

# Board Member Handbook



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## Getting Started

### Welcome to the CCRPC

This *Board Member Handbook* describes:

- What the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) is;
- How it is organized;
- What activities the CCRPC can and must do;
- The planning and funding processes;
- The powers and duties you have as a board member;
- How you can be an effective board member; and
- The resources available to you.

The *Handbook* cannot possibly answer every question you will have. Please do not hesitate to ask your fellow Commissioners (especially members of the Executive Committee) and the Executive Director for guidance and assistance. They can supplement the *Handbook's* resources by describing how the Commission previously has addressed your concern and concerns similar to it.

Serving on the Commission calls upon you to think regionally and invest your best efforts to help the CCRPC succeed on behalf of all the communities and organizations it convenes. Your service requires a certain level of commitment and investment of time. The learning curve is fairly steep, but there are plenty of people and resources available to help and support you.

#### **We want you to succeed as a board member. To be successful, you should:**

- Prepare thoroughly before each meeting by reading the board packet and related materials;
- Communicate the ideas and opinions of your community or organization clearly;
- Listen fully to the ideas and opinions of others;
- Be flexible and diplomatic; and
- Be true to the organization's guiding principles and laws.

The more you invest in the organization, the more rewarding you will find your service to be.

### Vision Statement

To be a pre-eminent, integrated regional organization that plans for healthy, vibrant communities, economic development, and efficient transportation of people and goods while improving the region's livability.



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## **What is the CCRPC?**

The mission of the *Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission* (CCRPC) is to act as the principal forum for planning, policy and community development in the region. We do this by providing planning and technical assistance that meets the needs of our member municipalities and the public, while remaining consistent with our federal and state requirements. Our work will result in the development and implementation of plans that support sustainable development and improve the region's quality of life and environment.

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission is an organization that combines the previously separate Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) and Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization (CCMPO). The CCRPC and CCMPO were combined with the adoption of these bylaws and subsequent actions to form one combined organization by action of the CCRPC and CCMPO Boards of Directors on May 18, 2011.

## **Enabling Legislation**

Here's your first taste of technical jargon. The legal basis and powers for the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission serving as the region's regional planning commission stem from Vermont laws and are as stipulated in 24 V.S.A. § 4301 et seq., as amended, 24 V.S.A. § 4345 et seq. The CCRPC was chartered by the municipalities of Chittenden County on May 2, 1966 with amendments to the original charter dated May 26, 1997 and September 28, 1998 and is funded in part through the State of Vermont property transfer tax as outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 4306(a).

The CCMPO conducts Metropolitan Transportation Planning pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 134 and was designated by the Governor of Vermont on June 10, 1983 pursuant to the Federal Highway Act of 1962, as amended (23 U.S.C. 101 et. seq.); the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as amended (49 U.S.C. 1601 et. seq.); and by agreements dated April 20, 1983 and January 28, 1998 to serve as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). In an agreement dated January 28, 1998, the CCMPO added membership to include the nine rural communities formerly members of the Chittenden County Rural Planning Organization.



## Getting to Know the Organization

### Representation

The CCRPC is made up of representatives from:

Bolton	Buel's Gore
Burlington	Charlotte
Colchester	Essex
Essex Junction	Hinesburg
Huntington	Jericho
Milton	Richmond
St. George	Shelburne
South Burlington	Underhill
Westford	Williston
Winooski	
Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)	US Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Agriculture	Industrial / Business
Socio-Economic-Housing	Conservation / Environmental
Burlington International Airport (BIA)	Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA)	Railroad Industry

Each member municipality's locally elected legislative body appoints a representative to the Commission and that representative's alternate. You can learn more about this in the [CCRPC Bylaws](#).

