



ColleCTive Climate Action Forum

October 23, 2024

**Connecticut State Community College Middlesex
Middletown, Connecticut**

Summary of Findings Report



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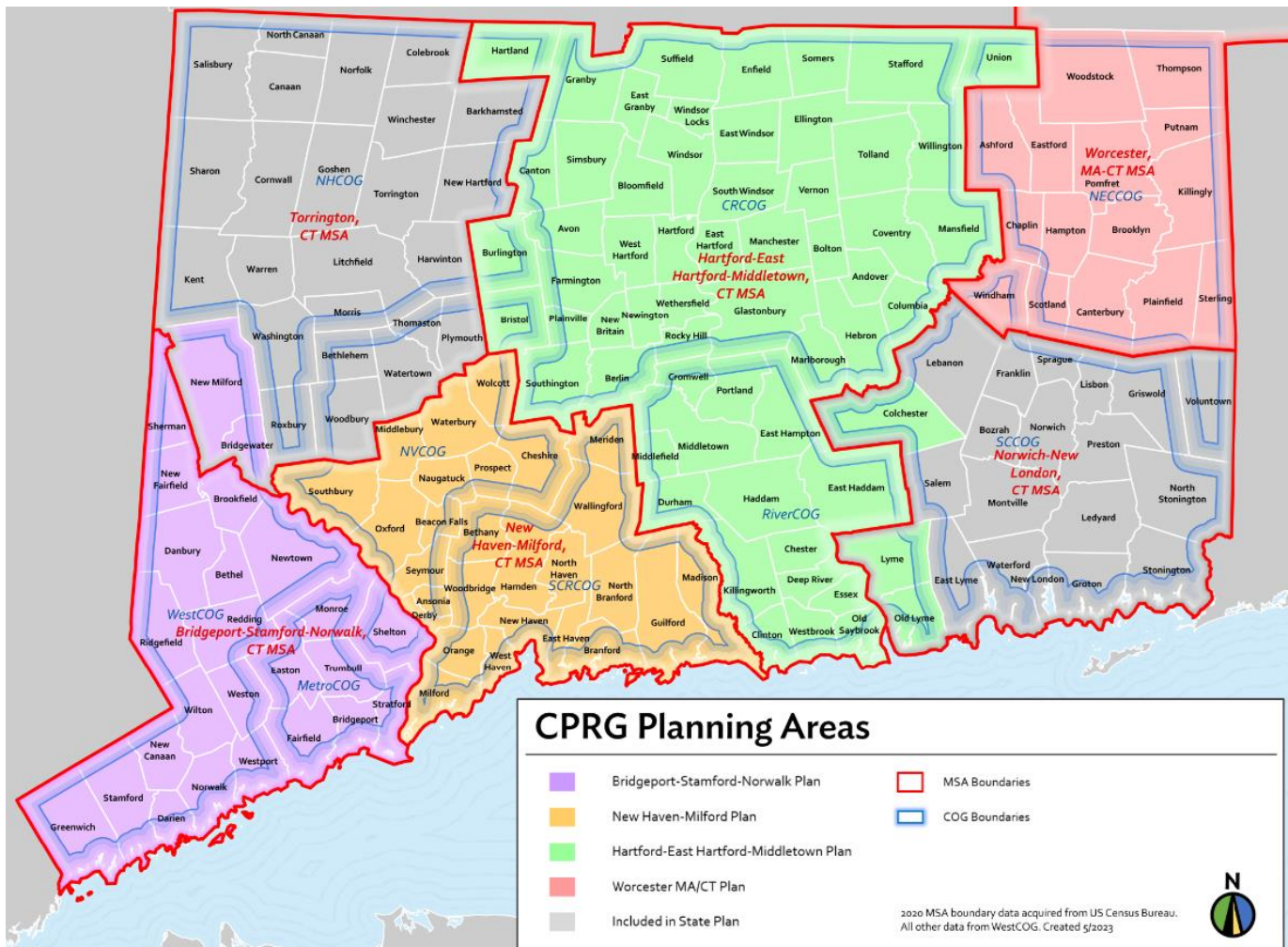
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Introduction

Over the past year, Councils of Government (COGs) across Connecticut have been developing regional climate action plans through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program. The CPRG program is intended to help states, local governments, tribes, and territories develop and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution. While climate change is a global concern, the CPRG program recognizes that direct local, regional and state action is necessary to adequately address the challenge.

