



CONNECT Working Group Visioning Session

July 18, 2019 from 3-5:15pm at the Mt. Lebanon Municipal Building, with a pizza debrief from 5:30-7pm

Executive Summary

CONNECT ends our first decade of existence heading into a strategic planning year while transitioning a new executive director and preparing to receive an endowment that will support and grow our impact for decades.

In December 2018, CONNECT staff conducted a Membership Engagement Survey, the results of which informed the new executive director and incoming officers as to what was going well and what was most engaging, but also demonstrated the need to dig deeper and to convene more formally and consistently around specific policy areas that ranked as high priorities.

In CONNECT's annual legislative session in April 2019, members passed a resolution defining three new working groups (Resolution 19-06). Resolution 19-06 takes the 17 policy areas rated as high in the Dec 2018 survey and divided them into three working groups: Economic & Environmental Development, Infrastructure & Utilities Coordination, Public Safety, Health Human Resources.

The July 2019 Working Group Visioning Session had a significant amount (~30) of our full membership participate and received universally positive feedback from CONNECT members throughout the activities and afterwards. The objectives of the session were made clear ahead of time:

- 1) Establish agenda topics and SMART goals for the working groups ahead of their fall launch meetings and solidify shared vision through Congress 2020.
- 2) Collect best dates, times and (tentative) locations for working group meetings

Executive director trained CONNECT staff** to facilitate members in a round robin of breakout activities for each Working Group to actively set and prioritize the goals, agendas and partners. Each member participated in brainstorming for each Working Group's agenda so that every member of CONNECT will know what the Working Groups are doing and who to refer to them from their municipality/network whether or not they are participating in them fully as an individual. The facilitators worked for 20 minutes with each round robin group, randomly formed by counting off in 3's. In each round, participants picked a couple of policy areas to individually write goals, facilitators collected and read aloud and used the below matrix to rank live with the groups. Attached are the top priority goals for each.

Policy Ranking Matrix:

| Stages of Engagement [Symbol] | Exploring Introducing a new topic | Monitoring Utilizing student groups/active research and monitoring | Implementing Funded pilots and active projects; technical assistance; utilizing more staff support |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| (Top Priority) | | | |
| ^ | | | |
| ^ | | | |
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| ^ | | | |
| (Low priority) | | | |

**a new CONNECT model in which we are already seeing great benefit in our Public Safety, Health & Human work is helping to fundraise and support at partner orgs for there to be a CONNECT-region serving staff. IE: ACHD (supported through Heinz) and at New Sun Rising (supported through Staunton Farm). Kat and Joellen are not technically CONNECT staff, nor reflected in our budget, but we are mutually benefiting from these orgs having a funded ambassador to CONNECT to leverage/amplify our members to significantly move the needle in the given impact area and to bring resources of these partners more seamlessly to CONNECT membership. Page Break

CONNECT's Infrastructure & Utilities Working Group: Top Priority Goals

Exploring: *Introducing a new topic*

Joint Energy Purchase

- Microgrid development for reliability
- Shared storage and renewable energy
- Create a joint fund to purchase green-teach.

Street Lighting

- Explore solar farm for municipal building lighting and street lights
- Direct the solar lights to be turned downwards to increase night sky visibility.
- Expand DLC's LED lighting subsidy program

Coordinate PA Website

- Better understanding of where Coordinate PAs rollout is headed
- Outreach to engineers to get their municipality participation
- Expand to include street trees because tree trimming and underground utility work disrupts tree roots

Other

- Coordinate advocacy for federal and state infrastructure bill (from sidewalks to stormwater)

Monitoring: *Utilizing student groups/active research and monitoring*

Stormwater Maintenance

- Change regional stormwater management to ALCOSAN governance
- Analyze and plan to implement around ALCOSAN's upcoming regional green stormwater mgmt
- Lobbying for boroughs to create an authority for flood mitigation
- Develop guidelines for leveraging development projects to include stormwater management and GI
- Develop resource of best practices and regional storm maintenance plan
- Collect resources for compliance with MS4 requirements, especially public education

Flood control

- Short term solutions for residents suffering from flood / sewer issues to help remediate damages
- Create intra-municipal partnerships to ensure developments do not have downstream effects
- Create model zoning overlays for flood prone areas

Sewer regionalization

- Share information with all members from solicitor meetings to address concerns with ALCOSAN's transfer agreement
- Continue outreach / info session for transfer agreements and timelines
- Help municipality staff have the resources to quantify benefits of transfer agreements
- Establish policy for maintenance of sewers after Alcosan acceptance

Utility Coordination

- Better communication by utilities to municipalities during outages and emergency situations to enable staff of officials to answer resident questions

Implementing: *Funded pilots and active projects; technical assistance; utilizing more staff support*

Flood Control

- Multi-Municipal zoning / planning tools to minimize property damage and loss
- Municipal cooperation to mitigate flooding and runoff upstream and throughout the watershed
- Improving communication with neighboring communities who both experience stormwater issues
- Residents education on how to reduce surface runoff and flooding on their properties
- Protect watershed by promoting green swales along roads and parking lots
- Gathering resources for property owners if they experience and stormwater issues
- Set up "mutual aid" fund for personnel and equipment

CONNECT's Economic & Environmental Development Working Group: Top Priority Goals

Exploring: *Introducing a new topic*

Housing and Development

- Identify communities that need the most help with housing
- Work with Councils of Governments (COGs) and County to map (or revise maps of) vacant lots in communities. Work with Western PA Regional Data Center on this.

