FRCOG BY THE NUMBERS

- **48** full & part-time STAFF
- **$7.1 million** estimated BUDGET
- **21** YEARS in service
- **12** PROGRAMS offering services
- **103** GRANTS in 2018
- **40** State & Regional Boards & Committees FRCOG Staff sit on
- **26** MEMBER municipalities
- **$6.8 MILLION** Highway Products & Services Procured
- **1** FRCOG offices
  - John W. Olver Center
  - a net zero energy building

ON THE COVER:
Tubers enjoy the Deerfield River as seen from the Bardwell’s Ferry Bridge between Conway and Shelburne.

FRCOG PROGRAMS:
- Administration and Special Projects
- Collective Purchasing
- Cooperative Public Health Service
- Economic Development
- Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program
- Homeland Security
- Land Use Planning
- Natural Resources Planning
- Partnership for Youth
- Regional Preparedness
- Town Accounting
- Transportation Planning

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

2018 ANNUAL REPORT CONTENTS

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BROWNFIELDS
The Regional Brownfields Program supports assessment and clean-up of potentially contaminated sites for the purpose of returning them to productive use. The latest EPA grant awarded to the FRCOG funded over $38,000 of environmental site assessment work on 6 sites in 6 towns in 2018. These sites included vacant industrial and commercial properties acquired by Towns, and privately owned parcels with a history of dumped debris and/or petroleum products on the site. The assessment of these sites used the balance of the Brownfields grant funds, and closed out the EPA grant. Because more sites needing assessment have been identified, staff will submit an application for another EPA hazardous assessment grant in the coming year. Staff also provided technical assistance to Towns to help them apply for further assessment or clean-up grants for Town-owned properties acquired through tax title proceedings.

ERVING INTERNATIONAL PAPER MILL REUSE
The FRCOG is working with the Town of Erving to support the clean-up and reuse of the former International Paper Mill Facility. This work includes assisting with applications to fund brownfields remediation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA) WORK
The FRCOG conducts planning activities that foster economic development and maintain the region’s eligibility for select federal funding programs. With funding from an EDA grant, and with guidance from the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee, FRCOG staff completed the 2018 CEDS Annual Report. The Report provides an update on the regional economy and outlines strategies to promote job growth and spur investment. Specific tasks included providing technical assistance to local communities on redevelopment strategies, participating in the Pioneer Valley Workforce Skills Cabinet, assisting mill redevelopment efforts, tracking major development projects, and collaborating with other regions to leverage opportunities. In addition, staff helped coordinate the 2018 Western Mass Developers Conference and worked with businesses interested in locating in the region.

While the labor force has remained fairly stable over the last decade, employment has continued to rise.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MILL SITE REDEVELOPMENT IN MONROE

After the FRCOG worked with the Town of Monroe to clean-up and demolish the wooden portion of the former Ramage Paper Mill, work began on the next step of the project to construct a park on the site. Staff assisted the Town with procuring a contractor, reviewing designs, and creating signage for an overlook park. With funds from the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), construction of the park was nearly complete by the end of 2018.

View of the site after the wooden mill structure was cleaned up of hazardous materials and demolished, and the overlook park’s retaining wall constructed.

SCENIC BYWAYS LAND PROTECTION

Staff worked with the Franklin Land Trust, MassDOT, the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife to permanently protect important scenic, natural and agricultural landscapes along the scenic byways in Franklin County. In 2018, an additional 255 acres of farmland were permanently protected on the Connecticut River Scenic Byway in Montague, the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway in Shelburne and Erving, and the Route 112 Scenic Byway in Ashfield. This year represented the conclusion of the 10-year project, with a total of 1,573 acres permanently protected from future development.

PASSENGER RAIL

Strong advocacy by FRCOG, PVPC and other stakeholders led to a June 2018 announcement by Governor Baker and MassDOT of an expanded passenger rail pilot project. Currently, Amtrak operates one round trip per day from Greenfield. The pilot project, expected to launch in the summer of 2019, will expand service to 3 round trips per day on weekdays, and two round trips per day on weekends and holidays. The new schedule allows round-trip travel between Greenfield and New York City in a single day. FRCOG staff are currently assessing existing rail promotion activities, and have begun planning a marketing campaign that will encourage local residents and visitors to travel by rail.
OPPORTUNITY ZONES

Opportunity Zones are a new federal program that emerged from the U.S. Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017. The program’s goal is to encourage private investment in economically distressed areas. The Opportunity Zone program allows individuals to defer taxable income from capital gains by investing the gains into an Opportunity Fund that finances projects or businesses located in designated census tracts. The FRCOG notified eligible communities of this program, and led the creation of applications to the State for the designation. Seven Franklin County census tracts were designated by the U.S. Treasury Department as Opportunity Zones in 2018.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

MOHAWK AREA PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION (MAPHCO)

Staff worked with local Boards of Health and other first responders to plan, train, and drill for large-scale emergencies, such as natural disasters and pandemics. In 2018, MAPHCO concluded a three-part preparedness training series for local officials with a tabletop exercise attended by local members of Selectboards, Fire Departments, Boards of Health, Town Administrators, Clerks, and Emergency Management Directors. Staff also compiled comprehensive inventories of supplies and equipment at each of the County’s regional Emergency Dispensing Sites (EDS). To test their readiness to dispense emergency, life-saving medications to all populations in Franklin County, the nine, all-volunteer EDS teams participated in a total of 27 drills.