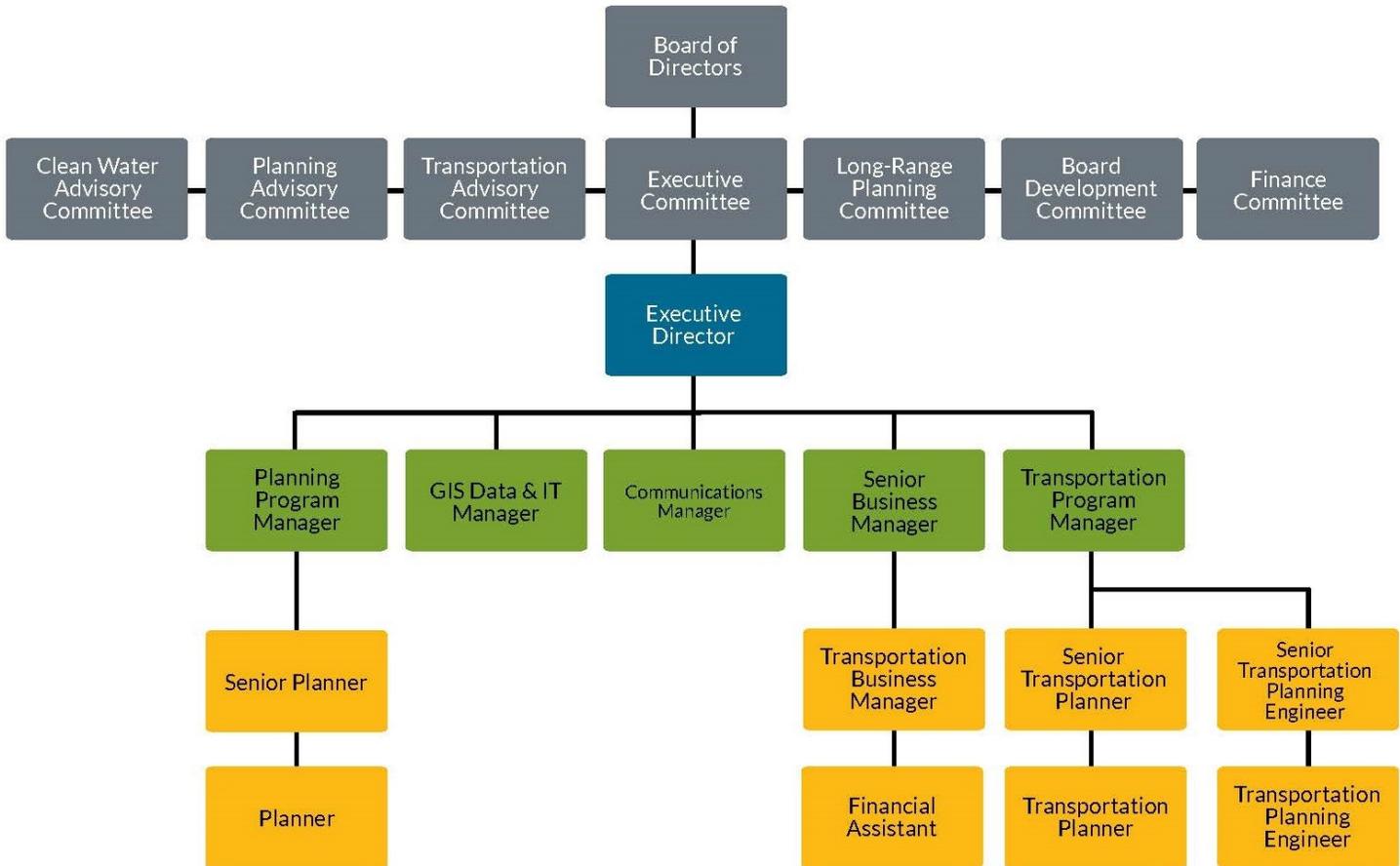
All non-municipal Board members are At-Large Board members. At-Large Board members (Agriculture, Socio-Economic-Housing, Industrial/Business, Conservation/Environmental and Railroad Industry) are appointed by the Commission. The Vermont Secretary of Transportation or his/her designated alternate represents the State of Vermont Agency of Transportation. In addition, the following entities appoint their respective representatives and alternates: FHWA, FTA, CCTA, and the BIA.



## Committees

The CCRPC has eight committees. They are: Executive, Finance, Board Development, Unified Planning Work Plan, Long-Range Planning, Planning Advisory, Transportation Advisory, and Clean Water Advisory.

All CCRPC Board members are encouraged to participate in a minimum of at least one standing committee.