Given the existing government structures in Connecticut, the primary authority to implement significant projects lies with the State or local municipalities. State efforts will be run primarily through the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, in concert with other State agencies. As such, the COGs have devoted much of our efforts to identify ways our member municipalities can help reduce their emissions, whether individually or through collaborative regional efforts.



CPRG planning areas overlap various COG and municipal boundaries, making a siloed planning approach impractical.

Collective Climate Action Forum

While there are three major regional plans being developed (Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven) most of the issues and challenges facing our member municipalities are overwhelmingly similar. Given this reality, planning in regional silos makes little sense. The COGs recognize that local governments from



Commissioner Katie Dykes, CT DEEP

across the state can better identify realistic pathways towards reducing emissions when sharing information, best practices, and drawing upon the collective experience of on-the-ground stakeholders.

The Collective Climate Action Forum was intended to bring together sector experts from across the state to help refine the eventual strategies in the regional climate action plans. The event was organized by some of the major emission sectors, along with strategies to reduce emissions:

Clean Transportation – As the single largest sector contributing to GHG emissions, creating cleaner transportation systems is typically a major emphasis in most climate action plans.

- **Electric Vehicles (EVs)** - Transitioning from the internal combustion engine to EVs, for both public fleets and personal automobiles.
- **Complete Streets** – Creating street infrastructure that safely accommodates all users beyond single-occupant vehicles – include infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and public transit. It can potentially include land use decisions like transit-oriented development.
- **Enhance Public Transportation** – Making public transportation more accessible and efficient to encourage greater mode shift.

Decarbonizing Buildings – The residential building sector is another major contributor of GHG emissions. Decreasing the use of fossil fuels to heat and cool homes is a critical measure for reducing emissions.

- **Deployment of HVAC efficient technology** – Heat pumps and renewable energy technologies will allow heating and cooling of buildings while significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Retrofit older buildings** – As a state with some of the oldest housing stock in the nation, Connecticut GHG emissions would be significantly reducing by widespread retrofitting of older properties to increase energy efficiency measures.

- Climate-friendly land use and building codes - Leveraging local and state governments land use and building code authority to develop, adopt, and implement regulations and processes that yield low-emissions outcomes.

Towards a Zero Carbon Electrical Grid – Moving away from the use of fossil fuels to generate electricity is a key emissions reduction strategy. This includes large-scale policies and actions taken by both regulated utilities and smaller-scale actions taken by individual property owners.

- Utility-scale renewables – Deploying utility-scale wind, solar, geothermal, or other clean and renewable resources to generate electricity for the grid.
- Distributed generation – Developing microgrids, community solar, networked geothermal, or on-site renewables that produce the energy at the point of consumption, removing strain from the grid.
- Municipal energy – Leveraging municipal policy and resources to procure renewable power, phase out fossil fuels, and evaluate sites for clean energy installations.

Waste Management – While not the largest contributor to global GHG emissions, waste management is consistently cited as a concern during public engagement. Many agree that Connecticut is facing a waste management crisis, as a large portion of our waste is shipped hundreds of miles out of the state, resulting in high tipping fees and uncaptured GHG emissions.

- Reduction – Minimizing the amount of waste created through unit-based pricing, extended producer responsibility (EPR), and other programming that incentivizes behavior change.
- Diversion – Redirecting waste from landfills or waste-to-energy incinerators to reuse, recycling, and composting facilities when feasible to decrease GHG emissions.
- Infrastructure – Developing efficient waste management and wastewater treatment systems that reduce GHG emissions and operating costs.

Event Summary

Over eighty people attended the Collective Climate Action Forum on October 23rd, 2024. Attendees included representatives from State agencies, municipal staff, utilities, non-profit organizations and other interested stakeholders. Discussion was robust and informative, with a focus on identifying practical pathways for implementation. The notes included in this packet attempt to summarize the day's discussion and hopefully provide a follow-up resource for local governments to help with their climate and sustainability initiatives. As always, municipalities are encouraged to reach out to their respective Council of Governments with any comments or questions.