Franklin County officials participate in a MAPHCO-sponsored tabletop exercise developed by FRCOG staff, February 2018
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH & MEDICAL COORDINATING COALITION (HMCC)

The HMCC membership includes the Health Departments/Boards of Health from 98 western MA communities, 9 acute care hospitals, 8 western MA Community Health Centers, 89 long-term care facilities, 44 Emergency Medical Services providers, and several home health care providers and dialysis centers. The FRCOG’s HMCC staff continued to provide 24/7 emergency support for all of the Coalition’s health and medical stakeholders in western Massachusetts, including providing situational updates during severe weather. In a 2018 western MA risk assessment, Coalition members offered feedback on how the HMCC could best serve the region. Based on that feedback and specific requests for more resources to be accessible remotely, staff created a stand-alone website for the western MA HMCC. This website highlights a wide variety of planning and response resources for members, as well as provides user forums and a situational awareness module that addresses emergent situations in the region. The HMCC website is found at www.region1hmcc.org.

FRANKLIN COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (FCECS)

At the request of member towns in the early 2000s, the FRCOG became owner of the Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS). The FCECS is a 13-tower, 450 MHz radio communications network that provides emergency communication services to first responders in Franklin County towns, and was built with Homeland Security grant funds. The FCECS infrastructure is now 12 years old and well past its expected life of 7-10 years. Replacement parts are no longer manufactured or vendor-supported, and used parts are increasingly unavailable. The focus of the FCECS Oversight Committee and the FRCOG efforts in 2018 was to maintain the existing system while also determining how to replace the system, either by rebuilding the 450 MHz network or migrating to the Commonwealth’s 800 MHz emergency communication system. Work included assessing the ability and cost of keeping the system operational, and working with the system’s Oversight Committee and the FRCOG Finance Committee to plan for needed expenditures. The Oversight Committee and staff also considered the benefits and obstacles of the system replacement options and met with state and federal officials and legislators to assess the best path forward.

A radio tower that is part of the Franklin County Emergency Communication System.
In 2018, the REPC underwent a strategic planning process to map out its future as an organization and identify next steps. A subcommittee was formed to review all current regional plans and identify ways to ease their implementation through standardized checklists and forms. In addition, two training sessions were held during the year. The first program explored how companies that store chemicals and toxins can assess their vulnerabilities and prevent weather related spills. The second program looked at the intersection of public health and emergency management, and investigated how each sector could better plan, respond, and recover from incidents through an improved understanding of each other’s roles and capacities. Staff also completed an analysis of critical infrastructure and culverts at risk for potential flood damage. Participating Towns have been provided with a tool that helps determine when certain locations should be monitored based on anticipated rainfall.

The MACC made progress in 2018 toward the goal of becoming a full operation center for shared response to major emergencies that cross multiple towns. Members of the FRCOG and the Northwest MA Incident Management Team (NWMIMT) met with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency to identify best practices and coordination strategies for assisting Franklin County towns with response and recovery from incidents. In addition, staff were able to address a major issue by identifying a comprehensive list of large equipment available throughout the County and capable of being shared. Thanks to significant input by the region’s highway supers, there is now a complete list of equipment, including necessary FEMA codes. This will make resource coordination more efficient and effective, and will make FEMA reimbursement paperwork easier for individual towns.

Since 2004, the FRCOG has served as fiduciary and program manager for the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) that oversees the State Homeland Security grant funds for the four western Massachusetts counties. WRHSAC projects are regional in scope, with a focus on building relationships between disciplines and jurisdictions, and enhancing capabilities that enable the region to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats and hazards, both natural and human-caused. A focus in 2018 was advanced training.

WRHSAC provides special and advanced training to first responders to enhance knowledge and increase skills. The FRCOG, on behalf of WRHSAC, creates a welcoming learning environment and capitalizes on the group gathering to foster relationships across disciplines and jurisdictions. These relationships have proven to be as valuable as the skills gained in the trainings for augmenting the region’s response capacity to, and recovery from, all-hazard incidents. A few examples of trainings offered in 2018 follow.

Increasingly, and unfortunately, schools are becoming common ground for mass casualty incidents. Schools that participate in planning and personnel training increase the effectiveness of both response and recovery. This training prepared school nurses to be leaders in emergency planning and response within schools. WRHSAC partnered with the Franklin County School Nurses Association to host this training at Greenfield Community College for more than 140 school nurses.

During a training exercise, first responders used the intensive, simulated environment to hone their skills of victim rescue in the active shooter incidents.
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS CONFERENCE
Preparing and protecting a municipal or organization's computer network from cyber-attacks can seem overwhelming and daunting. Through this conference, WRHSAC provided information to demystify cybersecurity issues, provided protocols to enhance system security, reviewed steps to take if one is a victim of a cyber-attack, and more. The conference fostered WRHSAC’s reputation as an informed member to be included in the Commonwealth’s cybersecurity preparedness efforts.

