

FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008

Greenfield Rotary Update

Construction of the long awaited Safety Improvements at the Greenfield Rotary is underway. The development of these improvements was the result of a collaborative process between the FRCOG and MassHighway District 2. Drawing on the experience of New York State Transportation Engineers, who had resolved similar issues at a Rotary in Latham, MassHighway and the FRCOG developed a design that primarily works within the confines of the existing 640 foot diameter Rotary. The bulk of the changes involve adding pavement markings and directional signage, but some minor widening is required to accommodate an additional lane on the Route 2 and Route 2A approaches. This design is expected to reduce driver confusion; slow circulating vehicle speeds, and reduce congestion, that in turn will reduce the number of crashes. Overall, the new layout should provide a more pleasant and safer driving experience, especially for those unfamiliar with the Rotary. Construction is progressing well and the project is expected to be complete by the middle of June. Educational materials are being finalized and will be released to the public closer to the completion date. For more information on this project contact Transportation Planning Engineer, Keith P. Wilson at 413-774-1194 ext. 109 or kwilson@frcog.org.

Petroleum Brownfields Grant

A grant from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will allow the FRCOG to fund environmental site assessments at properties that may be contaminated by gasoline or other petroleum products. Through a public procurement process, the environmental engineering firm of Tighe & Bond, Inc. was awarded the contract to

conduct these assessments. Potential sites could be abandoned or vacant gasoline stations or other locations where petroleum products may have been stored. Communities in Franklin County are invited to submit sites to the FRCOG Brownfield Steering Committee that they would like to have considered for assessment. For more information contact Director of Planning and Development, Peggy Sloan at 413-774-1194 ext. 105 or psloan@frcog.org.

Regional Broadband Survey

Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect (the Connects) are working to encourage broadband access throughout Western Massachusetts. Broadband access is essential for economic development, educational resources, healthcare information, communication with government, and so much more. The Connects ask that local broadband groups, town officials, and residents not only respond to the Regional Broadband Survey, but help us reach out to your neighbors as well! The Connects will use the data collected to better define the served and unserved areas of Western Massachusetts, and to better demonstrate the broadband market potential of this region. If your town will be issuing a newsletter or other mailing, we ask that you include a copy of this survey. If you would be willing to distribute the survey at your next Town Meeting or similar event, please let us know. Enclosed in this newsletter is a copy of this brief survey. The survey may also be completed online. The deadline for the survey is June 30, 2008. Go to www.pioneervalleyconnect.org for more information or to complete the survey online, or contact Economic Development Planner, Jessica Atwood at 413-774-1194 ext. 101 or jatwood@frcog.org.

Chapter 43D: Expedited Permitting Update

The Chapter 43D Program encourages towns to implement an expedited and streamlined local permit process for targeted economic development sites. A town may choose to designate one or more "Priority Development Sites" (PDS), which must meet specific criteria and have property owner approval, and then apply to the state for the formal approval of this designation. Participating towns, that have designated PDS, are eligible to apply for a one-time technical assistance grant of up to \$100,000. This grant can fund the hiring of expertise to develop a site-specific permit application package, as well as site-specific pre-development work. In order to be eligible for the grant the town must accept the provisions of Chapter 43D, which includes a maximum 180 day time frame for making permitting decisions for the PDS.

The FRCOG's role is to help towns explore whether the Chapter 43D Program is suitable for their community, and to help develop the PDS designation and grant application. To date, the towns of Deerfield, Montague, and Gill have all had Priority Development Sites designated and technical assistance grants awarded with technical assistance provided by the FRCOG. In Deerfield, the 16-acre former Oxford Food property was designated a PDS in September 2007. As part of the scope of work funded by the grant, the Town has hired the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts to facilitate a community visioning process as well as a site design & analysis. In Montague, the former Strathmore Mill was designated a PDS in November 2007. The firms of Fuss & O'Neill and Dietz & Co. Architects have been hired using grant funds to conduct an infrastructure analysis, update the 2005 feasibility study, and complete a parking and access plan. In Gill, the 10-acre former Mariamante Property was designated a PDS in March 2008. As part of the technical assistance grant awarded, the Town will have a Phase 2 archeological study conducted, as well as an infrastructure assessment and conceptual design work for the site.

