

ONE REGION FUND

at The New York Community Trust

THE ONE REGION FUNDERS' GROUP OVERVIEW

The One Region Funders' Group is a partnership of private funders from Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey learning and working together to advance and support transportation planning and reform in the Tri-State region. Participating funders recognize that transportation is an area not well served by philanthropy, yet is one that offers high leverage opportunities to affect decisions impacting quality of life, economic competitiveness, and opportunity in the region. Transportation is also an issue of great public interest and concern in many parts of the Tri-State region. Among their varied program activities, members of this funders' collaborative have established a grantmaking fund, the One Region Fund, at the New York Community Trust.

Mission

The mission of the One Region Funders' Group is to help the Tri-State metropolitan region of Connecticut-New York-New Jersey achieve a more sustainable transportation system that enhances economic competitiveness, while it protects public health and safety, promotes environmental quality, and supports social equity, by increasing the influence and coordination of philanthropic contributions and leadership.

Problem Statement

The tri-state New York City metropolitan region faces a number of threats to its quality of life, environment, and status as one of the economic leaders in the nation. At 22 million¹ in population, the region is fast approaching "build-out" of developable lands in many areas, including Long Island, North Jersey, Westchester and Fairfield counties. In addition, half a century of exclusionary zoning, inequitable tax structures, and other harmful policies have created some of the greatest disparities between rich and poor in the nation. This is an issue of race and class, but also of geography, with the region's older cities and towns (excluding Manhattan) becoming increasingly isolated from high growth economic opportunities.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau New York CSMA 2005 – population 21,923,089

While the region has an extraordinary asset in its transportation infrastructure, it is an asset that has reached its physical limitations in many ways, and that now requires major retrofits and reinvestment. Furthermore, transportation benefits are not equally accessible to all the region's residents. Decades of sprawl development have generated automobile and truck congestion that exceeds the region's carrying capacity on its major roadways and highways. This traffic congestion causes delays for millions of commuters, threatens commerce and the ability to move goods, and contributes toward air pollution, climate change, land consumption, and diminished public health. Transportation investment decisions made by public agencies and authorities lie at the heart of many of these problems. If these decisions are approached differently, they would provide huge leverage for positive change. The Tri-State region can no longer afford to continue transportation decision-making as usual. With economic prosperity, public health, and livable communities at stake, advocates and philanthropy need to engage in the transportation discussion in an immediate and pro-active way.

An Opportunity for Funder Collaboration

In the winter of 2004, the New York Community Trust and its affiliates -- the Westchester and Long Island Community Foundations -- convened a small group of civic, environmental, and philanthropic leaders to discuss ways to promote smarter land use decision-making in the Tri-State Metropolitan region. This meeting was organized with support from the Funders' Network for Smart Growth & Livable Communities. Following this meeting, funders decided to work together on transportation reform in the Tri-State region for four reasons. First, transportation is an issue that quite literally connects funders in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey. Second, transportation is at a point of crucial long term capital investment and policy decision making. Third, philanthropy places high priorities on many issues affected by transportation investments including environmental protection (air pollution, global warming, biodiversity and habitat protection, open space), economic opportunity (workforce development, economic development, urban revitalization), and social equity (access to jobs, housing, and services for low income communities and seniors, environmental justice). Fourth, philanthropy can play important and visible roles in the transportation arena as investors, partners, educators, and conveners. Funders can leverage their effectiveness by reaching out and working with other sectors -- business, civic, nonprofit, and government. By sharing information and making collaborative grants, funders can expand their understanding of and influence over transportation issues in the tri-state region. Wins on transportation leverage wins in many other critical issue areas.

