



THE POWER OF PEOPLE.

Congress of Neighboring Communities

Report to the Community
2017-2018





IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE.

As we come to the close of CONNECT's ninth full year of operations, we're poised to enter our second decade as a stronger, larger and more effective organization than ever before. The series of initial questions that launched CONNECT in 2009 – Does the City of Pittsburgh and its neighboring communities have issues in common? Are municipalities willing to collaborate? Can progress be made across borders? – have all been answered in the affirmative. And while we've paused as an organization along the way – to assess our progress and strategize our future with Strategic and Visioning Sessions, in 2010, 2014, and 2017 – the feedback has always remained consistent: ***this organization adds value to my municipality. The access to my neighbors and the City is vital. We are stronger together than we are alone.***

It's an exciting time for us. CONNECT has proven that local governments can successfully collaborate and affect positive change together. But how do we quantify success? Is it about bringing on new member communities? Advancing resolutions? High meeting attendance?

Though all of these measures play a role, when we really look at our year and what success means to us, we realize there's one thing at the root of every achievement. People.

Our members participate in CONNECT because they are working day in and day out to serve their residents. The time they dedicate to our organization – the connections that are made, the resources and knowledge they receive – are not for them, but for the benefit of the individuals that comprise their unique communities. As CONNECT has matured, our most important role – connecting people to people – has been clarified and has never felt more vital.

Sharing knowledge across borders, from local government to county government and back; from subject area experts to our members; and from our membership to organizations of every stripe that seek to better understand the inner workings and challenges of local government. It's what we do.

This year, we are celebrating the dedication of the committed public servants whom we at CONNECT are lucky enough to work with every day. We are celebrating the people – our members and our partners – who have supported us from the very beginning and the new faces that joined our table in an effort to gain resources to better serve the nearly 700,000 residents of the CONNECT region.

Thank you to all of you who have played a role in making CONNECT what it is today. Tomorrow looks very bright.

Kristen Michaels
Executive Director
CONNECT

CONNECT Officers, left to right: Reno, Garrett, Henry, Beuter, and Ramage. Not pictured: Mayor Peduto and County Executive Fitzgerald



2018 Officers

Thank you to our 2018 Officers who dedicate their time and leadership to CONNECT.

J.R. Henry, Chair

Mayor, Borough of West View

Brittany Reno, Vice Chair

President of Council, Borough of Sharpsburg

Mary Ellen Ramage, Secretary/Treasurer

Manager, Borough of Etna

Steve Beuter, Manager Representative

Manager, Borough of Carnegie

William Peduto, City of Pittsburgh Representative

Mayor, City of Pittsburgh

Rich Fitzgerald, Allegheny County Representative

Executive, Allegheny County

Marita Garrett, Immediate Past Chair

Mayor, Borough of Wilkinsburg

2017-2018 CONNECT Members

CONNECT was honored to welcome two new member municipalities, Blawnox Borough and the City of Duquesne, at our 2018 Annual Congress.

Allegheny County

Aspinwall Borough

Baldwin Borough

Baldwin Township

Bellevue Borough

Blawnox Borough

Brentwood Borough

Carnegie Borough

Castle Shannon Borough

Churchill Borough

City of Clairton

Crafton Borough

Dormont Borough

City of Duquesne

Edgewood Borough

Etna Borough

Forest Hills Borough

Green Tree Borough

Heidelberg Borough

Homestead Borough

Ingram Borough

Kennedy Borough

McKees Rocks Borough

Millvale Borough

Mt. Lebanon

Mt. Oliver Borough

Munhall Borough

O'Hara Township

Penn Hills

City of Pittsburgh

Reserve Township

Robinson Township

Ross Township

Rosslyn Farms

Scott Township

Shaler Township

Sharpsburg Borough

Stowe Township

Swissvale Borough

West Homestead Borough

West Mifflin Borough

West View Borough

Whitehall Borough

Wilkinsburg Borough

Wilkinsburg Mayor Marita Garrett and Aspinwall Councilman
Tim McLaughlin at CONNECT's 2017 Friendraiser



CONNECT members in their communities and at CONNECT gatherings from Sharpsburg, Allegheny County, Shaler, Etna, and Millvale!



In a time where everything seems to be going online, at CONNECT we believe that nothing can replace face-to-face relationship-building. Don't get us wrong, we *love* technology, and technological solutions are the answer to so many issues facing local government (including the recently launched *Coordinate PA!*) but nothing can replace the relationships that are built when people meet with people.

