

Newsletter from FRCOG

August 2010



\$45 million Federal Broadband Award for Western Massachusetts

A ceremony on July 9th at Greenfield Community College gathered together U.S. Secretary of Commerce John Locke, Senator John Kerry, Governor Deval Patrick, and Congressmen Richard Neal and John Olver. The purpose of this ceremony was to announce the award of \$45.4 million in federal stimulus funding to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI). With a match of over \$25 million in state bond funds, the MBI will invest more than \$70 million to deploy over 1,100 miles of fiber-optic broadband cable throughout western and north-central Massachusetts. This infrastructure investment will form a robust “middle-mile” network that has been lacking in the region and hindered the deployment of broadband services into unserved areas. The MBI has been working with WesternMA Connect, FRCOG and four other regional planning agencies to prepare for the swift implementation of this project. Before the award was announced, MBI Deputy Director Jason Whittet gave a presentation of the proposed project to the Franklin Regional Planning Board at their June 24th meeting. Now with the award announcement, the MBI will conduct a series of public forums in September, including one in Greenfield, for residents and officials to hear more about their plans. Once the date has been confirmed, more information will be available about the forums. More information about WesternMA Connect is available at www.westernmaconnect.org and more information about the MBI is available at www.massbroadband.org.

Spring and Summer Highway Bids

Bidding for the Spring and Summer Highway Products and Services is complete and over \$4.8 million in contracts are all in place. Pricing for services and products for all participating towns can be found on the FRCOG website under Cooperative Purchasing and Publications. All participating towns may utilize the FRCOG procurement officer to assist with other highway bids as needed throughout the year. Keeping abreast of the requirements of Chapter 90, the Massachusetts bidding and prevailing wage laws, and administering all contracts is an important service of the FRCOG. If your town does not participate in the program, consider what aggregating your needs with 22 other towns might mean to your bottom line and how much time you could save. For more information, contact Chief Procurement Officer, Andrea Woods, at 413-774-3167 ext. 104 or bids@frcog.org.

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FRCOG

425 Main Street
Suite 20
Greenfield, MA
01301

413.774.3167 ph
413.774.3169 fax
www.frcog.org

Public Health Risk Communication Training

Glenn Johnson, Public Health Emergency Planner here at the COG, attended a training on Public Health Risk Communication, the art of talking to the public about emergencies in a way that answers questions and calms fears.

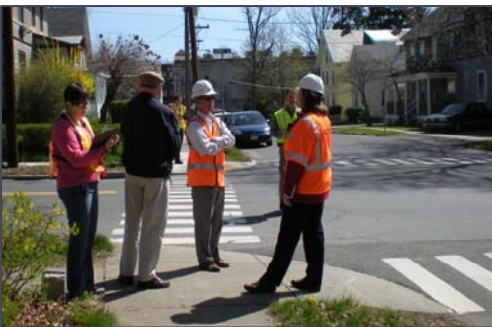
Here are some highlights for local officials:

- Prepare messages in advance – work as a team with other local officials.
- Pick the right spokesperson for the issue – the public will trust different people in a water contamination crisis than in an ice storm, for example.
- Limit the number of messages you want to pass on.
- Use examples, stories or analogies to explain the risk or the incident.
- Acknowledge the existing beliefs people may have about the crisis.
- Be sensitive to the non-verbal messages you are communicating
 - Think about your body language!

If you'd like to learn more about the public health risk communication training, contact Public Health Emergency Planner, Glenn Johnson, at 413-774-3167 ext. 114 or glennj@frcog.org.

Road Safety Audits

On April 15, 2010, FRCOG staff hosted the first Road Safety Audit (RSA) performed in Franklin County for three locations in Greenfield.



These locations were chosen to receive a RSA because they were previously identified as top hazardous intersections in the county. The RSA process brings together local public safety, planning and engineering personnel along with representatives from federal, state, and regional planning agencies to

examine the safety of particular locations by conducting an in-depth, on-site audit of the features and characteristics of the selected location(s). The team comes up with recommendations for improving the safety of those intersections. The RSA team consisted of representatives from the Greenfield Fire and Police Departments, as well as the Engineering Superintendent for Greenfield and representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), MassDOT, and the FRCOG. The RSA process will conclude with the Audit Team Leaders preparing a report of safety recommendations for the study areas. For more information, please contact Transportation Planning Engineer, Stacy Metzger, at 413-774-1194 ext. 109 or smetzger@frcog.org.