### Executive Committee

The Commission annually elects three officers, a Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer as members of the Executive Committee. In addition, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission annually elects two municipal Board members to the Executive Committee. One municipal Board member of the Executive Committee represents a community of 5000+ population; the other, a community of less than 5000 population, based on information from the latest census or population estimate completed by the US Census Bureau.

#### Key Duties

- Facilitate the administration of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
- Ensure that policy and planning recommendations are brought before the Board
- Ensure that the decisions of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission are implemented



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### **Finance Committee (FC)**

The Finance Committee oversees the Commission finances and matters related to organizational Finances. The Chair of the Finance Committee is the Commission Secretary/Treasurer. There may be up to three additional members, including the Commission Vice-Chair and two members of the Board.

#### Key Duties

1. Oversee Organizational Finances
2. Oversee Annual Budget
3. Oversee Annual Organizational Audit and Report

### **Board Development Committee (BDC)**

The Board Development Committee oversees the Commission's nominating process, updates to the bylaws, Board member development, communications, and engagement. The Chair of the Board Development Committee is the Immediate Past (unless he/she is unavailable, and then the Executive Committee appoints a Chair). There may be up to four additional members of the Board of Directors.

#### Key Duties

1. Preparation of Slate of Officers
2. Review/Update of Organizational Bylaws
3. Conduct Board Member Recruitment in Coordination with Municipal Legislative Bodies

### **Unified Planning Work Plan Committee (UPWPC)**

The Unified Planning Work Plan Committee oversees the Commission's annual work plan development process. The Chair of the Unified Planning Work Plan Committee is a Board member. There may be up to 12 members.

#### Key Duties

1. Develop Draft Annual UPWP
2. Develop Performance Measures and Monitor the Implementation of the UPWP

### **Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC)**

The Clean Water Advisory Committee oversees the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission activities and policy development regarding but not limited to, the Vermont Lake Champlain Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Plan and its related plans and programs. There may be up to 24 members.



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### **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

The Transportation Advisory Committee oversees the Commission's transportation activities and policy development funded primarily through the Federal Highway Administration Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The Chair of the Transportation Advisory Committee is a TAC member. There may be up to 33 members and representatives of organizations.

#### Key Duties

1. Review MTP Updates and Amendments
2. Recommend the TIP and TIP Amendments, Sidewalk & Transportation Enhancement
3. Oversee the Selection of Consultants for MPO Funded Projects & Programs

### **Planning Advisory Committee (PAC)**

The Planning Advisory Committee oversees the Commission's regional planning activities and policy development. The Chair of the Planning Advisory Committee will be a PAC member. There may be up to 31 members and representatives of organizations.

#### Key Duties

1. Review of Municipal Plans
2. Review Act 250 & Section 248 Policy & Projects of Regional Significance
3. Coordinate Cross Cutting Planning Issues with the Regional Plan

### **Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC)**

The Long Range Planning Committee oversees the Commission's development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Regional Plan (RP), and other associated long range planning activities. The Chair of the Long Range Planning Committee will be a Board member. There may be up to 14 members and representatives of organizations.

#### Key Duties

1. Develop the Metropolitan Transportation Plan
2. Develop the Regional Plan
3. Prepare an Annual Report of Indicators on the Region's Progress Toward Meeting Regional and Transportation Planning Goals



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## **The Role of the Citizen Planner**

As a Citizen Planner you can look forward to a rich and challenging experience! To help you better understand your role, please read the full [Board Member Job Description](#).

Being an effective Board member requires you to get involved in your community, be informed, communicate with your Selectboard, Trustees or City Council, and use common sense, fairness, and objectivity in all of the decisions that come before you. It is your responsibility to balance the public good with private rights and interests. Most of all, this Board makes decisions that impact an entire region, so it is important to be able to “think regionally” even though you are representing a local municipality or organization.

To understand what “regional planning” is, it helps first to understand that a “region” is a set of places that share common features or characteristics so that they relate to each other in one or more significant ways. These relationships may be defined by a specific geography (i.e. Chittenden County), a common natural resource (such as a watershed), a feature of the built-environment (such as a highway corridor), or a non-physical social, economic, or political feature (such as a housing market area).

Each place in a region is interrelated with the other places in the region. Consequently, it is challenging for any one place to successfully address a regional concern without considering what is happening in the region’s other places. By understanding what is happening in the entire region and coordinating local actions, a region’s places can address opportunities and problems more effectively and efficiently.