The FRCOG is currently working with the towns of Bernardston, Greenfield and Orange in developing their individual PDS designation and technical assistance grant applications. If your community would like more information about the Chapter 43D Program or about how to streamline the permitting process in your community, please contact Director of Planning and Development, Peggy Sloan at 413-774-1194 ext. 105 or psloan@frcog.org. Information is also available from the Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office at www.mass.gov/mpro.

Take the Challenge: Community Coalition for Teens (CCT) Encourages You To Support the Seventh Annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Hundreds of thousands of teens nationwide are expected to participate in the seventh annual National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy on **May 7, 2008**. The purpose of the National Day is to focus the attention of teens on the importance of avoiding too-early pregnancy and parenthood.

On the National Day, teens nationwide are asked to go to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy's new teen website -- www.stayteen.org -- and take a short, scenario-based "quiz" that asks young people what they would do in a number of sexual situations. The quiz is available for youth to take anytime on or after the National Day until the end of May. The quiz is appropriate for teens 13 and up.

Organized by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, the National Day has widespread support. More than 230 national organizations and media outlets serve as official National Day partners by promoting the online quiz.

The message of the National Day is straightforward: *Sex has consequences*. The online quiz (available in English and Spanish) delivers this message directly to teens and challenges them to think carefully about what they might do "in the moment."

Please support our youth in hearing this message. Youth in our communities need to hear this message from the adults. This May, go online with a youth you know, and challenge other adults to go online

with a youth they know to take the quiz. The Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and Unplanned Pregnancy's website www.stayteen.org even provides a parent/adult discussion guide for adults in order to help them have a dialogue with the youth who are taking the quiz. If you don't have access to a computer, you can contact CCT's Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator, Joyce Fulmer at 987-544-6912 or jfulmer@frcog.org for free paper copies of the quiz and discussion guide.

Last year, more than 350,000 individuals took the online National Day Quiz. A survey of the some of the teens that participated in the 2006 National Day ct Joyce Fulmer, CCT's Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator (978-544-6912) for free paper copies of the quiz and discussion guide.

Last year, more than 350,000 individuals took the online National Day Quiz. A survey of the some of the teens that participated in the 2006 National Day indicates:

- 83% said the Quiz made them think about what they might do in such situations;
- 62% said they'd talk to their friends about the situations described in the Quiz;
- 63% said they'd learned something new from the Quiz about the consequences of sex; and
- 73% said the Quiz made the risks of sex and teen pregnancy seem more real to them.

Despite hitting the lowest level in 30 years, **31% of teenage girls get pregnant at least once before they reach age 20.** Many teens say they are concerned about pregnancy, but still think "it can't happen to me." But it does - to 750,000 girls every year. And the number one reason teen guys and girls give for not using protection is that they *weren't planning to have sex* and that it "just happened." Our online quiz is designed to help

teens come up with their own plans for avoiding pregnancy.

For more information, please contact Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator, Joyce Fulmer at 978-544-6912 or jfulmer@frcog.org.

Homeland Security

Through the Federal FY 06 Homeland Security Grant, 27 fire and ambulance entities in Franklin County are receiving pre-programmed UHF pagers. This \$211,700 grant will significantly enhance the ability of our local and regional dispatch centers to activate large numbers of predominantly volunteer public safety providers for emergency response. Providing these responders with pagers capable of utilizing Franklin County's recently completed UHF simulcast system will close the last link in the implementation of a fully integrated interoperable communication system. The FRCOG will provide coordination and implementation of the grant funds and procurement of the radio equipment.