Our Core Values

*Service
Advocacy
Community
Quality
Professionalism*

FRCOG Council Representatives for FY 2011

Ashfield:	Dave Deherdt
Bernardston:	Stanley Garland
Buckland:	Stefan Racz
Charlemont:	Winston Healy
Colrain:	Mark Thibodeau
Conway:	Tom Spiro
Deerfield:	John Paciorek
Erving:	Thomas Sharp
Gill:	John Ward
Greenfield:	William Martin
Hawley:	Philip Keenan
Heath:	Thomas Lively
Leverett:	Gordon Fretwell
Leyden:	Michele Giarusso (VC)
Monroe:	Carla Davis-Little
Montague:	Patricia Allen (C)
New Salem:	Vacant
Northfield:	Kathleen Wright
Orange:	Rick Kwiatkowski
Rowe:	Paul McLatchy
Shelburne:	John Payne
Shutesbury:	F. Ellen McKay
Sunderland:	Tom Fydenkevez
Warwick:	Dawn Magi
Wendell:	Daniel Keller
Whately:	Lynn Sibley
FRPB Rep:	Sam Lovejoy (S)
Reg. Elected:	Ann Banash
Reg. Elected:	Bill Perlman

C = Chair, VC = Vice Chair, S = Secretary

Traffic Counting Season is Underway

The FRCOG conducts an annual traffic counting program for the region. Traffic count locations can be requested by Franklin County communities. The traffic count equipment operated by FRCOG is used primarily for the purpose of conducting state-requested counts required by our contract with MassDOT. However, fulfilling this obligation takes only a portion of the traffic counting season, making it possible for us to use the equipment to conduct traffic counts for FRCOG planning studies and fulfill requests from our member towns at no charge during the remainder of the season. From May until early November, Planning Department staff will be out on Franklin County roadways installing traffic counting equipment. For more information about the program, or to request a count, contact Transportation Planning Engineer, Stacy Metzger, at 413-774-1194 ext. 109 or smetzger@frcog.org.



Regional Economic Development Plan Completed

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Program is the regional economic development planning program serving the greater Franklin County area. Every five years a strategy plan is developed, with corresponding annual updates. In June, the 2010 CEDS Plan was approved by the CEDS Committee and Franklin Regional Planning Board, and forwarded to the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) for their consideration. The CEDS Plan maintains our region's eligibility to access certain grant funding from the federal Economic Development Administration, such as planning grants, construction/infrastructure grants, and revolving loan fund grants to support business development. In the coming weeks, copies of the 2010 CEDS Plan will be mailed to each Franklin County town. Additional hardcopies will be available or the document may be downloaded for free from the FRCOG website at <http://www.frcog.org/pubs/economic/2010CEDS.pdf>. For more information please contact Senior Economic Development Planner, Jessica Atwood at 413-774-1194 ext. 101 or jatwood@frcog.org.

FRCOG Programs

- Administration & Regional Services
- Community Coalition for Teens
- Cooperative Purchasing Program
- Economic Development & Planning
- Emergency Preparedness
- Franklin County Cooperative Inspections Program
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
- Land Use Planning & Zoning
- Natural Resources Planning
- Regional Health
- Town Accounting Program
- Transportation Planning

Harriman Dam Evacuation Planning: Town Recommendations

Building upon the previous evacuation planning exercise which examined the impacts of the potential failure of the Harriman Dam, the FRCOG has developed town-specific recommendations in the event of flooding caused by failure of the Harriman Dam. This analysis was conducted for each of the Towns located along the path of the flood and includes a general analysis of critical facilities located within Town boundaries. These recommendations are intended to be used as a starting point for the development of specific emergency plans in each Town. For more information about this project, please contact Transportation Planning Engineer, Stacy Metzger, at 413-774-1194 ext. 109 or smetzger@frcog.org.

