

Role of Community Liaisons

MVP Grant for Evaluating and Planning for Resilient Dirt Roads

Project overview Chester, in collaboration with Blandford and Middlefield, has received a two-year MVP Action Grant to conduct a regional assessment of the vulnerability of rural dirt roads within the context of climate change. Dirt roads are critical in the connections they make, especially to schools, jobs, health care services, local village centers, and other commercial centers in the region. The network of dirt roads in just these three towns make up for 60 miles of roadway, with Blandford at 7 miles, Chester at 30 miles, and Middlefield at 23 miles of dirt roads.

An analysis of these road systems in Blandford, Chester, and Middlefield will enable all three towns to best understand dirt road vulnerabilities and priorities so that each can program investments that lead to greater resilience across the transportation network in the Hilltowns. The project also involves important related activities, including:

- Listening sessions, both town-wide in each municipality, and also specifically with elders in each town
- Youth engagement program on beavers at the elementary school level and on the function of culverts at the high school level
- Field based assessments of both dirt roads and associated beaver activity in all three towns
- Development of a design library of 5 to 7 nature-based BMP designs in addressing problems common to dirt roads
- Concept design plans for up to 2 priority culverts in each community
- Review of local regulations to support improved dirt roads condition and recommendations for sensible local practice

Role of community liaisons The Community Liaison in each Town plays a critical role as a project envoy and in ensuring robust participation in the two listening sessions to be held in each community.

One of these listening sessions will be town-wide and the other will be geared specifically to elders.

Grant funding includes a \$5,000 stipend for each liaison to enable them in their work. It is anticipated that work will begin in January 2023 and then end with the last of two listening sessions.

Work entails the following:

- Actively promote awareness of the project and attendance in advance of the two listening sessions, which are anticipated to occur March-April 2023. This work should include developing and distributing flyers at local community events, sharing information through use of local social and print media, and any other means deemed useful and effective. Community liaisons will also work with Council on Aging directors to ensure effective outreach to all older residents in Town.
- Check ins with supervisor to obtain approval on printed materials to be used.
- Attend monthly scheduled Advisory Group meetings to stay abreast of project developments and especially join in the conversation about engagement strategies and promoting attendance at planned listening sessions.
- Assemble “deliverables” package (PDF or Word format) that documents all outreach completed to promote awareness of the project and attendance at the two listening sessions.

Note that collaborating with the other liaisons, representing the other participating towns, is encouraged.