



Transportation Mini-Series

September 24, 2026

Event Information:

Topics:

- » ConneCTed Conversations: Connecting Transportation Professionals Across New England
- » ConneCTing through Innovative Project Solutions
- » ConneCTing through the Industry
- » ConneCTing with our State and Municipal Partners
- » ConneCTing with our Community through Hands-On Demonstrations
- » ConneCTing with Regional Leadership: Shaping the Future of Transportation

Date & Time:

Thursday, September 24, 2026

8:00 am - 5:30 pm

Location:

Double Tree Hilton Hotel
42 Century Drive
Bristol, Connecticut 06010



Event Moderator:

Kristen Anderson Levesque

CTDOT, WTS CT Co-Chair Events Committee

Track 1 – ConneCTing through Innovative Project Solutions

Session II

Weaving Embodied Carbon into the Project Narrative We Already Write

Embodied Carbon refers to the GHG emission generated by the manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance, and disposal of construction materials used in buildings, roads, and infrastructure.” (Carbon Leadership Forum).

Embodied Carbon is still a relatively new topic in the infrastructure world despite accounting for approximately 10% of GHG emissions globally. As the infrastructure industry begins to have increased data and guidance for calculating carbon, carbon management strategies will become more common.

This interactive learning session will begin with understanding what embodied carbon is and where it comes from in our projects. Then, we will dive into how to calculate embodied carbon on an example bridge project by going through the steps of a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and how Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) play a role in this process.

This presentation will end with an interactive game to show how common design decisions impact a project’s carbon emissions. Participants will work in small groups to make decisions about a sample project, including materials, layout, structural elements, construction methods, etc. to see how these decisions influence embodied carbon, cost, and schedule. This activity will illustrate how carbon management can be seamlessly integrated within a project and balanced with project budget and construction schedule to reduce costs and improve impacts to users.

.Presenters:

- » Cierra Naugler, VHB
- » Ken Donald, VHB



Cierra Naugler, Transportation Engineer, VHB

Cierra Naugler is a Transportation Engineer at VHB with extensive experience in scoping and design, construction inspection, and developing plans for transportation and infrastructure projects, including pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure, urban roadways, and bridge approaches. Cierra plays a key role in developing and applying VHB's Embodied Carbon Calculation toolkit, including the highway-specific calculations used on transportation projects. Cierra's focus is enabling every engineer to conduct life cycle assessments (LCA) within existing workflows, without adding undue burden on project teams or budgets. By integrating carbon into core processes rather than treating it as a standalone task, Cierra is helping shift VHB's business model toward lower carbon, higher value solutions.



Ken Donald, Project Manager and Carbon Reduction Lead, VHB

Ken Donald is a project manager in the structures group and serves as VHB's Carbon Reduction Lead who plays a prominent role in advancing sustainable infrastructure and life cycle assessment.

He contributes to national sustainability initiatives including presentations and publications through involvement with the American Society of Civil Engineers, Carbon Leadership Forum, American Concrete Institute, and the Boston Society of Civil Engineers Sustainability Committee. At VHB, Ken collaborates closely with clients, industry partners, and subconsultants to define and deliver outcomes where embodied carbon is systematically measured, managed, and reduced. This includes developing tools, guidance, and implementation frameworks that make decarbonization both technically robust and commercially practical.

Track 1 – ConneCTing through Innovative Project Solutions

Session III

Reimagining Regional Mobility: *Unlocking Hartford's Bottleneck through the Greater Hartford Mobility Program (GHMP)*

The Greater Hartford Mobility Plan (GHMP) represents a transformative approach to regional transportation planning, integrating advanced modeling techniques and data-driven methodologies to address complex mobility challenges. The region's transportation network faces unique congestion issues, exacerbated by geometric constraints, including closely spaced interchanges, left exits and entrances, and capacity bottlenecks. This presentation delves into the technical innovations and operational analyses that underpin the GHMP, offering valuable lessons for transportation professionals.

