

Hi, just a reminder that you're receiving this email because you have expressed an interest in Western Piedmont Council of Governments. Don't forget to add jason.toney@wpcog.org to your address book so we'll be sure to land in your inbox!

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.



WPCOG - Newsletter

November 2018

Table of Contents

Calendar of Events



**Area Agency
on Aging**
2018 Caregivers
Conference...

[Learn more](#)



**Community & Economic
Development**
WPCOG Provides Grant
Assistance for New Hydrogen
Company in Long View...

[Learn more](#)



**Community & Regional
Planning**
- NADO Recognizes the Burke
Quality of Life Explorer
- Stormwater Public Outreach

[Learn more](#)



**IT/GIS
Services**
WPCOG Hosts the 2018 NC
Government GIS
Symposium... [Learn more](#)



**Regional Housing
Authority**
Volunteering Towards 300-
Hours of Sweat Equity...
[Learn more](#)



**Transportation
Planning**
GHMPO recommends \$6.3
million for three new local
projects... [Learn more](#)



**Workforce
Development Board**
Western Piedmont Region
ReEntry Initiative...
[Learn more](#)



Transportation

The Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization recommends \$6.3 million for three new local projects

The Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) recommends funding three new bicycle and pedestrian projects, two sponsored by the City of Hickory and one sponsored by the City of Morganton. The funding source is the federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Direct Apportionment (STBG-DA) grants, for which the four-county region receives \$3.2 million annually. Bicycle and pedestrian projects are encouraged through the Local Administered Project Program (LAPP) administered by Greater Hickory MPO.

Each of the newly recommended projects helps close a gap or build upon other trail projects. The three newest projects include 1) Old Lenoir Rd between River Walk and Downtown Hickory, 2) 9th St NW between Old Lenoir Rd and City Walk in Hickory, and 3) College St between US 70 and the Catawba River-Downtown Connector on N Green St. The list and maps of projects can be accessed online at the [Local Administered Projects Program page](#).

Article by Brian Horton

Workforce Development Board
Western Piedmont Region ReEntry Initiative



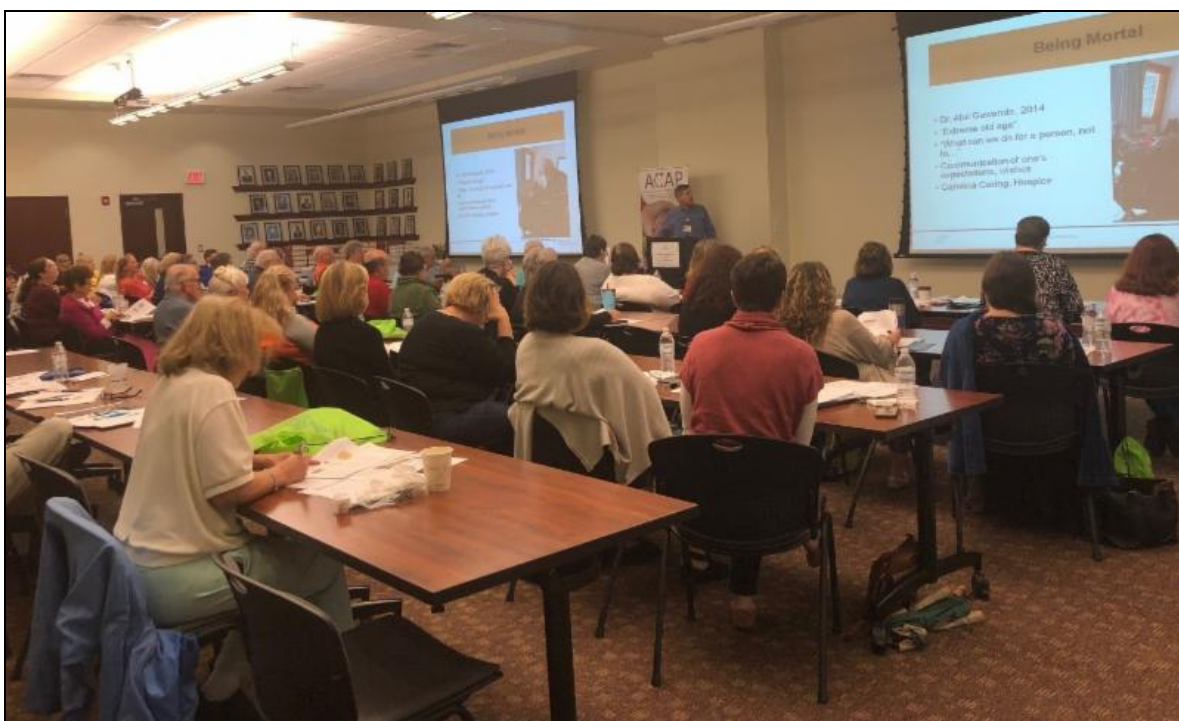
Many of our region's job seekers are disqualified before they even get an opportunity to share their skills. With national data showing that 1 in 3 adults have a criminal record of some kind, employers could be missing out on many qualified applicants. In order to help job seekers with criminal records and our employers, the NC Department of Commerce has developed a Reentry Initiative to provide resources and assistance to job seekers with criminal records and help them overcome the barriers toward employment that are created by a criminal record. The Western Piedmont Regional NCWorks staff have been trained and are ready to help these job seekers find employment and locate resources to meet their needs. On September 11, 2018 businesses/employers in the Western Piedmont Region had the opportunity to attend an Equitable Hiring Luncheon to find out the gains of hiring applicants with a criminal record. In addition to the services provided to all job seekers, individuals with a criminal record have access to the following:

- Help with writing resumes and a "letter of explanation" detailing their criminal record and/or incarceration and indicating rehabilitative efforts.
- Knowledge about employers' policies concerning hiring individuals with a criminal record.
- Workshops specific to addressing concerns of individuals with criminal records.
- Referrals to community organizations that assist individuals with criminal records.
- Information on Federal Bonding and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.

In addition to the economic value of obtaining employment, an individual who finds a job is less likely to be re-arrested or return to prison than those who do not obtain employment. On November 29th the Western Piedmont Workforce Board in collaboration with NC Commerce's Reentry Initiative will host a Regional Reentry meeting at WPCOG. Registration for the meeting will be forthcoming. If you are interested in attending this event, please contact Leslie Farris.

Article by Wendy Johnson

Area Agency on Aging
2018 Caregivers Conference



November is National Caregiver Month and an opportune time for AAA Family Caregiver Support Program to recognize and honor family caregivers by collaborating with ACAP (Adult Children of Aging Parents) Hickory and Carolina Caring to host the 4th annual regional Caregiver Conference, Friday, November 2, 2018. The theme for 2018 conference was *Caregiving: Finding Your Way*.

The focus for the conference, along with National Caregiver Month, was to provide caregivers with practical strategies to be effective caregivers and advocate for older adults they are caring for. Guest presenters for the conference were from Piedmont HealthCare, Winston Salem, Wake Forest Health Network and Brian Hissom & Associates. These experts in the area of older adults and caregivers offered participants information about realistic challenges facing caregivers, along with practical knowledge and resources to assist them.

Bob Cain, with Piedmont HealthCare presented advice on "What I Wish I Had Known", with advice on detailing available options and resources an older adult may qualify for. Defining terms used with older adult community were explained and what options caregivers may have when caring for a family member.

"Aging Gracefully, I Should Have Known Better" by Dr. Brian Vierling showcased physical and mental issues we might all face as we grow older, and a foundation of information to guide all older adults toward better quality of life. Additionally, Dr. Vierling reminded caregivers how important and beneficial rest, self-awareness and a sense of purpose can be for all older adults.

During their presentation of "Caring for Yourself and Another-Finding the Balance", Brian Hissom and Gary Indenbaum encouraged caregivers while providing avenues for balancing the role of caregiving and the importance of self-care. Participants were given reasonable, everyday illustrations of challenges facing families, while also providing practical resources to help with staying on the right track. Caregivers were cautioned and encouraged to follow avenues which might be most beneficial for them on their caregiving journey.

The 4th annual Caregiver Conference was successful and participants were positively encouraged, supported and educated by the expert presenters. We look forward to future collaborations to offer caregivers support and recognition on their path to caring for older adults. Thank you to our conference sponsors: GOLD: Home Instead, Catawba Valley Health System, Lutheran Services Carolinas, PACE@Home; SILVER: Hickory Falls Health and Rehabilitation, Adult Life Programs; BRONZE: SIR and Kindred@Home.

Article by Mary Mitchell

WPCOG Provides Grant Assistance for New Hydrogen Company in Long View



A manufacturer of hydrogen gas, along with storage and dispensing equipment, has been awarded a \$250,000 grant to renovate a building in Long View and plans to create 21 new, full-time jobs within the next two years.

OneH2, Inc. plans to renovate the 80,000-square-foot former Forest City Tools building - located at 620 23rd St NW - thanks to an N.C. Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Building Reuse Grant. The Western Piedmont Council of Governments facilitated the grant development and will provide administrative support for the project.