Clean Transportation

Introduction

Transportation accounts for over 40 percent of statewide emissions and had a larger carbon footprint than the next two sectors (residential and commercial, from use of fossil fuels) combined. This theme included discussions on policies intended to reduce the need for single-occupancy vehicle trips through land use, infrastructure and public transit improvements as well as transitioning to cleaner electric vehicles.

Session 1

Electric Vehicles & Charging Infrastructure

The discussion on electric vehicles covered a variety of areas, from the conversion of municipal vehicle fleets (including school buses) to EVs, to the necessity of EV charging infrastructure, to residential households opting for EVs in place of traditional internal combustion vehicles.

Grid capacity and charging infrastructure for widespread EV usage was a prominently mentioned challenge. Converting publicly owned vehicle fleets (state and municipal) was seen as an important initial step and a meaningful signal, particularly to utilities, who were mentioned as an essential partner.



Municipal public works staff said light-duty vehicles are more promising opportunities for EV conversion, while heavy duty vehicles are currently more difficult, due to cost and current performance limitations. The lack of grid capacity for charging heavy duty electric vehicles was cited as a concern. The higher upfront costs of EVs were also mentioned, but this could be overcome by emphasizing the total lifecycle costs and savings on maintenance.

Dagmar Noll and Renata Silberblatt

Built Environment & Infrastructure

This category includes specific initiatives such as Complete Streets improvement to more long-range policies such as reforming land use and zoning regulations. Measures in this category are broadly intended to reduce the demand for single-occupancy vehicle trips, by making walking and biking to destinations safer and more convenient. These strategies were recognized as a critical component for reducing transportation-related emissions, but challenges such as cost, required workforce and the relatively long timeframe for implementation were cited.

Consistent, sufficient funding for transformative infrastructure improvements is necessary to significantly reduce transportation demand for single occupancy vehicles at the scale required. Many localities are incrementally completing projects, but land use changes and large-scale infrastructure improvements take time to fully realize their benefits.

Enhanced Public/Active Transportation

This category included discussions of perception/marketing of public transit, operational policies such as free or low-fare rides, and identifying areas poorly served by existing transit. There was discussion on the need to improve both the perception and actual experience of taking public transportation in the state. Free or low-fare trips on priority routes was seen as a beneficial policy to incentivize ridership but presents operational challenges when there is no dedicated funding to make up the revenue gap.

Session 2

Priority Measures

1. Electrify municipal and state vehicle fleets
2. Encourage mode shift through complete street improvements
3. Reduce transportation demand through land use
4. Improve public transit access and affordability
5. Enhance micromobility through e-bikes, scooters, and other services
6. Transportation demand management to reduce peak hour volumes

Authority to Implement

CT DOT and local governments have the necessary authority to implement most projects pertaining to the built environment/land use and infrastructure. Sufficient funding from the state and federal government is typically the limiting factor, as many local governments struggle to contribute a 20 percent match for some infrastructure projects. COGs and the newly created Municipal Redevelopment Authority were seen as entities that could help local governments advance projects.

Workforce Needs

The workforce was cited as a considerable challenge for improving public transportation, as the sector generally has low pay and high turnover. The workforce was also cited as a concern for both the State and local governments, as there are often not enough qualified staff to shepherd projects to completion.

Barriers to Implementation

For many infrastructure or land use-related development projects, negative public sentiment can be a barrier; multi-family development proposals or roundabout projects are examples where public feedback is not always supportive. Upfront design costs were also cited as a barrier, as many municipalities do not always have staff capacity to complete preliminary design. As mentioned above, a typically required 20 percent match from local municipalities is often a barrier for less resourced communities.

Equity Considerations

There is limited enthusiasm for electric vehicles in many low-income communities, primarily due to the relatively low car ownership rates, as many residents rely on public transit. Due to the reliance on public transit, policies to improve the efficiency and convenience of public transportation have far greater relevance to low-income communities than transitioning to electric vehicles. Cost is also a concern, as even households with a car cannot easily afford to purchase a new electric vehicle. The ability to charge is also a concern, as they either live in a multi-family complex with no charging infrastructure or their home does not have a garage. However, converting municipal vehicle fleets to EVs would help improve air quality in many low-income neighborhoods, particularly if garbage trucks, snowplows and school buses are eventually converted to electric vehicles.

