FRCOG Council Updates: April 2018

Council Chair Update
Remaining 2018 Council Meetings: July 19, 2018 and October 18, 2018. Meetings are held in the Transit Center.

New Format for Council Updates
Staff have divided the Council Updates into 10 categories, which will hopefully make it easier for Council members to hone in on the topics and projects of greatest interest to them. The format will be used to also seamlessly create a quarterly newsletter for the organization that will contain highlights and be less comprehensive than this document. Your feedback on the new format is appreciated.

Executive Committee Update
Summary of Executive Committee Activities This Quarter
- Continued a road discontinuance hearing for the town of Hawley and worked with Hawley Select Board and Representative Mark to determine a path forward on this action.
- Reviewed staff advocacy letters regarding the Cannabis Control Commission legislation, the State Rail Plan, and the Governor’s housing legislation.
- Reviewed the FRCOG’s lease with the FRTA and discussed future costs and revenue sources.
- Authorized use of Woodard Road, a county road, to move a house to a new location.

Personnel Committee Update
Disaster Service Leave
The Personnel Committee reviewed a new policy for staff who are deployed after natural disasters or other like events. Currently two FRCOG staff are part of the Franklin County Incident Management Action Team. The policy outlines the processes used to request and approve of a deployment, the maximum number of days of deployment per fiscal year allowed by the FRCOG, and options for staff to use benefit time or unpaid leave. The policy will be reviewed for First Reading at the Council meeting.

Other Personnel Policy changes
The Committee will also present some relatively minor Personnel Policy changes to the Council for First Reading:
- Salary Adjustments – allowing the Executive Director to make market-driven salary increases.
- Longevity – reducing the longevity bonus to make it more financially sustainable and to match the FY19 budget.
- Personal Leave – clarifying language.

All recommended policy changes are included as separate attachments.
Finance Committee Update
The Finance Committee met once in the last quarter to address FY18 and 19 budget issues.

FY18 Budget Amendments
Due to unanticipated FMLAs and a difficult flu season, sick time actual expenses are slated to exceed budgeted expenses by approximately $6,000. To be conservative, the Committee increased the sick time line in the Pooled Budget by $15,000. Indirect revenue is expected to cover the increased expense.

FY19 Budget Amendments
Just before Pat retired, she realized we made a mistake in the Pooled Budget of the FY19 budget. The OPEB line was reduced by $33,292 to cover retiree health insurance costs (4 staff are retiring in FY18 and we anticipated all would request retiree health insurance in FY19). The intention was to note that the FRCOG would incur these expenses directly before investing money into our OPEB Trust. The mistake resulted in the budget being short by the $33,292. The Finance Committee fixed this error by increasing this budget. We anticipate that revenue will be available to make up for this increased expense — we expect the Partnership for Youth will secure more grants than we conservatively estimated during budget development and have shifted some administrative staff time to grants.

Transfer Unrestricted Fund Balance to Capital Reserve
Since moving into the Transit Center, the FRTA has had access to earmarks and other designated facility-specific funding sources. The FRTA has used this funding to make changes to the building, purchase equipment, build the new parking lot, etc. The final earmark designated to the Transit Center is dwindling and a large chunk of it will be used to make improvements around the Transit Center related to the Greenfield parking garage. Based on our understanding of current average spending on building improvements, repairs and capital upgrades, available existing funds will be gone in the next 3-4 years, assuming no major unanticipated repair. There is currently no expectation of funding for short and long-term capital projects once the final earmark is gone. Based on the lease agreement, the FRCOG and FRTA will then be required to share all building-related costs including all capital repairs and replacements. The Finance Committee will work on building a larger capital reserve into future budgets.

To begin that effort the Committee recommends that the Council approve a transfer from the Unrestricted Fund Balance to the Capital Reserve. As part of our negotiated indirect rate, we fully depreciated the capital costs related to our move. The depreciated funds total $144,988. That funding should be reserved for future capital improvements.

