



A view of the Quabbin from Gate 35 in New Salem. Photo Credit: Claire McGinnis

## NEWSLETTER: WINTER 2022



### Advocacy

The FRCOG is leading an effort on behalf of the [Rural Policy Advisory Commission](#) (RPAC) to advocate for rural equity of ARPA and state surplus spending. For too long state funding formulas and grant programs have disadvantaged rural municipalities and regions, as evidenced by Auditor Bumps' recent reports on [MA PILOT and solar taxation policies](#) and [public infrastructure in western MA](#). Now is the opportunity to bring significant federal and state dollars into our rural region to pursue new capital projects and, as importantly, repair and upgrade our existing critical infrastructure. It is also time, while every municipality is reaping the benefits of ARPA dollars, to change funding formulas that have been proven to be inequitable and unfair to rural communities. Linda is working with our legislative delegation to present this argument to the legislative Rural Caucus and Statehouse leadership. The presentation will also be brought to the administration, hopefully starting with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED).

**More Information:** Linda Dunlavy at [lindad@frcog.org](mailto:lindad@frcog.org) or ext. 103.

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### Land Use & Natural Resources

#### Watershed Assessment Plan for the South River

FRCOG staff are preparing a Watershed Assessment Plan for the South River, which will expand our understanding of agricultural land uses and their relationship to water quality and watershed health. The final product will produce a list of implementation projects that include best management practices to conserve soil and protect and restore water quality. Initial stakeholder engagement will take place in the first half of 2022.

This work will build off prior planning and education efforts; you can learn more about the South River watershed [here](#), or just click the image to the right!

**More Information:** Kimberly Noake MacPhee at [kmacphee@frcog.org](mailto:kmacphee@frcog.org) or ext. 130.



We updated our virtual tour of the South River in the summer of 2021; it will introduce you to all the work that has been going on in the South River Watershed over the past decade.



### Finance & Municipal Services

#### COVID-19 Tests Kits Available through MA Statewide Contracts

COVID-19 rapid antigen test kits have been added to the MA Statewide Contracts under HSP41 Statewide Contract (Category 10). There are fairly high minimum purchase requirements - towns may want to pool their resources and buy together. The state is adding new vendors as they become available. FRCOG is not planning to do a group buy of these test kits but [this document](#) provides some resource links for buyers. You may email [bids@frcog.org](mailto:bids@frcog.org) if you have further questions after reviewing them.





## Public & Community Health

### Connecting Racial Justice to Community Health

FRCOG's Partnership for Youth staff serve as lead conveners for the Communities That Care (CTC) Coalition, which was [recently highlighted in the Stanford Social Innovation Review](#) for their work in racial justice and collective impact. They also are active with the work of NELCWIT's [Coalition for Racial Justice](#), members of whom penned [this article](#) that dives deeper into the public health impacts of racism. There is clear evidence that racism causes poor physical and mental health outcomes, and limits the opportunities of many to contribute fully to their communities.

What can our local government boards and officials do to promote racial justice and community health? One starting point is to choose the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion municipal training option on the DLT survey recently issued to all towns. The linked article above also points to further resources, and you can also visit <https://nelcwit.org/crjeducation/>.

**More Information:** Rachel Stoler at [rstoler@frcog.org](mailto:rstoler@frcog.org), or ext. 121.



## Economic Development

### Grant Applications to Support Economic Development Activities

In December, we submitted an application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a new [brownfields grant](#) to assess properties potentially impacted by hazardous substances and/or petroleum products.

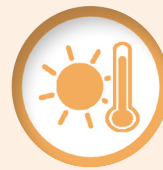
Since the start of the FRCOG Brownfields Program in 2000, over \$2.9 million of EPA funds have been awarded to assess or clean-up over 70 sites in 22 Franklin County towns. In addition, over \$2 million of EPA Region 1 funds have been leveraged to assess or clean-up 7 sites in the FRCOG Brownfields Program.



A prior Brownfields Assessment grant for the Monroe Bridge Overlook was featured as a success story by the EPA; you can view their writeup of this success story at: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-11/bf-ss-monroe-bridge-overlook-monroe-ma.pdf>

We are also preparing a grant application for a 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) -funded grant opportunity offered by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). If awarded, the grant would extend the Economic Development Special Projects Planner position for two years to work on implementing the recommendations of the upcoming Franklin County Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan and county-wide public water and wastewater study that are in development.