Final Notes

Changing land use patterns and creating less car-dependent communities was recognized as critical policies for reducing transportation emissions. However, these policies occur incrementally over a relatively long period of time. Specific infrastructure improvement like Complete Streets investments can be done in a somewhat timelier but limited fashion. By contrast, supporting the transition to electric vehicles and enhancing public transportation are policies that can be implemented in a comparably shorter time frame.

Final Summary

Local governments must reform land use and development practices to encourage less car-dependent communities. CT DOT and local governments have the necessary authority to implement projects, but not always sufficient funding or staff capacity. Dedicated, consistent funding streams with adequate staffing to shepherd projects to completion are necessary. While individual households will take longer to transition to electric vehicles, converting publicly owned State and municipal vehicle fleets (including school buses) should be prioritized. Finally, improving public transit, both the perception and actual experience of taking transit is critical for encouraging mode shift. Public transit must focus on efficiency and convenience.

Decarbonizing Buildings

Introduction

Residential and commercial buildings are a major source of GHG emissions, both through energy expenditure on heating/cooling systems and through construction. As the pace of residential development increases to meet demand in Connecticut, it is important to consider how policies regarding land use and building codes can impact these emissions. This sector discussion considered deployment of efficient HVAC technologies, retrofitting of existing buildings, and development of climate-friendly land use and building codes.

Session 1

Deployment of HVAC Efficient Technology

Discussion of HVAC technologies is focused primarily on increasing adoption of heat pump systems in both new construction and existing buildings. Despite the significant advantages these systems offer, uptake has been slow due in part to a lack of expertise among installers, public misconceptions regarding efficacy, and the current ubiquity of fossil-fuel based heating systems. To address some of these barriers, CT DEEP is currently working with a coalition of other New England states to accelerate adoption of heat pump systems using CPRG funding. While other alternative heating/cooling technologies such as geothermal are valuable tools for replacing fossil-fuel based systems, these face similar (but more significant) barriers to widespread implementation. The increased load on the power grid from a broad shift to non-fossil systems also bears consideration.

Retrofit Older Buildings

Retrofitting existing buildings is crucial to reducing energy use in the sector. Much of the building stock in Connecticut is aging and fails to meet modern standards of weatherization, leading to energy loss in heating and cooling. These retrofits can be costly, especially as newer, more efficient technologies require additional equipment and specialized knowledge from contractors, increasing the availability of these technologies hinges on increasing the availability of this expertise. Retrofit costs can also be offset through tax incentives and low/no-interest financing programs.

Climate Friendly Land use and Building Codes

Addressing efficiency through building codes generally involves requirements for significant upfront investments such as foam insulation and passive design elements. While effective, these requirements

can significantly increase building costs, which are passed on to renters and home buyers. Passive design requires skilled attention from architects and newer technologies such as spray foam insulation require specific equipment and expertise from contractors; this suggests opportunities for reducing some of these costs through funding programs for training, certification, and equipment.

Session 2

Priority Measures

1. Adopt the use of networked geothermal systems
2. Support energy efficiency upgrades for municipal buildings
3. Support the use and expansion of energy efficient building technologies
4. Incentivize residential & commercial energy efficient building retrofits
5. Support HVAC & weatherization upgrades for low-income households
6. Advise municipalities to adopt energy efficient building codes
7. Require energy reduction benchmarks for buildings
8. Support the use of sustainable building materials in construction & renovations
9. Incentivize & support adaptive reuse of aged & vacant buildings
10. Support cluster development in nodes that support transit systems and are sited near jobs & amenities

Authority to Implement

A large component of the priority measures listed hinge on workforce training and homeowner/builder education. This could be effectively carried out by state agencies or regional organizations such as COGs provided adequate state/federal funding is available. Incentivization of efficient technologies can be accomplished through a combination of tax credits, rebates, and low/no-interest loans for both homeowners and contractors. Municipal land use authorities can also play a significant role in incentivizing efficient construction through siting/design guidelines and streamlining of approval processes.

Workforce Needs

There is a general need for training and expertise in the installation of energy efficient building technologies to overcome the momentum of traditional techniques. Public sector support is required to make training and certification more widely available to builders, contractors, and HVAC technicians as greater availability would do much to lower costs.