THERE'S POWER IN PERSON:

Between July 1, 2017, and June 30, 2018, CONNECT facilitated 21 in-person meetings. The way we see it, that's 21 opportunities for information to be shared and meaningful relationships to be built across borders. Nine Executive Committee meetings, five policy working group meetings, two CONNECT/Utilities Meetups, one Complete Streets Workshop, one ALCOSAN plant tour, the kickoff of our Transit-Oriented Development Initiative, one Annual Legislative Session and Reception and one Friendraiser. Each event offering representatives from a variety of municipalities to cross borders and come together to discover cross-boundary solutions and to advance good policy.

Left to right: Kristen Michaels, CONNECT; An Lewis, Steel Rivers Council of Governments; and, Ruthann Omer, P.E., founder of Gateway Engineers at the Allegheny League of Municipalities' Spring Conference, 2018.

THE ORIGINAL FACETIME





CONNECT member municipalities at swearing-in ceremonies and community celebrations from Bellevue, Carnegie, Pittsburgh, Blawnox, Duquesne, Clairton, and Etna!

CONNECT members enjoying a tour of the Dormont Pool after our May Executive Committee meeting.





POLICY FOR PEOPLE

Reviewing maps in Mt. Lebanon during the CONNECT/PAAC
Transit Oriented Development Workshops.

SERVING PEOPLE

The opioid epidemic has affected every community in Allegheny County. Thanks to support from expert partners, CONNECT has facilitated a Health Working Group focused on the opioid epidemic that has brought the most up-to-date municipal-level data, resources, interventions, funding opportunities and trainings directly to our municipal membership. Through this effort, the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD), the Department of Human Services, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the CONNECT Community Paramedic Program and others have formed valuable relationships with local governments, agencies, and service providers that have allowed collaboration and meaningful, evidence-based interventions to emerge with feedback and buy-in from the communities themselves.

Realizing the intense need for additional capacity, in early 2018, CONNECT and ACHD officially partnered to raise funds to support a Community Opioid Response Manager at the Health Department, tasked specifically with working with CONNECT communities to assess and address the epidemic. This resource has been invaluable and we look forward to continuing this partnership to bring more resources and opportunities to our membership.

PLANNING FOR PEOPLE

A great T-Stop isn't so great if your residents can't get to it. This is a lesson we learned during a recent tour of municipal fixed guideway stations with our partners at the Port Authority of Allegheny County (PAAC) and the consultant group Dover, Kohl & Partners. This tour was the kickoff to an 18-month long initiative that brings expertise in Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) directly to CONNECT municipalities that are host to transit stops with potential for development. This effort comes after the publication of the PAAC's TOD Guidelines (2017), which was our region's first effort at defining "good" TOD. In an effort to ensure that these guidelines are put into practice, a partnership between CONNECT and PAAC, with funding from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, was formed to help municipalities better understand their transit stops – constraints, opportunities, and possibilities. By connecting our members on the ground with planning experts, developers and best practices, we hope to inspire the beginnings of TOD design and implementation that will better serve the region.



Port Authority CEO Katharine Kelleman discusses transit priorities with CONNECT's membership.

PLANNING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2015, CONNECT's membership tasked the organization with helping local governments better collaborate with utilities regarding infrastructure repair and construction. Three years and many meetings later - *Coordinate PA* is here! Provided by Pennsylvania One Call, this free, web-based data platform allows municipalities and utilities to upload paving and construction plans, and view conflicts and potential areas of opportunity for collaboration. Any municipality that is a PA One Call member now has access to this platform, and we are working to onboard our members and utilities. Opportunities for cost savings and reduction of duplication are massive.

We are excited about the potential of *Coordinate PA*, and we will continue to host biannual meetups between local governments and utility representatives, so that relationships between parties can be maintained, and issues can be discussed and resolved face-to-face.

PARTNERS

We can't do anything alone. A huge thank you to our partner organizations that inform us, support us, and collaborate with us to advance good policy, including: the Port Authority of Allegheny County, the Allegheny County Health Department, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Allegheny County Economic Development, 3 Rivers Wet Weather, Pennsylvania One Call, 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, Tree Pittsburgh, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the American Heart Association, WalkWorks and Economic Development South, among others.

FUNDING

For the third year in a row, CONNECT's membership contributed a larger portion to CONNECT's annual budget than the year prior. These voluntary contributions continue to exceed 30% of CONNECT's annual budget.

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.

THE PEOPLE OF CONNECT

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

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

Contact:

connect@pitt.edu

3921 Wesley W. Posvar Hall
230 South Bouquet St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

www.connect.pitt.edu