## Board Member Roles, Responsibilities, & Expectations

Your role is important and the public trust is invested in you. In addition to the Job Description below, take a look at the [Job Description and Expanded Duties](#).

### BOARD MEMBER JOB DESCRIPTION

#### Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Define and oversee the vision and mission of the organization and keep it relevant to the needs of the region and its individual local governments and communities;
2. Approve programs and services and monitor their effectiveness and usefulness;
3. Provide strategic guidance to the organization and the Executive Director; and
4. Ensure financial solvency, integrity, and soundness.

#### Keep Your Commitments:

- a. Know the organization's vision, mission, goals, products, and services;
- b. Do your homework before all meetings; and
- c. Focus on solving problems and achieving positive results for the region.

### Here are some tips to help you in this role:

- Recognize and avoid, or make public, any conflict of interest your position may place you in as defined in Article XII of the CCRPC Bylaws;
- Don't pursue special privileges;
- Maintain confidentiality;
- Let your behavior contribute to the smooth operation of the Board. Since so much of your time is spent in meetings, you can help them run efficiently by preparing ahead and following the rules and agreements;
- Ask questions to gain a fuller understanding of the topics at hand;
- Communicate regularly with your local legislative body and/or constituents; and
- Become familiar with the laws that cover public open meetings and hearings.

During your term, you will become conversant in planning lingo; new terms, acronyms, and legal citations such as Act 250, TIP, and ANR will be rolling off your tongue. There will be a virtual alphabet soup of just the acronyms. (Never be afraid to ask for explanations of terms you don't understand.)

You will form new relationships with other boards and commissions; you will learn to write legally binding policies; and you will have the opportunity to influence decision making that may stand for decades.

There will be times when your decisions, in whole or in part, may not be popular. Some of these may be challenged in court or written up in the local paper. You'll be thought of as a villain by some and a hero by others and the tides can change easily.

There will be times when the learning curve is steep, so take advantage of any training opportunities in order to learn about general planning issues and technical topics which will be the underpinning of your decision making process.



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## Planning Basics

Regional planning involves a wide range of activities, such as:

- Land use planning;
- Economic development;
- Community wellness;
- Transportation planning;
- Conservation and recreation;
- Historic preservation; and
- Fiscal planning.

Planning can address just about any issue of regional concern. The regional planning commission is the primary body responsible for planning for the region, concentrating on writing the regional plan. Regional planning can be divided into two steps:

**Planning**, where the visions and goals of the community are discussed and established and a means of achieving the goals are determined. Typically, this is done in conjunction with the adoption or amendment of a municipal plan, but doesn't need to be. The development of a specific plan such as a recreational plan or open space plan would follow the same process.

**Implementation**, where the goals from the planning stage are brought to reality through projects or regulations. The development of projects and regulations is principally undertaken by local and state government in Vermont.



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## Regional Planning

Planning for an entire region is especially challenging. While we all agree that Chittenden County should be a “great place to live, work and play,” there are myriad visions of exactly what this means and which actions we should undertake to achieve this goal. The CCRPC is statutorily designated as the County’s official forum for developing public consensus on the future of Chittenden County.

In Vermont, planning is performed collaboratively by the State, RPCs, and municipalities. Laws define how this collaboration is to work, specifying different responsibilities for each level of government. This means that the regional planning undertaken by each RPC is intended to be different from the planning undertaken by municipalities and the State.

Regional planning performed by RPCs is at an intermediate level between the most local planning performed by municipalities and the most general planning performed by the State. As a consequence, it makes sense that the regional planning responsibilities of RPCs are intended primarily to promote the coordination and collaboration of planning activities, both between each RPC’s member municipalities and between those municipalities and the State.

The State calls upon each RPC to fulfill the following duties:

1. Promote the mutual cooperation of the RPC’s member municipalities and cooperate with neighboring states, regions, counties, and municipalities;
2. Assist and advise municipalities in the preparation of plans, studies, and Bylaws regarding the appropriate development and use of the region’s physical and human resources;
3. Prepare a regional plan at least every eight years;
4. Review proposed State capital expenditures for compatibility with the RPC’s regional plan and assist municipalities in assessing compatibility with municipal plans;
5. Appear before District Environmental Commissions to aid in *Act-250* reviews of proposed developments and appear before the Public Service Board to aid in *Section-248* reviews of proposed utilities; and
6. Confirm municipal planning programs and approve municipal plans.