OneH2 officials said a key factor in choosing to locate in Long View is due to the town's high-capacity natural gas lines. Along with making zero-emission hydrogen, the company plans to store and distribute its product for multiple uses, including industrial forklifts and short-range commercial trucks.

"We are excited that this company has chosen Long View for this unique venture that will greatly enhance our manufacturing community," Long View Mayor Marla Thompson said. "We welcome our new company with open arms and believe that it will be a substantially important addition to our business community."

OneH2 has committed to creating new jobs that will feature an average annual pay of \$68,276, which is well above the Catawba County average.



WPCOG Assistant Executive Director Sherry Long, along with Community and Economic Development Administrator Erin Schotte, worked with OneH2 and the Town of Long View to help make the project a reality.

"Thanks to the assistance of the Western Piedmont Council of Governments, this new venture in Long View will receive needed funds for improvements to the old Forest City Tools plant," Thompson said.

The improvements include new roofing, renovations to the manufacturing and office areas, and improvements to the flooring.

The grant program offered by the state is a competitive process and assists businesses seeking to bring new life into vacant buildings. For grant payments to be issued, all expenditures must be documented and the new jobs must be verified and maintained.

Article by Paul Teague

Community & Regional Planning

NADO Recognizes the Burke Quality of Life Explorer



On October 13, the Western Piedmont Council of Government's Burke Quality of Life Explorer was recognized at the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) annual training conference held in Charlotte, NC.

Healthy Places NC, an initiative started by the Kate B Reynolds Charitable Trust, looks to improve health outcomes in several North Carolina Counties, including Burke County. Burke County faces several major health challenges including physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and disease prevention. The Western Piedmont Council of

Governments is committed to addressing Burke County's major health challenges by identifying and sharing high quality data through the continued development of the Burke Quality of Life Explorer.

WPCOG staff created the Burke Quality of Life Explorer web tool in 2017. The free web mapping tool contains numerous community asset data sets including school and church locations, community gardens and farmers market locations, grocery stores, WIC and SNAP approved suppliers/retailers, child care centers, restaurants, existing sidewalks, bike lanes and greenways, parks and recreation centers, medical office facilities, chronic disease rate data (provided by Carolinas Health Care System) and Census data. The Burke Quality of Life Explorer may be accessed through the WPCOG website (www.wpcog.org).

Data analysis using the Quality of Life Explorer can help users identify existing places to be active, provide additional places to be active, improve access to healthier foods and local farmers markers, community gardens and grocery stores. Another key to realizing healthy outcomes in Burke County will be the reduction of chronic health disease rates such as cancer, diabetes, COPD, hypertension and kidney disease. The ability to achieve these improvements depends heavily on the widespread availability of reliable and relevant data, which will enable stakeholders to implement quantifiable solutions.

Public input is another important element in the success of the Quality of Life Explorer. During the creation of the mapping tool, over 200 comments were received from the public which improved the quality of the data used in the explorer. Additional feedback from surveys, presentations, and trainings has led to additional data layers being added to the explorer over the past two years.

The ultimate goal of the Quality of Life Explorer is to improve the county's health over the next ten years by providing a reliable source of data that will empower users to make informed decisions. WPCOG staff is equally committed to providing on-site training opportunities and encouraging nonprofits to incorporate the Quality of Life Explorer into a data-driven decision making framework. For additional information about the Burke Quality of Life Explorer please contact [Todd Stroupe](#), [Duncan Cavanaugh](#) or [Taylor Dellinger](#).

Article by Taylor Dellinger

Stormwater Public Information and Outreach



Recently, local government received correspondence from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Energy, Mineral & Land Resources Stormwater Program about their federal Phase II NPDES Stormwater permit. The program began the process of collecting surveys from local governments to better determine who and how to audit the local government's Phase II Stormwater programs.

Jeanette Powell, MS4 Program Coordinator with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality was present to give a presentation on the MS4 Stormwater Permit Program at the Western Piedmont Water Resources Committee held on Wednesday, November 7th at the WPCOG Offices. This gave the local governments an opportunity to ask questions about some of the changes being made to that program. There are six minimum measures that the local government must meet as part of their permit. They include:

- Public Education and Outreach on Stormwater Impacts
- Public Involvement and Participation
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control
- Post-Construction Stormwater Management in New Development and Redevelopment
- Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

As listed above, one of the requirements of the stormwater program is to conduct outreach and education. The Western Piedmont Stormwater Partnership, now in its eighth year, was formed to assist the local governments in our region who are obligated to manage stormwater runoff under a federal Phase II NPDES Stormwater permit. The Partnership is an ongoing collaborative effort lead by WPCOG to collectively and adequately fulfill education and outreach requirements of active Phase II Stormwater Permit holders, with a minimal burden on local government staff.