Key topics include:

- Post-COVID Travel Volumes and Patterns: Analyzing shifts in travel behavior to ensure the model reflects current conditions.
- Travel Demand Model Refinement: Developing and recalibrating the base-year Travel Demand Model (TDM) to align with observed 2024, post-COVID travel dynamics.
- Integration with Micro-Simulation Tools: Exporting origin-destination patterns to conduct detailed operational analyses of critical corridors.
- Calibration and Validation: Ensuring model accuracy through rigorous comparisons of observed and modeled traffic flows, enhancing confidence in predictive capabilities.
- Operational Insights: Leveraging model outputs to identify actionable strategies for improving mobility, reducing congestion, and supporting future infrastructure investments.

The GHMP exemplifies how integrated modeling frameworks can provide a comprehensive understanding of regional mobility dynamics. Attendees will gain insights into the technical processes, challenges, and successes of implementing a robust, data-driven mobility plan that prioritizes efficiency and sustainability.

Presenters:

- » Casey Hardin, PE, AECOM, Moderator
- » David Mancini, PE, CTDOT
- » Danielle C. Wong, HNTB
- » Ashley Berthaume, AECOM
- » Joshua Johnson, PE, CDM Smith



Casey Hardin PE, AECOM, Moderator

Casey Hardin has 17 years of experience in transportation planning and engineering. His diverse background enables him to manage and lead multi-disciplinary teams and projects.

He is AECOM's Surface Transportation Market Leader for New England, overseeing traffic engineering, structural engineering, civil/highway engineering, and transportation planning. Casey has worked on previous iterations of this project for 13 years and believes with all his heart that it will be built before humans colonize the Moon.



David Mancini, PE, CTDOT

David Mancini is the Greater Hartford Mobility Program Chief overseeing the implementation of numerous multi-modal projects and initiatives in the Hartford region. He is a professional engineer with 30+ years of experience working for the Connecticut Department of Transportation. He has served in several capacities throughout his career including design, administration and management of large-scale transportation projects, manager of the Consultant Selection Office, and chairperson for the CTDOT's negotiation committee.



Danielle C. Wong, HNTB

Danielle C. Wong is a communications and public engagement leader in the civil engineering and construction industry. She combines expertise in stakeholder engagement with a strong background in data protection and reporting, ensuring transparency and compliance in complex projects. A former elected official and public servant, Danielle brings unique insight into community priorities and governance, making her strategies both inclusive and impactful.



Ashley Berthaume, AECOM

Ashley Berthaume demonstrates deep expertise in traffic engineering, specializing in capacity and operations analysis across multimodal corridor studies. Active in the GHMP traffic modeling program since 2020, Ashley organizes the extensive 2024 data collection effort and outlines the approach for developing both the travel demand model and VISSIM models to support multiple core component projects. She evaluates roadway and intersection operations and design for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and vehicles, ensuring balanced, context-sensitive solutions. Her technical portfolio includes rigorous analysis of signalized and unsignalized intersections, on- and off-street parking, and curbside areas, leveraging tools such as Synchro and VISSIM to translate complex data into actionable operational and design recommendations.



Joshua Johnson, PE, CDM Smith

Joshua Johnson, PE, is a traffic operations engineer at CDM Smith with more than 20 years of experience delivering planning, operations, and safety solutions for transportation agencies across the country. He specializes in freeway and corridor planning, traffic analysis, and microsimulation modeling, with extensive experience applying microsimulation-based tools to evaluate transportation investments and operational strategies. Joshua has supported several major transportation projects in Connecticut over the last few years, including serving as traffic lead for the I-95 Greenwich PEL Study, lead VISSIM modeler for the I-95 Fairfield/Bridgeport PEL, and senior modeler for the Greater Hartford Mobility Program.

Track 1 – ConneCTing through Innovative Project Solutions

Session IV

Advancing Transit Resilience Through Heat Mitigation Strategies

Advancing Transit Resilience Through Heat Mitigation Strategies

Extreme heat is no longer an occasional disruption but an increasingly significant challenge for transit agencies, affecting daily operations, workforce safety, customer comfort, service reliability, and long-term asset performance. As temperatures rise and extreme heat events become more frequent, transit providers must balance immediate operational responses with strategic investments that strengthen resilience across their systems.

This interactive panel brings together transit operators from CTtransit and Metro-North Railroad alongside resilience practitioners to explore how agencies are adapting to the realities of a warming climate. Through audience engagement and real-world agency perspectives, panelists will discuss the operational impacts of extreme heat on employees and riders, changes in ridership and customer expectations, strategies for maintaining safe and reliable service, and improvements to stations, bus stops, and other passenger facilities that enhance the customer experience.