REGIONAL SPECIALTY RESPONSE TEAMS
WRHSAC supports multiple specialty response teams that serve the region. In 2018, WRHSAC supported the following teams through training and/or equipment purchases:
- Western Massachusetts Technical Rescue Team
- District 4 & 5 Hazardous Materials Response Teams
- Franklin County Special Response Team
- Berkshire County Special Response Team

PASSENGER RAIL EMERGENCY RESPONSE TRAINING
WRHSAC and Amtrak Police partnered to bring Passenger Rail Emergency Response Training to first responders. Through this unique partnership, two full weeks of discipline-specific trainings took place. Amtrak Police and Corporate Safety facilitated the trainings and provided several passenger rail cars for a realistic training environment, while WRHSAC coordinated location logistics, participant communications and event management support. The training was held at Springfield’s Union Station.

Special Response Teams practice railcar tactical entries.
Accident scene reconstruction using a drone.
Bomb squads practice suspicious package retrieval.
Specialty K-9 units practice explosive & drug detection.
COMMUNITIES THAT CARE COALITION
The FRCOG’s Partnership for Youth collaborates with Community Action Pioneer Valley to staff and convene the Communities That Care (CTC) coalition – a consortium of local youth, parents, schools, community agencies, and local governments focused on promoting the health and well-being of young people in our region. This effort has been successful in reducing youth substance use in the region, and also works to improve youth nutrition and physical activity. In 2018, CTC continued to encourage all area middle schools to implement the LifeSkills curriculum that teaches social and emotional skills for dealing with risky situations. This curriculum has been shown to reduce substance use by middle and high school students. By the close of 2018, approximately three-quarters of Franklin County middle school students were participating in Year 1 of the program, and just under half of students were participating in Years 2 and 3 of the program. Surveys of students administered before and after the curriculum went into effect show measurable increases in knowledge, and the Teen Health Survey shows continued decreases in youth alcohol, marijuana, prescription drug misuse, and other drug use.

GREENFIELD SAFE SCHOOLS, SAFE STREETS COALITION (4SC)
The Greenfield Safe Schools, Safe Streets Coalition (4SC) received an additional 5 years of Drug-Free Communities funding from the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The 4SC brings together multiple community partners to prevent, reduce, and delay youth substance use, and improve overall youth health through evidence-based activities, educational campaigns, and events. As the new fiscal agent for the 4SC, the FRCOG will continue to work closely with the former fiscal agent, Greenfield Public Schools. In addition, the 4SC Coordinator, a FRCOG staff member, will continue to provide a community presence with offices at both the FRCOG and the Greenfield High School.

FRANKLIN COUNTY/NORTH QUABBIN COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CHIP) NETWORK
The FRCOG is the host of the region’s first coordinated Community Health Improvement Planning effort, bringing together more than a dozen organizations and institutions to work on improving the physical and mental health of all Franklin County residents. Broad groups of stakeholders in health, housing, human services, planning, and education convened at quarterly meetings to review progress on the strategies chosen by the group as 2018 priorities: Housing Rehabilitation Loans, Fluoride Varnish, Tobacco Cessation, Evidence-Based Substance Use Prevention Curriculum in the Schools, School Nutrition, Community Health Workers, Breastfeeding Support in the North Quabbin, and Public Transportation.

The CHIP focuses on improving the many factors that influence physical and mental health.
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

OPIOID & OTHER SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION IN FRANKLIN COUNTY
The FRCOG is a partner in numerous efforts that focus on the prevention and treatment of heroin, prescription drug, and other drug abuse in Franklin County and North Quabbin. Staff sit on the Executive Council of the Opioid Task Force (OTF), participate in the Healthcare Solutions and Prevention and Education Committees of the Task Force, and seek to represent the needs of the region’s municipalities in new OTF projects including the Youth Adult Empowerment Collaborative.

SCHOOL NUTRITION
Staff worked with all of the region’s K-12 School Food Service Directors, and completed a site visit to at least one school in each district to observe meal preparation. The purpose of this work was to see how schools go about their meal preparation, and offer suggestions on best practices of how to improve school nutrition. Research shows that good nutrition is fundamental to students’ success. Each school received recommendations specific to their school district, as well as recommendations for improvements region-wide.

PROMOTING FARM TO INSTITUTION
Using local food in institutional food services, like those at schools or hospitals, increases healthy eating and supports the local economy. Staff are working with the Franklin County Food Council and Greater Quabbin Food Alliance to achieve these ends through relationships with food service directors in all of the K-12 school districts in the region, as well as the Franklin County House of Corrections, Baystate Franklin Medical Center, Meals on Wheels, and Greenfield Community College. The group’s work is informed by the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan, which was completed in 2016.

TEEN HEALTH SURVEY
As part of its work co-leading the Communities That Care Coalition, the Partnership for Youth has conducted a health survey of Franklin County and North Quabbin middle and high school students every year since 2003. The 2018 survey provided detailed information about students’ substance use, and about positive and negative factors that underlie substance use and other risky behaviors. For most substances, local youth use is at an all-time low. An exception is in youth vaping, which has become increasingly prevalent here as it has nationwide. The Partnership for Youth responded by creating a supplemental lesson plan on vaping for the LifeSkills prevention curriculum that is being implemented in area schools, distributing educational materials for parents on vaping, and collaborating with the Hampshire-Franklin Tobacco Free Community Partnership to give presentations on the topic.

The annual Teen Health Survey shows a continued decline in youth substance use over the last 15 years.
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

PARENT SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

The messages parents give their children have a tremendous influence on their children's behavior. Staff built on messages from previous years to promote family dinner and family time, and distributed post card and flyers with similar messages to the parents of middle and high school students. In addition, partner agencies also received these educational post cards to distribute in their efforts to recruit parents for educational events and programs. Our work to improve family life in the region is working. In 2018, Teen Health Survey data showed improvements in indicators of family well-being.