FERC Relicensing Reserve
In January the Council approved $15,000 from the Unrestricted Fund Balance for FERC relicensing advocacy and specifically for staff time, consulting services to help draft a River Management Plan framework, and legal review services, if needed, for the FERC process or the MassDEP 401 Water Quality Certificate. Because the relicensing process has slowed down, this work is not expected to commence in FY18 nor be far enough along to request a carry forward of the funding into FY19. We currently expect we will leave the funding fully unspent at the close of FY18 and will request it again at the July Council meeting for use in FY19.
Executive Director Update

Advocacy, Boards, Commissions and Committees

The *Communities that Care Coalition*, co-facilitated by the FRCOG’s Partnership for Youth and Community Action, has been called upon many times by the Promote Prevent Commission to help improve the State’s prevention systems – the commission’s [final report to the legislature](#) was released earlier this month and includes a full-page write-up of the Franklin County / North Quabbin efforts as a model for what they would like to see in the state, and the commission has proposed a statewide Communities That Care system for Massachusetts. In addition the Coalition has been in close contact with the Cannabis Control Commission and has been actively involved in advocating for sound marijuana regulations that protect youth health.

Phoebe Walker continued to serve as the Governor’s appointee to the *Special Commission on Local and Regional Health* representing small towns in health districts. During this quarter the Commission endorsed recommended standards for public health departments in Massachusetts, and has begun the work on a list of workforce credential requirements. The Commission intends to have public meetings on its initial findings in June.

Bob Dean, a member of the *Massachusetts Municipal Association Policy Committee on Municipal and Regional Administration*, met with Massachusetts Senate President, Harriette Chandler, to offer feedback on housing and zoning issues and the impact of various bills currently under consideration by the Legislature.

Governor Baker created the *Workforce Skills Cabinet* to better align workforce development, economic development, and education systems to meet the needs of regional economies. Linda Dunlavy and Jessica Atwood participated in the Pioneer Valley regional Cabinet as part of this initiative. Through a nearly year-long planning process, a new Pioneer Valley Regional Labor Market Blueprint was submitted to the State in March. The seven regional Blueprints will be incorporated into statewide efforts. Find the Blueprint for the Pioneer Valley at [www.fhreb.org](http://www.fhreb.org).
FRCOG staff and FRPB continued to participate in the **FERC relicensing** process for the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage and Bear Swamp Hydroelectric Facilities. To ensure that the relicensing protects the river and its habitat and adjacent land, staff will ask the Council for dedicated funding for this work. See Finance Committee entry.

**Staff submitted testimony** on the Governor’s Housing legislation, the State Rail Plan and submitted questions to the Cannabis Control Commission in advance of the Commission’s release of its Regulations.

**Adult Use Recreational Marijuana**
The final regulations governing commercial marijuana were issued by the Cannabis Control Commission on March 23, 2018. FRCOG staff prepared written comments on the proposed Regulations for Adult Use Recreational Marijuana and attended a public hearing on February 7, 2018 to provide testimony. Planning staff conducted a presentation on Adult Use Recreational Marijuana at the March 22, 2018 Franklin Regional Planning Board meeting and are currently assisting six communities (Conway, Buckland, Colrain, Charlemont, Erving, Whately) to conduct Public Education and/or prepare zoning bylaw changes. FRCOG also has template Board of Health regulations for adult use cannabis, and can assist towns in implementing them. More info: Peggy Sloan at PSloan@frcog.org or ext. 133 or Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org or ext. 102.

**Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program**
FRCOG staff is providing technical assistance to several towns as part of this new state initiative to help cities and towns complete vulnerability assessments and resiliency planning to address the impacts of a changing climate. To date, FRCOG has facilitated workshops in Buckland, Colrain and Montague. During these workshops, participants identified vulnerabilities and risks from extreme weather and climate related hazards and developed prioritized actions for the community. A joint workshop is planned for Ashfield and Conway since these communities have been working for several years on watershed-scale projects related to the South River.

