

Memorandum of Agreement for the Co-Gen Rail Transformation Project

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is to formalize an agreement between the Towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, Orange County, the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and the Southern Environmental Law Center (“the Parties”), and to collaboratively envision, plan, and jointly seek grant funding opportunities for the Co-Gen Rail Transformation Project.

Background

In late 2023, the Southern Environmental Law Center and UNC-Chapel Hill entered into contracts with Central Pines Regional Council to jointly cover the cost to facilitate the development of strong grant applications for long-term economic and transportation planning activities along the Co-Gen Rail Line. As entities with primary control of land use decisions, as well as ownership of numerous properties along the rail line, and/or organizations with an interest in the Project, it is essential that “the Parties” are foundationally involved in the process.

Mutual Interest of the Parties

The long-term transformation of the Co-Gen (UNC) rail line into a multi-modal greenway (a “rails to trails” project) can bring extensive opportunity and allow the Parties to advance collective goals to promote housing, economic development, and connectivity across each jurisdiction and between residential, institutional, commercial, and rural areas of the county. By identifying the potential benefits of the project today, the Parties can support a robust and timely transition away from coal at the Co-Gen plant and ensure alignment between local and countywide plans for development and connectivity and to achieve environmental goals that accompany the expansion of the county’s network of greenways.

Responsibilities of the Parties

- Appoint one representative of the Party to serve on the Co-Gen Rail Transformation Project’s Policy Steering Committee, comprised of local and state elected officials, community groups, institutional partners, and others impacted by the project.
- Provide guidance and direction to the steering group and Central Pines Regional Council, as the grant writer, on submission of grant applications, grant cost-share allocations, and alignment or coordination with local priorities and funding applications.
- Designate local staff members to provide information or data related to project outcomes and assist with grant applications.
- As appropriate and/or when most competitive, serve as the lead applicant on grant applications for the project. Central Pines Regional Council can administer any grant where capacity is a concern.
- Work collaboratively with the Co-Gen Rail Transformation Project’s Policy Steering Committee to design and implement communications and messaging on the project, its purpose, and its progress.
- Appoint relevant staff to serve on a Technical Working Group to provide technical guidance on implementation of an awarded grant application(s).

This MOA does not anticipate any present exchange of monies between the Parties or guarantee specific funding. Rather, it documents this understanding for mutual records.

Town of Chapel Hill

Acknowledgement and Acceptance:

_____ Date: _____

Town of Carrboro

Acknowledgement and Acceptance:

_____ Date: _____

Orange County

Acknowledgement and Acceptance:

_____ Date: _____

University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill

Acknowledgement and Acceptance:

_____ Date: _____

Southern Environmental Law Center

Acknowledgement and Acceptance:

_____ Date: _____