Barriers to Implementation

Higher costs remain a significant barrier to the implementation of energy efficient building technologies. Homeowners and builders are also more likely to choose systems that they are familiar with when replacing/upgrading an existing HVAC system. Current outreach efforts are largely targeted towards

homeowners; programs focusing on educating HVAC installers and builders on the advantages and limitations of these technologies could improve adoption. The capacity of the power grid to accommodate a large-scale shift to electrical heating/cooling is also a barrier that requires state attention.

Equity Considerations

Special care needs to be taken to ensure that the cost of any required efficiency upgrades does not create an additional burden for low-income renters or homeowners. Accessibility should also be a consideration in the siting and availability of training and funding opportunities.

Final Notes

Reducing energy consumption and emissions in the building sector will involve significant investment in workforce training and education to increase the availability of energy saving technologies. Existing authorities at the local, regional, and state level are well-positioned to facilitate these investments; some progress is already being made by CT DEEP in this regard.

Final Summary

Significant opportunities exist for decarbonization of the building sector, but they will require coordinated and consistent investment at all levels to overcome the ubiquity of fossil fuel dependent heating/cooling systems and low-cost but inefficient building techniques. Expanding current outreach efforts from homeowners to contractors and technicians is seen as an effective path forward towards broadening adoption of climate-friendly technologies. State agencies, municipal departments, and regional planning authorities all have roles to play in these efforts, which must necessarily be coordinated with efforts to address connected issues of energy and transportation.



Towards a Zero Carbon Electrical Grid

Introduction

Connecticut's electrical grid is powered primarily by natural gas (62%) and nuclear (35%), with a small portfolio of renewables ([U.S. Energy Information Administration](#)). In alignment with Connecticut's legislative goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from electricity by 2040 ([PA 22-5](#)), all three COG Priority Climate Action Plans established measures to move towards a zero-carbon electrical grid. The discussions at the Climate Action Forum centered around how to balance the attainment of this goal with the realities of the grid and politics, including: infrastructure upgrades, energy reliability, political/legislative will, utility collaboration, workforce readiness, and the long on-ramp for enacting reforms. Stakeholders represented a wide variety of organizations, including CT DEEP, the utilities, municipalities, nonprofits, small businesses, and local commissions.

Session 1

Utility-Scale Renewables

Off-shore wind dominated the conversation of utility-scale renewable energy, emerging as a more viable and impactful option than solar farms. Utilities, voters, and legislators all seem to like the concept, plus the State Pier in New London has CT well-positioned to deploy turbines. However, roadblocks such as the monumental upfront investment and the unpredictability of the post-COVID market have already delayed projects and will likely continue to do so. Workforce development for offshore wind will be key, including partnerships with unions, apprenticeships, and CT schools. To accommodate offshore wind (and most of the other topics discussed throughout the day), the grid is in serious need of infrastructure and technological upgrades.

Distributed Generation

A recurring concern related to ground-mounted solar was using prime agricultural land or cutting down forests as a counterproductive way to access clean energy. Solar is better suited as canopies over parking lots, on roofs, or over brownfields rather than "solar farms" sited in undeveloped land, the groups agreed. Microgrids were lauded as promising and should be incorporated into redevelopment plans, but given that there are only a handful in CT, there needs to be more attention and investment from government. Interconnection challenges (i.e., I want to put solar here but there's no capacity, now what?) could be mitigated if conversations with utilities are started earlier. Again – the need for grid upgrades. Homeowners are often overwhelmed when it comes to installing residential solar, due to aggressive or dishonest marketing tactics, supply chain challenges, and the high upfront costs (even with rebates). It is also crucial to ensure renters access solar benefits, with some sort of security that the landlord will pass along solar savings to the tenants.

Municipal Energy

While municipalities do have access to decarbonization incentives – reimbursement from the IRA, technical assistance from UConn, utility-based programs – they often lack the capacity to seek funding and then implement the grants. Disadvantaged communities especially tend to have older buildings that are not ideal for major energy upgrades. Municipal staff are not necessarily experts in energy and may not consider it a priority, given competing tasks. Yet, municipalities have several powerful tools they can use to enact energy reform, like requiring EV charging at new developments or bonding for energy upgrades as part of CIP or POCD planning. They could also tap into COG capacity for grant-writing.