Communities who complete the MVP program become certified as an MVP community and are eligible for follow-up grant funding and other opportunities. We anticipate that a second grant round will be available soon to encourage more towns to complete this planning exercise. More info: Kimberly Noake MacPhee at kmacphee@frcog.org or ext. 130.

Through the MVP program, towns are preparing for more extreme weather events, reflecting on the impacts of past storms such as Tropical Storm Irene to help gauge future impacts.
Public Trees and Climate Resilience in Deerfield
FRCOG planning staff collaborated with the Town of Deerfield and the Conway School of Landscape Design on a public trees project. What started out primarily as a tree inventory project, conducted by the FRCOG and funded by a grant from DCR, has broadened to include a town-wide ecological assessment, conducted by a student team from the Conway School, with trees and forests as a focal point. An inventory of town-owned trees in the Village of South Deerfield and in Old Deerfield was conducted by the FRCOG in fall of 2017, and findings from that inventory are helping to determine recommendations being developed as part of a tree planting and maintenance plan. Findings and recommendations from the ecological assessment are being included in a report by Conway School students, slated to be released in May 2018. A volunteer-based tree planting event is planned for May or June. More info: Mary Chicoine at maryc@frcog.org or ext. 131.

Green Communities
FRCOG staff continue to provide technical assistance through DOER’s Municipal Energy Technical Assistance (META) grant to assist towns to either become a Green Community, or if already designated, to meet annual reporting requirements, apply for additional grants, and procure grant-funded projects. Most recently, staff assisted the towns of Buckland, Gill, and Warwick with applying for 2018 Green Communities Competitive Grants. Staff supported the Town of Hawley with procurement for projects funded through their Green Communities Designation Grant. FRCOG staff also successfully applied for a META grant on behalf of Charlemont, Colrain, Heath, and Shelburne, to fund energy audits of municipal buildings in each town. Vendors were selected in March to conduct audits, which will provide recommendations on energy efficiency improvements to reduce energy use. More info: Alyssa Larose at alarose@frcog.org or ext. 127.

Economic Development

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Related DLTA Projects
The third annual update to the 2015 CEDS Plan will be released for public comment on May 11. The CEDS Plan and updates are created in accordance with federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) guidelines, which maintain the region’s eligibility for select funding programs. A proposal being developed for EDA consideration is to construct and operate LaunchSpace, Inc., a makerspace and training facility in the Orange Innovation Center. Future EDA project proposals may include the redevelopment of the former IP Millers Falls Paper Mill in Erving and a business technical assistance project by the FCCDC.
To help our regional economy’s resilience in the event of economic disruptions, the 2015 CEDS Plan recommends businesses practice emergency preparedness. Staff conducted a presentation after the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce Breakfast on February 23 on business and organizational preparedness. The presentation was filmed by GCTV for broadcast. Staff will work with the FCCDC to host a full workshop on the topic in the near future.

Economic development projects in Orange and Whately will be conducted under DLTA. For Orange, efforts will target increasing the reuse of vacant commercial space in the Downtown. For Whately, a community-wide visioning session focused on economic development will be conducted. More info: Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org or ext. 123.

**Industrial Park Inventory**
Staff updated the industrial park inventory for Franklin County. This research and mapping project evaluated development trends and determined the amount of developable industrial land remaining. In recent years, there has been considerable market activity. Approximately one-third of all parcels in the industrial parks have been sold since 2010, including simple transfers of ownership as well as businesses moving into existing buildings. Only three parcels had new building construction. While there was limited new development, the percent of new businesses moving into the parks was high. Of the parcels that are undeveloped and ready for development, six are in private ownership and seven are owned by the industrial park or municipality. These seven publicly owned parcels total 33.8 acres, and range in size from 2 to 8 acres. As demonstrated by real estate activity, there is market interest for planned industrial park space in Franklin County. The supply of existing, developable industrial park land will be exhausted within the next few years. It is important that there is a variety of spaces available to meet future demand for manufacturing, research & development, and distribution. In addition to strategies such as reusing vacant mills, increasing the amount of planned industrial land in the region is needed. More info: Jessica Atwood at jatwood@frcog.org or ext. 123.