MASS IN MOTION

Mass in Motion is a statewide movement that promotes opportunities for healthy eating and active living in the places people live, learn, work and play. With funding from the Center for Disease Control, staff worked throughout 2018 on initiatives to prevent chronic disease. This work included revising the Walk Franklin County maps to make them more user-friendly and encourage exercise, working with towns on Complete Streets Prioritization Plans, and completing a walkability assessment in Deerfield. In addition, staff worked closely with the Community Health Center of Franklin County to support the integration of its Community Health Worker program more fully into patients’ care plans. Staff also worked with area food pantries on education outreach and logistics to increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. Finally, staff teamed up with a variety of statewide and local partners to provide a training on Shared Use and Community Kitchens.

MUNICIPAL SERVICES

COOPERATIVE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE (CPHS)

The CPHS Health District provides comprehensive municipal public health services to the eleven communities of Buckland, Charlemont, Conway, Deerfield, Gill, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Monroe, Rowe and Shelburne Falls. The CPHS has four public health programs: community sanitation, food safety, Title 5 and private well safety, and public health nursing (Deerfield and Conway are members only of the nursing program). Each member community has a representative on the CPHS Oversight Board which meets monthly to review budgets and potential grant applications, and to draft policies. The 2018 district programming highlights include:

- Provided Public Health Nursing services in 1,200 encounters to over 292 residents living with chronic illness. Regular nursing clinics are held in Charlemont, Conway, Deerfield, Gill, and Shelburne Falls.
- Processed 320 permits from the district’s online permitting program, and registered an additional 74 new users, for a total of 441 users.
- Conducted approximately 112 food, septic, well, housing, camp, motel, B&B, and pool inspections in member towns.
- Collected and exchanged 136 sharps containers for residents in cooperation with the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District.
- Conducted monitoring of 178 reported communicable illnesses and conducted follow-up investigation for 43 cases to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health on behalf of CPHS Boards of Health.
- Collaborated with CPHS member towns to conduct 15 community flu clinics serving 1,019 area residents. This year the vaccination program included both flu vaccine for all ages and pneumonia vaccines for residents over age 65.
- Provided subsidized tick testing for 316 district residents with 32% of ticks testing positive for Lyme Disease, 5% for Anaplasmosis, and 3% for Babesiosis.
- Staffed the Food Safety Project that provided ServSafe Manager training to 16 individuals from 9 communities, representing 10 separate food establishments. These trainings also provided the participants with the Massachusetts Allergens Awareness Training and Choke Saver Training, making 10 food establishments safer for their customers. In addition, the food safety training program was available to field questions from food vendors on a variety of topics. Staff have just wrapped up the process of becoming Standardized Food Safety Inspection Officers, a designation that ensures that food safety staff are well trained and prepared for all retail food safety issues.
MUNICIPAL SERVICES

COLLECTIVE PURCHASING PROGRAM
The Collective Purchasing Program provided bidding and contract administration services for highway products and services, fuel, dog tags and licenses, and elevator & fire alarm maintenance. In addition to the collective bids, the FRCOG Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) assisted several Towns in 2018 with fee-for-service procurements for truck and tractor equipment, building weatherization and electrical upgrades, landscaping, athletic field upgrades, park and sidewalk construction, site preparation for fiber internet upgrade, easement for cell tower, culvert/bridge construction, Complete Streets improvements, and monument repairs. The CPO also assisted Towns with general procurement questions including speaking to Boards and Town Departments about procurement requirements.

MUNICIPAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
Throughout 2018, staff continued to work with member communities on a variety of municipal financial management projects funded through the Baker-Polito Administration Community Compact Program and with District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA). Projects included development of budget documents and policies, formation of multi-year financial forecasting tools, and creation of capital improvement programs. The communities served in 2018 were Hawley, Rowe, Shutesbury, Sunderland and Whately. Staff also worked with the Frontier Regional School District, that serves Conway, Deerfield, Sunderland and Whately, on long-range financial planning. In addition, a fall seminar was held on municipal finance issues, and was attended by over 20 local officials from member towns.

FRANKLIN COUNTY COOPERATIVE INSPECTION PROGRAM
The FCCIP provided building, zoning, plumbing, wiring and code enforcement services to 15 Towns, issuing 1,330 building permits that included 23 permits for new single family dwellings and 1 permit for new commercial structures. There were 664 wiring permits and 467 plumbing and gas permits. In addition, 182 periodic inspections that assess safety in public and multi-unit buildings were performed and Certificates of Inspection issued. Online permit applications have been simplified and made more user-friendly. As of January 1, 2019, there were 5,036 registered users, and since its launch on July 1, 2011 there have been 18,289 online permit applications.
PUBLIC SAFETY CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL SHARING
Staff worked with a number of Towns interested in exploring how to share police and fire services. This work included conducting a feasibility analysis, facilitating meetings, researching legal and administrative logistics, and creating a draft Shared Services Agreement. This work was funded through the state’s District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding program.