In order to fulfill these responsibilities, the State empowers each RPC to exercise certain powers:

1. Prepare studies, plans, and recommendations on a broad set of issues;
2. Retain staff and consultant assistance, enter upon land with the prior approval of the owner to make examinations and surveys, hold public hearings, and require municipalities and the State to provide information;
3. Carry out, with the cooperation of member municipalities, programs for the appropriate development and use of the region’s physical and human resources; and
4. Perform other acts or functions that the RPC deems to be necessary or appropriate.

The [CCRPC Bylaws](#) provide details on many of these powers and duties, as well as the strategies that CCRPC has embraced to use them to promote the well-being of Chittenden County.



## Transportation Planning

The surface transportation system is not just highways, but a wide array of modes that are used to provide mobility and serve the economic and social needs of the region.

A region, however you define it, can have a range of transportation types, but to get them to function effectively as a system takes transportation planning to develop the initiatives, both projects and operational strategies, that will optimize its utility.

Regional transportation needs at any level can be met by some combination of several planning approaches:

1. Modifying or adopting strategies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing operations;
2. Developing policies to influence transportation behavior and practice; and
3. Construction of new or enhancement of existing capital projects.

As the region changes over time, transportation needs, and the demands on the existing system, are also likely to change. So transportation planning is an ongoing process that has to factor in how the system is performing in relation to those changing needs and demands—and performance will be affected by the condition of the system's components.

Transportation planning is about more than just transportation. It must account for the extended and unintended impacts of the transportation system, and strike a balance in relation to non-transportation policies. The location, construction, and operation of transportation systems have effects that are the focus of non-transportation statutes.

Transportation shapes and is shaped by all aspects of community life. Non-transportation policy decisions—on land use, housing, economic development, and social services—made by State, regional, and local agencies can have a bearing on transportation decisions.

Because of this interdependency, a number of other laws—Federal, State, and local—bear on transportation planning.

- **Land use decisions** are generally in the purview of State governments and have often been delegated down to the city and county level. This means that generally State DOTs and MPOs do not control this process.
- Because **traffic congestion contributes significantly to air pollution**, planning efforts to reduce congestion are a key Federal requirement.
- Federal transportation law and regulations tie into the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**, which requires varying levels of environmental review, depending upon the nature of the transportation initiative.
- **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** requires universality of design. In transportation, this particularly impacts public transit infrastructure and vehicles.
- **Environmental justice under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act** means that the effects of transportation initiatives may not adversely affect the well-being of any subgroup of the population in a discriminatory manner.

Planning is clearly important, but regional transportation planning is essential. Planning that pulls in adjoining jurisdictions, the affected stakeholders, and the public has the greatest likelihood of yielding a system that will anticipate and support future needs.



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## The Importance of Public Engagement

Community planning and regional planning enable people with different outlooks and awareness to learn about important and sometimes controversial matters, to agree on common objectives, and to collaborate on undertaking coordinated agendas of actions. Planning by public bodies strives to engage people not only because our laws and democratic traditions require it, but also because public engagement makes planning better. Planning that engages affected people, communities, and organizations promotes:

- Greater understanding of key facts,
- Deeper and more widespread appreciation of divergent views,
- Increased consensus on important goals and objectives, and
- Improved collaboration in undertaking complicated sequences of interrelated actions.

## Additional Resources

- [CCRPC Bylaws](#)
- [Committee Charters](#)
- [Full Board Member Job Description & Duties](#)
- [CCRPC Work Program & Budget](#)
- [CCRPC Regional Plan](#)
- [Community Statistics](#)
- [CCRPC Staff Directory](#)

## Training Videos

- [How to be an Effective Board Member](#)
- [Board Decision Making & RPC Basics](#)
- [MPO Basics](#)
- [Understanding Our Budget](#)
- [Regional Planning](#)
- [Transportation Planning \[Handout\]](#)
- [Emergency Management & Mitigation](#)
- [Natural Resources, Climate and Brownfields](#)
- [Economic Development](#)