Walking Maps

The Transportation Planning Staff is currently in the process of completing walking maps for each town in Franklin County. The maps are being produced in partnership with the *Walk Franklin County – for the Health of It!* project, which is a free program that allows you to measure and record your progress and receive rewards for reaching your walking goals. The maps will be available as a complete set of walking routes for all the towns or individually. They will be pocket-sized for easy transport and should be completed by October 2010. For more information you can go to <http://www.walkfranklincounty.org/>, or contact Transportation/Land Use Planner, Megan Rhodes, at 413-774-1194 ext. 110 or mrhodes@frcog.org.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Watch for a Public Records Storage Seminar in September. Date & Location TBD.
- Regionalization Conference, 9/2/10, @ Hogan Conference Center in Worcester. Register @ admin@frcog.org.
- IT Security Seminar, 9/23/10, 10:00 a.m. @ 278 Main Street.
- Ryan Clary, Senior GIS Specialist, and his wife Lauren and daughter Allison, welcomed a baby boy, Thomas Ryan Clary, in May.



Green Communities Technical Assistance Wrap Up

The FRCOG planning staff has been working with 16 towns in Franklin and Worcester Counties to provide technical assistance to those communities working towards becoming a Green Community. Since the inception of this program, the FRCOG has helped each community develop a local Action Plan as well as develop a Regional Action Plan which consists of a collaborative effort by several North Quabbin communities (as well as Shutesbury). These Action Plans are used by participating communities to help achieve Green Communities designation from the state, which will make them eligible to apply for Green Communities Grants. Three of these communities (Athol, Greenfield, and Montague) applied for, and received, designation as the Commonwealth's first Green Communities. Several more communities in the region are making significant progress and are aiming for second or third round designation. For more information about the Green Communities Technical Assistance Project, please contact Director of Planning and Development, Peggy Sloan, at 413-774-1194 ext. 105 or psloan@frcog.org or Transportation Planning Engineer, Stacy Metzger, at 413-774-1194 ext. 109 or smetzger@frcog.org.

Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Facility Improvement Project Completed

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments working in conjunction with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has completed the installation of information kiosks; the fabrication and installation of historic district signs; and vista pruning as part of the Mohawk Trail Facility Improvement Project. Two information kiosks were installed in Charlemont. One was installed at the Shunpike Rest Area in west Charlemont and the other was installed at the TransCanada Picnic Area in east Charlemont. The kiosks contain information about the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway, the various local points of interest, and water safety precautions while taking part in recreation activities on the Deerfield River. The project also included some minor site improvements at the Shunpike Rest Area to remove the existing information board and install a new picnic table under the covered pavilion in the location where the information board had previously been located.

The project also included installing historic district signs for the Shelburne Falls National Historic District (in Buckland and Shelburne) and for the Charlemont Village Historic District in Charlemont. In addition, a historic site marker sign was purchased and will be installed on Route 2 near the Long View Tower in Greenfield. Vista pruning was also completed at two locations in east Charlemont.

For further information, please contact Senior Transportation Planner, Elizabeth Giannini, at 413-774-1194 ext. 104 or giannini@frcog.org.

Cooperative Insurance Bid for Schools

FRCOG is actively working with the School Business Managers in Franklin County to aggregate needs and cooperatively contract for services. Recently, a bid for building and liability insurance for eight schools/districts resulted in a 23.8% savings over current costs – a savings of over \$118,000. Aggregating the schools' insurance needs made this a very desirable opportunity for insurance companies, and the savings are significant. This process was overseen by a licensed insurance consultant who negotiated on the schools' behalf and carefully reviewed coverage needs and costs. For more information contact Chief Procurement Officer, Andrea Woods, at 413-774-3167 ext. 104 or bids@frcog.org.



New Kiosk installed at the Shunpike Rest Area in West Charlemont



Shelburne Falls Historic District Sign in Buckland



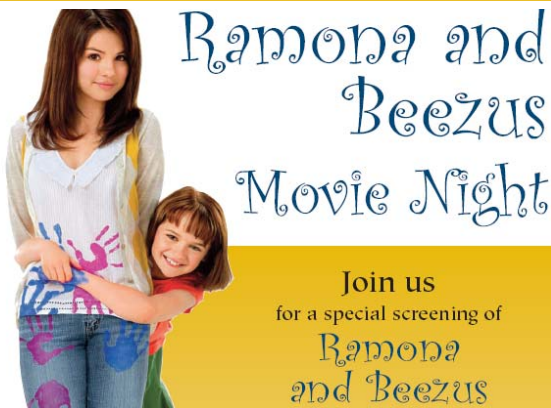
Charlemont Village Historic District Sign in Charlemont

