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For Immediate Release

PLANNING COMMISSION ANNOUNCES \$280,000 FOR IMPLEMENTATION  
PROJECTS THAT SUPPORT NEW REGIONAL PLAN

Winooski, VT – The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), on behalf of the ECOS (Environment, Community, Opportunity, and Sustainability) Steering Committee, is soliciting proposals for projects that will implement the common goals and criteria created by the ECOS Project. \$280,000 will be awarded for these projects.

Any public, private or non-profit entity is eligible as long as the project will benefit are eligible to apply for grants between \$10,000 and \$50,000 that will benefit Chittenden County. Proposals may include but are not limited to implementation activities such as bylaw revisions, capital projects, programs, funding and financing plans, and multi-jurisdictional agreements. RFP guidelines are available at [www.ecosproject.com/actions](http://www.ecosproject.com/actions). Deadline for submission is Friday, September 21, 2012.

Last year, the CCRPC and its partners were awarded a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program, to bring together a broad range of community partners to develop a plan for sustainable growth in Chittenden County. The ECOS Project is both the plan and the process for managing sustainable growth in Chittenden County for a healthy, inclusive and prosperous community.

Upon its completion, the ECOS project will function as the Regional Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The project is managed by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) and GBIC (Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation) with a 65 member Steering Committee and is intended to improve cooperative regional planning implementation.

“By 2035, Chittenden County’s population is projected to grow by 30%,” explains Charlie Baker, Executive Director of the CCRPC. Growth rates in Chittenden County have been surpassing the rates of both Vermont and New England, and minority populations have been growing faster than in VT, New England and the United States as a whole. At the same time, the amount of people being born in the county has been decreasing, which shows that more and more people are clearly emigrating from elsewhere to make Vermont, and specifically Chittenden County their home.

(more)

While the ECOS process is still ongoing, partners have compiled a lot of valuable information about the current state of Chittenden County, which will help us better understand how things may look in the future. Much of that data paints a picture of a county in transition, with factors that will impact everyone's quality of life. For example,

- Currently, 54% of rental households already spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing and the urban rental vacancy rate is below 1%. Where and how will the newcomers live?
- Employers are seeking more employees with science, math and technology skills. How do we improve our labor force development?
- Income and racial disparities are evident in income, education, health, and incarceration. How do we address this issue?
- We are losing farmland and we have water pollution in our streams and Lake Champlain. How do we improve water quality and keep land in farming?
- Traffic congestion and driving is increasing. How do we provide mobility and transportation options?

“All of these issues will continue to pervade our future lives in Chittenden County, and the ECOS project is an attempt to lessen the impacts of these problems as we move forward,” explains Baker. ECOS co-chair Sandy Miller noted that “This project and the associated opportunity to encourage – through these grants - innovative approaches to a sustainable future for Chittenden County represent one of the most exciting and important activities I and our ECOS colleagues have participated in.” Penrose Jackson, the other co-chair, said, “We hope to see applications from ideas that are, frankly, risky; without risk we cannot innovate. I hope people let their creativity fly.”

The draft ECOS Plan to address these issues will be available for public comment in November. For more information about the ECOS Project visit [www.ecosproject.com](http://www.ecosproject.com).

Applications for implementation grants must be submitted by 4:00 PM, Friday, September 21, 2012. Awards will be announced around November 1, 2012; and the projects must be complete by December 31, 2013. Application information is available at: [www.ecosproject.com/actions](http://www.ecosproject.com/actions).

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