Energy Saving Performance Contracting Update

At the time of our last newsletter the FRCOG had advertised a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from Energy Service Companies (ESCOs) to provide energy saving services to sixteen participating towns and two regional school districts in Franklin County. The three ESCOs that responded to the RFQ are Siemens, Trane and Johnson Control. Also, the FRCOG has hired a consultant, Beacon Integrated Solutions from Boston, to assist in the process to select the preferred ESCO and to develop "generic" contract documents for use by the participating towns and regional school districts in contracting for energy saving improvements to their facilities. We anticipate the ESCO selection process will be completed before the end of May. The development of contract documents will then proceed. When these documents are completed, the individual participating towns and school districts will be able to enter into direct contract negotiations with the ESCO for their specific scope-of-work and

energy saving guarantee agreements. For more information please contact Special Project Coordinator, William Gran at 413-774-3167 ext. 107 or wgran@frcog.org.

Bicycle Parking Racks Still Available to Towns in Franklin County

FREE BIKE RACKS. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments is distributing the remaining bicycle parking racks that were purchased as part of the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) funded program *Share the Road in the Connecticut River Valley*.

During the fall 2005 the FRCOG purchased and distributed bicycle parking racks to the towns in Franklin County. Twenty-two of the twenty-six towns in Franklin County requested and received bicycle parking racks for installation in their town. A total of 144 bicycle racks were purchased and distributed to Franklin County towns. The FRCOG has fourteen single inverted u-style bicycle racks available to interested towns. The racks will be distributed on a first come first serve basis. Please contact Senior Transportation Planner, Elizabeth Giannini at 413-774-1194 ext. 104 or giannini@frcog.org, if your town is interested in receiving bicycle racks.

Copies of *Enjoy the Ride in the Connecticut River Valley* Video are Available

Just in time for the 2008 Bike Commute Week festivities (May 10-18, 2008), copies of the *Enjoy the Ride in the Connecticut River Valley* Video are available to towns and organizations interested in airing the video.

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) worked with Paul Hake Productions and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to produce a four-part media campaign to promote bicycling as transportation in the Connecticut River Valley. The media campaign includes a thirty minute documentary film, a thirty second public

service announcement for television, a thirty second public service announcement for radio and versions of these video to be viewed on the internet. The videos are intended to encourage people to use their bicycle as a fun and rewarding means of transportation whenever they are able. The film and public service announcements feature local cyclists from Franklin, Hampshire and Hamden Counties who tell their stories of how, when, and why they choose to bicycle instead of driving. The thirty minute documentary also includes some educational information about bicycling including proper equipment, rules of the road and tips on how to handle the challenges that often face those who commute by bicycle.

Also, watch for information about an airing of the video sponsored by the FRCOG during the month of May. Individuals can also view the video and the PSA on www.enjoytheridebybike.com. For further information or if you are interested in a copy of the video, please contact Senior Transportation Planner, Elizabeth Giannini, at 413-774-1194 ext. 104 or giannini@frcog.org.

Traffic Count Program

In the 17 years since its traffic count program began, the FRCOG has collected traffic count data at nearly 700 different locations in the 26 Franklin County Communities. The data collected during that time is cataloged in a booklet showing the traffic volumes recorded at each location. The latest version of this booklet, covering data from 1991 through 2007 is now available for review and download from the Transportation Planning Publications section on the FRCOG Website at www.frcog.org.

The traffic count equipment operated by the FRCOG is used primarily for the purpose of conducting state-requested counts required by our contract with the Massachusetts Highway Department. 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 now through early November, Planning Department Staff will be out on Franklin County roadways installing traffic counting equipment. A typical count installation involves placing two rubber hoses 8ft apart across the roadway and connecting them to a traffic counting unit. Each installation is left in place for at least seven days. The traffic count equipment has the capability of collecting vehicle type and speed data, although contrary to popular myth, the data collected by this equipment is **not** used to ticket speeding drivers. For more information about the traffic count program, contact Transportation Planning Engineer, Keith P. Wilson at 413-774-1194 ext. 109 or kwilson@frcog.org.