**More Information:** Jessica Atwood at [jatwood@frcog.org](mailto:jatwood@frcog.org) or ext. 123.



## Climate Resilience

### Regional Energy Planning Assistance (REPA) Green Communities Activities

This fall, FRCOG Planning Staff assisted thirteen towns with completing their Annual Reports to remain in good standing with the [Green Communities program](#). Many communities saw significant energy savings after completing weatherization, HVAC, and lighting upgrades in their municipal and school buildings.

The MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) will open applications for the next round of Competitive Grants in April; notification with information about eligible projects should be available in late January.

**More Information:** Allison Gage at [agage@frcog.org](mailto:agage@frcog.org) or ext. 136.



## Homeland Security & Emergency Preparedness

### Earmark to Defray Police Reform-related Training Costs

\$90,000 of the \$100,000 earmark secured by Senator Comerford will be distributed to offset [Bridge Academy](#) costs, which, when divided equally across the 36 officers who need training, comes to a little over \$2,400 per officer. Town administrators received a memorandum of agreement via email in December outlining how this program will work. The remaining funds will be used to pursue more funding from an alternate funding source and to gather data about existing coverage and response in the county so a future consultant does not need to conduct that labor-intensive work.

**More Information:** Tracy Rogers at [emergencyprep@frcog.org](mailto:emergencyprep@frcog.org), or ext. 118.





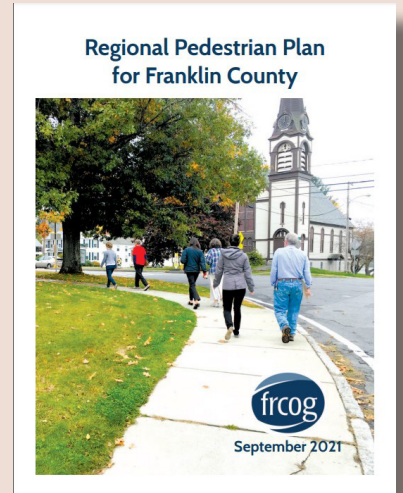
## Transportation

### Franklin County Pedestrian Plan

We are pleased to announce the [Regional Pedestrian Plan for Franklin County](#) is complete and available online. The plan includes town-level pedestrian infrastructure assessments and describes specific needed improvements in areas near walking destinations such as schools, senior centers, and town center business districts. It also identifies tools and strategies for developing pedestrian-related improvements, and provides information about funding programs for towns to complete pedestrian improvements such as the [Massachusetts Complete Streets Funding Program](#) and [Safe Routes to School](#).

This plan is intended to inspire and encourage towns to consider pedestrian accessibility whenever feasible. We hope you find it useful!

**More Information:** Beth Giannini at [giannini@frcog.org](mailto:giannini@frcog.org), or ext. 125.



## Training & Education

### Western MA Municipal Conference

The FRCOG, along with Franklin County Selectmen's Association, Berkshire County Selectmen's Association, [Berkshire Regional Planning Commission](#) and [Pioneer Valley Planning Commission](#), is working with the [MA Municipal Association](#) to develop a municipal conference for western MA local officials. The conference was originally scheduled for October but postponed to April. Planning is underway for an April in-person meeting (fingers crossed). The day will tentatively include panels on police reform and regionalization, ARPA spending and rural equity, housing costs and development, and a review of current status of Auditor Bump's Western MA Infrastructure study.

**More Information:** Linda Dunlavy at [lindad@frcog.org](mailto:lindad@frcog.org) or ext. 103.



## Staff Updates & Changes

**Alyssa Larose** resigned her position as Senior Land Use & Housing Planner to work full-time on affordable housing at the Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority. We miss Alyssa greatly, but are pleased she continues to bring her expertise and commitment to furthering housing in the region, and wish her all the best in her new position!



*Alyssa Larose*



*Leigh-Ellen Figueroa*

**Leigh-Ellen Figueroa** joined the FRCOG's Partnership for Youth full-time as the Health and Equity Programs Coordinator. Leigh-Ellen is coordinating much of our work with the schools, our new prevention in early childhood effort, and our PEER Ambassador parent-to-parent outreach program. Welcome, Leigh-Ellen!

The Emergency Preparedness Program is again fully staffed after hiring two new staff members! **Nick Licata** is a former Greenfield dispatcher who is now responsible for making bulk purchases on behalf of hospitals and for maintaining and tracking all of the HMCC's inventory. **Val Woodring** is a registered nurse and has served as a volunteer for the Medical Reserve Corps and American Red Cross. She is now responsible for helping health and medical entities in western MA align their preparedness and planning efforts through the [HMCC](#). Welcome, Nick and Val!



*Nick Licata*



*Val Woodring*



*Have a safe and happy winter from all of us at the FRCOG!*

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