TOWN ACCOUNTING PROGRAM
The Town Accounting Program provides quality municipal accounting services to 12 Towns including Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Conway, Gill, Leverett, New Salem, Shelburne, Sunderland, Wendell, Whately, and Williamsburg. The program provides member Towns with qualified, professional accounting staff, access to shared software at a greatly reduced cost, and a service product completed in adherence to the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws and the Uniform Municipal Accounting System. In 2018, staff began planning for a town accountant training program to help sustain the Town Accounting Program, and to fill a serious training need identified in the Local Government Workforce Skills Gap Report.

WORKSHOPS AND TRAINING SESSIONS
During 2018 the FRCOG held many workshop and training sessions for municipal officials and employees, and community volunteers.

COLLECTIVE PURCHASING
Procurement for Department Heads

COOPERATIVE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
Gluten-Free Menu Makeover
ServSafe/Allergan/Choke Saver
Vaping and Marijuana Use

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE
Active Threat Integrated Response Course
Building Chemical Safety Into Local Emergency Response Plans
Cargo Tank Response
Cybersecurity Preparedness Conference
Deerfield River Tabletop Exercise
Effectively Managing Disaster Volunteers
Emerging Threats Training
Incident Command System
Initial Response Operations for NIMS
MAPHCO Annual Meeting
National Incident Management System
Officer Down Rescue Instruction
Passenger Rail Mass Casualty Incident Training
Pediatric Disaster Response & Emergency Preparedness
Pioneer Valley COAD Tabletop Exercise
School Emergency Triage Training
Sharing Fire and/or EMS Services in West County
Sport and Event Risk Management
Sports & Special Events Evacuation Exercise
The State of Preparedness in Franklin County

MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL CONTINUING EDUCATION SERIES
2020 Census Planning
Cannabis Control Commission Regulations
Community Kitchen Development
Great Libraries Build Communities
Growing Hemp
Municipal Financial Management
Municipal Workforce Succession Planning
Select Board 101 Training
Vacant and Abandoned Building Issues

PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUTH
Legislative Advocacy for Health
LifeSkills Curriculum for Teachers
Retail Liquor Store Certification
Social Justice: Health Equity & Race
TIPS Alcohol Server Certification
Vaping and School Policy Conference

PLANNING, CONSERVATION, AND DEVELOPMENT
Introduction to Subdivision Control Law and ANR — Citizen Planner Training Collaborative
Repairing Historic Windows
Site Plan Review – Citizen Planner Training Collaborative
ADVOCACY

An important function of the FRCOG is to advocate for issues important to the Franklin County region and its communities and residents. Throughout the year, staff testify at public hearings, provide input to locally important legislation and policy, and bring important issues to the FRCOG advisory council and member municipalities. In 2018, the FRCOG was particularly active in advocacy at the state level, which included staff sitting on the Rural Policy Advisory Commission, the Lt. Governor’s Local Government Workforce Skills Gap Committee, and the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health. Staff also served as a designated expert to the Special Legislative Commission on Behavioral Health Promotion and Upstream Prevention.

Additional advocacy included:

- Commented on regulations promulgated by the Cannabis Control Commission.
- Conducted close monitoring, technical review, written filings, and attended meetings related to the FERC relicensing of the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Facility and Turners Falls Dam.
- Provided written testimony both supporting and outlining concerns on Governor Baker’s Housing Choice (zoning reform) legislation.
- Provided written testimony on the State Rail Plan, State Pedestrian Plan, and the State Bicycle Plan.
- Contributed to the writing of the Lt. Governor’s Local Government Workforce Skills Gap report.
- Quickly mobilized and assisted communities with pursuit of Opportunity Zone designation.
- Advocated for staffing increases at the MassDOT Right of Way office.
- Provided detailed response to a Federal Emergency Regulatory Commission request for suggestions of how to improve FERC’s gas pipeline siting process.
- Contributed to the writing of the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health Commission report.
- Provided written testimony supporting the federal Building Rail Access for Customers and the Economy Act.
- Provided comments to drafts of the Choices for Stewardship (future of transportation in the Commonwealth) report.
- Provided testimony to the Department of Telecommunications and Cable supporting an E-911 surcharge increase for the overhaul of the Commonwealth’s Radio System.

Local members of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) with EOHD Secretary Jay Ash at a December RPAC Listening Session in Greenfield.
STATE AND NATIONAL PRESENTATIONS BY FRCOG STAFF

FRCOG staff members regularly present work locally and regionally, but many are honored by being asked to share their expertise at state and national events and conferences. The following represent a sampling of the larger scale Massachusetts events that included presentations by FRCOG staff:

- Parenting in the Age of Legal Marijuana
- Annual Meeting, Massachusetts Public Health Association
- Western Massachusetts Anti-Poverty Forum
- Massachusetts Ecosystem Climate Adaptation Network 2018 Conference
- Municipal Partnerships: A Statewide Conference for Municipal Officials and Staff

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

FRCOG staff members sit on a variety of boards and committees representing the FRCOG, the region and Franklin County communities, either directly as part of their FRCOG responsibilities or on a volunteer basis. In 2018 these included:

- Baystate Franklin Community Advisory Board
- Baystate Franklin Medical Center Community Benefits Advisory Council
- Baystate Franklin Readmission Prevention Collaborative
- Creating Resilient Communities
- Common Capital Board of Directors
- Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts Trustees
- Community Health Center of Franklin County Board of Directors
- Economic Development Council of Western MA Economic Development Partners, Infrastructure Committee
- Franklin County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors
- Franklin County Community Development Corporation Board of Directors
- Franklin County Food Council
- Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority Board of Commissioners
- Franklin Region Economic Development Initiative
- Gill-Montague Community School Partnership Executive Council
- Greater Quabbin Food Alliance
- Greenfield Safe Schools Safe Streets Steering Committee
- Local Government Workforce Skills Gap Working Committee
- Massachusetts Broadband Institute Board of Directors
- Massachusetts Epidemiology Workgroup
- Massachusetts Municipal Association Policy Committee on Municipal and Regional Administration
- Massachusetts Rural Policy Advisory Commission
- Massachusetts Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health
- Massachusetts Technical Assistance Partnership for Prevention Steering Committee
- Massachusetts Technology Collaborative Executive Director Search Committee
- MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board Youth Career Connections Council
- Mayor’s Taskforce on Domestic Violence (Greenfield)
- North Quabbin Childrens’ Health and Wellness System of Care
- North Quabbin Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force
- Northwest Massachusetts Incident Management Team Executive Committee
- Opioid Task Force of Franklin County and North Quabbin Executive Council
- Opioid Task Force Building a Resilient Community Workgroup
- Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress Board of Trustees
- Pioneer Valley Workforce Skills Cabinet
- Rural Development, Inc Board of Directors
- Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts
- Tri-State Fire Mutual Aid Executive Committee
- United Way of Franklin County Board of Directors
- University of Massachusetts Department of Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning Alumni Board
- Western Massachusetts Health Equity Network Steering Committee
- WGBY Board of Tribunes
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

REGIONAL ANAEROBIC DIGESTER
Communities that operate wastewater treatment plants are having increasing difficulties disposing of wastewater sludge due to limited landfills and incinerators that will accept sludge, and the increasing cost of disposal either locally or by transport to farther sites. Several communities are collaborating on a project to build a shared anaerobic sludge digester in Greenfield that can reduce the amount of sludge to be trucked by up to 85%. Combined with other local efforts like composting, this project has the potential to save Towns a significant amount of money by reducing capital, disposal, and transport costs. The project is in the conceptual design/feasibility stage. The FRCOG is helping to facilitate this process by encouraging the collaboration and participation of eligible towns, coordinating meetings, and offering technical assistance including helping to draft an inter-municipal agreement for participating Towns.

GREEN COMMUNITIES
Since the inception of the State’s Green Communities program in 2010, staff have assisted Franklin County Towns with becoming designated Green Communities and accessing funds for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at municipal facilities. During the past year, staff worked with the Towns of Charlemont, Colrain, and Heath on becoming designated Green Communities; successfully helped Buckland, Deerfield, Gill, and Warwick apply for Green Communities competitive grants; and supported seven existing Green Communities with annual reports and procurement activities for grant-approved projects. To date, 24 of the 26 towns in Franklin County are Green Communities, with a total of over $5.4 million in grant funds awarded to Franklin County Towns through the program. Also in 2018, staff administered a Municipal Energy Technical Assistance grant for completion of energy audits at municipal buildings in the Towns of Charlemont, Colrain, Heath, and Shelburne.

ELECTRICITY AGGREGATION
The FRCOG helped organize a multi-town effort to aggregate the purchase of residential and commercial electricity for 13 participating communities. The goal of the project is for the Towns to collectively control the purchase of electricity, thereby taking advantage of economies of scale to realize better pricing and/or encourage the development of renewable energy resources across New England. In 2018, staff coordinated a procurement process to hire an electricity aggregation consultant to work on behalf of the partnering Towns. Guided by a selection committee comprised of Selectboard representatives, the Colonial Power Group (CPG) was chosen as the aggregation consultant. The FRCOG connected Town staff with CPG to begin the contracting process, and CPG is now guiding Towns through the rest of the aggregation planning and electricity supply bidding process.

Staff assisted the Town of Hawley in using its Green Communities grant to procure solar PV panels on its Highway Garage and install an Air Source Heat Pump at the Town Office.
MOHAWK TRAIL WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP PROJECT
The goals of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Project (MTWP) are to bring recognition and additional financial and technical resources to 21 municipalities in Western Franklin and Northern Berkshire Counties. The project’s intent is to conserve forest land and support sustainable forestry, increase natural resource-based economic development including tourism, and improve the fiscal stability and sustainability of the participating municipalities. Approximately 82% of the land in the 21-town region is forested. During the past year, staff assisted the MTWP Advisory Committee with the passage of State legislation that created the MTWP. This special legislation identifies the 21 towns as eligible to participate in, and receive benefits from, MTWP activities. Each municipality must formally vote to participate either through a Selectboard or Town Meeting vote. Eleven of the 21 eligible towns must choose to participate in the Partnership in order for the Partnership to actively pursue funding to support the envisioned projects.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLANS
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. These grants include MA Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grants, and MA Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grants, as well as for other potential grant sources. OSRP plans 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. In 2018, staff worked with local committees in Ashfield, Gill, Erving, Heath, Leverett, and Warwick to update their existing OSRPs.