**Monroe Ramage Paper Mill Clean-up and Demolition**
With the support of FRCOG staff, the Town of Monroe successfully completed the clean-up of hazardous materials and demolition of the wood structure of the former Ramage Paper Mill. This deteriorating structure was located across from the launch point for whitewater rafting the “dryway” portion of the Deerfield River. Staff are continuing to support the Town as they proceed with the next phase of the project, to create an overlook park funded by the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. An IFB was recently issued to construct the overlook park. More info: Peggy Sloan at PSloan@frcog.org or ext. 133.
Opportunity Zone Application Assistance
As part of the recent federal tax plan, a new program was established to create “Opportunity Zones” in economically distressed areas. This program is designed to encourage investment in low income areas by allowing private investors to defer federal capital gains tax obligations over time by investing in targeted Opportunity Zones. These low income areas are determined when a Census Tract meets specific poverty and income thresholds. The Baker-Polito Administration will choose the Census Tracts to be designated as Opportunity Zones and promised that 10% of the MA designations would be rural Census Tracts (defined as less than 10,000 residents in a community). Eligible Census Tracts in Franklin County included tracts in Greenfield, Montague, Orange, and the combined tracts that include Erving, Wendell and Warwick, and Charlemont, Colrain, Hawley, Heath, Monroe and Rowe. FRCOG staff assisted all interested municipalities with the application to be considered for designation.

Regional Brownfields Program
Under its current EPA grant, the FRCOG can conduct environmental site assessment activities on properties potentially impacted by hazardous substances or petroleum products. In this past quarter, assessment activities continued for a site on Caldwell Road in Northfield. Presently, all grant resources have been obligated, so no additional sites can be assessed under this current grant. Staff anticipate hearing the outcome of their latest EPA brownfields grant application later this quarter. If a community has a site that may be appropriate for the Brownfields Program, they should contact staff to have it be considered for the program’s waiting list. More info: Peggy Sloan at PSloan@frcog.org or ext. 133.

Animal Control Collaboration
Staff will be working with a number of towns to explore cross-jurisdictional sharing of the Animal Control Officer role. We will be exploring the state requirements, different models for sharing, and cost-sharing agreement options. Towns currently involved in the process are Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Heath, Leverett, Monroe, Rowe and Shelburne. Please let us know if you are interested in joining the conversation. More info: Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org or ext. 102.

Collective Purchasing Program
We are pleased to add the Town of Monroe to our Collective Bid Program for Highway Products and Services and the Mahar and Pioneer Valley Regional School Districts and the Town of Whately to our Collective Bid Program for Fuels for the upcoming Fiscal Year. Those bids are well underway and will be bidding in early and mid-May respectively. All the open bids can be reviewed and downloaded at https://frcog.org/bids. The Municipal Small Bridge Program has resulted in towns utilizing FRCOG Purchasing for their bridge construction bid needs. We recently opened bridge bids for Wendell and Charlemont and expect a couple more before the end of the season. Happily, we got a jump on the season and those two bids came in close to budget.

Training by the Massachusetts Operational Services Division on using the CommBUYS system is being scheduled in early June at Greenfield Community College. Any Construction bids over $10,000 or Supplies and Services over $50,000 must be posted in this online publication. More info: Andrea Woods at bids@frcog.org or ext. 104.
Electricity Aggregation
The FRCOG continued working to help organize a multi-town effort to aggregate the purchase of residential and commercial electricity. The goal of this project is for towns to collectively control the electricity supply purchase process and to take advantage of economies of scale to realize better pricing and/or encourage the development of renewable energy resources across New England.