Session 2

Priority Measures

Seven out of fourteen potential measures were chosen. The group modified the wording of several measures. ~~Strikethrough~~ means a word was eliminated; *italics* means a word was added. Explanations for these changes are written below.

1. Invest in Offshore Wind Energy
2. Fund Electrical Grid Improvements & Upgrades
3. ~~Expand~~ *Maintain* Natural Gas Pipelines
 - a. The group acknowledged that although we don't want to increase fossil fuels, it is important that the disadvantaged populations who might get left behind in the clean energy transition have safe, reliable, affordable access to energy.
4. ~~Expand~~ *Optimize* Energy Assistance for Low-Income Families
 - a. These programs don't necessarily need to expand, but they need to be much easier to access and navigate.
5. ~~Increase Rebates~~ *Provide Technical Assistance* for Solar Panels on Residential Homes
 - a. Significant financial incentives already exist for solar adoption – what people need is help to ensure they understand what they're signing up for, to give them confidence that they won't get caught in a scam or have to pay a huge cancelation fee.
6. Invest in Energy Storage Tech
7. Work with Developers & Utilities to Site Solar

Authority to Implement

There are many parties that need to work together to accomplish this, but they don't always play nicely together. This includes: the Connecticut legislature, the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the CT Siting Council, and of course the utilities. Better communication and a clear vision of how to move forward would be helpful. The utilities pointed out that Massachusetts has a much "friendlier" regulatory environment and that is why they have been able to make more progress on grid upgrades.

Workforce Needs

Electrical engineers, software engineers, manufacturers, arborists, and union laborers all have a role to play in the clean energy transition. It is crucial that we work with schools at all levels (K-12 computer science, technical high schools, community college apprenticeship programs) to build a CT-based workforce that can tackle these jobs.

Barriers to Implementation

It will cost billions of dollars to upgrade the grid, making funding one of the foremost barriers. Moreover, the logistics of upgrading equipment in millions of individual homes and businesses means that this would need to take place over many, many years. By the time the last “smart meter” is installed, that tech may already be outdated. Additionally, the nature of the electrical grid is such that upgrades will only really work at scale – for instance, putting in new infrastructure in only 10 of the 169 towns isn’t going to have an impact. Finally, the utilities pointed out that no matter where the funding comes from, it will ultimately fall on the backs of the public (either as “ratepayers” or “taxpayers”).

The group brainstormed ways to address these barriers, including better education across all age groups, earmarking funds in the legislature strictly for infrastructure upgrades, and trying to attract private investment.

Equity Considerations

Grid improvements should start in environmental justice communities. Interestingly, the group discussed that upgrading existing infrastructure – which is primarily located in EJ communities like Bridgeport – will still put the burden on urban areas to provide energy for rural areas. Is the upgrading-in-place model fair to low-income communities? There was some discussion of “virtual power plants,” where each home or business produces a little more energy that they use and put that back into the grid, thereby decentralizing production to remove the burden of certain residents having to live next to power plants.

Final Notes

Upgrading and maintaining our grid is the key that allows us to unlock all the benefits of renewable energy. It also takes a very long time, so we need to start as soon as possible.



Final Summary

Stakeholders acknowledged and engaged with the many barriers to transitioning Connecticut's electrical grid away from fossil fuels. We need better communication between utilities, regulators, and legislators. The relationship between the three is complicated and too often results in a chicken-and-egg situation where no one wants to make the first move, the first investment, without a signal from the other side. Similarly, inaction from the legislature and the inability to move common sense energy reforms through the Capitol was another barrier that came up multiple times. Legislators need more education on energy



Forum attendees

issues. Our grid is in desperate need of infrastructure and technological upgrades, if we have any chance of accommodating the renewable energy necessary to reach zero emissions. Certain technologies, like wind, geothermal, storage, and smart grid tech, are still “emerging” and might be vastly improved-upon in ten years. Is it prudent to make a large investment now when it could become outdated in short order? Finally, the workforce is a very important piece of this puzzle, especially because Connecticut prides itself on being a hub of precision manufacturing.

