

Priority Pathways - Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG)

Advisory Committee – Meeting #5

Below is a summary of the December 10, 2025, Priority Pathways Advisory Committee meeting #5, held at CRCOG. The meeting spanned 12-1:35pm.

Attendees

CRCOG: Mike Cipriano, Anaka Maher, Heidi Samokar

Toole Design: Shawna Kitzman, Quinn Molloy, Kate Rozen

Foursquare ITP: Kyle Hearing (online)

Advisory Committee: Kimberly Bradley, Patrice Carson, Leigh-Marie Chin, Mary Cockram, Joseph Dickerson, CJ Gandza, Hailey Fournier, Kristjana Kabilo, Christopher Roberts, Natalie Shurtleff, Erin Spalding, Kevin Sullivan, Jason Theriault, Grayson Wright

Meeting Overview

The meeting focused on reviewing the updated network and discussing how to prioritize corridors and segments based on project goals.

Prioritization Activity

Quinn Molloy introduced an activity to inform prioritization of corridors and segments, emphasizing that all factors will be incorporated in some element of the network, and that prioritization metrics are to inform decision making.

The framing questions included:

1. What overarching goals have shaped recent projects in your town or sector?
2. Which user groups are of particular concern?
3. Are there reasons a project should be addressed before its scheduled ranking?
4. How should constraints (e.g., environmental, safety, ownership) factor into prioritization?

The room was divided into three breakout groups.

Group 1 (Shawna)

Erin Spalding noted that Achilles athletes sometimes experience injuries on regional trail, which they use frequently to train for long- and short-distance races. Quinn stated that bicyclist and pedestrian injury rates will not be used as a prioritization factor because they are difficult to measure. Shawna added that the Achilles Foundation (who are involved in insurance claims for athletes) likely has more insight into injuries and near misses than most local governments, as these incidents are often underreported.

Jason emphasized the importance of pedestrian connectivity within CTDOT District 1. Kristi explained that Traffic Safety reviews major traffic generators, such as large commercial developments and

multi-unit housing, and evaluates bicycle and pedestrian safety alongside AADT, including considerations like buffered shoulders, Complete Streets elements, and existing and planned destinations.

Grayson explained that the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) selection process considers cost effectiveness, regional significance, maintenance, and plan consistency. He noted that bicycle and pedestrian projects often struggle to compete with traffic flow improvements like roundabouts due to their high measurable impact on a reduction in emissions, which is weighted heavily in the CMAQ selection criteria specifically. Towns retain maintenance responsibility for certain sidewalks and signals, even on state roads or intersections.

CTDOT's Vendors in Place (VIP) program focuses on bringing state-route corridors up to standard and serves as an overlay to other project scopes.

Erin emphasized safety and connectivity, particularly regional trail access, including sidewalks, ramps, marked crossings, and signals. CTDOT applies MUTCD, the Highway Design Manual, the Traffic Design Manual, PROWAG/ADA requirements, and the Complete Streets Controlling Design Criteria, which evaluates projects without prioritizing a specific mode.

School connectivity is another key consideration. Anaka asked about access versus coverage for people with disabilities; Erin noted that access to destinations via transit or paratransit, paved facilities, and the presence of supporting amenities (such as marked crosswalks and signals) are essential.

Group 2 (Kate)

The discussion focused on connectivity and network value, coverage and cost effectiveness, and safety conditions along trails and shared-use facilities. Participants noted accounting for constraints such as environmental issues, ownership, and existing safety concerns.

Participants identified key user groups to consider for prioritization, including recreational users, commuters, vulnerable users, and equity-focused users. Emphasis should be on safety-driven prioritization and serving users who may not have access to a bicycle or other transportation options.

Jurisdictional and governance issues are significant factors. State-owned rights-of-way and highways can present challenges, making it important to identify parallel or alternative facilities where possible. Coordination among municipalities, CTDOT, and regional partners is essential to advancing projects.

Municipal representatives emphasized cost effectiveness, coverage, and connectivity, while advocacy voices focused on safety, wayfinding, equity, and connections to key destinations. CTDOT emphasized coverage, connectivity, cost-effective investments, safety for vulnerable users, and the distinction between recreational and commuting functions, with interest in quick-build approaches.

Participants also noted that economic development and community support can strengthen projects, though they are secondary to safety and connectivity. The condition of existing trails and shared-use

paths is a concern, with suggestions to improve documentation and reporting through site reviews or other assessment methods.

Group 3 (Quinn)

The group discussion began with a general consensus that Safety was the most important factor in prioritizing shared-use pathways. There was also discussion about how safety may be easier to communicate to non-expert stakeholders. Kevin and CJ discussed Mode Shift and the benefits of giving people options to travel using alternative modes of transportation; however, some felt that improving the network itself would naturally encourage mode shift, making it less necessary to target as a standalone priority.

Leigh-Marie noted that Cost Effectiveness ranked highly for her, with Kim adding that maximizing “bang for the buck” could allow the completion of more pathway miles overall, but is likely to happen regardless. This led to a discussion about whether prioritization should focus on total miles built or on access to key destinations.

From there, the group explored the distinction between Connectivity and Coverage, noting that connectivity may be more important at a local level, while coverage is better suited to a regional scale.

Access was championed by Kim, who emphasized its importance for connecting people to outdoor recreation spaces. The group also discussed the overlapping nature of many priorities. For example, safety improvements are closely tied to mode shift, as people are more likely to walk or bike where they feel safe. Similar relationships were noted throughout the discussion: improvements to safety, connectivity, and accessibility can collectively result in a more inclusive and Equitable pathway network.

Natalie also highlighted the importance of Equity, particularly for the communities she represents, and expressed a desire to see infrastructure prioritized in higher-population areas where more people could benefit. Kevin spoke about the economic benefit to households and local businesses of having many transportation options, seconded by CJ. While this might not be a prioritization measure, it should be included in the plan as it is a tangible benefit that many non-expert stakeholders understand.

After reviewing each factor, it became clear that these priorities are highly interconnected. Overall, the group generally agreed with the rankings established by the committee as a whole, but each had their own preferences.

The discussions led to a rank choice voting activity, conducted via mobile phones. The top 3 results, after calculating a weighted score post-meeting, are:

- 1. Safety**

2. Connectivity

3. Access

The Committee discussed coverage versus connectivity, with Mike noting that coverage is important at the regional level but may be less critical for municipalities. Quinn added that coverage is already reflected in the tiered draft network.

Economic development potential could be a consideration. CJ cautioned against using cost-benefit analysis at this early stage, as that information typically emerges during feasibility studies. Mike observed that funding considerations are always influential, and Patrice added that towns must be able to fund projects, with smaller communities often needing to hire an engineer to conduct initial assessments.

The team is evaluating the ranked choices for final prioritization.

Regional Connectivity and Priority Corridors

Participants identified several corridors and connections as particularly important to regional connectivity, including:

- CTfastrak alignment from Hartford to West Hartford, Newington, and beyond. There may be appetite for a trail-naming contest.
- Griffin Line between Bloomfield and Hartford (including Hartline).
- Potential pedestrian and bike bridge across the Connecticut River.
- Bloomfield (along 218 to 291) to South Windsor to Manchester.
- Improved connectivity to UConn in Storrs, which has the highest pedestrian activity in the region.
- Thomasville, Enfield, and Suffield connections
- Links to the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail

With appreciation for their work and dedication, the team distributed cookies to Advisory Committee members. The meeting concluded at 1:35pm.