Interested town select boards were asked to appoint a representative to a Selection Committee that drafted an RFP that was issued by the FRCOG to choose one electricity aggregation consultant to work on behalf of all participating towns. Proposals were opened on April 9th and the Selection Committee will review proposals and interview candidates as appropriate.

Once the consultant is selected, the FRCOG will cease its involvement in this project and the chosen consultant will guide towns the rest of the way through the aggregation planning and electricity supply bidding process. More info: Bob Dean at bdean@frcog.org or ext. 108.

Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness

Mohawk Area Public Health Coalition’s Elected Officials Preparedness Series
MAPHCO sponsored a four-part training series that concluded in March. Selectboard members and town administrators from seven towns learned risk communications, administrative preparedness, and how to handle spontaneous volunteers. They then put those skills to a test by participating in a tabletop exercise. Recommendations that came from the exercise include the FRCOG staff creating a standardized emergency operations center “playbook” and a set of standard tracking forms for towns to use, towns familiarizing themselves with statewide contracts for vendors they might need during an emergency response, towns instituting standby contracts with vendors so they can be quickly engaged during an emergency, and town identifying at least two individuals to act as volunteer coordinators.

Emerging Threats for First Responders Training
First Responders are facing threats from a growing number of fronts that weren’t even in the realm of possibility just a few years ago, including: improvised explosives and military-grade weapons; clandestine labs yielding highly caustic and flammable substances; highly concentrated street drugs that may be weaponized; terrorism, domestic and foreign, and much more.
On March 15, 2018, the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) sponsored the Emerging Threats to First Responders Conference, bringing together multiple response discipline leaders for a fast-paced, multimedia workshop designed to consider these hazards and recommended creative multidisciplinary solutions. Sessions were case-study based and offered perspectives of preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. Demonstrations of a wide variety of cutting edge technology resources were also conducted.

Some of the equipment presented included WRHSAC’s purchased resources such as the Communications Pod, a portable, interoperable, command center and the WMLEC Rapid Communications Trailer. Both of these assets can serve as temporary solutions to interoperable communication gaps. The equipment can work in tandem or independently. They are regional resources and are available for planned events and emergency incidents. Learn how to access the equipment in the WRHSAC Resource Guide at [www.wrhsac.org](http://www.wrhsac.org).

The Bomb Detect Robot and the WRHSAC Comm Pod are regional resources available for planned events and emergency incidents.

**Passenger Rail MCI Training**

With the advent of increased passenger rail traffic through the Pioneer Valley, Amtrak Police identified a need for passenger rail MCI training in the region. Recognizing the quality and professionalism of trainings provided by WRHSAC/FRCOG, Amtrak Police have partnered with us to conduct a series of MCI trainings throughout May 2018 at Union Station in Springfield MA.

Classroom and hands-on field training will be combined to provide participants with skills to respond to a passenger rail mass casualty incident. Students will become familiar with safety and mechanical aspects of Amtrak passenger rail cars, learn Amtrak response protocols, and practice locating victims and victim extraction. Tactical law enforcement teams will also learn car entry and search techniques related to possible hostage or terrorist incidents. Up to 450 personnel from local, state and federal Fire, EMS and Police Departments will participate in the training.
Open Space and Recreation Plan Updates
A current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) that has been approved by the MA Division of Conservation Services (DCS) establishes a town’s eligibility for state grants through DCS, such as Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grants and Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grants, as well as for other potential grant sources. OSRPs include a 7-year action plan that identifies priorities for open space protection and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities, and provides current data and up-to-date maps to assist in local planning efforts. FRCOG staff is currently working with local committees in Ashfield, Gill, Erving, and Leverett to update their existing OSRPs.