Waste Management

Introduction

Following the closure of the MIRA Waste to Energy facility, 42% of municipal solid waste is now being exported out of state, resulting in rising tipping fees. This has made managing the waste stream and its associated emissions a particularly acute issue in Connecticut. This theme included discussions on policies intended to reduce the amount of waste generated, diversion of waste from destinations such as out of state landfills, and ensuring that the appropriate infrastructure is in place to accommodate significant change.

Session 1

Waste Management Infrastructure

An acute stressor that has the potential to worsen with increased rainfall and rising sea levels, the discussion on wastewater management centered primarily on the prohibitive cost of infrastructure. There was a recognition that major investments are still needed to fully phase out combined sewer outflows (CSO's) and properly maintain current infrastructure to ensure capacity.

A major barrier to the implementation of wastewater infrastructure improvements was identified as the complex web of the authority to implement which has been exacerbated by a lack of communication between the Department of Public Health, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, local health officials, and key town staff. The creation of regional stormwater authorities was proposed as a potential path forward to address this issue.

Increasing Connecticut's capacity to manage waste within the state was seen as a priority, with a waste-to-energy facility or updating existing facilities as potential solutions. Further, the group recognized a need to rapidly scale supporting infrastructure to allow for greater food waste and organics collection. Complicated zoning and permitting have made a siting process that is already sensitive to environmental justice community concerns especially difficult. For organics diversion to significantly increase, there is a need for the development of more anaerobic digesters and composting sites statewide.

A general lack of state leadership and coordination have made new waste management infrastructure difficult to develop. Overall, there was an understanding that both new infrastructure development and legacy maintenance are expensive and cost prohibitive, thus requiring greater emphasis on waste reduction.



Waste Reduction Strategies

While waste diversion is inherently intertwined with achieving large-scale reductions in municipal solid waste, this category includes initiatives that serve to reduce waste with minimal requirements to invest in expensive new infrastructure.

Unit-Based-Pricing (UBP) was the predominant waste reduction method discussed, generally combined with some form of organics collection. While the strategy was viewed as holding immense potential to reduce municipal solid waste levels if legislated by the state and enforced properly by municipalities, there were several roadblocks to implementation. The current paradigm in Connecticut focuses on a decentralized approach to waste, while several participants expressed a desire for more top-down leadership from state agencies and the legislature. The logistics of UBP were also seen as a barrier, with multi-family dwellings, increased costs for residents and haulers, and the need for significant public education to ensure smooth implementation being cited as the greatest concerns.

Other initiatives discussed included ensuring single stream and curbside recycling in the communities where not currently in practice. Extending producer responsibility and recycling friendly packaging were proposed as measures to reduce waste directly from the source of production. Overall, the group recognized the need for greater public education to reduce contamination in the recycling stream and promote higher levels of reuse.

Waste Diversion

As the heaviest subset of municipal solid waste, diversion and disposal of food waste and organics through new collection programs and increased composting holds considerable promise to reduce both hauling and management emissions. For municipal and regional programs, successful pilots have thus far been limited by continued funding and available capacity to offload organic waste. Participants saw potential for more decentralized forms of organics diversion through improved in-house composting technology, neighborhood programs, and greater involvement of farms in composting. It was noted that conversations surrounding further scaling of organics diversion should involve groups that were not represented in the current discussion, including schools, farmers, and private haulers.

Session 2

Priority Measures

1. Establish a county/statewide unit-based pricing program with food scrap collection and public education
2. Expand existing waste diversion infrastructure
3. Promote reuse, recycling, and composting within waste diversion programming
4. Advance municipal food waste reduction programs
5. Construct a new waste-to-energy facility

Authority to Implement

The state has the authority to make legislative advances in waste reduction and diversion, supporting and mandating municipalities and private entities in making improvements to their current methods of waste disposal. Participants expressed a desire for the formation of regional waste authorities to reduce costs and implement innovations, while those already served by regional resource recovery authorities conveyed their importance. There was an understanding that significant coordination with the private sector haulers and developers will be vital to increase Connecticut's capacity to handle municipal solid waste and diverted organics.