RIVER CORRIDOR MAPPING AND MANAGEMENT TOOLS
The goal of this project is to provide municipalities, riverine landowners, land trusts, and others with powerful tools to improve ecological function, increase flood resiliency, reduce flooding, better protect infrastructure against erosion, and increase watershed resiliency to future climate change. During 2018, staff continued developing products to assist stakeholders in river corridor management. These strategies include easement tools, zoning options, and other approaches like floodplain reconnection and management of stormwater in upland, forested areas of a watershed.
WATERSHED-SCALE CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE PLANNING

Staff completed work on a multi-year project funded by the Community Compact Program’s Efficiency & Regionalization Grant Program to develop a climate resiliency plan for the Deerfield River watershed. Climate change exacerbates the risks and damages caused by natural hazards like flooding, heat waves and storms by amplifying their intensity, frequency and duration. The impacts from these events often extend beyond a single town’s boundaries, to include their neighbors. A watershed can provide a framework for understanding the interconnectedness of natural systems and the built environment, as well as how climate change can affect several things simultaneously. A watershed can be a useful decision-making framework when towns are working to become more resilient to storm events and impacts. The project’s final report provides the 14 towns of the Deerfield River Watershed with information about how changes in precipitation, rising temperatures, and extreme weather will likely impact natural resources and habitat, human health and welfare, and the local economy and infrastructure.

The recommendations described in the FRCOG’s Plan were designed to:

- Be achievable (within the power of Towns and individuals to implement);
- Address multiple climate change factors (changes in precipitation, rising temperatures, extreme weather);
- Benefit multiple sectors (Natural Resources & Habitat, Human Health & Welfare, Local Economy & Infrastructure); and
- Build resiliency at multiple scales (property, town, and watershed).

The reality of private land holdings and 14 town boundaries in the Deerfield River Watershed make approaches to climate resiliency challenging and complex. However, working in partnership with their watershed neighbors, towns can improve the climate resiliency of each town and the watershed as a whole. This watershed-scale climate resiliency plan is the first of its kind in Massachusetts and could be a model for other watersheds in the region and across the state.
TOURISM/BICYCLE ALTERNATIVES AND ADVOCACY

The FRCOG continued work with regional stakeholders to market Franklin County as a bicycle tourist destination, and to advocate for the use of bicycles as a means of transportation. Working collaboratively with the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, staff participated in the development of a recreational marketing program aimed at all types of outdoor recreation, but with a strong emphasis on recreational biking. In other activities, staff hosted the annual Bike Breakfast at the JW Olver Transit Center during national bike week and provided an opportunity for local bicyclists to network with one another, and for staff to receive input about bicycle infrastructure needs. In addition, Bike Breakfast participants had the opportunity to learn how to load bikes onto FRTA buses, and to check out the new FRTA low floor accessible bus.

COMPLETE STREETS

Staff helped Towns participate in MassDOT’s Complete Streets program by providing planning technical assistance and developing prioritization plans for needed infrastructure improvements. Complete Streets are roads that are accessible to all modes of travel and types of user, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and drivers of varied ages and abilities. Staff compiled Complete Streets Prioritization Plans for Buckland, Montague and Whately, and assisted them in preparing applications for construction funding. Staff also assisted Erving in developing a Complete Streets policy that the Selectboard adopted, and MassDOT approved. Staff is available to help other communities in the coming year.

BICYCLE FRIENDLY BUSINESS PROGRAM

Staff developed and launched a Bicycle Friendly Business Program with the goal of recognizing and marketing Franklin County businesses that welcome and support the bicycling community. Staff sent a mailing to 300 local businesses with information about the program, and invited them to participate. Bike Friendly businesses provide amenities that support cycling and can draw riders to their establishments. Amenities include bike parking, water and restrooms, repair stations, snacks, bike rentals and more. In return, the participating businesses will be included in Bike Friendly Business promotional materials and marketing efforts in the County. Full rollout the program will continue in 2019.

New or repaired sidewalks expand mobility option in the region.
TRANSPORTATION

EFFECTIVENESS OF SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS AT HAZARDOUS INTERSECTIONS

Every three years the FRCOG compiles a report on the top 50 most hazardous intersections in Franklin County. In 2018, staff reviewed all past Top 50 lists, and identified locations where safety improvements were constructed. These intersections were further analyzed by comparing crash rates before and after the improvements to determine their effectiveness. In general, the data showed measurable improvements in crash rates.

HIGH RISK CULVERT MAPS AND REPORTS

Staff developed reports and maps for all Franklin County towns within the Deerfield River watershed that identified road-stream crossings at high risk of failure in a significant storm. The source data for the project came from a pilot study completed by MassDOT and UMass that assessed the vulnerability of road-stream crossings during precipitation events. The products of this work will help municipalities prioritize bridge and culvert upgrades, as well as provide information on how to make road-stream upgrades more resilient. Also included are potential funding sources that municipalities may pursue to upgrade crossings.

LONG RANGE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Staff began working to update the region’s long range transportation plan, an assessment and vision for mobility in Franklin County. Using a time horizon of 2040, the Plan looks at all modes of transportation and assesses their status and condition, while simultaneously identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and funding constraints. The draft Plan will be available for public review and comment in June, 2019, and will be finalized the following month. Based on extensive public outreach, the most frequent comment about the transportation network is the need for additional transit service.