Building on these operational perspectives, the discussion will examine industry best practices, capital investments, and scalable resilience strategies being implemented across the country. Attendees will gain practical insights into protecting frontline employees, improving rider comfort, strengthening service reliability, and prioritizing investments that prepare transit systems for future climate conditions.

Attendees will leave with actionable lessons and proven approaches for advancing heat resilience through both day-to-day operational practices and long-term infrastructure improvements

Presenters:

- » Alicia Leite, HNTB, Moderator
- » Elizabeth Hotetz, MTA Metro-North Railroad
- » Emily Korman, HNTB
- » Patrick Cooney, CTTransit



Alicia Leite, HNTB, Moderator

Alicia Leite is a Project Manager with HNTB Corporation in Rocky Hill, Connecticut, specializing in transit planning, customer experience, and strategic transportation initiatives. In this role, she supports public transportation agencies in delivering innovative, customer-focused solutions that enhance mobility and service delivery.

Prior to joining HNTB, Alicia served as an Assistant Vice President at WSP USA, where she was a member of the Advisory Services Organizational Transformation team. She led strategic initiatives for clients across the country, helping organizations navigate complex transformations through planning, change management, and operational improvement strategies. Before transitioning to consulting, Alicia spent more than a decade with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT), where she held several leadership positions within the Bureau of Public Transportation. As Transit Manager, she oversaw statewide transit planning, marketing, and customer experience programs for both bus and rail services. Previously, she served as Supervising Transportation Planner for the department's Customer Experience unit, leading initiatives focused on improving the rider experience across Connecticut's public transportation network.

During her tenure at CTDOT, Alicia also served as Assistant to the Bureau Chief of Public Transportation and spent nearly two years in the Commissioner's Office as the Department's Legislative Liaison, coordinating transportation policy and legislative affairs. Earlier in her career, she worked as a Transportation Planner and played a key role in the implementation of two transformative transit projects: CTfastrak, Connecticut's first bus rapid transit system, and the CTrail Hartford Line passenger rail service.

Alicia is an active leader within the transportation industry. She is a graduate of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Emerging Leaders Program (Class of 2018), serves as an APTA Emerging Leaders Program National Mentor, and was recently appointed to a two-year term on the APTA Emerging Leaders Program Committee. She also mentors emerging professionals through the WTS Connecticut Chapter Mentoring Program and serves as a guest speaker for the COMTO Connecticut Chapter Mentoring Program.



**Elizabeth Hotetz, Director of Station Operations,
MTA Metro-North Railroad**

Elizabeth has advanced through a range of front-line, operational and leadership roles since joining the railroad in 1998 as a ticket seller. She went on to serve as supervisor of materials from 2004 to 2006 before moving into customer- and station-focused management. In 2018, she became district manager of station operations, a role in which she oversaw station performance and customer experience across a large territory. She was appointed assistant director of station operations in 2021 and director of station operations in 2023. Throughout her career, Elizabeth has brought deep operational knowledge, a customer-focused perspective, and a steady commitment to improving the rider experience across the Metro-North system. She has applied her business acumen to every facet of station operations, from revenue collection and

ticketing systems to capital project planning and customer experience enhancements. She has overseen the installation and servicing of ticket vending machines, directed the training of new ticket sellers, and instituted safety audits that have reduced incidents across the system. Recently, her role was expanded to encompass oversight of all maintenance and construction activities across more than 100 train stations and employee facilities. Elizabeth is a builder of people: She has coached managers into confident leaders; empowered staff to take pride in their work; and inspired teams to see the bigger picture of how their work affects the daily lives of thousands of commuters. Her work has elevated Metro-North's standards and set a powerful example for women in transportation.