Participating Funders

Sharon Alpert and Helen Chin, Surdna Foundation

Eileen Auld and Rei Perez, Citigroup

Yolanda Caldera-Durant, Fairfield County Community Foundation

Don Chen, Ford Foundation

Nicole Chevalier and Ashley Sklar, Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation

Hans Dekker, Community Foundation of New Jersey

Laura Hansen, J.M. Kaplan Fund

Pat Jenny, New York Community Trust

Michelle Knapik, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation

Richard Manson, Local Initiatives Support Corporation

Catherine Marsh and Laura Rossi-Ortiz, Westchester Community Foundation

John McNally, Rauch Foundation

Jenny-Ann Kerschner, Fund for New Jersey

Suzu Sonenberg and Sol Marie Jones, Long Island Community Foundation

Grantees Supported by the One Region Fund from 2006-2008

In its first three years, **the One Region Fund at the New York Community Trust has made grants totaling \$1,672,000** to support strategic transportation reform and promote transit investment and transit-centered community development in the Tri-State region. These grants include:

- \$385,000 in December 2006 to Tri-State Transportation Campaign for work to support smart transportation outcomes by encouraging reform at state transportation agencies in the Tri-State region, with emphasis on expanding and deepening the significant change in transportation planning and spending framework in New Jersey, while simultaneously promoting adoption of similar transportation reform policies at transportation agencies in New York and Connecticut.
- \$355,000 in February 2008 to Tri-State Transportation Campaign to reform state transportation agencies in the three state region, and to design and develop a Transit-Centered Development Community Assistance Grants Initiative on behalf of the One Region Funders' Group, and \$150,000 for Community Assistance Grants.
- \$425,000 in February 2009 to Tri-State Transportation Campaign to reform state transportation agencies in the region, manage a Community Assistance Grants Initiative supporting Transit Centered Development, and coordinate communications

and working relationships between regional and national transportation advocates around stimulus spending and transportation reauthorization.

- \$110,000 in December 2006 to Regional Plan Association to support a research and action strategy aimed at developing the next generation of transportation investments to support sustainable and equitable growth in the Tri-State region, and for participation in the Transit for Connecticut coalition.
- \$100,000 in February 2008 to Regional Plan Association to support planning and implementation of two Mayors' Institutes on Transit-Centered Development for Greater New York and southwestern Connecticut.
- \$67,000 in January 2007 to Connecticut Fund for the Environment for two related activities: 1) a bus transit needs analysis and plan for bus service investments in Connecticut, and 2) coordination of a broad-based coalition to educate policymakers and the public about the importance of increased state investment in bus transit for job access, economic development, environmental protection, smarter growth, and congestion relief.
- \$50,000 in February 2008 to Connecticut Fund for the Environment to support the second year of the Transit for Connecticut Coalition in its efforts to secure significant increased in state investment in bus transit services in Connecticut.
- \$30,000 in April 2007 to New Jersey Future to develop and distribute informational materials about transit villages for local officials, professionals, and citizens, and conduct targeted outreach and presentations to select communities considering transit villages in New Jersey.

Foundation Outreach and Educational Activities

- One Region has co-sponsored three funder educational briefings in Connecticut in January 2006, November 2006, and January 2008. Discussions at the November 2006 briefing led to the creation of the Transit for Connecticut Coalition.
- June 2006 *Issue Briefing and Roundtable Discussion on Transportation Planning and Reform* co-sponsored with the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers
- January 2007 Briefing: *You Can't Get There from Here: A Transportation Briefing for the Tri-State Metropolitan Region* co-sponsored with the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers, Connecticut Council for Philanthropy and Council of New Jersey Grantmakers
- September 2007 Long Island Community Forum: *Transportation Solutions for Long Island: Towards Transit-Centered Community Development* co-sponsored with Hofstra Center for Suburban Studies, Long Island Community Foundation, Long Island

Regional Planning Board, New York Community Trust, Rauch Foundation, Sustainable Long Island, Tri-State Transportation Campaign and Vision Long Island.

- November 2007 Funder Site Visit to the Hudson Bergen Light Rail Line co-sponsored by One Region Funders' Group, the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers, and the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers.
- December 2008 Funder Briefing on Transit Oriented Development Opportunities in New York City, co-sponsored with the New York Regional Association of Grantmakers.
- One Region members and staff have written articles for the Council of New Jersey Grantmakers' *Perspectives* Newsletter, for the Connecticut Council for Philanthropy's e-newsletter, for the Environmental Grantmakers Association's Spring 2008 Journal, and One Region has been featured in the e-newsletter of the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities.

For More Information

The One Region Funders' Group is staffed by the Funders' Network for Smart Growth & Livable Communities. For more information, please contact:

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