Trail/Green Spaces

- Provide design standards for trail projects, e.g. surface material, stream crossings, signage, etc.

Electric Vehicles

- Muni fleets/incentives for private use
- Working with DLC to purchase and/or build charging stations infrastructure

Air Quality

- Connecting with partners who are monitoring/studying and sharing info

Tree Canopy

- Working with non-CONNECT communities upstream to reduce loss of tree canopy/green space

Monitoring: *Utilizing student groups/active research and monitoring*

Economic/Environmental Project Funding Sources/Resources for CONNECT members

- Collecting and sharing resources that already exist
- For resources that *don't* already exist, use staff time or student projects to create them, or ask partners to create them
- Annually publish list of grants and grant deadlines for local governments
- Create better systems to share resources with other CONNECT members
- Convene developers and investors (public & private) directly with CONNECT members
- Each semester publish at least one simple case study of a muni implementing a CONNECT best practice, show economic impact (Shaler/Hampton EMS example, Shaler was being 400k before consolidating, now spends \$185k)

Recycling

- (Urgent priority topic for virtually every member)
- Identify new pathways for recycling and ways to communicate with the public
- Encourage economic development in the region through recycling/reduction of waste efforts – there are local glass making factories in region, etc.
- Identify effective partners: Allegheny County, Pennsylvania Resource Council, COGs, etc.

Implementing: *Funded pilots and active projects; technical assistance; utilizing more staff support*

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):

- For those already working on TOD, more specific goals around TOD came to the forefront
- For munis with limited public transportation, work on developing this
- Resource guides, messaging and other efforts that could be done quickly

Blight

- Working with city code enforcement for lead/asbestos safe demos of parcels of blighted properties on borders

CONNECT's Public Safety & Health Working Group: *Top Priority Goals*

Exploring: *Introducing a new topic*

Lead-free Housing

- Create/disseminate resources for munis to pass to residents and landlords.
- Create/expand/disseminate information on grants for low-income residents who can't pay their own
- Expand testing and remediation especially in areas for food growth

Food access

- Fresh food access in food deserts by partnering with food organizations.
- Exploring what's working in other communities
- Identify food deserts and lack of access in CONNECT Communities (map). Identify partners.

Monitoring: *Utilizing student groups/active research and monitoring*

Police Regionalization

- Study of full-time equivalent officers per community to analyze: department spending per FTE, 911 calls per FTE, violent crimes per FTE to determine which communities are underserved and could be candidates for regionalization & which nearby communities could be part of joint department.
- Look at professionalizing collective bargaining in all communities
- Ensure all CONNECT communities' police departments are accredited
- Civil Service Commission has seen decrease in police candidates- what are the hiring, interviewing processes for each muni?

Volunteer Fire

- 15-year strategy plan for regional consolidation/service coverage
- Promote inter-operational support among adjacent towns
- Electronic interconnection among volunteer fire departments
- Adjoining munis share paid firefighters to gradually replace volunteers
- Public outreach efforts; a lot of backlash from residents on regionalizing / consolidating. Create a presentation that can be used across the board for residents (ie. Showing the statistic of Allegheny County apparatus vs. City of New York)

Emergency Medical Services

- Update the *Critical Conditions* report/analysis of the status of EMS in the urban core

Gun Violence

- Create/develop best practices for munis
- Analysis of current gun violence levels
- Bring in more expert speakers on the subject for more proactive initiatives

Public Space/Recreation

- Examine conversion of vacant/derelict buildings into public space or parks. Make goal to have a natural area in every neighborhood.
- Work with organizations and owners to acquire vacant properties.
- Planning for potential ownership turnover; future investment/combatting speculation.
- Easier/More cost-effective way to secure state right-of-way for trails/recreation
- Identify non-active rail lines in Allegheny County, focus that development into transit lines (bike/ped)

Implementing *Funded pilots and active projects; technical assistance; utilizing more staff support*

Opioids

- Training and resources for first responders and offenders. Narcan Box in public spaces

Digital Accessibility

- Make sure all borough/township materials and websites are available in other languages and to people who are blind (could be between monitoring and implementing)