FEMA Funding Opportunities for Communities with Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans

Summer storms, winter storms, spring nor'easters and other natural events can cause flood, wind, ice, and fire damage that can tax municipal resources and aggravate residents. Because Franklin County has a FEMA-approved pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation plan, FEMA funding for mitigation activities could be only an application away. Thanks to Congressman Olver, FRCOG has funding to develop and launch an online risk assessment tool in the next few weeks to help compile a list of potential hazard mitigation projects in the region to evaluate for funding under FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Program, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) Program. Potential projects may include culvert replacements, stormwater management projects, dry floodproofing of critical facilities or historic structures, acquisition of floodprone residential and commercial properties, underground relocation of overhead utilities, retrofits of critical facilities to protect against wind damage, and installation of dry hydrants. Select Board members, please watch for the online tool and submit recommendations from your community. Potential projects will be evaluated this autumn for possible inclusion in the 2011 grant application cycle. For more information contact Director of Regional Services, Bob Dean, at 413-774-3167 ext. 112 or bdean@frcog.org.



Ramona Fundraiser



On Saturday, July 24, the Community Coalition for Teens held a fundraising event at the Garden Cinemas in Greenfield. We held a special screening of "Ramona and Beezus," based on the books by Beverly Cleary, which follow the adventures and misadventures of 9-year old Ramona Quimby. The audience was encouraged to dress for the "red carpet" or as a character from the movie. The event was very successful, with an almost-full house and a great show of costumes. Funds raised will support CCT projects not funded by grants, including the annual Youth Conference.

Staff Updates

- **Dan Laroche** has resigned as Land Use Program Manager.
- The Planning Department has reorganized and **Kimberly Noake MacPhee** has been promoted to Land Use and Natural Resources Program Manager, **Pat Smith** has been promoted to Senior Land Use Planner, and **Jessica Atwood** has been promoted to Senior Economic Development Planner.
- **Jim Slowinski**, Electrical Inspector, has decided to go back to private work. **Tom McDonald** replaces him as our new Electrical Inspector.
- Interviews for the Regional Preparedness Program Manager are in process.
- **Ted Harvey** has joined the FRCOG as a Public Administration Intern. Ted is a Master's candidate at UMass' Center for Public Policy and Administration. He is working with the COG's administrative team on a variety of municipal service projects. He can be reached at Harvey@frcog.org or ext. 107.

UPCOMING EVENTS!!!

AUGUST 2010

- 8/12/10 @ 5:00 p.m. FRCOG Executive Committee, Greenfield Courthouse, lindad@frcog.org
- 8/31/10 @ 5:30 p.m. FRCOG Regional Issues Committee, Greenfield Courthouse, bdean@frcog.org

SEPTEMBER 2010

- 9/2/10 @ 9:00 a.m. Second Annual Regionalization Tool Kit Conference, Hogan Conference Center, admin@frcog.org
- 9/6/10 @ 4:30 p.m. MAPHCO Steering Committee, Montague Public Safety Complex, glennj@frcog.org
- 9/9/10 @ 5:00 p.m. FRCOG Executive Committee, Greenfield Courthouse, lindad@frcog.org
- 9/15/10 @ 6:00 p.m., CERT, Montague Public Safety Complex, nina@frcog.org
- 9/23/10 @ 7:00 p.m. FRPB Meeting, Planning Conference Room, 278 Main Street, psloan@frcog.org

OCTOBER 2010

- 10/4/10 @ 4:30 p.m. MAPHCO Steering Committee, Montague Public Safety Complex, glennj@frcog.org
- 10/5/10 @ 3:30 p.m. REPC Quarterly Meeting, FC Jail, 160 Elm Street, bdean@frcog.org
- 10/13/10 @ 6:00 p.m., MRC/CERT, Montague Public Safety Complex, nina@frcog.org
- 10/14/10 @ 5:00 p.m. FRCOG Executive Committee, Greenfield Courthouse lindad@frcog.org
- 10/28/10 @ 5:30 p.m. FRCOG Council Meeting, GCTV Studios, 3rd Floor, 393 Main Street, lindad@frcog.org
- 10/28/10 @ 7:00 p.m. FRPB Meeting, Planning Conference Room, 278 Main Street, psloan@frcog.org