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Project
The MTWP is a community-driven project of 21 towns in Western Franklin and Northern Berkshire Counties begun in 2013 to support forest conservation, a recommendation of the 2013 Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. Community input expanded project goals to include natural resource based economic development and improved financial sustainability of participating towns. MTWP’s Advisory Committee participates in all aspects of the project. The region is unique because of the convergence of several types of forests, resulting in astounding diversity for an area of this size. However, it is also an economically distressed area experiencing population loss, low wages and strained municipal budgets.

State legislation has been filed to formally establish the MTWP, which will enable the 21-town region to pursue State and Federal funds to implement MTWP priorities and goals. The legislation has been reported out of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. If adopted, federal legislation will also be needed to allow the U.S. Forest Service to provide financial and technical resources to the region. The MTWP’s guiding principle is to support forest conservation and natural resource based economic development that sustains the region’s ecosystems while improving the financial viability of towns. More info: Peggy Sloan at psloan@frcog.org or ext. 133.
Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition
The Communities That Care coalition continues to work with school, town and agency partners to implement effective strategies for reducing youth substance use and improving youth health. All of the public middle schools in Franklin County are working on implementing the LifeSkills substance use prevention curriculum with support from CTC, and CTC hosted a LifeSkills trainings at the Transit Center in early March.

In February students around the region completed the 2018 Teen Health Survey, coordinated by the Coalition and its Regional School Health Task Force. The most recent Teen Health Survey data show that youth substance use rates are at their lowest levels ever measured for Franklin County (see charts). In spite of this success, CTC is preparing for several of our funding sources to come to an end at the end of this fiscal year, bringing the Coalition’s budget down from $230,000 to $100,000 per year on the substance use prevention side, and from $266,000 to $50,000 on the nutrition and physical activity promotion side, unless we find additional and new funding sources. Staff have recently submitted applications for several federal grants in an effort to replace this funding and support the work in promoting youth health and well-being locally.

Community Health Improvement Plan & School Nutrition Technical Assistance
The FRCOG’s Regional Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), a coalition whose work improves health in the region, set the following priority strategies for 2018:

- Tobacco Cessation
- School Nutrition Initiatives
- Community Health Workers
- Increased Public Transportation
- Breastfeeding support in North Quabbin

The CHIP received its first grant toward a 2018 CHIP Priority from the County Health Rankings Team at Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The funding provides for a consultant to meet with school food service directors in all 10 public school districts in Franklin County and the North Quabbin to observe breakfast and/or lunch preparation and service in one school per district. The consultant has completed site visits and is preparing a report for each district commending best practices and suggesting implementable improvements and longer-term goals for local food procurement, encouraging students to make healthier choices, and school nutrition policies. She will also recommend regional efforts such as content for regional trainings for food service directors and needs for regional technical assistance. The consultant will present her report at the Mass in Motion Steering Committee meeting on May 17, 2018 at 11:00. CHIP meetings: https://frcog.org/programs-services/regionalization-special-projects/chip/. More info: Rachel Stoler at rstoler@frcog.org or ext. 121.
Cooperative Public Health Service
On April 24 from 6-9 PM, the FRCOG’s health district is offering local food service establishments a free training on adding gluten-free options to their menus. Participants will learn how to stock and store essential gluten-free ingredients, get a refresher on food safety, including avoiding cross contamination of gluten and gluten-free ingredients, and get recipes for quick breakfast pastries, satisfying soups and salads, sensational main courses and much more! RSVP at registrations@frcog.org.

Workplace Wellness
Through a small award from the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust, FRCOG staff have established a Workplace Wellness Committee and have been organizing wellness activities for the past several years. Activities include periodic staff walks, food preparation demonstrations, staff potlucks, skin health assessments, ergonomics seminars, webinars on walking meetings, healthy break room snacks, and much more. Some recent activities includes a lunch presentation on Elder Caregiving about the basics of caring for aging parents, accessing resources regionally and within Massachusetts, negotiating the sticky "sandwich generation" layers, and keeping ourselves healthy along the way.