MUNICIPAL AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) SELF-EVALUATIONS AND TRANSITION PLANS

Staff conducted ADA Self-Evaluations and Transition Plans for Charlemont, Gill, and Montague. For these plans, FRCOG staff evaluated all municipally-owned buildings and infrastructure (sidewalks, parks, and parking lots), as well as Town programs, for their accessibility for persons with disabilities. The Massachusetts Office on Disability has begun using these FRCOG Self-Evaluations and Transitions plans as model templates for other rural and small communities in the Commonwealth.
PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT
The FRCOG inspects the pavement condition of all Federal Aid roadways under Town jurisdiction in Franklin County on a three-year rolling schedule. Roadways are visually surveyed, and the results are input into the RoadManager Pavement Management System (PMS) software. This produces a report on each road’s pavement condition, and lays out repair options and costs. This information is valuable to Towns in planning cost-effective pavement repair strategies. In 2018, the FRCOG surveyed 36.3 miles of roadway in Leverett, Shutesbury, Sunderland, and Whately.

ROUTE 5 & 10 CORRIDOR STUDY
Staff is underway with a study of the Route 5 & 10 Corridor in Deerfield and Whately to better understand the current and future conditions of the area. The study is compiling information on demographics, land use, zoning, recent development, and transportation conditions to project areas of potential new development. The study is focusing on multimodal potential and safety needs.

TRAFFIC COUNTING
In 2018, 52 traffic volume counts (including vehicle classification and speed counts) were conducted in the following towns: Ashfield, Buckland, Colrain, Erving, Gill, Greenfield, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Shutesbury, Sunderland, and Warwick. Each year traffic counts are offered free of charge to Franklin County member municipalities on a first-come, first-served basis. The FRCOG now also has equipment that is able to count bicyclists at the same time as motor vehicles on the same stretch of roadway. Traffic counts are often needed for municipal planning purposes and grant applications. Information on past traffic counts since 1993 can be obtained by contacting the FRCOG.
TRANSPORTATION

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VISION ZERO

Vision Zero is the name of a growing movement within transportation planning and engineering to achieve zero deaths on all roadways, including drivers, passengers, cyclists, and pedestrians. As an initial effort towards Vision Zero in Franklin County, the FRCOG looked in depth at one of the most preventable types of roadway crashes - those involving distracted driving. Analyzing local crash statistics, the Franklin County Distracted Driving report highlights the many factors at play in crashes involving distracted drivers.

TRANSPORT OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Staff collected data on the content of trucks and trains traveling through the region to determine the types and quantities of hazardous materials being shipped through the County. Trucks on I-91 and Route 2 were surveyed, as well as freight trains on all of the region's rail lines. The most common hazardous materials moving through Franklin County are liquefied petroleum, hot asphalt, sulfuric acid, and liquefied carbon dioxide. The data gathered provides information for emergency preparedness, environmental protection, and transport planning.

- Distracted driving is a significant cause of fatal crashes throughout the nation.

TRANSPORTATION

- Staff continued to collaborate with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) in a variety of ways to help broaden public outreach efforts, particularly related to changes of bus schedules and routes. Staff also worked with the FRTA to explore alternatives to serving the region's residents beyond traditional buses. This included working with the FRTA and regional partners to investigate the feasibility of a shared van among social service providers; a van shuttle and free fare program for individuals recovering from substance misuse, and the possibility of an Uber/Lyft-like program using FRTA vans and buses called “micro-transit.”

- FRCOG staff conducting a cargo survey at the I-91 weigh station.

- FRCOG staff conducting a cargo survey at the I-91 weigh station.
FRCOG FINANCES

The FRCOG closed Fiscal Year 2018 in a strong position. Over $3.4 million of grant funds came into the area through the FRCOG, which allowed continued work on issues aimed at benefiting the people, economy, environment and local governments of Franklin County. Grant funding varies slightly from year to year, but the FRCOG has a demonstrated record of securing funds in multi-year programs to continue a steady work load. The FRCOG is also the designated Regional Planning Agency for Franklin County.

Examining these grants by topic, the largest spending areas were Transportation, Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, and Substance Abuse Prevention. Federal grants are graphed in shades of blue, and state grants in shades of pink.

The FRCOG works diligently to pair expenses to the programs in which the expense occurs so that programs can be self-supporting whenever possible. General fund expenses are limited to the administrative costs of running the organization and benefits for all employees, both Administrative and Program staff. Administrative and benefit costs are recovered from grant funding sources whenever possible.
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MONTAGUE
Richard Kueklevicz, Steve Ellis

NEW SALEM
Wayne Hachey

NORTHFIELD
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ORANGE
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Robert Manners

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Daniel Keller, Michael Idoine

WHATELEY
Lynn Sibley

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REGIONALLY ELECTED
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Regional Public Health Nurse

Andrea Woods
Chief Procurement Officer
In 2018, the Commission identified the need for a Massachusetts Rural Policy Plan. After identifying priority issues, the Commission held 10 Listening Sessions across the state in November and December of that year. The purpose of the Listening Sessions was to validate and prioritize the top issues and challenges facing rural Massachusetts. Based on the combined results of the ten Listening Sessions, the top seven rural issues in Massachusetts are:

**TOP 7 RURAL ISSUES IN MASSACHUSETTS BASED ON 2018 LISTENING SESSIONS**

1. Need for All Types of Housing (senior/affordable/workforce)
2. Impact of Schools on Municipal Budgets; Overall Costs and Funding Formulas
3. Transportation Infrastructure
4. Broadband Infrastructure
5. Climate Change Resiliency Infrastructure
7. Aging Population/Aging in Place/Isolation/Loneliness
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