Workforce Needs

There is a need to improve labor practices in the industry as there has been an overall high turnover since the pandemic while private haulers specifically have struggled with a low retention rate even while having a large applicant pool. Increased training opportunities at community colleges were cited as necessary to train younger employees to fill in workforce gaps left by older, experienced staff members who are retiring without sufficient replacements.



Sonya Carrizales facilitating

Barriers to Implementation

The need for significant public education and associated funding to improve the quality of current recycling and waste diversion efforts, while new methods of waste disposal will require accompanying campaigns to ensure smooth implementation. Funding and equitable siting are current obstacles to the development of new waste management infrastructure. The monetary and municipal staff time cost of voluntarily improving waste collection methods is significant without the state or regional support.

Equity Considerations

The greatest concern for low-income and environmental justice communities was the siting of waste management facilities. Historically, such infrastructure was built in communities with little resources to oppose their construction, bringing with them numerous negative externalities that actively diminish the quality of life for nearby residents.

Final Notes

The reduction of municipal solid waste through unit-based-pricing and organics diversion programs were seen as the most promising opportunities to significantly reduce emissions in the waste sector. However, large scale adoption of such improvements will require a paradigm shift of greater state leadership and funding support to effectively implement. Regional authorities to manage both municipal solid waste and

wastewater were viewed as cost effective means of taking up the burden of waste from the municipalities. Increased funding for public education programs was seen as essential in improving current waste management operations and as any part of a future change in collection methods.



The Future of Climate Planning in Connecticut

Currently, COGs are hard at work creating the next deliverable for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant: the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP). These plans are due by December 2025 and will contain long term strategies, policies, and actions that municipalities can take to reduce air pollution. COGs will share all notes and documentation from the event with consultants writing the CCAPs for the three MSAs, and they will work to identify appropriate areas to incorporate forum input and feedback into their respective plans. COGs and their consultants will continue to create region-specific engagement exercises (tabling, online surveys, public meetings, etc.) and meet with the public to hear their concerns and feedback around the topic so the public can further shape the final plan. COGs will continue to update and maintain project webpages where members of the public can interact with CPRG content. Additionally, the State is working on developing a statewide CCAP so that all residents and all municipalities are represented and can benefit from these critical plans and planning efforts. In the Fall of 2025, COGs will post the draft CCAPs for public comment, and they look forward to hearing from and working with as many members of the public as possible. For more information on the CPRG planning process, please visit the following websites:

[Hartford MSA \(CRCOG, RiverCOG, and NVCOG\)](#)

[Southwest CT \(MetroCOG, WestCOG, and NVCOG\)](#)

[New Haven County \(SCRCOG and NVCOG\)](#)

[State of Connecticut Resources](#)



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Appendix A: List of Participants

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Daniel Carter, Town of Bloomfield	Julianna McVeigh, Save the Sound	Emily Tully, CT DEEP
Alicia Dolce, BuildGreenCT	Marc Morgan, Casella	Ken Vallera, Bristol Resource Recovery Facility Operating Committee
Cecelia Drayton, City of Hartford	Mark Moriarty, City of New Britain	Victoria Vetre, Resilient Land & Water
Sachin Dubey, UConn	Austin Murray, Town of Manchester	Charles Vidich, WestCOG
Killian Duborg, Save the Sound	Kimberly Norman-Rosedam, Town of Guilford	Bryan Walsh, CTrides
Lily Engbith, CT OPM	Leslie O'Brien, Eversource	Hank Webster, CT DEEP
Elizabeth Esposito, Avangrid	Bernard Pelletier, PACE	Ben Winter, Town of Rocky Hill
Jonathan Ferrigno, Eversource	Danielle Petretta, City of Stamford	Joanna Wozniak-Brown, CT OPM
Camille Fontanella, CT DEEP		Barbara Yaeger, B. Yaeger, LLC
Bill Freeman		
Brenna Giannetti, CT DEEP		
Zachary Giron, CT DOT		
Alexa Gorlick, Town of Berlin		
Nicole Govert, CIRCA		
Claudia Gwardyak, Town of Bloomfield Library Board of Trustees		

Appendix B: Presentations





CRCOG



Lower Connecticut River Valley
Council of Governments



METROCOG
Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments

ctmetro.org



NHCOCG
— Northwest Hills —
Council of Governments



NVCOCG

SCR | South Central
COG | Regional Council
of Governments