Emily Korman, AICP, HNTB

Emily Korman, AICP, is a Resiliency Planner at HNTB, based in New York City. Trained as an urban planner and climate adaptation professional, she leverages her background in environmental policy, geospatial analytics, and capital planning to create plans, projects, and programs that adapt the built environment to climate change. Before joining HNTB, Emily served as Resiliency Capital Planning Manager at NJ TRANSIT, where she was responsible for developing and implementing the Agency's long-term capital strategy for protecting New Jersey's public transit system from severe weather and climate change impacts. Prior to joining NJ TRANSIT, she served as the Assistant Director of Data, GIS, and Research at the New York State Office of Resilient Homes and Communities (RHC), where she supervised quarterly grant reporting, maintained disaster recovery program data, and supported research initiatives designed to quantify the Office's impact on communities affected by Hurricanes Irene, Lee, and Sandy. Emily earned her bachelor's degree in Environmental Analysis & Policy from Boston University and a master's degree in Urban & Regional Planning from the University of Michigan.



Patrick Cooney, CTTransit

Patrick Cooney is the Assistant General Manager of Transit Services at CTTransit and has more than twenty years of experience in the public transportation industry. Throughout his career, Patrick has held a variety of leadership positions within transit operations, including Division Manager of the Stamford Division from July 2019 through January 2024 and CTfastrak Division Manager from January 2024 through January 2025. As CTfastrak Division Manager, Patrick focused on improving on-time performance and overall service reliability. During the first six months of 2024, CTfastrak achieved an on-time performance of 83.0%. Patrick attributes this achievement to a strong team, recognizing that operators, supervisors, superintendents, law enforcement agencies, and community members each play a crucial role in delivering reliable transit services.

In January 2025, Patrick was promoted to Assistant General Manager of Transit Services, where he provides leadership and oversight across transit operations and supports the continued development of safe, reliable, and customer-focused service. Patrick attends numerous transportation conferences and participates in a variety of professional training programs, workshops, and industry development opportunities. He strongly believes in teamwork and professional development and is committed to developing and supporting his team members so they can achieve their full potential and provide the highest level of service to the riding public. In his spare time, Patrick enjoys attending professional sporting events, watching movies, and viewing documentaries.

Track 1 – ConneCTing through Innovative Project Solutions

Session V

From Hydraulics to Policy: *How Water Resources Professionals Shape Transportation Decisions*

Transportation professionals are often encouraged to participate in professional organizations, yet many struggle to connect that involvement to real project decisions or career advancement. This session reframes these organizations as active drivers of engineering practice, with a focus on how water resources professionals influence transportation outcomes.

Using coastal bridge design as a unifying example, the presentation shows how technical research, standards development, and floodplain policy intersect to shape decisions related to scour, hydraulic modeling, and regulatory compliance. It connects the roles of organizations such as TRB, AASHTO, ASCE, ASFPM, and WTS to the guidance and criteria professionals apply in practice.

Drawing on experience across national, state, and local organizations, the presenters distinguish between participation that builds awareness and participation that contributes to tangible outputs, such as guidance development, committee work, and technical publications. Strategies are provided to help attendees align involvement with their technical focus, career stage, and leadership goals.

The session includes a brief interactive component to help attendees identify one organization and one action they can take to increase their level of engagement and visibility.

Participants will leave with:

- A clear understanding of how professional organizations influence real transportation design decisions
- One actionable step to move from passive involvement to meaningful contribution

Presenters:

- » Dr. Maura K. Boswell, HDR
- » Donald Hendon, HDR



Dr. Maura K. Boswell, HDR

Dr. Maura K. Boswell serves as the East Region Coastal Lead at HDR and has more than 20 years of experience providing expertise in coastal engineering and urban waterfronts planning and design. She has focused her interests the last 15+ years on resilient coastal shorelines and projects concerned with managing coastal flooding and sea level rise, including providing expertise on development of Nature-based Solutions design guidance documents. Maura's interest in understanding and applying the latest technical research, combined with her experience locally, nationally, and globally, allows her to provide the most up-to-date approaches to coastal resilience design. As the Vice-Chair of the EBC Ocean and Coastal Resources Committee and as a member of the Board of Directors for the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association, Maura's professional interests service allows her to maintain a rich technical network and advocate for science-backed policies that enable successful design and implementation of resilient projects along our coastlines.



Donald Hendon, HDR

Don is a H&H/Coastal Project Manager with HDR focusing on the design and analysis of transportation hydraulic infrastructure in riverine and coastal environments. He gets excited designing hydraulic structures and countermeasures, performing scour analyses, modeling vessel hydrodynamic effects, and storm surge modeling.

