) to start the Blight and Abandoned Coalition (BAC) which will be meeting regularly to address vacant property and land banking with numerous regional entities including Allegheny County.
- An **Economic Development Policy Working Group**, which is working to develop a repository for economic development projects important to the urban core to determine which are best implemented collaboratively. This group is also spearheading a gathering of the Community Development Corporations and economic development entities operating within CONNECT. This event, the "CDC Congress," will be held in spring 2012 and will work to develop a common agenda for economic

development in our region and bridge the divide between non-profit economic development agencies and municipal leadership.

- A **Solicitor Policy Working Group**, which has brought together the solicitors from the CONNECT municipalities to develop templates for intergovernmental agreements, formalize “hand shake” agreements between municipalities, and develop a framework to utilize alternative dispute resolution between CONNECT municipalities should it be needed prior to entering into litigation.

And finally, an important part of CONNECT’s work is continued outreach to other elected officials representing the member municipalities. In November 2011, CONNECT representatives went on their first legislative trip to Harrisburg and met with a number of legislators to make them aware of the successes CONNECT is achieving multi-municipally.

## **MEDIA HITS 2011**

### **Federal Grant to Create More Local Opportunities for Solar Power**

*Forest Hills-Regent Square Patch.com* | December 21, 2011

### **PennFuture already taking on the Rooftop Solar Challenge**

*Cleanenergyauthority.com* | December 14, 2011

### **Upper St. Clair Working to Move Solar Power Forward**

*Patch.com* | December 9, 2011

### **Federal grant to move region’s solar power forward**

*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | December 8, 2011

### **PennFuture team to create model solar ordinance**

*Pittsburgh Business Times* | December 7, 2011

### **PennFuture: DOE grant to Western Pennsylvania coalition will grow solar market, green jobs Western Pennsylvania plan only Keystone State application approved by DOE**

*MarketWatch – The Wall Street Journal* | December 7, 2011

### **Group to announce \$300,000 energy grant**

*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* | December 7, 2011

### **Bellevue to contribute to CONNECT**

*The Citizen* | December 5, 2011

### **EMS companies laud plan for direct insurance reimbursements**

*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* | November 13, 2011

### **Manage stormwater runoff near your home, officials urge**

*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | October 17, 2011

### **Solar panel business confronts hodgepodge of regulations**

*Pittsburgh Tribune Review* | October 16, 2011

**Municipalities struggling to solve problem of sewage overflows**

*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | October 4, 2011

**Signs, signs, signs and more (September 6 Baldwin Township Meeting Notes)**

*The Baldwin-Whitehall Patch* | September 7, 2011

**West View Borough Reappoints Doerfler to Zoning Board, Appoints Fromlak to CONNECT**

*Patch.com* | August 11, 2011

**West View Borough Votes to Join CONNECT**

*Patch.com* | July 14, 2011

**Study Examines Sewage Line Upgrades**

*Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* | June 18, 2011

**CONNECT Holds Third Annual Meeting This Friday**

*Patch.com* | June 13, 2011

**CONNECT Meets to Discuss Common Issues**

*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* | June 2, 2011

**Grant's Aim: Efficient Sewers**

*YourFoxChapel.com* | March 10, 2011

**CONNECTing the Municipal Dots**

*Pop City* | February 23, 2011

**CONNECT Unites City and Suburbs**

*PA Times* | February 14, 2011

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

37 Municipalities of CONNECT

Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG)

Scenic Pittsburgh

Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD)

Pittsburgh Partnership on Neighborhood Development (PPND)

10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC)

Port Authority of Allegheny County

Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN)

Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)

3 Rivers Wet Weather (3RWW)

Allegheny County EMS Council

Northeastern University – Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy

West Penn Allegheny Health System

UPMC

Allegheny County Economic Development (ACED)

Turtle Creek Valley Council of Government

Pittsburgh United

Sustainable Pittsburgh  
Leadership Pittsburgh Inc.  
Center for Emergency Medicine of Western PA  
Local Government Academy (LGA)  
Good Schools PA  
Duquesne Light  
Municipality of Monroeville  
Borough of Forest Hills  
Ford Foundation  
Allegheny River Town Enterprise Zone (ARTEZ)  
Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA)  
ALCOSAN  
Riverlife  
Penn Future  
Economic Development South  
Penn Hills CDC  
McKees Rocks CDC  
Pittsburgh Foundation  
RK Mellon Foundation  
McCune Foundation  
Benedum Foundation  
Hillman Foundation  
Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED)  
Buhl Foundation  
Heinz Endowments  
Great Lakes Urban Exchange (GLUE)  
PA State Representative Chelsa Wagner  
Green Building Alliance  
Nine Mile Run Watershed Association  
Chicago South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association  
Pennsylvania Mayors Association  
Northeast Ohio First Suburbs Coalition  
Michigan Suburbs Alliance  
First Suburbs Association of Kansas City (MARC)  
Senator Wayne Fontana  
PA State Representative David Reed  
PA State Representative Rick Saccone  
Allegheny County Sustainability Office  
Center for Deliberative Democracy  
GTECH  
Wilksburg Christian Housing  
Human Services Center Corporation  
Community Technical Assistance Center (CTAC)  
Creative Reuse Pittsburgh  
TerraShift  
Pittsburgh Pipeline  
Pittsburgh Neighborhood Community Information System (PNCIS)  
WQED  
Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP)  
Allegheny County Democratic House Delegation

Solar Unified Network of WPA  
Coro Center for Civic Leadership  
Pennsylvania Economy League (PEL)  
Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities (PLCM)  
Building One PA  
Allegheny League of Cities and Municipalities (ALCM)  
National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NAASPA)  
PACOG  
National League of Cities (NLC)  
National Association of Regional Councils (NARC)  
PA Housing Alliance  
Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 (AIU3)  
Highmark  
Traffic 21  
Operation Better Block  
Airport Corridor Transit Association  
Oakland Transportation Management Association