Participating governments share equitably in the cost and benefits of the program. Currently, each partner's portion is determined using a base fee of \$1,000, plus a portion based on the local government's population (Population X 25% = the dollar portion). If you are interested in being a member of the Stormwater Partnership, please contact [John E. Wear](#) at (828) 485-4283.

Article by John E. Wear

IT/GIS Services

WPCOG Hosts the 2018 NC Government GIS Symposium



In October, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) professionals from across North Carolina and Virginia converged on Hickory for the 2018 NC Government GIS Symposium. Nearly 60 persons attended the North Carolina ArcGIS Users Group (NCAUG) event at the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) to see experts share the latest techniques and issues of GIS utilization in local governments.

The Symposium's agenda included four presentations by GIS professionals from WPCOG, Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), University of North Carolina-Wilmington (UNCW) and MapAnything, Inc., as well as a discussion panel who reviewed GIS aspects of the response to Hurricane Florence. In the opening slot, GIS staff from WPCOG discussed how they teamed with engineers during a wastewater GIS project in Drexel, NC. The representative from ESRI shared the latest technology of online GIS for emergency management. A faculty member from UNC-W shared an assessment, which the University conducted of household vulnerability to flooding throughout coastal NC, and the presenter from MapAnything provided a demonstration of her company's geo-productivity platform.



NCAUG sponsors the Government Symposium annually in accordance with its mission to "provide a forum for the exchange and distribution of knowledge, techniques and data for people across NC using and/or associated with software produced by ESRI." WPCOG staff have been proud to host the event in Hickory for the past eleven years, and look forward to continue working with NCAUG to help local governments Statewide serve their communities with the latest in GIS technology.

For more information about NCAUG and future GIS events, please visit

their website at ncaug.com.

Regional Housing Authority Volunteering Towards 300-Hours of Sweat Equity



Tuesday, October 30, the Regional Housing Authority (RHA) participated in a volunteer day with Habitat for Humanity, to help earn sweat equity hours for a shared client. Through Habitat for Humanity, applicants who meet the criteria and are accepted into the homeownership program must complete 300 sweat equity hours per adult family member. The applicant's friends or family members can volunteer to donate their time towards the requirement.

Ms. Dixon has been a Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher participant with the Regional Housing Authority since 2012 and recently became a participant in our Family Self-Sufficiency Program | REACH. As a REACH participant, Ms. Dixon has had the opportunity to share her goals and dreams with RHA staff, who in turn connected her to community resources to help reach those goals. Ms. Dixon shared that she had been working toward homeownership with Habitat for Humanity and still needed to finish her sweat equity requirement. She also informed RHA staff that with her new job, reaching the 300-hour requirement would be difficult. Ms. Dixon is determined to achieve her goals; she works full time with a company in Caldwell County, raises her grandchildren, and has a strong desire to help others.

To make sure that Ms. Dixon was able to accomplish her goal of being a homeowner, RHA staff volunteered their time toward her 300-hour sweat equity requirement. When we made Ms. Dixon aware of our decision to volunteer our time toward her sweat equity requirement, she cried and thanked us. She gushed to RHA staff, "You may not understand the difference you are making in my grandchildren's lives. This house is going to be more than just a roof over their heads. A stable home and stable environment is something every child deserves, and I'm just so grateful you all are going to help me provide that! I'm just overjoyed".

We too are thrilled that Ms. Dixon is close to reaching her sweat equity requirement. The Caldwell County Habitat for Humanity provides a wonderful experience for both volunteers and program participants.

If you are interested in participating in volunteer opportunities with the Regional Housing Authority, please contact [Kala Guido](#) at 828-485-4282 to learn about how you can participate with the EnVision Center.

Calendar of Events

November

27 - WPCOG Policy Board Meeting (6pm)

28 - Greater Hickory MPO TAC/TCC (2pm/3:30pm)

December

4 - WPAQC Meeting (10am)

19 - Greater Hickory MPO TAC/TCC (2pm/3:30pm)

21 - WPCOG Executive Committee Meeting (TBD)

Stay Connected



1880 2nd Ave NW · Hickory, NC 28601 · 828.322.9191
www.wpcog.org