He is active in WTS, the Mississippi Engineering Society, ASCE and is the VP for Friends of the MS River Basin Model, a non-profit making a children's science center out of the largest physical hydraulic model ever built.

Track 1 – ConneCTing through Innovative Project Solutions

Session VI

Completing the Norwalk River Valley Trail:

A Multi-Partner Approach

This session will explore how the Wilton Pedestrian Infrastructure and Property Study is advancing the next critical segment of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT), a planned 30-mile regional trail in southwest Connecticut. Focusing on a 1.5-mile gap between Wilton and Norwalk, the project demonstrates how municipalities, regional agencies, private stakeholders, and trail advocates can work together to deliver multimodal infrastructure that supports economic development, public health, and community connectivity.

Presenters will share the study's interdisciplinary approach, spanning transportation planning and preliminary design, economic analysis, environmental assessment, stakeholder engagement, and regulatory coordination to evaluate route alternatives and develop a preferred alignment. The session will highlight how the trail improves access to employment centers, downtown destinations, and regional transit connections while addressing complex constraints related to rail crossings, flooding, and adjacent land uses.

The presentation addresses how the NRVT supports broader municipal, regional, and statewide goals for walkable communities, active transportation, tourism, workforce mobility, and quality of life. Attendees will gain practical insights into balancing safety, implementation feasibility, environmental considerations, and stakeholder priorities in trail and active transportation projects. This case study

offers transferable lessons for partners seeking to advance transportation investments through collaborative planning and data-driven decision-making.

Presenters:

- » Andrea Gartner, Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) Executive Director
- » Matthew Pugliese, CTDECD, Deputy Commissioner
- » Shawna Kitzman, AICP, RSPI, Toole Design
- » Hilary Ho, HR&A Advisors, Inc.



Andrea Gartner, NRVT, Executive Director

Andrea Gartner is a lifelong Fairfield County resident and community development leader with decades of experience advancing regional initiatives in economic development, arts and culture, historic preservation, and placemaking. She helped establish the Ridgefield Playhouse and Ridgefield Historical Society, expanding the Boys & Girls Club, and serving for 15 years as a Historic District Commissioner. As Executive Director of CityCenter Danbury, she helped lead downtown revitalization efforts, including the creation of the Downtown Revitalization Zone, attraction of Naugatuck Valley Community College, launch of the Danbury Innovation Center, and development of arts-based public initiatives. Since 2022, Andrea has served as Executive Director of the NRVT, advancing regional trail connectivity and multimodal transportation projects. She also serves on the Danbury City Council.



Shawna Kitzman, AICP, RSP1, Toole Design

Shawna is an award-winning project manager and speaker who connects people, places, and ideas. She leads dynamic stakeholder engagement and planning for Safety Action Plans, active transportation plans, as well as transit and trail projects. She approaches her work through the lens of social and gender equity, with the philosophy

that all people deserve safe and equitable access to our streets. With a background in planning, communications, and fine art, Shawna seeks projects that unite creative engagement with economic development and social well-being. She volunteers to increase transportation access and safety, serving on boards for WTS Connecticut, The Rideshare Company, and Watch For Me CT.



Hilary Ho, HR&A Advisors, Inc.

Hilary works with public sector agencies to advance transformational economic development initiatives that center equitable growth. Drawing on her experience in urban analytics and community development, her work at HR&A spans economic and fiscal impact assessment, real estate financial feasibility, and helping clients identify

where targeted investment can unlock redevelopment potential and deliver public benefit.



Matthew Pugliese, CTDECD, Deputy Commissioner

Matthew J. Pugliese was named Deputy Commissioner and Chief Investment Officer of the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) on January 1, 2024. In this role he oversees all real estate, capital project, brownfield and community development initiatives in the department. Matt joined the department in 2022 to help launch the Community Investment Fund 2030 program, and \$875 million-dollar, five-year program fostering economic and community development in historically underserved communities across the state. Prior to joining DECD, Matt was the Associate State Director of the Connecticut Small Business Development Center and held leadership positions at UConn and nonprofit organizations. Matt served three terms on the Town of Old Saybrook's Board of Selectmen and is a past chair of the town's Economic Development Commission.