Training & Education

Abandoned Properties Tool Kit for Towns
Vacant and abandoned buildings can be a financial drain on towns, can pose health and safety issues for residents and first responders and can decrease the value of nearby properties. FRCOG Planning staff, partnering with our Cooperative Public Health Service, developed a toolkit to help towns address vacant and abandoned buildings, focused on housing.

The toolkit includes: 1) How to form a task force and who should serve on it, 2) How to inventory and prioritize vacant and abandoned properties and 3) how to pursue various paths to clean up these properties. Download the toolkit at goo.gl/yyvsbb. More info: Mary Chicoine at maryc@frcog.org or ext. 131 or Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org or ext. 102.

Local Officials Workshops
Local official workshops in 2017 included topics as diverse as the Census, emergency preparedness administrative skills, and marijuana. We kicked off 2018 with the Abandoned Properties workshop, which was well attended and full of practical help for communities. Staff are now collecting suggestions for capacity-building workshops for the next fiscal year. Please send any ideas to Phoebe Walker at walker@frcog.org.
Annual Bike Breakfast
May is National Bike Month, and the FRCOG will be hosting its Annual Bike Breakfast on Tuesday May 15th from 7:30 am to 10:00 a.m. at the John W. Olver Transit Center. This popular event provides an opportunity for cyclists to come together to discuss future projects and to enjoy the comradery of fellow riders. The Bike Breakfast is a great opportunity to kick off the 2018 bicycling season and to pick up a new copy of the Franklin County Bikeway map. There will be demonstrations, give aways and, of course, breakfast! Please mark your calendars and join us. More info: Beth Giannini at Giannini@frcog.org or ext. 125.

Complete Streets
FRCOG staff are in the process of working with Buckland, Montague, and Whately to develop Complete Streets Prioritization Plans that will outline the top projects those communities would like to see implemented over the next 5 years. Complete Streets are those that are designed for all modes of transportation, not just vehicles, and typically include improvements that make biking and walking safer and more enjoyable. A prioritization plan completed for Sunderland last year has resulted in an award of construction funding to implement the first wave of projects. This work will be conducted during the upcoming construction season. The FRCOG is available to answer questions about the program, assist with securing MassDOT funding to participate in the program, and can work with your town to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. More info: Beth Giannini at giannini@frcog.org or ext. 125.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations
FRCOG staff has completed a study on the electric vehicle charging infrastructure located in and around Franklin County, and has surveyed use and demand for the stations. Final results show that the charging stations in our area receive regular use and there is demand for additional stations, particularly along Route 2. More info: Megan Rhodes at mrhodes@frcog.org or ext. 132.

Traffic Counting
Traffic counting season is upon us. We will begin putting out automated counters by the end of April. These machines can record volume, vehicle type and speed. Traffic counts can be conducted in your town free of charge, based on a first-come, first-served basis. We also have the capability of conducting bicycle counts in certain conditions. Please let us know if you’d like more information or would like to request a count. More info: Laurie ScARBrough at lscarbrough@frcog.org or ext. 139.
Staff Changes
Pat Auchard retired on March 30 after 18.5 years with the FRCOG as the Director of Finance.

Claire McGinnis is our new Director of Finance. Claire is a lifelong Franklin County resident and comes to us from the Town of Amherst where she served as the Co-Director of Finance.

David Roberts is our new Building Inspector and will overlap with Jim Cerone until Jim’s retirement on June 30.

A Hiring Committee has just conducted second interviews for a new Regional Health Agent. Glen Ayers will be retiring on June 30 and it is hoped that there can be a period of overlap between Glen and a new Health Agent.

We will also be hiring a Planner to replace Mary Chicoine, Senior Land Use and Natural Resources Planner, who will be retiring on June 30.

The FRCOG thanks Pat, Jim, Glen and Mary for their service to the FRCOG and the communities of Franklin County.